**Advice on Recruiting New Cub Scout Leaders**

The following was excerpted from <https://scoutingmagazine.org/2014/10/advice-recruiting-cub-scouting-volunteers/>

**IT’S A COMMON SIGHT** at join-Scouting nights: Parents of new Cub Scouts sit around a table waiting for someone to blink. Perhaps it’s the dad who acknowledges being an Eagle Scout. Perhaps it’s the mom who starts filling out the den roster she finds on the table. Whoever blinks first ends up as den leader, while the rest of the parents breathe a sigh of relief.

The pack committee chairman and Cubmaster may breathe a sigh of relief as well, glad to be done with an unpleasant task that comes around only once a year.

Other leaders take a different approach, recognizing that recruiting leaders is a year-round process and that effective recruiting will ensure their pack’s health not just for the current program year but for many years to come. For them, late fall and early winter — right now, in other words — is a great time to recruit leaders.

**Define Your Needs**
The first step in recruiting leaders is to determine your pack’s needs. Assuming you have all your positions filled for this program year, start thinking about what will happen next spring after your second-year Webelos Scouts graduate to Boy Scouting.

That’s just what Katie Dettmann did. She became committee chairwoman of Pack 111 in Lakeville, Minn., at the end of her older son’s Tiger year and quickly saw a problem. “The leadership was primarily made up of the older Scouts’ parents, and they were all on their way out,” she says. She began developing a succession plan to ease the transition to a new generation of leaders.

**Evaluate the Parents**
A major advantage of late-fall recruiting is that you have time to evaluate potential leaders before you recruit them. That Eagle Scout dad at the join-Scouting night? His travel schedule might prevent him from being an effective den leader. That proactive mom with her pen at the ready? Perhaps she’d be a better fit behind the scenes as pack secretary or treasurer.

Those are the sorts of questions Jean Lundsteen likes to think about. Now a den leader with Pack 302 in North Aurora, Ill., Lundsteen has been a Cub Scout leader since the late 1970s and has rarely been turned down by a prospective leader.

One key to her success is letting prospects know how well their skills align with the potential position. “By the time you get through telling them why they’d be perfect for it, they’re kind of hard-pressed to say ‘no’ because it convinces them that they’re appropriate for it,” she says. “This isn’t just saying, ‘We need a den leader. Can you do it?’ ”

Dettmann believes the best way to evaluate parents is to get to know them. “Once you get to know their strengths, you can easily say, ‘You seem very organized; committee chair is something you could do’ or ‘You have a wood shop; I think you would be great at helping us run our pinewood derby.’ ”

Another clue, she says, is watching which parents stay engaged at meetings — and which sit in a corner glued to their cellphones. “The parents who are joining in the group when the kids are playing kickball to kill time are the parents who have the potential for being leaders,” she says.

It also helps to get input from other leaders in the pack. Den leaders tend to know the parents in their dens best, but they might not be thinking about what those parents could do beyond the den. Challenge them to be on the lookout for potential leaders they encounter.

**Get New Leaders Trained**
If you identify next year’s leaders now, don’t wait to get them trained. Many councils hold University of Scouting programs in the winter or spring, which allows leaders the luxury of getting trained before they take over; others, like Dettmann’s, offer basic leader training in conjunction with spring roundtables. And, of course, online training is always available at [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org).

While formal training is important, don’t overlook on-the-job training. If you recruit next year’s Cubmaster now, have her spend the rest of this year shadowing the current Cubmaster and learning from his example.

That’s just what Dettmann is doing with her replacement as committee chairwoman. “I have someone who’s going to replace me in a year, and I can’t even begin to explain to her what my responsibilities are,” she says. By shadowing Dettmann for a year, the new chairwoman will have a better idea of what she’s getting herself into.

So what happens if that year of preparation scares her off? Dettmann argues that it’s better to discover now rather than later that the position isn’t right for her. “You don’t want someone in the position who can’t handle it anyway,” she says.

**Expand Your Recruiting Calendar**
The better you get at early recruiting, the earlier you can get started. Dettmann likes to recruit parents before their sons even join the pack. “I approached this one guy at a school field trip and said, ‘Put your son in Scouts, and you can be the leader,’” she recalls. “He said, ‘OK.’ ”

Lundsteen, meanwhile, took this idea to the extreme. She recruited her daughters and daughters-in-law as leaders while they were still pregnant. “If they had a boy, I extracted a promise that they’d be den leaders,” she says.

You don’t have to visit the maternity ward to recruit new leaders, but you also don’t have to wait until next fall’s join-Scouting night. By recruiting early and often, you can ensure your pack’s continued health and perhaps even work yourself out of a job in a year or two.