*Recruiting in the Age of Millennials*

*Richard B. Cash*
*Unit Commissioner*
*Daniel Morgan District*
*Palmetto Council*
*Boy Scouts of America*

*June 2019*

**Piedmont-Appalachian College of Commissioner Science**

**Ridgecrest Conference Center**

**Ridgecrest, NC**

*Dr. Elizabeth Stoner*, Advisor

To the Doctoral Candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Richard Cash, entitled "Recruiting in the Age of Millennials". 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.
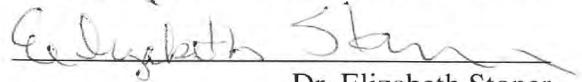
_____
Dr. Elizabeth Stoner

We have read this Dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:
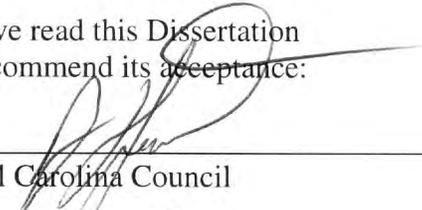
_____
Coastal Carolina Council
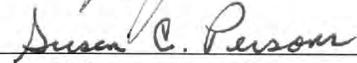
_____
Daniel Boone Council
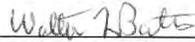
_____
Great Smoky Mountain Council

_____
Palmetto Council

_____
Piedmont Council
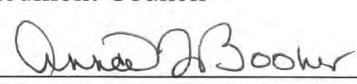
_____
Sequoyah Council

Accepted for the Piedmont-Appalachian College of
Commissioner Science:
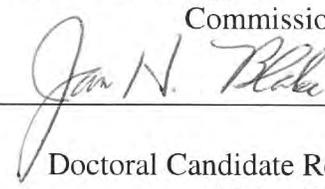
_____
Chairman
Doctoral Candidate Review Board
and Blue Ridge Council

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# LIST OF FIGURES

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to help analyze the recruiting trends in the Daniel Morgan district of Palmetto Council over the last several years. Various methods have been tried with varied success, depending on factors such as regional characteristics, demographics, preparation, and publicity. This paper reviews several methods and discusses factors impacting success. Hopefully, this will help someone else be successful in their recruiting efforts in the future.

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

In the Daniel Morgan District of Palmetto Council, the annual Cub Scout recruiting numbers have steadily dwindled over the past several years (1), as shown in Figure 1. Traditionally, the main recruiting effort for traditional Cub Scout packs is done through School Night for Scouting. This has been the annual method for many years, and it was very successful. The district has several school districts that are independent of one another, and some have restricted access to students for recruiting or simply banned access for any purpose. This lack of access has led our membership team to seek other ways of contact and to try to get creative in recruiting efforts. This paper will explore several methods we have used and the reasons for their successes and failures. I hope to show how success can be varied in relation to the demographics and activities of different areas.
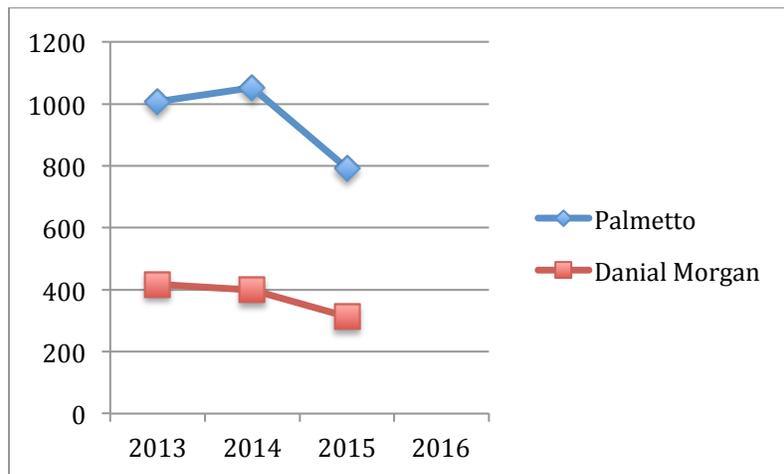


Figure 1.  Recruiting Statistics (1).

The Daniel Morgan District in Palmetto Council is made up of Cherokee, Spartanburg, and Union Counties of South Carolina. Cherokee and Union counties are primarily rural counties throughout the last 25 years, while Spartanburg County has experienced rapid growth. Most of the area has transitioned from textiles to some other form of manufacturing, with the automotive sector being a large segment due to the location of BMW's North American plant in Spartanburg County (2).

Religious, racial, and educational demographics of the area are available from various sources as follows:

- The predominant religion is Southern Baptist followed closely by United Methodist and non-aligned (3). Southern Baptists make up approximately 87,000 members verses 15,000 United Methodists and 11,000 non-aligned members.

- According to the US Census Bureau, the racial make up is mostly white/Caucasian (72.3%) with black/Afro-American (20.6%) being the largest minority (4).

- Most of the residents have a high school education with some college and/or trade school following high school (4). Of the adults over age 25, approximately 29% have a high school diploma or equivalent. Close to 21% of adults over age 25 have had some college and almost 10% have a college degree.

BSA uses these and other sources to do its own market analysis report, and the above are consistent with the 2016 report from Palmetto Council (6). The council's report statistics are shown in Figures 2 and 3.
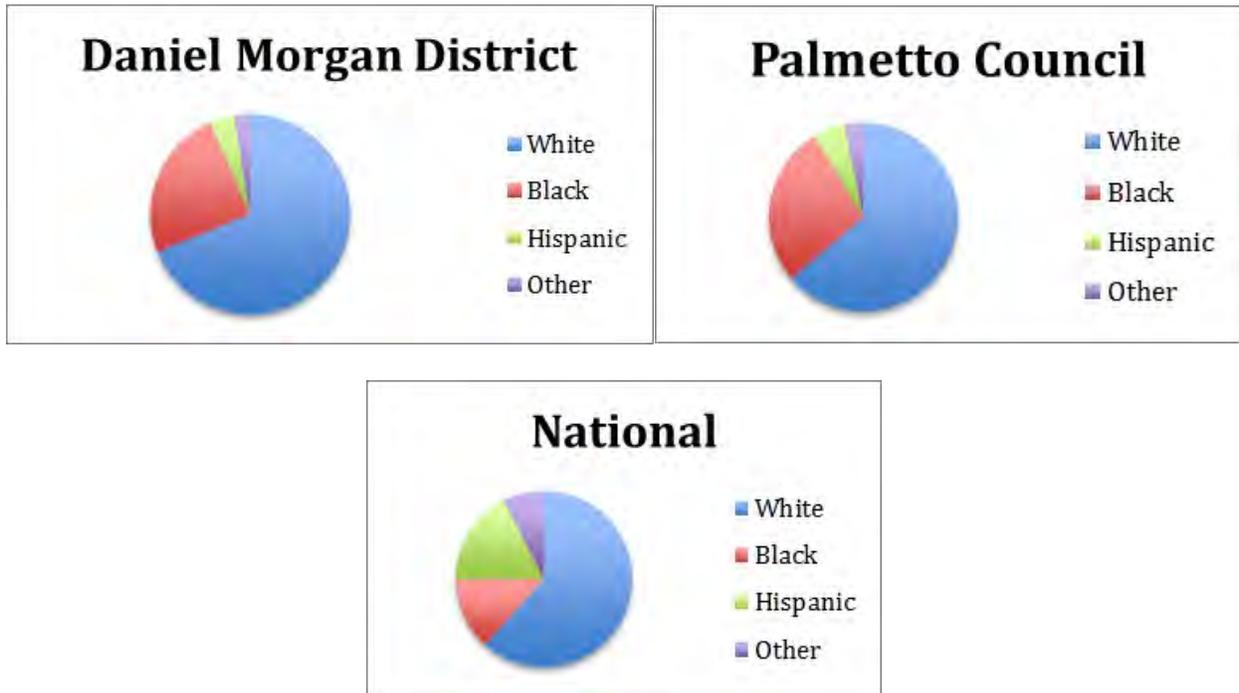
Figure 2.  Racial Breakdown (4).
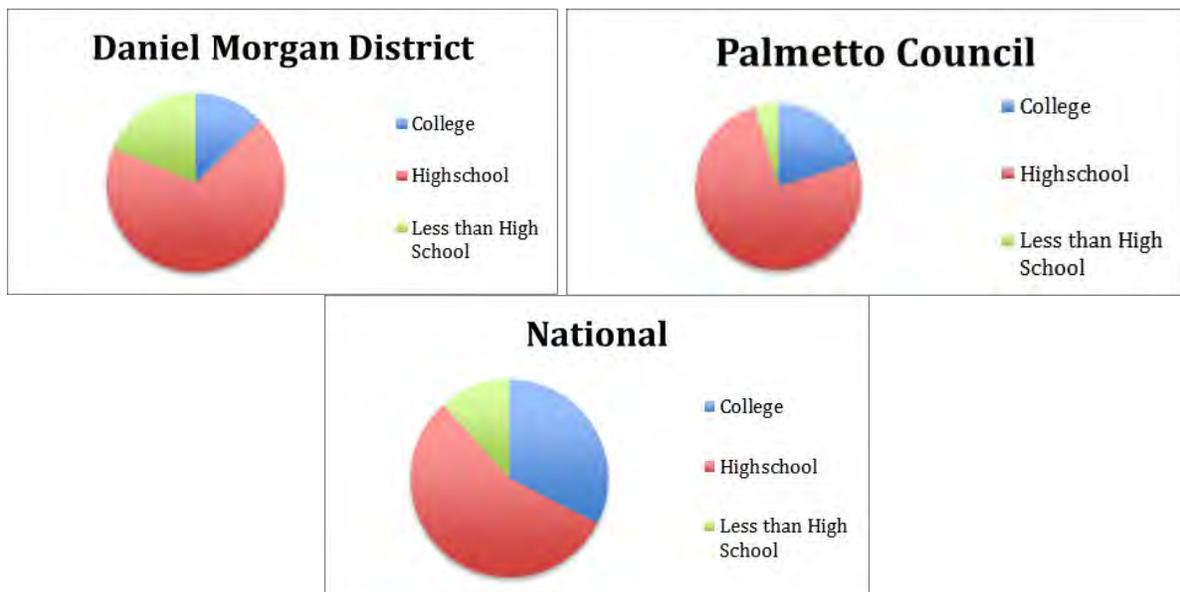


Figure 3.  Educational Breakdown (4).

# CHAPTER II

# RECRUITING METHODS

Various recruiting methods have been tried over the course of the last few years with varied successes and failures. In this chapter, I will describe some of the methods tried in the Daniel Morgan District and Palmetto Council, as well as other councils. The main methods used in our area in the past have been School Night for Scouting and "boy talks" at schools to introduce Scouting to grades in which youth are first able to join (age, grade, and program requirements have changed over the years). Rocket into Scouting has been the most recent push, along with Scout Show type events. All of these activities involve using flyers, emails, and yard signs to help promote the upcoming Scout recruiting event. These are placed in schools, on community message boards, and emailed to parent distribution lists.

The traditional "School Night for Scouting" is geared towards each elementary school in a particular Scouting district with all the Cub Scout packs in the vicinity of that school sending representatives, and the district sending a coordinator to help manage the flow of the event. All the coordinators are trained at a district level event where they are taught how the evening should be structured and run. These events concentrate on recruiting the adults to fill out roles in the packs, with the hope that the children will come along as parents are recruited. The applications are then taken up by the site coordinator and returned to the district headquarters where all the numbers are tabulated for reporting to the council office.

Boy talks are another avenue used to recruit boys into Cub Scouting. These have usually involved a professional Scout or volunteer giving a pep talk to boys at school during an assembly

during the school day to get them fired up about Scouting. These typically occur the week of the School Night for Scouting. This is basically a sales pitch and pep rally rolled into one to fire the boys up about joining a local pack. These have been used alone and in conjunction with other recruiting activities.

Scout shows or fairs have also been used to showcase Scouting to the community. These have involved both troops and packs in the district. The format is that the units set up in a large building or park and showcase a Scouting skill or activity such as Raingutter Regatta or Pinewood Derby in the case of Cub Scout packs.

Rocket into Scouting is the latest method to be tried in the Daniel Morgan District. This activity was tried in several councils in other parts of the country and was suggested by our District Executive, Taylor Thomas. The concept for this is having several units at locations throughout the district and having potential Cub Scouts come in to build and launch a rocket. This allows a child to participate, take something away from the event, and do something fun rather than listen to someone talk. The site coordinators are trained at a district level event, and they in turn pass that training on to the unit leaders at the launch sites. The rockets are beginner level and designed such that someone without a lot of building experience can build them.

At our event, we tried to precut some of the rockets where cuts were needed to take some of the difficulty out of the building experience, thereby allowing the recruits to better enjoy the experience and to have fun safely. The rocket kits were supplied by the council and came pre-assembled in kits. This allowed for rapid distribution of the number of required rockets to the respective launch sites. Having the council purchase the rocket kits also allowed for the cost of

the rockets to be kept down and helped allow a smaller unit with less resources to fully take part in the recruiting effort. Launch sites in Spartanburg County were chosen through the Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Department to have recognizable areas with plenty of room to shoot off the rockets. The launch sites in Cherokee and Union Counties were also chosen to be easily located and recognizable within the community. Rocket into Scouting was chosen both for its impact and freshness to the recruiting effort.



Figure 4. Rocket into Scouting Rocket Kit (11).

Other efforts considered were bicycle rodeos or fishing derbies/rodeos. Bike rodeos are skill competitions and safety inspections designed to help Scouts be safer riding bicycles. They can involve everything from a simple safety inspection to more advanced games, testing braking and handling. One example from the Baloo Bugle website (7) is a race where the slowest cyclist wins. This will help with control and keeps the event from being a pure race event. Another example of an activity is a safety quiz. These could all be done at the same rodeo using stations, with one station (or the event opening) including a recruiting message to kick off the event and another station set up as a sign up booth. There are several Scouting resources to get information

from, How to Run a Bike Rodeo (8), Guide to Safe Scouting (9), and Bicycling Safety Guidelines (10). Other resources are local law enforcement agencies or Explorer Posts affiliated with those agencies; insurance agencies, pediatrician and civic clubs may have some information too.



Figure 5. Cub Scout Bike Rodeo (12).

Fishing Rodeos are another fun option to use during recruiting of new Cub Scouts. These take more planning due to access to fishing lakes/ponds and any licensing issues that may have to be resolved beforehand with your local authorities. These may also be totally unrealistic for more urban units where travel time would make it hard to use for recruiting. Again, tailoring to your target area is critical: if you have to drive an hour to fish then it's unlikely you'll recruit from the area where your pack is located.

After due consideration, bike and fishing rodeos were not chosen due to the requirements that would have to be met for each and/or to limit the impact on the community. For example, the bike rodeo concept would have required helmets and knee and elbow pads plus numerous bicycles for the event to be successful and run safely and properly according to the

Guide for Safe Scouting. A sizable secure parking lot for the rodeo would have also been required. Not all the charter partners have a suitable site and there are not sites in all districts that can be used at times when recruiting is done.



Figure 6.  Cub Scout Fishing Rodeo (13).

Fishing rodeos or derbies were not pursued due to the lack of a suitable location for fishing in each recruiting area. Potential licensing issues could have been a problem with adults, not for the youth, in South Carolina. In other states, this is an area that would need to be addressed before holding a fishing rodeo event. Quantities of fishing rods and tackle would be required, as would adult supervision just for safety. National BSA marketed this plan as "Hooked into Scouting". Both events would require additional adults compared to Rocket into Scouting to ensure that aspect was communicated and carried through effectively.

These methods can be used with traditional units, with units serving under-privileged areas, and in areas in which the district is trying to start a new unit. The recruiting efforts in more under-privileged areas are generally done as a group effort by the professional staff and some key volunteers, who saturate a site to ensure the message of Scouting is communicated to the

area. Recruiting in areas in which we are trying to start new units is generally a smaller effort, but still typically staffed by more than one person. Recruiting efforts are tailored to the audience to whom you are trying to sell Scouting.

Still other examples of activities that have been used for recruiting new Cub Scouts include traditional Cub Scout activities like campfire socials, and other newer activities such as ice cream socials and geocaching. These activities need to be fun and customized for the area and its demographics. A common element is they all target fun, include a Scouting activity, and most importantly, they are welcoming.

Geocaching involves looking for a trinket at a designated set of coordinates. Most of the time they are set by strangers and left over a wide area to find. For the purposes of Cub Scout recruiting, they need to be in a fairly small area (say with a city park for example) rather than spread over a large area.



Figure 7.  Cub Scout Geocaching (14).

Ice cream socials in conjunction with a recruiting drive provide a welcoming experience to the parents and new Cub Scouts. Similarly, a campfire with skits and s'mores, or a cookout, are even more examples of providing a sample of the program and recruiting at the same time.



Figure 8.  Cub Scout Campfire (15).

One activity we have tried with one of our recruiting drives was to have a BB gun range set up. This takes a little more planning due to the safety rules and procedures that have to be followed. Allowing some of the youth to shoot a BB gun – especially those that have never done so – is, to the boy, a thrill of a lifetime.



Figure 9.  Cub Scout BB Gun Shooting Range (16).

# CHAPTER III

# BARRIERS TO RECRUITING

Recruiting by its very nature tries to introduce Scouting into areas that haven't had it traditionally or to units that have faded away over time, along with helping current units maintain and grow their membership. Within our district and council, our recruiting efforts are traditionally geared towards a council-wide School Night for Scouting event. This presents the biggest challenge as our district cannot get into our two largest and fastest growing school districts. Not all schools will allow us to have "boy talks"; the majority of schools in the other areas are accessible in some form.

A newer trend emerging over the last several years are the youth sports leagues that run year round. Baseball, for instance, is now huge year round presence with travel teams and fall leagues, whereas in previous generations, it was primarily a spring-early summer sport. The same can be said for soccer and basketball. The competition for the spots on the "better" teams drives the parents to emphasize the sports programs above all other programs. Coaches and administrators also do not allow us to do school visits and/or flyers in some areas, depending on the administration's desire in that particular area to emphasize sports. This has severely hampered recruiting in the larger residential areas. Some school superintendents have taken to not allowing any outside groups in to avoid any legal issues and not having to decide who to let in and who not to let in. Reaching the children is a huge issue and the key to recruiting for a Cub Scout pack.

The lack of an effective plan has shown to be an issue with recruiting too. When the parents show up at a recruiting event to sign their kids up and the time or location of the event has changed, then that has to be effectively communicated from the start so that we don't appear inept and disorganized. This can be accomplished by effectively recruiting knowledgeable coordinators and support personnel to help with the recruiting effort. It's hard to recruit when you have shown that you are disorganized. The plan has to include effective training and communication to all parties both internally within the district/council and to your recruiting base. This can be accomplished through multiple training sessions so the coordinators and staff for each recruiting site have adequate materials if doing a project and knowledge of unit locations in the area so questions can be answered.

The publicity of a recruiting drive is extremely crucial to making the public aware of what is going on and reaching the available youth. An obstacle we have run into using television occurs when the host of the program skews the topic to the membership vote and other policies, rather than Scouting's core mission. This can be detrimental in keeping the public from receiving our message and creates confusion as to why we are on radio or television. Several of these barriers are interrelated. The training and plan go hand in hand, just like appropriate publicity and planning. If any of these fail, then the recruiting effort will suffer.

**CHAPTER IV**

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

School Night for Scouting has been a traditional method for recruiting boys to join Scouting for many years. This method has failed in our council and district over the past 3-5 years with numbers dwindling each year. Part of this can be attributed to several influences: the youth and adult membership votes, lack of school access, and staff and contact turnover requiring a rebuild of resources.

At first, we as a district and council tried to change our model and do concentrated efforts with more support in a district or area where Scouting was nonexistent (typically lower income areas), but the results were not much different. After varied success, but still an overall downward trend as a council, we decided we have to do something else to improve recruiting results with sustained retention.

Our next idea was a Scout show or fair, which had not been held in several years. This was started by one pack and troop in the Daniel Morgan district and grew to include the whole community during the spring of the year, whereas our normal recruiting drives were in the fall as school started back. The presence was good and visible and was advertised in the community well, but response was almost nonexistent. The units that participated were the local units to that community (three packs and three troops). The location was beside one of the larger churches and in the heart of the Boiling Springs community with over 20,000 cars going by a day.

Rocket into Scouting was our most recent recruiting effort in the fall of 2016. We recruited experienced Scouters from all over the district to help man locations in each of the local

school districts. This would allow parents to better align their children with packs in their local area rather than driving across the county to another pack. We used websites, posters, and media presentations as shown in Figures 9 and 10 to advertise the event. In the areas where we were able to get access for boy talks, the recruiting was measurably more successful. In areas where we couldn't get access for boy talks, there were large sporting events going on that included recruiting for the start of their fall sports seasons. In these locations, our recruiting numbers were almost nonexistent. Remarkably, in the areas where we had more experienced Scouters and less "other" activities happening at the same time, our recruiting numbers were great.



Figure 10.  Daniel Morgan Rocket into Scouting promotion picture (17).

Figure 11.  Rocket into Scouting TV promotional spot (18).

The Rocket into Scouting was successful overall but was definitely a learning experience. Scheduling was an issue and planning needs improvement as might be expected, since this was our first year trying the concept. I think that Rocket into Scouting was such a new concept that there was definitely a learning curve; if this can be overcome in future years, it could be more successful.

One of the learning experiences was to precut rockets to save time. This is also a safety factor to allow an adult to handle an Exacto knife so a youth doesn't cut themselves. One other factor that needs to be researched is the timing of the event. When we had our "Launch Day", the two largest school districts in our area had soccer and softball sign ups. This direct competition hurt our efforts; the sites were not as visible as they would have been had there not been several hundred people at each site pursuing other goals. More visibility and larger signage would also help visibility.

A prior adult session could have allowed trouble-shooting the rocket prep, and a mock launch might have revealed other timing and coordination issues. As an example, one of the

major issues was clear understanding of how the rocket bodies had to be cut for the clip holding the rocket engine and the parachute streamer elastic band. One leader came up with a handy jig cut out of some plastic pipe. Another made one out of wood. These were huge time savers to make the experience a lot more enjoyable, because, as we all know, youth have little patience and want it to work yesterday. More supplies to paint or mark up the rockets would also have been a plus.

I think a mock launch day for the adults participating would have been great to help the adults see the whole process of building the rocket. Having plenty or igniters and extra engines to deal with faulty versions of both would have helped greatly, and this was a major issue we encountered. This would also have allowed multiple launches per Scout/recruit at minimal cost. The launch system should be tested and checked ahead of time, and a mock launch day could accomplish this too. Some of the included systems didn't work or the batteries were dead. Extra batteries are needed in case the prepackaged ones die or run out.

The biggest observation that we made, as a district, was that most of the areas where we had school access and boy talks, the turnout was fantastic. The areas where we didn't have access, the turn out wasn't nearly as good and those areas also had major sporting activities (soccer and softball games/sign ups) going on. This needs to be explored better next time so we can pick a better date to avoid those large events and not get lost in the shuffle. This first try at the Rocket into Scouting theme was a good success, but we definitely learned from it.

This is also something that can be done as a unit activity, but by having the council sponsor it, the cost is not incurred by the pack. Having a unit run the recruiting activity for the

council effort in the local area would take some planning to ensure that youth are funneled to the units that suit them best, but it could be very appealing to parents and boys alike to see a unit in action at the council recruiting drive.

Some of the other recruiting ideas explored here are probably better suited for a unit level recruiting drive. Bike rodeos come to mind as the one best suited for a unit level recruiting drive. In our council, the units are generally aligned to one or two elementary schools, especially in the rural areas. Thus, the units have a smaller audience to manage. The units also have a better understanding of their youth target group and what their interests are. We, as a district and council, need to listen to them and don't think we always know what is best. We don't always have that interaction that allows us to be in tune with the changes in trends among youth.

Finally, we should note that national BSA is always researching and putting out new ideas on recruiting. The Internet is a wonderful resource to use because somewhere there is someone out there that has had a similar question to you.

**CHAPTER V**

**SUMMARY**

The recruiting dilemma is something that has probably plagued Scouting since its inception. The recruitment of new youth members into the movement is critical to the survival of the Scouting organization/movement. Being flexible in the recruiting approach is one of the keys to recruiting. In a large geographical area like the Palmetto Council, where there are a couple of more urban areas and large rural areas, means that the youth have varied interests and using the same approach in rural areas as the more urban areas will not be successful. In areas where there are a lot of activities and other distractions, the recruiting method needs to adapt and evolve to be successful.

The Scouting movement needs to recognize that it has to be multifaceted and adapt to different areas and times, yet still maintain its core function and mission. Rocket into Scouting is one example of changing our approach and has proven to be a success in areas where youth are used to being more hands on and outdoors (rural areas). In areas where there are more social groupings and less outdoor open space (urban areas), the approach has to be tailored to that demographic to connect with their interests.

In the areas where we have had our school access restricted or cut off altogether, we must find another avenue to approach the children either though advertising, churches, or other civic activities. The variance between our district (which includes rural areas) and council (which encompasses the regional urban areas) demands that we be flexible and use multiple approaches

to recruiting so we reach a maximum number of youth. The activities have to be fun and engaging, not a boring speech or talk, and engage the youth.

The parents' help is also critical so we can find leaders from the recruiting drive, too. Scouting is not just about the youth; it can also help adults grow as a side product of helping youth. Striving to innovate rather be complacent is what will allow us to grow our membership and succeed rather than wither away and die. Look at any other child's activities: they all have evolved and have to evolve even faster now with the number of distractions increasing exponentially and other activities becoming more attractive. Technology has also changed how our youth are entertained in their free time; we have to incorporate that into our movement to be relevant. We can't compete unless we use technology in some form. The STEM program is a great example of this but I think we have to do similar things across the program while staying true to our core mission and traditional activities. I hope this paper serves as a lesson and an example you can use of what has worked and what hasn't, and the obstacles that we encounter as a movement. Remember to keep things fun and innovate to keep the program fueled with new youth. Without growth, we will eventually die out as a movement.

## REFERENCES

1. Actual recruiting numbers for Daniel Morgan District and Palmetto Council as reported by Council office

2. Spartanburg Convention and Visitors Bureau (http://www.visitspartanburg.com/See-and-do/history-of-spartanburg.html)

3. Association of Religion Data Archives (http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/45/rcms2010_45083_county_adh_2010.asp)

4. US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov)

5. US Religion Census (http://www.rcms2010.org/)

6. 2016 Council Market Analysis Report

7. Baloo Bugle website (http://usscouts.org/bbugle/bb9909/biker.html)

8. How to run a Bike Rodeo (http://scoutingmagazine.org/2015/02/run-bike-rodeo-cub-scouts)

9. Guide to Safe Scouting (http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS/toc.aspx)

10. Bicycling Safety Guidelines (http://www.scouting.org/Home/OutdoorProgram/Safety/bikesafety.aspx)

11. Rocket into Scouting Rocket Kit (https://tentaroouscentral.blob.core.windows.net/tentaroo/resources/camp86/cmsblogphoto17082/lg15_model%20rockets.jpg)

12. Cub Scout Bike Rodeo Picture (http://cubpack109.org/pack-updates/2013/05/08/bike-rodeo)

13. Cub Scout Fishing Rodeo Picture (https://greatneckcubscouts.com/2012/08/)

14. Cub Scout Geocaching Picture (http://www.arlenward.com/wordpress/2011/01/07/geocaching-with-cub-scouts)

15. Cub Scout Campfire Picture (http://blog.utahscouts.org/cub-scouting/campfire-fun-for-cub-scouts/)

16. Cub Scout BB Gun Range Picture (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lee-ekstrom/5979487218)

17. Daniel Morgan District Rocket Into Scouting Promotion (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/528d1446e4b0c9f861419ba1/t/57af5fd659cc68f157537743/1471111154784/HolstonCreekParkRockets2017.png)

18. Rocket Into Scouting TV Promotional Spot (http://carolinascw.com/2016/08/22/ignite-the-adventure-and-sign-your-kids-up-for-boy-scouts/)