

Every Family Has a Job

BY KEN HEMMELMAN
Illustration by Joe Snyder



Ten years ago I had just finished my first job in Scouting, Webelos den leader. It had been a great experience with my oldest son, Tim. We had lots of fun and adventure, but the climax was all six Webelos Scouts in our den earning their Arrow of Light award.

At year's end our Cubmaster moved on. Our Spokane, Wash., Pack 117 committee asked me to be the new Cubmaster. They also asked Myrna Weber, who had been an assistant den leader, to serve as new committee chairman. We both accepted.

That first year was rather hectic for both of us. In addition to learning our new jobs, it seemed that we had an abundance of activities to deal with. As well, there seemed to be a lack of help from families within the Balboa School Parent Teacher Group pack. But with a bit of effort, the year turned out successfully.

Beginning with the next year, we implemented a new pack policy with the slogan, "Every family has a job." We had about 25 families and 35 Cub Scouts in the pack. Several of our families had helped, but many just "belonged" without any real involvement.

To initiate our plan, we drew up a large chart. On it we listed about 30 jobs. They included positions such as den leaders and assistants, Cubmaster and assistants. There were activity positions such as pinewood derby chairman with a committee of helpers, Christmas-Hanukkah party chairman with helpers, a telephone person to call leaders to remind them of committee meetings, etc. We were creative to include positions for single-parent families and those with little money.

At the fall roundup, we asked each family to take a job as it joined Pack 117. We got signatures on the large chart

and regarded those signatures as commitments to do the job listed. We displayed the chart at every pack meeting. In the end we had most of the positions filled. Newcomers to the pack had accepted the responsibility with little reservation. Returning members to the pack sometimes grumbled and needed a bit of persuasion to become a part of the program. We did not have to turn away one boy from the pack, nor would we have even if the parents had not signed up. But we didn't tell the parents that.

During that year, the majority of the families did a reasonably good job of supporting the pack. Most of the problems occurred with the older families that objected to our "new" policy. That first year many of the jobs took as much time coordinating as they would have taken to do the job ourselves. However, we were building for the future, and the trade-off was worth it.

The next year we had better support with the new crop of families. Even the original families accepted the policy with less reservation. By the third year, we had a well-functioning organization, one that really clicked. When it came time for the blue and gold banquet, we spent our efforts energizing the committee, as opposed to "doing" the banquet.

During the month when a committee needed to be active (such as December for the Christmas party), we would call the members of that committee and invite them to the pack committee meeting. They therefore became involved with the pack committee, understood a bit more about how it functioned, and had some direct involvement with the other pack leaders.

At the end of each pack meeting when a family had a significant role, it would

be called forward and rewarded with a trinket as a sign of our appreciation. It gave it recognition just as we did for the Cub Scouts.

As we involved the families in pack activities, it was interesting to observe that they became more involved in Scouting. Their sons tended to become more active, to earn their badges with more enthusiasm, and to participate in and enjoy Scouting more. It seemed that the family involvement was good for everyone.

In the three years, our pack grew to more than 50 boys and almost 40 families. We had two-deep leadership for almost every position. Each den had two- or three-deep leadership.

As I began my fourth year as Cubmaster, we were looking forward to another great year. Unfortunately, because of my job, our family had to move. However, the pack continued with very little change. As you may guess, there was an assistant Cubmaster ready to take over my duties.

I owe Myrna Weber and her family my appreciation. Together and with our parents and pack leaders we solved our problem. And we commend our solution to every pack that has ever faced the prospect of "doing it all" themselves.

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