



Increasing Parent/Guardian Involvement



F. Dekovic, GGD District Commissioner



*How do we respond to a parent that says
"I rather not register as a volunteer" or,
"The unit seems to have more than
enough leaders!"*



My response is simply, "Scouting is an activity you do with your child (in Cub scouting). We'll find you an appropriate role in the Committee (in Boys Scouts, Sea Scouts, Venturing units). However, to really get most from the experience alongside your child, you'll have to actively contribute towards this."

The BSA is NOT “Babysitting of America”

The Boy Scouts of America



Nation’s foremost
youth program of
character development
& values-based
leadership training

Helps young people
be “Prepared. For Life.®”

Composed of 2.4
million youth

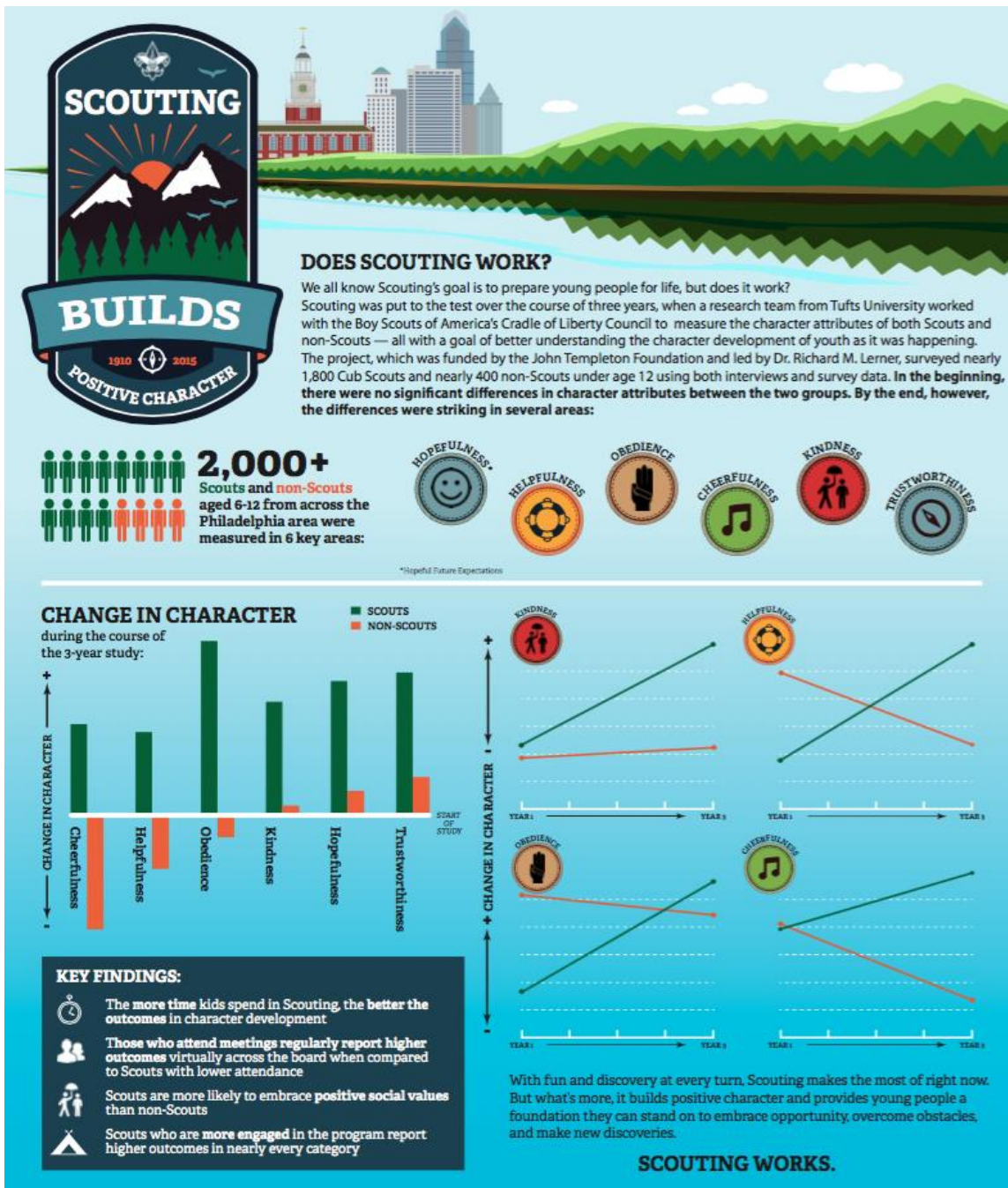
> 1 million volunteers
in local councils
throughout the US and
its territories

3 yr Tufts University study:

Compared
1,800 Cub Scouts and
400 non-Scouts under
the age of 12.

Measured the
difference Scouting
makes in several areas
over time.

Scouting has a positive
impact in the character
development of young
people.



The importance of believing in the BSA programs: If a parent doesn't buy into the program, neither will the youth.



When looking at Boy Scouting, it:

- unlocks a **world of discovery** to help forge a path for a scout's future
- offers **130+ merit badges** to choose from
- extends **unique hands-on learning** experiences
- presents opportunities in **leadership skills**
- allows Scout to **gain the confidence** to excel in life
- leads a scout on **path to Eagle** + accomplishing a service project imagined and executed by the scout himself

Let's look at some reasons why parents are not involved in scouting

My son/daughter "prefers to be independent and doesn't want me to be present."

"It's my son's thing.....not mine."

Parent is unaware of unit activities – i.e. not on unit mailing list; doesn't read ScoutBook messages; unable to attend parent committee meetings.

Activities appear too strenuous for parent.

"Not enough time" (i.e. holds down two jobs; has other kids; elderly parents)

Parent may not have a dependable mode of transportation.

Language barriers.



We understand.
Being a parent of a
scout can be over-
whelming too, especially
if scouting expectations
aren't explained
well.



Unfortunately, some parents aren't quite sure what Scouting is all about either.

Cub Scout leaders have special challenges before them.



*It's good to remind
parents that their
sons' rank
advancement
is a commitment
from **both** the scout
and them!*





New or uninvolved parents often have little or no previous knowledge about Scouting or what scouts learn.

As soon as possible, introduce Troop parents to:

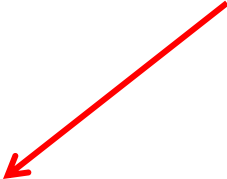
**methods used in
scouting**

**reasoning behind
the process**

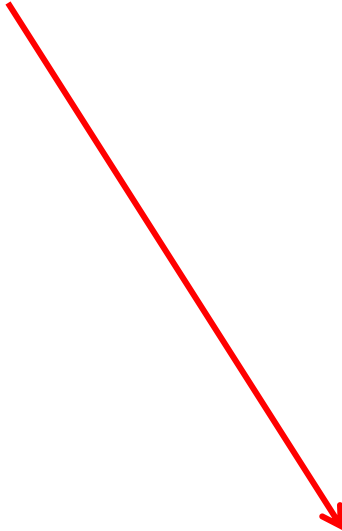
**bring them
“on board”**

**make them feel part of the
troop & active contributors to the
quality of their son’s Scouting experience.**

**Not every unit role requires
BSA adult registration for \$33**



Filling out the volunteer application reinforces the point that one is signing up with one's child.



And, application is on file if a parent steps up for a more engaging unit role.

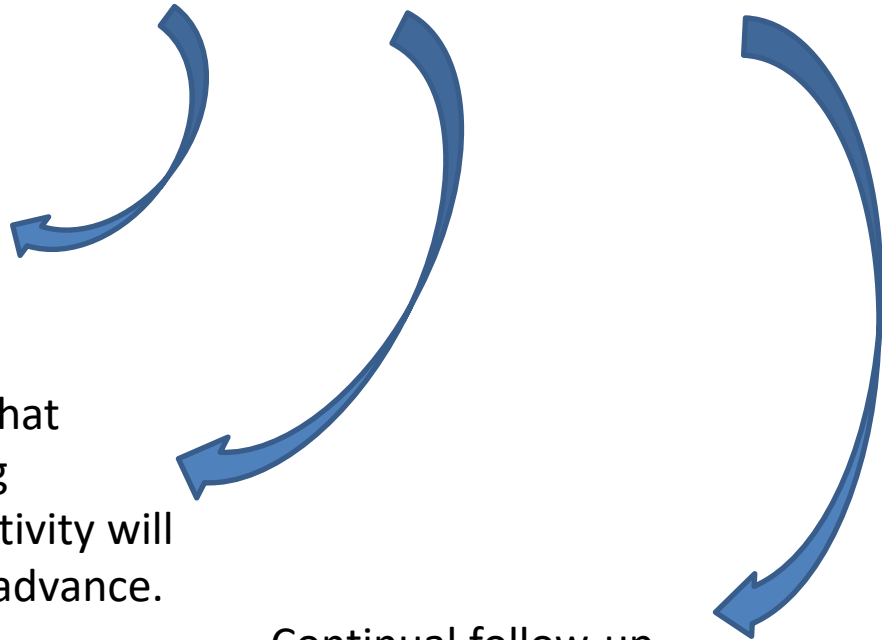


GOOD COMMUNICATION with parents is essential.
Both Pack and Troop Parents want to see their kids advance!

Speak directly to
them not through
the Scouts.

Explain in detail what
you are doing
and how the activity will
help their youth advance.

Continual follow-up
is vital to avoid misunderstandings .



Encouraging Troop Parents

Advise parents against too much direct involvement with sons' Advancement

Use parent meetings as opportunities to encourage involvement in other ways.

Have parents fill out Troop Resource Survey form

Pass around a Volunteer sign-up sheet for annual Troop events.

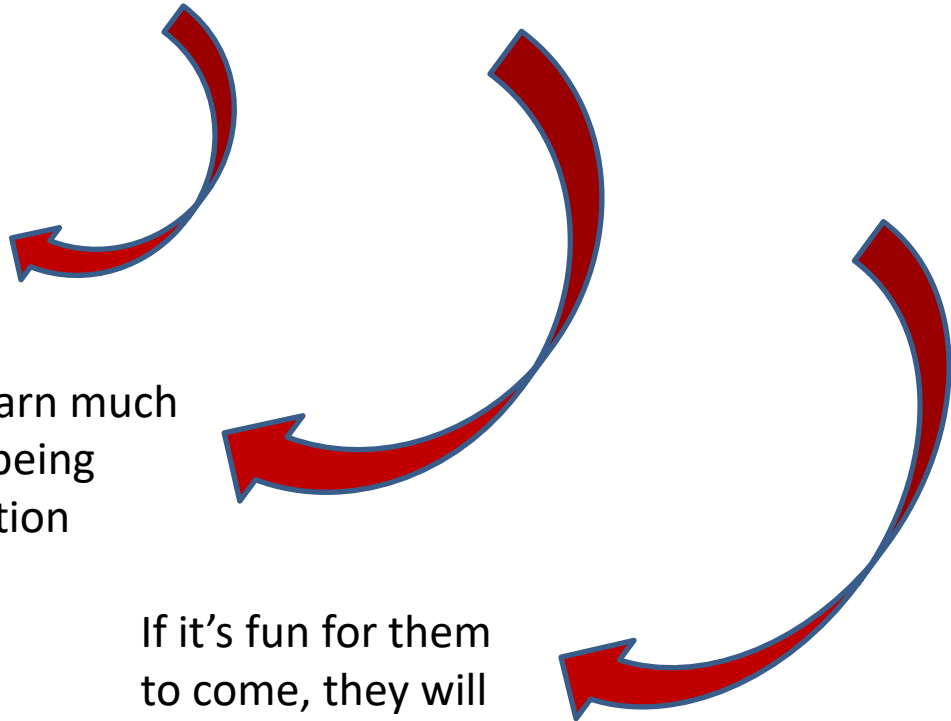
INVITE SCOUT PARENTS EARLY and OFTEN

Experienced Scoutmasters recognize the value
of welcoming parents to regular troop meetings

Make sure adults
have as good a time
in Scouting as youth do

Parents can learn much
by watching/ being
around the action

If it's fun for them
to come, they will

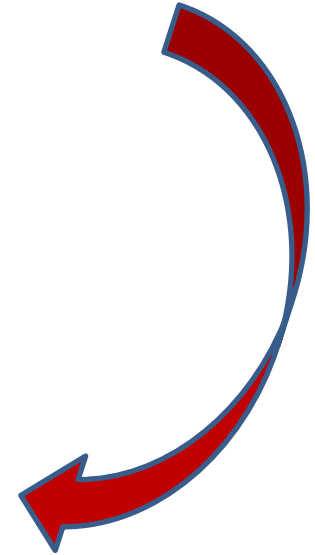
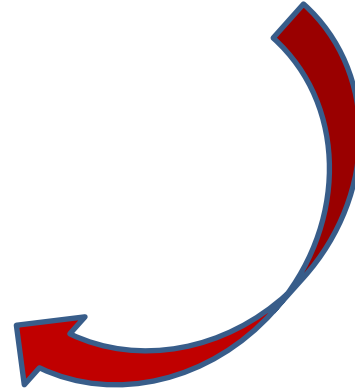
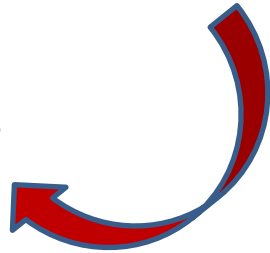


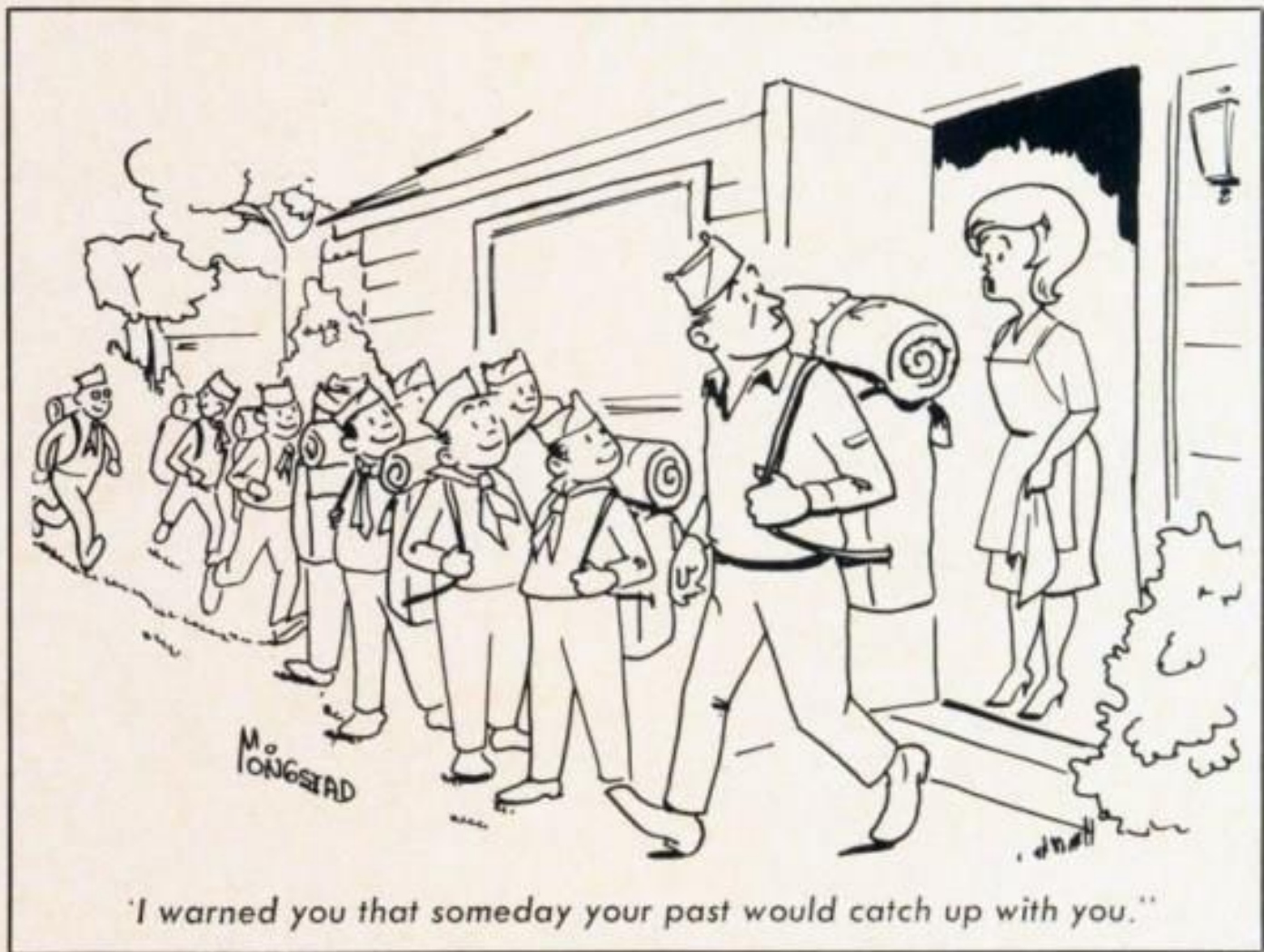
Invite both new Scouts and their parents to a special boy-led training session night

Introduces basic skills,
(i.e. tent setup to
dishwashing)

Shows parents how
Scouting works and
how skills are taught in
the troop, and who does
the teaching

Parents learn that the
support their sons will
receive comes mainly from the other
boys, Troop guide and older Scouts





If you expect parents to give up their evening.....

PUT 'MEAT' INTO MEETINGS

Consider a fresh look at the agenda topics

- Instead of discussing the same administrative issues each time, offer some **mini-training sessions on specific troop topics**.
- Offer plenty of hands-on activities, practical demonstrations, and specific information they can use.
- A parent who has never camped, but who is about to help his son purchase a backpack and hiking boots, will appreciate a 20 minute equipment demo.
- Compare benefits, drawbacks, and costs of internal and external frame packs, give hints on where to shop, show how to fit the pack to a boy's back, and more.

More new PARENT MEETING ideas

Short sessions topics can be about:

- **Backpacking:** proper-way-to-pack orientation (by boy leaders).
- **Junior leadership:** Give parents an overview of junior leader training program and the roles of all junior leaders. Be prepared to host patrol meetings? Support extra day hikes? Reminder son to make phone calls?
- **Advancement and merit badges:** describe advancements, that scout makes requests to MB counselors. Encourage parents to sit down with their son and review his *Boy Scout Handbook* ([No. 33105](#)), asking him about his own advancement plan and help work out a calendar.
- **Working with a new patrol cook:** Teach parents that some questions are O.K. to ask: What's the menu? Is it healthy? Can you purchase everything and stay within your budget, or should you make some economical substitutions? What about cooking supplies? Remind parents not to tell the boys what they're forgetting (unless it's a health or safety item); Suggest that they advise boys to imagine cooking the meal, think about all the tools and foods they might need, and then take a second look at their supply list. When the patrol chef actually visualizes flipping those pancakes, he generally remembers the spatula.

For incoming Cub parents to troops or crews:

Explain the differences between Pack management and older Youth-led units

Compare and contrast
Org charts

*From the Scoutmaster Handbook
[No. 33009B](#))] explain how event
planning differs from Cub scouts*

Compare/contrast activities (i.e. Cub
day hike vs. patrol hike.) Talk about
who in each case, would do the advance
planning, arrange for food, make
phone calls, and plan the route.

Compare the *direct*
involvement of Cub adults to the
background support provide in
the older youth-led patrol.

Effective Ways for Approaching Pack Parents

- 1. Fun interactions with your child is key.** Remind them that “in a blink of an eye,” they’ll be on their own.
- 2. Set expectations.** Scouting is a family activity and run by volunteers; *each family should volunteer* in some way during the year for pack to be successful.
- 3. Ask personally.** Often parents have the “someone- else- will- volunteer” attitude. *Asking an individual personally* to do a specific job makes it a lot harder for them to say no!
- 4. Start early.** As Tiger parents must attend with them, *use this opportunity to get them involved*. Ask a parent to lead the gathering activity for a particular meeting. Ask a parent to help you get everything set up. One mom of a Tiger said she couldn’t be the leader, but **she would plan all of the Go-See-Its.**

5. **Break up jobs.** No one wants to be the “fund-raising committee chairman,” but they might be willing to coordinate popcorn sales or organize the lemonade stand at the local festival. ***Splitting up responsibilities*** could allow some parents to get involved who might not otherwise be able to.
6. **Share roles.** Dens can have ***co-leaders who take turns*** with meetings. One leader is responsible for one meeting; the other is responsible for the next.
7. **Know your parents.** If a parent is reserved and introverted, he/she may not be a fit to lead a meeting or head up a committee. He may be a behind-the-scenes person (tracking advancement and awards). Leading songs or teaching skits are good jobs for the parents who are outgoing. ***Matching the job with the parent’s personality*** will make them feel more comfortable accepting the job.
8. **Discover talents.** Ask parents to fill out a [talent sheet](#). ***Parents will have hobbies and interests*** that you never expected. Be sure to ask how much time they can spare.

- 9. Have clear expectations.** People *want to know what they're getting into* before they agree to do something. We all know what it's like to be told "all you have to do is..." only to find out later that there's a lot more to it than that.
- 10. Define responsibilities.** It's easy to simply point someone to a generic position description online, but that might not be how your pack operates. For example, your secretary may be the one who is responsible for any required tour permits, but that isn't on the generic pack secretary job description provided by BSA. Ensure that the *job description matches the pack's expectations*.
- 11. Provide training.** BSA training is needed but also consulting with your Unit commissioner, former parents of scouts, etc. Volunteer time must be used wisely - not researching what goes into a den meeting.

12. Plan den meetings. Planning is now easier than ever, thanks to the new [Cub Scout Den Leader guides](#)! Purchase one of the leader guides for each rank. They can be passed down at the end of the year.

13. Mentor new leaders. New *leaders need to know there's help available*. A casual "call me if you need anything" isn't good enough.

The Cubmaster, Committee Chairperson or an experienced Den Leader should *run the first two meetings* for the new den leader so that she can get the hang of the meetings. Follow-up often.

14. Use drastic measures. Some experienced leaders say, "I have always promoted the 'if-the-program-is-important-here's-what-needs-to-be-done' approach.





At a pack parent meeting:

*Post an individual **sign up sheet**
for each event/activity during the year.*



***Ask parents to sign up** as they come in the building.*



*After the meeting starts, **collect the sign up sheets.***



*Pick up a sheet that doesn't have a volunteer; Hold it up.
Say, "here's the fall camporee flyer, who wants to take charge?"
If no one raises their hand, crumple up the paper and throw it in
the trash.*



Move on to the next sheet with no volunteers.

Characteristics of Leaders with active Unit parents

Enthusiastic
about their roles

Have a shared vision
supported by other
leaders

Identify roles
that excite volunteers

Respect volunteers' time

Find ways to thank
volunteers for efforts

Find resources to make
the unit successful
and efficient



Parting thoughts....

Rather than worry about parents who don't participate, I do right by parents who do. When camping with older youth, I bring my Italian coffeepot and serve my favorite blend of espresso; another parent brings a cooler with fresh cream. At times, parents cook in their own "patrol" and enjoy gourmet meals. As adults learn to make each other a little more comfortable, taking their youth on outings becomes a treat and not a chore.

And this demonstrates to the youth that parents care about one another and can work together.

