

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SCOUTING

The Aims

**TO BUILD CHARACTER
TO FOSTER CITIZENSHIP
TO DEVELOP FITNESS**

CHARACTER

What is character? It's "a complex of mental and ethical traits," says one dictionary. It's "moral and ethical quality," says another. It's "qualities of honesty, courage, and integrity," says a third. To these perfectly good descriptions we add four "self" qualities that Scouting, over the years, has been especially successful in developing in boys: self-reliance, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-respect. When a boy begins to develop these, he begins to develop character.

CITIZENSHIP

The Dictionary defines citizenship as "behavior in terms of the duties, obligations, privileges and functions as a citizen." Another says it more simply as "the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community." How can Scouting help boys become good citizens? Boys can perform community services through advancement projects, learn about local, regional, state and federal government through the merit badge program, hiking and touring historical sites and museums, clean up litter, plant trees, perform conservation projects just to name a few. The list is endless.

FITNESS

The third aim covers a much broader area because Scouting recognizes four kinds of fitness: physical, mental, emotional and moral. Physical fitness means good health and good health habits, not muscles and speed. All boys, no matter of their physical well-being, are encouraged to perform up to their potential and maybe a little beyond. Mental fitness means getting the most mileage you can with the brain power you were born with. Scouting activities challenge boys to be curious, stay alert, ask questions, get the facts, and make decisions. Emotional fitness means the skill and courage to adjust and learn to live with problems they can do little to solve, the ability to remain in self-control not when something goes wrong and the self-discipline not to be arrogant when something goes right. Moral fitness has been part of the Scout Oath since 1910, and was just as important then as today. When speaking of moral fitness, courage becomes an important word. A boy's courage to do what his head and his heart tell him is right and the courage to refuse to do what his heart and his head say is wrong.

THE METHODS

**IDEALS
PATROLS
OUTDOORS
ADVANCEMENT
PERSONAL GROWTH
ADULT ASSOCIATION
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
UNIFORM**

IDEALS

The ideals of Scouting are aptly stated in the motto, “Be Prepared,” the slogan, “Do a Good Turn Daily,” the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. These are the personal behavior guides to which a boy commits himself when he becomes a Boy Scout.

PATROLS

The Boy Scout troop is composed of patrols, groupings of three to eight boys working together as a team to achieve a common goal. The patrol has its own name, its own meetings and its own identity. The patrol helps emphasize a boy's feeling that he belongs to his own special group. Each patrol has its own leader, a patrol leader, elected by the members of the patrol. The patrol leaders, along with other older boys, form the patrol leaders' council, headed by the senior patrol leader. This council, along with guidance by the Scoutmaster, plans and carries out the troop's program. All the boys in the patrol will have his chance to share in the responsibilities of leadership, which is how the boys learn skills of leadership and why the patrol system is one of the most strategic of the methods of Scouting.

OUTDOORS

Outdoors is the place for most Scouting activities. Scouts can and should do as many activities as possible outdoors. Not just camping and hiking, but sports, field trips, tours, advancement projects, troop and patrol meetings, rallies, even award ceremonies and parent affairs. The outdoors is not just a place, it's a method. It helps Scouting work.

ADVANCEMENT

Advancement is a natural outcome of a planned, quality troop program. It provides the leader of skills that a Scout climbs at his own pace. The higher he climbs, the more challenging his tasks - and the more rewarding. Via the advancement program, the Scout learns skills needed for exciting outdoor challenges, develops in body and mind, grows in

self-confidence and helps younger Scouts climb the same advancement ladder. Most of all, he discovers the thrill of going further than he ever thought he could, to learn, achieve and to mature.

PERSONAL GROWTH

All the Scouting methods help a boy grow as the result of his Scouting experience. But growth, personal growth, is itself a method. Other Scouting methods specialize on offering character, fitness, leadership, skill training, citizenship, and so on. They all contribute to a Scout's personal growth as an outcome of his experience. This quest for growth as an outcome has become a method as well.

ADULT ASSOCIATION

Boys learn from the examples set by their adult leaders. Troop leadership may be male or female, and association with adults of high character is critical at this stage of a young man's development.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Making the boys obtain leadership experiences is one of the most valuable things a Scoutmaster does. The more ways he uses to plant leadership opportunities, the better the chance the seeds will grow. Leadership opportunities can be both short-term and long-term, at the patrol level or the troop level.

THE UNIFORM

The Boy Scout uniform is a tool with many edges. It is an outward sign that he believes in certain values and is willing to stand up for them. It gives a reason to take pride in the way he looks, and in the badges and awards he displays that testify to his achievements in skills and leadership. His uniform gives him a sense of belonging, not only to his patrol and troop, but to the worldwide brotherhood of Scouting.

