

*Donald D. Belcher serves as national commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America. Don*

*is the retired chairman of the board and CEO of Banta Corporation. He is an Eagle Scout, Silver Beaver,*

*Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, Distinguished Eagle Scout, and James E. West Fellow, and a member of the 1910 Society and Founders Circle. Don has served as Central Region president, council president, and in a variety of other local and national responsibilities. He became a Cub Scout over 50 years ago in Kansas City, Missouri.*



*“The role of the unit commissioner is to help every unit be successful. Unit success is defined by the unit achieving Quality Unit status and demonstrating an improvement in the retention of its members.”*

## Preparing for the Unit Health Reviews

In January and July of each year as a part of the membership validation procedures, commissioners work with their district executive and other key district leaders in evaluating each unit in the district. The first unit health review should have been conducted in January and each unit should have been assigned the status of “good” or “fair” or “poor.” Good means the unit would qualify as a Quality Unit based on its current program delivery.

All other units that received a grade of fair or poor need an action plan developed that will help the unit achieve Quality Unit status by year-end. Two questions come to mind: (1) How do you distinguish which units are rated as fair or poor? (2) What should be included in an action plan?

Each council develops its own criteria for evaluations. There have been several questions as to what should be included in this evaluation. Here are some guidelines to use, but their use is not required:

**❸ Poor units:** This unit is not doing well. It is even uncertain that it will recharter on time without some major actions being taken (e.g., needs new leadership, no leader training, additional youth members needed to recharter, no committee, etc.). By starting early in the year on a plan to revitalize, the unit should be kept from dropping and not achieving the Quality Unit Award for this year. Monthly or regular monitoring of the action steps that are established will help this unit survive and provide a better program for its members.

### Unit Monthly Visits and Monitoring Their Progress

Monthly unit visits are the single most critical requirement to ensure the delivery of a quality program to every unit in your council and districts. Even more important is a way to monitor the unit’s progress through a reporting system that is used by each district commissioner.

No matter what system you use, some means to monitor the progress of unit visits is needed to ensure that every unit is being visited monthly with a meaningful visit by a unit commissioner.

The Shawnee Trails Council, through the efforts of the assistant council commissioner, Ron Hubbard, implemented a plan. He wanted to make sure each unit commissioner was visiting each of their assigned units at least once per month and reporting it so that he could make an effective report to his council commissioner and the respective district committee.

The commissioner worksheets (now replaced with the new unit self-assessment forms released in February with the new DVD training, *Commissioner Annual Orientation*) were used as a guide to develop a visitation report for unit commissioners. The chart became known as the “stoplight” chart, since they used green, yellow, and red for the criteria for each unit. Black was added when a unit became dropped. All levels of the organization were able to use the data to complete their status reports for a true understanding of “Where are our units in their progress toward being a Quality Unit for year-end?”

**❶ Good units:** They qualified last year for the Quality Unit Award and are on track for achieving the award for this year.

**❷ Fair units:** This category of units may or may not have achieved the award last year. They have some new leadership, and there is some uncertainty about qualifying for the award this year unless some specific plans are put into place and executed as a part of this year’s program. Specific action steps are established with deadlines for completion to help the unit achieve the award. Each of the steps established is evaluated on a monthly or regular basis to assist them in achieving its completion.

**Action plans** are related to specific areas of offering a quality program that are currently not being carried out by a unit that need immediate action in order to achieve successful completion. They should be tied directly to the standards outlined in the Quality Unit Award and the unit self-assessment tools used by unit commissioners during their monthly unit visits. Your overall goal is to improve the quality of the program provided in every unit in your council. The higher the percentage of units achieving the Quality Unit Award, the better the program being provided to the youth members in your districts.

# The New Internet Advancement

## Online advancement entry is here!

Each council has the option to make this available to their units. A council must be licensed for Internet Rechartering to use this feature. An implementation packet was sent to each council in early March. It included

- A sample training outline to use with unit leadership and other volunteers
- A sample newsletter article to use in communication to unit leaders
- A Web page example to use
- Suggestions for obtaining and distributing the unit ID codes
- Frequently asked questions to use as the council supports units
- A CD with the packet contents, plus PowerPoint presentation for training

Units can use Internet Advancement to record their youth member advancements from any online location—at home or at the office. They will find this new method to be easy, convenient, and accurate because they enter the information. The council has an Internet Advancement page on its Web site ([www.councilwebsite.org](http://www.councilwebsite.org)) with instructions and a link to this new functionality. Internet Advancement makes it easy for unit leadership to record awards, ranks, and merit badges to youth via an online process. This system is separate from Internet Rechartering but uses a similar concept.

Anytime during the year, the unit advancement processor from each active unit will be able to record advance-

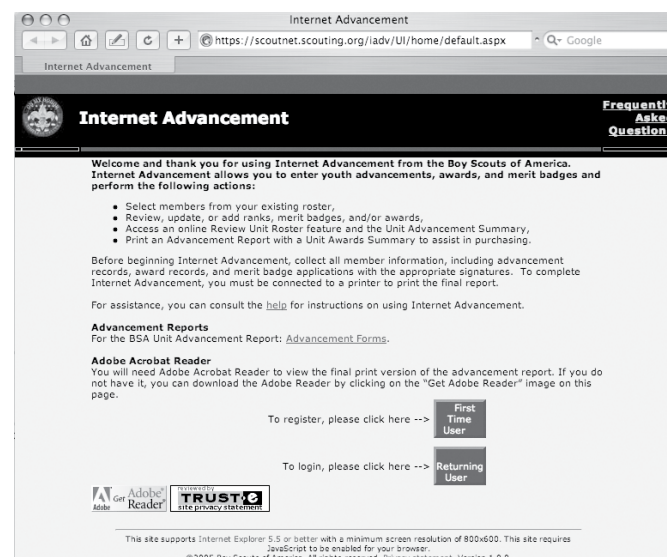
ments to youth member records. They'll also be able to print a unit roster at any time. The roster is the most current information from ScoutNET, and it will include the person ID for each adult and youth member.

### These are other reports available from Internet Advancement:

- **Unit Advancement Summary** shows ranks, merit badges, and awards saved in each person record for current members of the unit.
- **Advancement Report** lists each youth member that has new ranks, merit badges, and awards, if any. This is the official unit Advancement Report to be signed and submitted.
- **Unit Awards Summary** lists the number of new ranks, merit badges, and awards by name as a shopping list.
- **Advancement Update Summary** lists any ranks, merit badges, and awards that were already in the member record and were updated online.

The council will provide each unit with a unit ID, and the unit will assign an adult to record advancements. Ranks must be recorded based on program identification and in the correct rank and date sequence. Only the Eagle Scout rank cannot be awarded by this process. Awards to be entered will not include nominated awards, such as those for meritorious action, and awards that are controlled by other organizations, even if approved for uniform wear. As BSA policies for rank entry are enforced, what units enter will meet these requirements.

There's a link established to the Internet Advancement help on the council Web site. There's also a Frequently Asked Questions link on the Internet Advancement site and these should be reviewed. If you have any questions or comments, contact your council office and they'll be glad to help you out. Councils and districts are encouraged to provide an orientation at the district roundtables for units to learn more about Internet Advancement.



## Leadership Support Service Moved to the Program Group

(Previously Known as District and Council Resources)

### Contact Information Mailing Address

SUM 230, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079

### Fax Number

972-580-7894

### Personnel

#### SERVICE DIRECTOR

(commissioner service, parent initiative, strategic planning):

##### ■ Keith Christopher

Telephone: 972-580-2125

E-mail: [kchristo@netbsa.org](mailto:kchristo@netbsa.org)

Administrative assistant (primary support to Keith Christopher):

##### Michelle Hamilton

Telephone: 972-580-2195

E-mail: [mhamilto@netbsa.org](mailto:mhamilto@netbsa.org)

#### COUNCIL SERVICES SPECIALIST

(council bylaws, local council charter renewal):

##### ■ Carolyn Turrubiarte

Telephone: 972-580-2101

E-mail: [cturrubi@netbsa.org](mailto:cturrubi@netbsa.org)

#### SERVICE DIRECTOR

(District and Council Operations, Health and Safety):

##### ■ Bill Steele

Telephone: 972-580-2447

E-mail: [bsteeler@netbsa.org](mailto:bsteeler@netbsa.org)

Administrative assistant (primary support to Bill Steele):

##### Natasha Leahey

Telephone: 972-580-2448

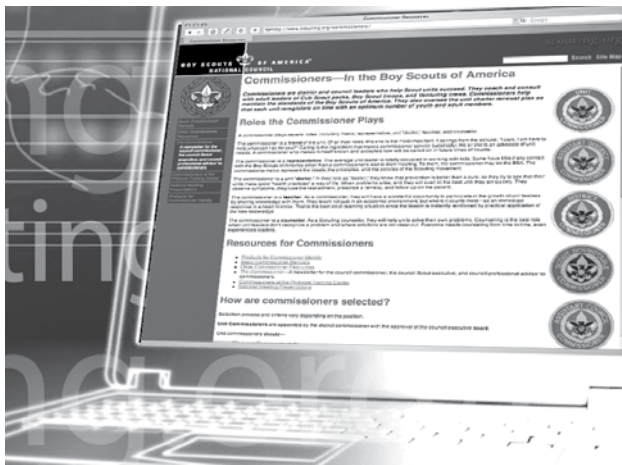
E-mail: [nleahey@netbsa.org](mailto:nleahey@netbsa.org)



## Web Site Connections

**BSA Info:** Go to **Program Group**, then go to the link for **Leadership Support Service** for support of council and district operations and commissioner service items. The previous connection was under Strategic Initiatives, then District and Council Resources. (Available only through council)

**Commissioner Web site**—[www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners)—includes issues of the quarterly *Commissioner* newsletter, commissioner recognition items available from the Supply Group, support resources, and downloadable new tools to support the monthly unit visit and the unit action planning meeting.



## Functions in Support of Commissioner Service, Council and District Operations, and Health and Safety

- 1** To provide support to **commissioner service:** unit service methods, *Commissioner* newsletter, Web site through BSA Info and extranet and the commissioner's site, seminars and training, revision and development of new literature and support materials, audiovisuals, and reports for the national commissioner.
- 2** To provide support to **council and district operations:** revision and development of new literature and support materials, audiovisuals, Web site coordination through BSA Info and extranet, seminars, and training.
- 3** To provide and maintain updated resources related to **health and safety** issues on a national level
- 4** To coordinate the development and implementation of the **National Parent Initiative program** and integrate into our program delivery with units through local councils.
- 5** To develop and administer the **Quality Award program.**
- 6** To provide coordination of training opportunities for **commissioner service, council and district operations, and health and safety** at the Philmont Training Center.
- 7** To provide support in the coordination and promotion efforts of the **e-learning development** site for training opportunities.
- 8** To give leadership to the **National High-Adventure Base Visitation Team** process.
- 9** To coordinate the **Report to the Nation** annually.
- 10** To assist in preparation of brochures and audiovisuals for the **National Strategic Plan.**
- 11** To manage needed support tools, methods, and materials to help local councils in the development of their **local council long-range strategic plans.**
- 12** To support the **Scouting for Youth With Disabilities** task force and program.
- 13** To support all levels of Scouting's leadership in the delivery of a quality program.
- 14** To support volunteer training, involving all program areas.
- 15** To support the development and revision of courses provided at the **Center for Professional Development** for professionals in support of council and district operations, commissioner service, as well as support of regional and area personnel.
- 16** To give leadership to a close working relationship with other national staff divisions in development of support materials.
- 17** To plan, prepare, and implement exhibits, seminars, electives, and other special projects for National Annual Meetings and Top Hands conferences.
- 18** To supervise the update and reassembly of the *District Operations Manual for Professionals*, both hard copy and Web-based.
- 19** To monitor and interpret the principles and policies of commissioner service, council and district operations, and health and safety as set forth in the rules and regulations, bylaws, and all literature.
- 20** To develop specialized training, audiovisuals, and workshops to help develop the skills, attitudes, and know-how for effective commissioner service and district operations.
- 21** To develop resources for council officer retreats and documents on good volunteer-professional relationships.

# Memo From a Council Commissioner

To: All District Commissioners

Subject: Trying to Do the Job Alone—A Letter Worth Reading!

Dear Fellow Commissioners:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block 3 of the accident report form, I put “trying to do the job alone” as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully, and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the date of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I discovered that I had about 500 pounds of bricks left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley which fortunately was attached to the side of the building at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the 500 pounds of brick. You will note in block 11 of the accident form that I weigh 135 pounds.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rather rapid rate up the other side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley.

Fortunately, by this time, I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope in spite of my pain. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground . . . and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed approximately 50 pounds.

I refer you again to my weight in block 11. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles and the lacerations of my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks, and fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I'm sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the pile of bricks in pain, unable to stand, and watching the empty barrel six stories above me . . . I again lost my presence of mind, and . . . I let go of the rope. The empty barrel weighed more than the rope so it came back down on me and broke both my legs.

I hope I have furnished the information you required as to how the accident occurred.

(This letter points out the reasons for not working alone. You will accomplish much more faster and have someone else to enjoy the results with as you make quality Scouting happen. Recruit a full commissioner staff to deliver the promise of Scouting to every youth who wants to join.)

# New National Parent Initiative

Through the kind and generous support of the Gerald I. Lawhorn family, we are pleased to announce as part of the new National Strategic Plan a National Parent Initiative to engage parents in units—Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, Varsity teams, and Venturing crews. The implementation of this program will be integrated into our current literature and our program delivery system. Goals, strategies, and tactics are being developed to help carry out the mission and vision of this program.

The mission is to create, implement, and grow initiatives that increase participation and the passion of volunteers, especially parents, by promoting parents' understanding, appreciation, and prioritization of Scouting and its importance to their child's development and their Scouting success. The vision of the program is

**“ A passionate parent initiative that continually increases youth and parent recruitment, retention, advancement, participation, perseverance, and a passion for Scouting. ”**

By adopting this philosophy of support, a unit will be able to turn its dream into action and reality. The theme captures our passionate attitude and it is our hope that it will inspire many parents to become involved and more committed to the success of their child's Scouting experience.

The national initiative will provide resources and guidelines for each



council and district to use in the implementation of the program. All units will be encouraged to adopt the program as an integral part of their unit's program. The objectives established for the program initiative are

- Increase parent recruitment.
- Increase parent retention.
- Increase parent participation.
- Increase youth advancement.
- Increase youth perseverance.
- Increase the passion for participation in Scouting by youth and their parents.

As part of the basic program, each youth member's family will be encouraged to (1) influence their child to become a Scout, (2) participate in Scouting directly with their child, (3) go to and observe Scout meetings, (4) be part of the unit's program—both weekly meetings and outings, (5) support the program financially, (6) coach their child's advancement and the earning of recognition awards in Scouting, and (7) serve in one support role during the Scouting year.

Each council and district must assess their current volunteer structure and resources to determine how it would work best for implementation. You will need someone to take

charge of the implementation in your district. It may be your commissioner staff or a special ad hoc district committee to give it emphasis and attention. All members of your district will need to be aware of and trained in the program's implementation.

Each unit involved in the program would have someone on their unit committee accept the responsibility for delivery and coordination. This person would be responsible for keeping the parents informed of the unit's programs and needs. They would (1) provide new parents with a welcome kit of how the unit works, (2) provide an orientation for all parents to answer questions and talk with them about the benefits of the program, (3) keep all parents updated on the unit's program and their child's involvement, and (4) secure every parent's commitment to help with an assignment or project annually.

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You will need to start your preliminary planning and manpower identification now. There will be more details available by mid-September from your council.

# Annual Unit Service Plan Actions for Summer 2006

*During the year several key things must be done to ensure a quality program is provided in each unit. The items listed below are areas of emphasis commissioners should encourage their units to do to help them with their success.*

## July—Unit Health Reviews

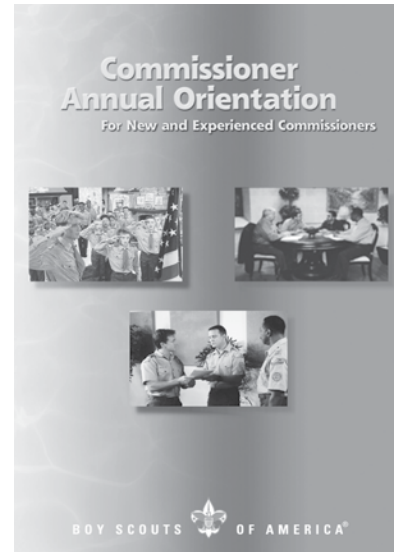
This is the second evaluation to be conducted during the year. The first one was in January. The unit-serving executive for each district meets with his/her commissioner team to evaluate the units in the district. Units meeting Quality Unit requirements would normally receive a grade of good. For any unit not meeting the requirements, a plan is developed on how this unit can be brought back to Quality Unit status. This plan is reviewed regularly during the year to monitor progress and to help bring the unit to Quality Unit status.

## By August 1—Unit Program Planning

Unit commissioners visit with unit leaders to help with the unit's planning process. With a new year starting September 1, a unit annual plan should be completed by August 1. This will allow the unit program to be shared with existing members and those recruited new in the fall. The council and district program plans are normally shared with the units in late spring or early summer.

## Fall Support

Unit visits should be done each month to ensure that the units get off to a great fall in programming. Support the unit's fall roundup and recruitment drive. Help the training team encourage all adult volunteers to get Fast Start training, Youth Protection training, and basic leader training in a timely manner. Follow up on the unit health plans to assist units in earning the Quality Unit Award.



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## Thoughts for Future Reference

“ Remember to use the magic of WE and you will accomplish more in a shorter time. ”

—Anonymous

“ The only things you keep are those you give away. ”

—Waite Phillips

# Com-mu-ni-ca-tion:



“The art and technique of using words effectively to impart information and ideas.”

## Ways of Communicating Your Message

We do this every day, but we can always do it better and more often. It is verbal and nonverbal. The sender and receiver both have to be fully involved in the process. If this is not in place, a potential for blockage occurs. This leads to incomplete transmission or distortion of the message. Feedback from the receiver gives us information on how the message was received. The more people who are involved in receiving the message, the more likely miscommunication is. You want to make sure your methods of communication are exact, timely, and as often as needed to ensure feedback and success.

There are several ways to communicate, with each having its own advantage:

- E-mail can be useful to get the message to everyone the quickest.
- The telephone is the most common method used.
- Mail is the least used since it can take days and sometimes weeks to get the message out. Then you might have the wrong address or they are out of town and did not get the message.
- Monthly or regular meetings can help communicate your message face to face (e.g., unit meetings, roundtables, commissioner staff meetings, district committee meetings, and activities).

Have you ever seen a horse and rider in action when they seem to move together effortlessly, and you wonder in amazement how they did it? It took a lot of time, effort, and practice, but there is something even greater: the ability to deliver a message clearly, at precisely the right time, and then fully receive the intended message, and respond accordingly. They have optimum communication. You want to make sure you can deliver your message precisely to achieve the results you want.

# Unit Commissioner Box Score

As of December 31, 2005

Region	Number of Units* This Year	Unit Commissioners Required	Unit Commissioners Registered	Need to Recruit	Percent of Need Filled Last Year/This Year	Unit/Commissioner Ratio Last Year/This Year
Northeast	18,814	6,271	3,522	2,749	51.9%/56.2%	5.8/5.3
Southern	28,749	9,580	4,113	5,467	41.4%/42.9%	7.3/7.0
Central	26,185	8,729	5,366	3,363	54.7%/61.5%	5.5/4.9
Western	41,354	13,785	6,598	7,187	42.7%/47.9%	7.0/6.3
National	115,102	38,365	19,599	18,766	46.6%/51.1%	6.4/5.9

\* Does not include Explorer posts or Learning for Life groups



## 2006 Calendar Dates of Interest

**June 11–17, July 16–22, and July 23–29**

Commissioner and Key 3 Conferences at Philmont Training Center are offered each week. (If you have attended all the available commissioner courses, plan on attending the Membership Growth Ideas new course July 23–29.)

For comments or more information:

EDITOR: Keith Christopher, director,  
Leadership Support Service

Boy Scouts of America

SUM 230

1325 West Walnut Hill Lane

P.O. Box 152079

Irving, TX 75015-2079

Telephone: 972-580-2125

Fax: 972-580-7894

E-mail: [kchristo@netbsa.org](mailto:kchristo@netbsa.org)