



Troop 57
Pacific Skyline Council
Boy Scouts of America
Palo Alto, California
www.troop57.com

Dear Prospective Troop 57 Scouts and Parents:

On behalf of Troop 57, we would like to thank you for your interest in Boy Scouts and in our troop. We are proud of our program and glad that you have decided to seek additional information.

Joining our troop is an important decision—for a boy, for his parents, and for our troop. To help you make a good decision, we would like to provide you with some background on Troop 57 and what you can expect from the Scouting experience we offer. Similarly, we would like to outline the expectations we have of you if you join and, should you remain interested in our troop, the next steps you need to take.

Background

Troop 57 has been an important part of Scouting in Palo Alto since it was chartered in 1933. The troop is parent sponsored and run, and is not affiliated with any church or service organization. We encourage you to visit our website (www.troop57.com) for further information about our policies and programs.

At this time, we have approximately 95 boys registered in the troop, organized in six patrols of 12 Scouts each, a group of Eagle candidates finishing their Eagle projects and other requirements, and several Eagle Scouts. Each patrol has a range of Scouts of varying ranks, from entering first years to First Class, Star and Life Scouts. We have 32 uniformed adult leaders (Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters), many of whom are Eagle Scouts. All Assistant Scoutmasters have received formal BSA training or they are scheduled to receive it by the end of the year. We also have a group of parents who are active members of the Troop Committee. They are non uniformed volunteers who help coordinate fundraising, summer camp participation, advancement records, outing transportation and other troop events. All families are expected to take a volunteer role with the troop.

Our Scout leaders (the boys), with support from adult volunteers, take a big role in organizing and leading troop activities. In this respect Boy Scouts represents a significant departure from Cub Scouts and other youth activities. All troop meetings are planned and led by Scout leaders. Every outing and Community Service event has a Scout Leader as well as an Adult Leader. When you attend one of our Courts of Honor, you will immediately notice that it is completely run by Scouts, from the opening ceremony through all award presentations. This primacy of Scout leaders in Troop 57 activities is what we mean by a “Scout-led” troop.

In addition, several adults supervise every troop activity, at least one of whom is fully trained as a leader. For example, most adventure outings have several adult participants who provide active, full-time supervision of the boys. With some trips (e.g.,

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skiing), different levels of supervision are offered and parents are informed when that occurs.

Troop 57's primary focus is upon the development of skilled, confident boy leaders who are competent and comfortable whether they are in wilderness backcountry, planning and leading a Scout meeting or working in a community service food kitchen. The primary way boys practice their leadership skills, apart from weekly meetings, is through Community Service activities and on our adventure outings, many of which are in the Sierra high country and/or involve outdoor skills such as rock climbing, kayaking and fishing. The focus of our outdoor program is on challenging outdoor adventure trips that may include building a snow cave and sleeping in it during the dead of winter at 6,000 feet or rock climbing in Yosemite Valley with the Yosemite Climbing School.

Outings

During the school year the troop has a full schedule of outdoor activities, with two or three different outings in some months. Our first outing in September is a hiking and camping trip to the Yosemite High Country. We pitch our tents at Porcupine Flat (7,000+ feet altitude) and carry our own water (there is no running water on the Tioga Road after Labor Day). The boys select and plan their patrol hikes from trailheads in the Tuolumne Valley or near the Tioga Pass. It is rewarding to see our 3rd and 4th year Scout leaders develop, over time, knowledge of the Tioga Road trailheads, destinations, and the nature of the terrain. The hikes to dramatic high altitude settings are a great way to start the year.

Our trips during the school year may include an additional trip to Yosemite, snow camping in the Sierras, a caving trip to the Gold Country, a kayaking trips in Monterey Bay or Tomales Bay, hiking at Pt. Reyes and Pinnacles National Monument, fishing in the Bay, Ocean or Sierra foothills, and a cycling trip in the local mountains. "Rim of the Bay" weekend outings can include hikes to the top of Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. St. Helena in Napa and Mt. Diablo. There is also an annual ski trip in January and a whitewater rafting trip in June. May always features rock climbing in the Sierra; the Troop recently purchased its own rock climbing gear in response to Scout interest.

Spring break usually features longer trips. In 2002 and 2003 we went to Death Valley. In 2004 we camped to Joshua Tree National Monument and Lake Mead, and in 2005 our group hiked in the Grand Canyon.

Of course, the best opportunities for longer "backcountry expeditions" are on summer trips. In August 2003 a group of our Scouts summited Mt. Whitney as part of a 50-mile hike along the John Muir Trail. In August 2004 the troop had two different crews at BSA national adventure camps: one crew completed a 60-mile trek at Philmont Scout Camp in the mountains of northern New Mexico while a second crew traveled 100 miles during a canoe trip in the "Northern Tier" near the U.S.-Canadian border. In 2005, we sent a crew to hike about 50 miles in the Wind River Wilderness of Wyoming. In 2006, we sent another crew to Philmont. Last summer, all Scouts attending Camp Oljato (see below) went on Scout-led hikes into the Kaiser Wilderness north of Huntington Lake during the weekend between weeks 1 and 2 at camp.

The Troop recently received the Warren Snow Award for Outstanding Outdoor Program by the Pacific Skyline Council because of the quality and quantity of trips in our program.

Summer Camp

Each summer, from the middle to the end of July, Troop 57 Scouts spend two weeks at Camp Oljato, a Boy Scout camp owned and operated by the Pacific Skyline Council on Huntington Lake south of Yosemite. This camp is staffed primarily by older Scouts, and each day is filled with fun, merit-badge based activities that range from small boat sailing and motor boating to swimming, handicrafts, Scout Craft skills, bow & arrow, and shotgun. There are also courses on Environmental Awareness, First Aid and other key skills. Each boy participates in a service activity each week and, with his patrol, completes duties including cleaning up camp, cleaning the latrines and helping with other camp maintenance activities.

Camp Oljato is an integral part of the Troop 57 Scouting experience: every boy considering our Troop should plan to spend at least two summers there. Many Troop 57 scouts attend for three or four summers, some for five. Most Troop 57 scouts earn over half of their merit badges at Camp Oljato, and because the camp is staffed by older Scouts they have a great time doing it!

Scouting Experience

Troop 57 is a Scout-led, patrol-based troop in which Scout leaders make decisions that determine which activities we schedule and how these events are run. Scout troop leaders, headed by our Senior Patrol Leader, plan and run all Scout meetings. Scout patrol leaders, including a Patrol Leader and two Assistant Patrol Leaders, plan and run their patrol meetings. Each patrol is also responsible for planning and running the major activity at one troop meeting each term (Fall and Spring).

Our troop usually has two troop meetings and one patrol meeting each month of the school year. We meet on Wednesday evenings, with the first Wednesday dedicated to the Patrol Leader Council (PLC) in which the Scout troop and patrol leaders plan the next 60 days. We then have troop meetings on the second and fourth Wednesdays, and patrols meet on the third Wednesday. There are also one to three weekend activities per month. These activities include service projects (food and clothing drives, trail maintenance and campground cleanup), advancement clinics (skills or merit badge training), adventure trips and other activities.

Scouts have numerous opportunities to learn and exercise leadership skills in a wide variety of leadership positions. These positions involve responsibility for small groups (Patrol Leaders), mid-size groups (Trip Leaders), and large groups (Troop Leaders). They may also participate in some of the specialized activities that interest them, such as maintenance of the troop web site, video productions for Courts of Honor or creation of a Troop Newsletter. All Scouts participate in Troop 57 leadership training: we offer Troop 57-designed Patrol Leader and Den Chief training courses to help prepare them for leadership roles. We believe this training is a unique strength of our troop. In addition, a number of Scouts choose to participate in the extended leadership training program (National Youth Leadership Training course) offered by our Council. This is a one-week course held at one of the local Scout facilities in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Expectations of Scouts

The Troop 57 Program is best suited for boys (1) who would like to continue active involvement into their high school years, (2) for whom Scouting will be a high priority extracurricular activity, and (3) who aspire to the rank of Eagle Scout. While it is not expected that each Scout will attend every troop function and outing, Scouts are expected to be active participants in the program. As members of a patrol and the troop, they must contribute to the team efforts that are an essential part of Scouting. The typical Scout will attend most troop and patrol meetings as well as a couple of outings each semester. He must participate in the troop's one fundraising effort in December (the holiday wreath sale) and we strongly encourage full participation in our community service activities. These include a fall food drive and a spring community service event (recent ones have included brush and trail clearing for Park Rangers in the Baylands Park or Arastradero Nature Preserve, a clothing drive and Memorial Day commemoration activities). Several weekend trips include service a service project, such as the first Yosemite trip (campground maintenance) and the upcoming Caving Trip (brush clearing to reduce fire danger).

A Scout must purchase a uniform and *the Scout Handbook* (approximately \$60). Troop 57 policy is that the Scout shirt is to be worn to all troop meetings. Formal occasions (Scoutmaster Conferences, Courts of Honor, Boards of Review, public appearances and other ceremonies) require a full "Class A" uniform. The *Scout Handbook* is brought to many meetings.

Additional expenses are related to participation in our outdoor program. These costs vary depending on whether or not your son already has a sleeping bag, hiking boots, tent and cold weather clothing. These items can cost, in the aggregate, \$300 or more to purchase. Please note that not all items are required for every outing, and different items can be purchased over the course of the first two years. We will be happy to recommend equipment and suggest how to economize on your purchases. There may also be some uniforms and gear available from older scouts who may have outgrown their initial purchases, and we try to facilitate the exchange. The Troop has 2-man tents available to borrow for the Caving Trip in March. Financial aid is also available for scouts who require it.

A new Scout is expected to advance in rank so that he earns - at a minimum - Tenderfoot and Second Class ranks by the end of his first year. Most Scouts earn First Class by June of their first year. Scouts typically earn Star Rank at the end of their second year or in the Fall of their third year. Scouts typically work toward the Life Rank during eighth grade and freshman year in high school. Eagle Scout can then be earned during his sophomore or junior year of high school.

From a behavioral standpoint, Scouts are expected to be respectful of their peers, their adult leaders, the environment, Scout values and the goals of Scouting in general. They should exhibit a growing level of responsibility for their advancement and independence in their personal preparations for troop activities. All Scouts are expected to have their own email addresses by their second year, so they can take responsibility for communicating with other Scouts.

Consideration for fellow Scouts, an appreciation of diversity and the development of mentoring skills to assist fellow Scouts are all important Troop 57 values. While boys and adults recognize that Scouting is a learning experience and that there will be failures in behavior, serious violations (e.g., incidents of violence, use of drugs and alcohol, theft,

carrying weapons, vile and/or obscene language, harassment, discrimination, hazing) are not tolerated.

Expectation of Parents

We believe that Scouting is a family matter and expect parents to take an active interest in their son's participation. This includes support of individual advancement, attendance at important meetings and ceremonies, and active participation in planning, organizing, and supervising troop activities.

The troop relies entirely on parent volunteers for all of its activities. All parents are expected to make a contribution of time and effort. We ask that at least one parent, and preferably both, completes the "Youth Protection Training" offered by the BSA. This class outlines the rules of conduct that adults are expected to follow and to uphold in others. This training is now offered online, and requires a relatively small amount of time. It is also offered once a month in either the Palo Alto or Foster City Scout centers.

At a minimum, we expect every parent to choose from one of the following options:

1. Become a uniformed leader ("Assistant Scoutmaster");
2. Serve as a Committee member;
3. Help organize two outings as a Trip Coordinator;
4. Assist at two fundraising or service projects;
5. Organize one service or fundraising project;
6. A combination of the above.

Next Steps

The next steps are 1) to schedule a visit to a Wednesday night troop meeting and 2) to schedule your den's participation on a weekend outing with our troop in March or April. We will work with you to confirm those dates. When you visit a troop meeting (from 7:00 to 8:30), your Webelos II Cubs will participate in our activity while parents are expected to attend a Troop 57 Orientation meeting in the "Stern Apartment" conference room across the courtyard from the Scout House. This parent meeting will feature a presentation by two experienced Assistant Scoutmasters and will provide an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have. We will have separate discussions with your Cub Scout adult leaders regarding your boy's opportunity to participate on a Troop camping trip.

We look forward to discussing the Troop 57 program with you and hope you will visit a Troop 57 meeting. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us at the phone numbers shown below.

Yours truly,

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