

How to Introduce

the

Unit Commissioner

to your

District

How to Introduce the Unit Commissioner to your District

Margaret Herlihy

Unit Commissioner

Etiwan District

Coastal Carolina Council

Boy Scouts of America

March 2011

Piedmont-Appalachian College of Commissioner Science

Ridgecrest Conference Center

Ridgecrest, North Carolina

Hulic Ratterree, Adviser

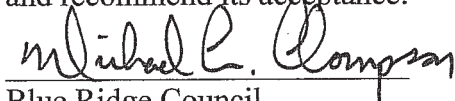
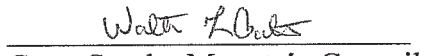
To the Doctoral Candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Margaret Ann Herlihy, entitled "How to Introduce the Unit Commissioners to your District". I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.




Hulec Ratterree, Palmetto Council

We have read this Dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:


Blue Ridge Council
Great Smoky Mountain Council
Sequoyah Council

Accepted for the Piedmont-Appalachian College of
Commissioner Science:


Chairman, Doctoral Candidate Review Board
and Daniel Boone Council

Acknowledgments

My deepest thanks to my husband, Anthony R. Herlihy, his direction, support, and encouragement as I labored to complete my dissertation. I will be forever grateful to his commitment to ensure that I was aware of and able to meet my necessary deadlines.

I thank my Review Board members for their time and useful insights. I also thank Hulec Ratterree for his interest and encouragement to continue this endeavor.

Thanks to God for granting me the abilities and perseverance to complete this Dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Introduction	1
II. Who are Unit Commissioners	3
III. What Does a Unit Commissioner do for a Unit	6
IV. What Does a Unit Commissioner do for the District	8
V. Recruiting	9
VI. Activities in a Unit Commissioner	13
VII. Ways to Establish Relationships with the Units	16
VIII. Planning to Keep Unit Commissioners Strong	20
IX. Summary	22
REFERENCES	23
APPENDICES	
Appendix A. Questionnaire of District Unit Leaders	25
Appendix B. Questionnaire of District Committee Members	27
Appendix C. Interview of Lucille Watson	29

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Questionnaire of Unit Leaders	25
2. Questionnaire of District Committee Members	26
3. Interview of Lucille Watson	27

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to introduce the role of the Unit Commissioner to District unit leaders.

There are units who not know why these people with silver tabs were showing up at their meeting.

Some Unit Commissioners did not know how to gain the trust, or feel useful, on the unit visits.

I wanted to discover if there are ways Unit Commissioners could make the units feel like Unit Commissioners serve a useful purpose.

The information gathered from interviews and readings has enabled me to come up with suggestions that Unit Commissioners can implement to help establish a relationship with their units.

The conclusions reached by this research indicate a need for Districts to talk about Unit Commissioners at training, and at roundtables, so unit Leaders are aware of Unit Commissioners and their goals.

Chapter 1

Introduction

How can we let Unit Leaders know who Unit Commissioners are and that they are here to help the units.

First, the Unit Commissioners need to gain the trust of the units they are serving. It will be hard to recruit Unit Commissioners when units do not know what the Unit Commissioners do.

Next, Unit Commissioners need to participate in the units more. Some ideas are to sit on board of reviews or lead a song at a Pack meeting.

Unit Commissioners always need to set the example. We need to keep our promises, be considerate, be diplomatic, we need to have an attitude of helpfulness and we need to grow in experience and knowledge.

Unit Commissioners need to start the tradition of meeting with and sharing information with other Unit Commissioners. There should never be a competitive feeling as to who has the best units. Our guide should be to let our units know that a Unit Commissioner's motto should be:

- I care,
- I am here to help,
- What can I do for you?

Chapter 2

Who Are Unit Commissioners?

Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of Boy Scouts, created the position of commissioner. In the Boy Scouts of America, commissioners have been with Scouting from the very beginning in 1910. As experienced Scout Leaders, commissioners help with unit committees, leader training, recruiting and other unit needs. They work with units to determine ways to best deliver the Scouting program.

Commissioners are District Scouters who help Boy Scout, Cub Scout, and Venturing units succeed. They coach and mentor adult leaders, help maintain the standards of the BSA, and assist with unit charter renewals.

There are units that do not know why Unit Commissioners want to attend unit meetings. An easy way to let them know why you are there is to take a poll of the unit leaders to determine their needs and what they know about Unit Commissioners from either training or informal discussions with other Scouters.

We need to make sure everyone in the District is familiar with their District Commissioner, and that the District Commissioner actively participates in Roundtable meetings in an effort to assist units. A District Commissioner appoints Unit Commissioners with the approval of the Council Executive Board. Unit Commissioners should have excellent people skills, have a Scouting background, and know and practice Scouting ideals. He or she needs to be passionate about Scouting and helping units succeed.

Determine if your District will set up Commissioners to serve more than one type of unit, for example to serve a Cub Scout Pack, Boy Scout Troop, and Venturing Crew in the same chartered organization. Another option is to set up Unit Commissioners to serve only packs, troops, or crews. Some chartered organizations that have several units could be assigned the same Unit Commissioner. The health of the unit could be a way to assign Unit Commissioners. A Unit Commissioner with good organizational and mediation skills may be assigned to a unit that is in trouble. Personalities are another type of consideration when making unit assignments if the personalities of the unit leaders and Unit Commissioners are well known. The correct pairing of units and Unit Commissioners can make a big difference in the effectiveness of the relationship. Either way, each Unit Commissioner should know each phase of the Scouting program and be able to describe what each is and how each works. They should be

constantly reviewing the Scouting program literature, changes happen and unit commissioners need to be well informed. Get to know the neighborhoods in which your units are located. Are there lots of new families moving into the District? Learn about resources and characteristics of the neighborhood, which may affect a unit. This will help us better serve the units and know what is appropriate to discuss with the units. This knowledge will help Unit Commissioners identify potential opportunities to recruit new Scouts, along with locating adults of good moral character who might become future Scouters.

Chapter 3

What does a Unit Commissioner do for a Unit?

One of the main purposes for having Unit Commissioners is to help units succeed in providing our Scouts with a good program that will not only attract you but will also retain the memberships of its youth.

Unit Commissioners provide service to one or more units. They will become the unit's point of contact for the District and or Council. They must ensure they have a good line of communication.

They provide many services for the unit. They work as a liaison between the chartered organization and the unit(s) they sponsor. The chartered organization is responsible for the actual appointment of unit leaders, however, the Unit Commissioner may need to help select and recruit the future leaders.

They work with the unit's committee to ensure the unit is both active and effective. One of the ways they can make sure the units are keeping up to date, is by ensuring the units are attending roundtables.

Here is a list of basic ways to help units:

1. Help Unit Leaders solve their unit's problems and identifying solutions.

2. Take the Leader's needs, ideas, and suggestions to the Key Three (District Commissioner, District Executive, and District Chairman)
3. Find resources to help the unit better their Scouting activities and programs.
4. Become a liaison between the unit and their Chartered Organization.
5. Help the unit re-charter each year and on time.
6. Confirm the unit has a strong committee.
7. Help the District's troops grow by assisting with the Webelos to Scout transition period.
8. Recognize top leaders at a Roundtable or other appropriate committee meeting.

As much as we want our Unit Commissioners to be helpful to the units they are serving, they must not fall into a trap of promoting projects, carrying messages, or asking for Friends of Scouting contributions. Their job is to help units be successful.

Chapter 4

What does a Unit Commissioner do for the District?

One of the reasons Unit Commissioners are asked to visit units often, is to let the District know what units need. The Unit Commissioners need to become an expert on his or her units. The Key Three (District Commissioner, District Executive, and District Chairman) are not able to visit all the units on a regular basis. The Key Three may ask the Unit Commissioner's advice as to how a program is working. The Key Three also needs to know about successful stories within a unit.

Chapter 5

Recruiting

Recruiting should be a priority focus in most Districts. After units know who Unit Commissioners are and why they are there, a need to recruit more adults becomes necessary. This is to spread the units among more Unit Commissioners insuring that each unit can be well served.

Who should you look for when recruiting? A main focus is to look for a “people” person more than a procedure oriented person. Other qualities to look for are those who can keep promises, are diplomatic, who will be concerned about proper uniforms, while being a model of Scouting ideals himself or herself. They must always set the example.

We all know one, two or seven volunteers cannot do it all. As Scouters, we often try to do it all. Remember the standard for the Districts are one unit commissioner for every three units, one Assistant District commissioner for every five Unit Commissioners and we all need Roundtable Commissioners.

First, your District will need to determine what Commissioner positions are needed. An easy place to start is by accessing the effectiveness of existing

volunteers. Define responsibilities of the position and create a job description. List the qualities needed to get the job done. When you think of a possible recruit, keep in mind these ideas. Learn their interests, and then tailor your approach to them according to those interests. Determine who will make the approach. Anticipate questions they may have then develop specific information for the possible recruit.

The next step will be to make an appointment. It is best not to recruit over the phone. Make sure you are picking the best time and place; you do not want it to be in an office or where there are other distractions. Never recruit alone, it is best to take someone the prospect knows. Have one person talk while the other person listens. Make sure to talk about what the person in that position will do. Make small talk with the recruit based on what you know about them. Pitch the Commissioners' Service, but do not give all the details of the job yet. It is best just to explain the benefits the units can receive by having a great Unit Commissioner.

A main point not to forget while recruiting is to talk about serving youth. Describe the job then explain why they are best for the job. Ask for questions, and make sure to listen for comments. Know when to close the deal. Stress the participation of others, especially someone the recruit respects.

Where should you be thinking about recruits? Recruit Pack or Troop families that are not interested in getting involved at the Unit level to become Unit

Commissioners. Leadership conferences, friends, associates, employers or business contacts are all places to keep a look out for recruits. Organizations and employers sometimes like their members to be involved in other activities. Service clubs already have people who know how important it is to give back to their local community.

The National Eagle Scout Association may also be able to provide local members who can serve as Commissioners. These members already know the importance of Scouting. Boy's applications also list their parents' previous scouting experience. Many times units receive applications and then file them away. The applications can be a great tool in many ways. Former successful Scouters may be looking to reconnect with Scouts. They may be looking for a way to stay involved but have not thought about becoming a Commissioner. Friends of Scouting donors should not be overlooked. Look for those donors who have great people skills, they may make good Scouters. Neighborhood Associations may have members who are trying to keep a positive place for us to live and grow. Former Scouts who may still live in the area. They may not want to become a leader but have great memories and would consider serving as a Commissioner. Current Scouters, but not Unit Leaders, are already involved in the program. Former Jaycees may be looking for another way to give to the community. Ask at the local schools, there may be someone who volunteers at the school but has never been involved with

Scouts or may not have known how to get involved with Scouting.

Young adult recruits may be time conscious. Be specific and focused. They may be well suited for a specific job in the District. Older adults may have more time and be willing to take on a broader role. Each recruit could be beneficial to the District.

Group recruiting is a tool that may take some more thought but is a unique way to build a staff quickly. The benefit is that they can all be trained together. Their enthusiasm will spread quickly among the group. No task will be overwhelming to one person. With all this said, do not forget one on one recruiting

Some cautions to keep in mind while recruiting are to not assign Unit Commissioners to their own unit(s) or their chartered organization. We never want to look like the Unit Commissioners are not being objective. Never ask a unit to provide their own Unit Commissioner. The District must select Unit Commissioners.

Chapter 6

Qualities in a Unit Commissioner

Being friendly may be the most important quality of a Unit Commissioner. Many units do not know why we attend their meetings. This means we will need to make sure our attitude, is “I care”, “I am here to help”, “what can I do for you?” Everyone appreciates being supported. Unit Leaders can get so overwhelmed, and it is nice to let them know that someone out there cares for them. This caring attentiveness will help make the Unit Commissioners a success. If we can gain a unit's trust quickly, the hope is they will call on us in future if the unit starts to experience trouble.

Most people serve as Unit Leaders because they enjoy working with youth. This job can take so much personal time that they do not have much contact with the Boy Scout organization outside their unit except when a Commissioner comes to visit their meeting. We need to make sure our Commissioners will represent the B.S.A.'s policies. One of the first items we need to concern ourselves with during unit visits is making sure that B.S.A. policies are being followed correctly.

I see the doctor role as one of prevention. If Unit Commissioners are making

their visits, they will know when a problem arises. Everyone can improve.

We need to make sure our Unit leaders are trained. Unit Commissioners should come with some sort of news about training or teach something to the unit. Some examples are the Leave No Trace policies, new handbook changes, or recently added Council events. I think if the Unit leaders had a quick break during a pack or troop meeting they would begin to appreciate our visit.

We should not try to fix units; this could lead to hard feelings instead acting as a counselor. Instead, help units solve their own problems. A Unit Commissioner must have knowledge about where to go to get answers so unit leaders can be directed where to get their own answers. This may include finding and suggesting resources that will help the units have better Scouting activities and programs.

Unit Commissioners must also be willing to continue to grow as a Commissioner through training, experience, and via consultation with others within the District. Involve Unit leaders and parents in Roundtables. Implement a District "Cubby" program. The Pack with the most in attendance will get to take "Cubby" for the month. "Cubby" will then return sharing what he did with that Pack. Hopefully this will help not only with attendance but will start discussions on what others Packs are doing. This can lead to group discussions on what worked and did not work for that Pack. I feel Roundtables should be an open discussion for learning, not merely sitting listening to announcements or stories

from one person.

In summary, I think an article from Bluebonnet District of the Circle Ten Council states it best when they said: “A Commissioner plays several roles, including friend, representative, unit doctor, teacher, and counselor.”

Chapter 7

Ways to Establish Relationships with the Units

Here are some of the ideas that your District can establish to help build the Unit Commissioner relationship with units. Hold a re charter night. Provide laptops and printers for units to use. Help units conduct a membership inventory of youth and adults. This will help us verify that a completed charter renewal application is returned to the Council service center. Create a District web page so units can use it for preparing a program calendar and to find important contact information. This will help to gain attendance at both District events and Roundtables. Make sure the units are putting in the paperwork for Quality Unit recognition. Work one on one with Unit leaders to go over each item on the Quality Unit recognition form. Units set their own goals. See that Unit leadership participates in adequate training. Along with Unit recognition, the District should present awards to highlight Unit leaders.

Meet with all the chartered organizations and have a formal Charter presentation. Be in touch with the all the chartered organizations of the District. Establish relationships with the chartered organizations, and commit to visit them at

least once a year. While meeting with the chartered organizational representative, explain the Unit Commissioner's role. We want them to know that we appreciate them being supportive of Scouting. The District Executive can then give the organization a brief update on the business of B.S.A. This relationship may help our District gain insight into potentially new chartered organizations. The chartered organization may have adults who want to volunteer. Remember, we need to always think about recruiting for our District.

It is helpful if all the Unit Commissioners have B.S.A. business cards to hand out. This way the unit leader knows not only the Unit Commissioner's name but also how to contact us in the future.

An idea I think would be appreciated is to show up with coffee during a camp out. I know this may be hard for some Commissioners to get up early, but I think it would go a long way to build the trust we need with Unit leaders. We need to listen to Unit leaders' needs, ideas, and suggestions, so we can address them with the District and / or Council leadership. We should be visiting regularly with the Unit leader. We need to build a good relationship with our Unit leaders. We should listen closely to what the Unit leader has to say about being a Unit leader, always offering encouragement and support. Districts need to use BSA literature and profile sheets to help their leaders see new opportunities for improvement. By gaining a personal relationship with leaders, we can confirm that the proper

techniques are used to select and recruit new Unit leaders.

Help to run Council events. Encourage unit participation in Council program events. Unit Commissioners are the key liaison between our units, District and Council. Unit Commissioners may want to run a camporee event. This will give the troops a break so they do not have to do all the work. This will also be a way for units to see the face of Unit Commissioners in a positive way; outings are what Scouting is all about.

We must make sure we know our District and Council. We need to work closely with the professional staff. Unit Commissioners need to get to know the District Operating committees. Participate in their meetings. Knowing how the District is run as a business side, will help you answer unit questions.

Having Unit Commissioners make many visits, even if to stop in quickly, helps to get units use to seeing their Commissioner. Just pick up the phone for a quick call to ask how it is going. Get the units use to someone keeping in touch with them. This will help us be able to identify resources that can help the unit succeed. If we know a unit's event schedule, we can then volunteer to help out. If we show up to help run an activity, the leaders will come to trust that we are there to help. A fun way to help would be to judge in a pinewood derby. This would allow the parents to enjoy the derby with their son, instead of having to provide service for the event. Have each Unit Commissioner come up with a favorite song or cheer

that they could teach at the beginning of pack meeting. Sometimes leaders are busy with last minute details or parents questions, what better way to get the Cubs focused. On the troop side, some units have trouble getting enough adults to participate sitting on a Boards of Review. This would also assure that the Boards are being run properly. This also allows Unit Commissioners to make sure all the units are holding Scouts to the same standards. These ideas will allow the Unit Commissioner to observe the unit in action and determine if BSA policies and descriptions are being followed. We can then privately use the Commissioner worksheet.

Help packs or troops recruit for their committees. After fall recruitment or bridging, Packs usually need to add committee members. Work with the Unit committees to make sure they are being effective. We should visit the Unit committee meetings and observe them in action. By bringing BSA literature, we can offer suggestions for improvement and show them ways to solve problems.

Chapter 8

Planning to Keep Unit Commissioners Strong

Unit Commissioners should have an Annual Preparation plan. This will help the Unit Commissioners feel as though they have a guide to follow, which may help their confidence in approaching units. This will also encourage the Unit Commissioners to visit their units.

Uniform inspections are not on the list that follows. They may not be for all units, especially if you are serving an inner city unit. The recommendation is to hold them for Packs in the fall and troops in both the spring and fall. Uniforming helps develop Unit pride. Uniforms should be encouraged for all new members of a unit.

Unit training visits should be done in a meeting with the adults of that unit. Not only should the latest training, books and online courses be explained and encouraged, but the mandatory Youth Protection Training for all registered adults must be explained and promoted. Units usually have a parent meeting at the beginning of the school year already built into their calendar.

Ideas that I have gathered from other Councils are as follows:

January- Cub Scout retention

February -Units Leadership Inventory

March- Promote Camp

April -Awards promotion, like Quality Unit Award

May- Letting units know about Resources

June -Staffing Inventory

July- Recruiting Efforts

August -Orientation/Training/Leave No Trace

September -Conference of all Commissioners

October- Re-Charter Night/ Re-Charter training

November- Membership of units inventory

December -Spring programs

Chapter 9

Summary

Packs are more receptive to Unit Commissioners than troops. As District's Pack Leaders begin to bridge into troops, the hope is that the positive attitude toward Unit Commissioners will flow upward into the troop's leadership.

Sometimes a Unit Commissioner may get the feeling while visiting a troop that a Unit Commissioner is not needed. However, keep serving every unit.

Assisting a unit once as a Commissioner may help establish a trusting relationship.

We are constantly recruiting experienced Scouters to serve as Unit Commissioners. However, because of a Commissioner shortage, many units still lack Commissioner assistance. Being a Unit Commissioner is a very rewarding experience. Unit Commissioners receive training to do their job, meet as a group monthly, and have the opportunity to directly influence the success of many units and Scouts.

REFERENCES

1. Boy Scouts of America, "Considerations in Assigning Unit Commissioners."
Administration of Commissioner Service. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America,
2009. 11
2. Highlights for Unit Commissioners. No. 347211. Lucille Watson. "Gaining
Trust of Units." Isle of Palms, SC. September 27, 2010.
3. Bluebonnet District, Circle Ten Council "Commissioners Service".
www.bluebonnetbsa.org
4. Tussahaw District, "Unit Commissioner Job Description".
www.tussahaw.org/unit_commissioner_job_description.htm
5. Boy Scouts of America, "Continuing Education for Commissioners".
www.ocscouts.org
6. Cascade Pacific Council, "Commissioner Job Descriptions".
www.cpc.org/leaders-resources/commissioners/commissioner-job-description

7. Bay Lakes Council, “ District Operations Manual for Professionals”.

www.baylakesbsa.org

8. Lucille Watson. “Becoming a Unit Commissioner.” Isle of Palms, SC.

September 27, 2010.

Do you know what a Unit Commissioner does?

Do you know how he/she can help?

Last year, did a Unit Commissioner visit your unit?

What would your unit like to have Commissioners do for your unit or for the
District?

Questionnaire to District Unit Leaders

I emailed the survey on the previous page to all the Unit leaders in the Etiwan District on October 26, 2010.

The only response I got back was from a former Unit leader stating that she would forward my survey on to the current leader of the Unit.

The District Commissioner then put a hard copy of my survey into each re-charter package for me. I received none back.

I then tried to call each Unit leader on the telephone. Only one phone number was current. Most numbers were not current. The one Unit leader I reached had an issue I could help him begin to resolve. I was able to contact both the District Executive and the Learning for Life District Executive to try to help this leader with his specific problem.

His responses to my survey are as follows:

No, he does not know what a Unit Commissioner does.

He would like his Unit Commissioner to help find black, male leaders for his troop.

A Unit Commissioner did not visit his Unit, but the District Executive did visit. For his unit, he would like the Unit Commissioners to find black males to help him lead his Unit.

Questionnaire to District Committee Member

Name _____

Years in Scouting _____

Current Position _____

Topic you could discuss for five minutes

Would you give this talk to a Unit or to the Unit Commissioners?

I handed out the previous survey at a District Committee meeting to the twelve Unit Commissioners were in attendance.

I received three surveys back at the end of the meeting. I even had boxes of cookies for those who filled out the survey.

One commissioner has since moved back to Florida. The other two had the following to offer:

Talk about how a Bridging program can assist Units.

Pack camp-outs, how to make them fun

Since I did not receive any of the Units' questionnaires back, I do not know what the unit would like to have presented to them. I will have the two Commissioners that responded, talk at a future Roundtables so Unit leaders can hear the Unit Commissioners talks.

Interview of Lucille Watson, Unit Commissioner

How long have you been a Unit Commissioner?

“This is my third year.”

Before you were asked to become a Unit Commissioner, did you know what a Unit Commissioner did?

“Not a clue. Tim introduced me to the idea and has been my mentor.”

You have been successful in establishing a good working relationship with your units. How do you think future Unit Commissioners could learn from your successes?

“I would caution anyone not to expect too much too fast. This is about building friendships. First you have to be a friend to them and let them know that you are there for them. Be willing to go to the Unit meetings and the events that they plan. Help when you can. Give out patches any chance you get and never let your feelings get in the way of doing what you can to make the program better for the boys. If you help only one boy, that one will remember it for a lifetime.”

What have your challenges been with your units?

“Time is the biggest challenge. You cannot be everywhere for everyone. You want to be there for the big things and you have to decide sometimes whom you visited last and who you need to see your face. Personal contact is essential and can not be over rated.”

Please feel free to add any comments you think future Unit Commissioners should know to help them become successful and grow the Commissioner Corps.

“This is all about the boys. I would remind potential Unit Commissioners that they can not wear their feelings on their sleeves. You have to be tough as nails and willing to be wrong until you can be right. It is hard to work with people when you are suggesting they do things differently that what they have been used to doing. Just make up your mind to love them until they can love you for all you do to make them successful.

It may also be helpful to take only two units to start. You may want to suggest a pack that feeds a troop or maybe, just troops or just Cubs. People should go where their interest lead them. I am just crazy about the little guys. They bless me with the joy in their eyes and the wonder of discovery and accomplishment they get when they do something new.”