



Boy Scouts of America

Baltimore Area Council

Arrowhead District Advancement Committee

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Congratulations! Your son, who has attained the rank of Life Scout, is on the Trail to Eagle. Virtually every boy who achieves the Life Scout rank has the potential of reaching Eagle. We truly share your hope that your son becomes an Eagle Scout.

If your son is not yet 17½ years old, he has enough time to complete all of his Eagle Scout requirements. Since one of the requirements for Eagle is to serve in a position of responsibility for six months while a Life Scout, boys older than 17½ are effectively precluded from reaching Eagle.

You should be aware of a few facts and rules. Approximately 40,000 scouts reach Eagle rank each year. That represents about 4% of scouts (4% of 1,000,000 registered scouts). The average age of a Scout when he reaches Eagle is 16 to 16½. A Scout must complete 100% of the requirements for Eagle before his 18th birthday (there are very few exceptions to this rule). In the Arrowhead District, an average of between 30 and 50 scouts attain Eagle each year (out of roughly 900 registered Boy Scouts).

At this point, every parent asks the same question: What can I do to help my son reach Eagle?

The purpose of this letter is to answer that question, outlining what you can, and CANNOT do to help your son. It has been said that the hardest job in Scouting is reaching the rank of Eagle Scout. Probably the second hardest job is being the parent of a scout who is reaching for the rank of Eagle Scout, just because our natural tendency as parents is to help our children. The help that you give your Eagle Scout candidate must be measured, and that's not easy.

First, offer your son your congratulations. Attaining the Life Scout rank is no easy feat. It took a lot of work to get here, and even if he were to go no further in his scouting career, he is to be commended for a job well done. Also offer your son your assistance in helping him to decide whether to continue on the trail to Eagle. You should not assume that he automatically wants to reach Eagle. After all, it will take a strong commitment on his part to become Eagle. He will have many distractions, from sports to cars to the social scene to after-school and summer jobs to college applications, all depending upon his age and interests. Help him to review what it will take to reach Eagle. With him, look at his Boy Scout Handbook, to see what needs to be done. Additionally, he will have received a packet of information from the District. Ask him what information was in the packet, or ask if you could look at the packet itself. Showing interest in your son's scouting career will serve you, and him, well. There are lists of links at the end of this letter that may help you learn more about the process of becoming an Eagle Scout.

Your son's Scoutmaster will probably assign one adult leader as your son's Eagle Advisor (most Troops do). His Advisor may be an Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop Committee member, or another interested adult, who may or may not be an Eagle Scout. The Eagle Advisor is available to help your son identify merit badges that need to be completed, the leadership position requirement that must be fulfilled, and will also assist your son in the identification and planning of a required service project.

As a general rule (and this is not easy for a parent to accept) ALL contact with the Eagle Advisor should be done by your son. The Eagle Advisor is your son's advisor, not yours. Most experienced Eagle Advisors will insist that they deal exclusively with your son and will often refuse to deal with you. There are important reasons for this, but the primary reason is that the requirements for Eagle are designed to develop your son's character and leadership skills. If you, as the parent, are interceding on your son's behalf, your son is not demonstrating those skills necessary to reach Eagle.

Almost every Life Scout will have developed the ability to effectively deal with the adult leaders in the Troop. If you really believe that your son does not have the maturity or experience to work directly with his Eagle Advisor, then it is likely that your son is not yet ready to become an Eagle Scout. He will probably realize that himself, and wait 6-12 months until he is "ready". Please do not push your son before he really is "ready".

Probably the most challenging part of the Eagle Scout process is the service project. As a parent, please offer your son ideas and encouragement. Common places that your son could "look" for projects include his school, his church, his town. His project cannot benefit Boy Scouting, nor can his project benefit any for-profit organization, either directly or indirectly. He will need to find a project that he can become enthusiastic, if not passionate, about. Eagle candidates will often look at 10-20 different project ideas before coming up with the "right" project. And these same candidates may think they found the "perfect" project two to four times before finally deciding on the "right" project. We can promise you however, that your ideas of the "right" project will frequently differ from your son's ideas. Your son is the Eagle Scout candidate, so his ideas carry more weight than yours.

Your son's Eagle Advisor will help him through the selection process, and has considerable experience on what scouts in general, and your son specifically, can accomplish. You should know that the typical Eagle Scout project will involve 100-200 hours of work, including your son's time to plan and carry out the work. There is, of course, no minimum or maximum number of hours for a project.

After selecting his project, he will be required to write up a plan of action for approval by (1) the beneficiary, (2) his Scoutmaster, (3) the Troop Committee Chair, and (4) the District Advancement Chairman. The write-up will follow the format of the Eagle Project Workbook. Your son will need to identify all of the materials required for the project, and how the donations for the materials will be obtained. Some benefactors will pay for required materials, but others will not. Your son may have to submit requests to local businesses (hardware stores and the like) to obtain donations of the materials. We discourage having fund raising as part of an Eagle project, as it significantly complicates the project. We also discourage having your son solicit donations of money for materials, as this too is a complicating factor.

After his project proposal has been completely approved, he may start work on his project (he must not, however, start any work before final approval by the District Advancement Chairman, or that work may not count towards his project). You should offer to help your son, if he requests your help. That may include driving him to and from the project, and doing actual physical labor (to the extent required by the project). Your son must also solicit other people to help him. These can include members of his troop, his church or synagogue youth group, his classmates, his sports teammates, or family members. All labor and all assistance must be from unpaid volunteers.

Just as you are discouraged from dealing directly with your son's Eagle Advisor, so too should you avoid dealing with the project's beneficiary. This is your son's project, and part of the process requires

him to work out issues and problems with the beneficiary. Many beneficiaries understand that and are eager to help your son. Some beneficiaries may not recognize what is expected of an Eagle Candidate. Other beneficiaries may try to add requirements to a project. If your son is having problems with the beneficiary, he should ask his Eagle Advisor for guidance and assistance.

If you are working with your son on his project, please remember, you (and others) are there to assist him, not the other way around. This is his project, under his leadership and his direction. Let him take the lead, let him make assignments. And let him make mistakes - he will learn from them.

One area where we encourage your involvement is with health and safety issues. All projects must be carried out safely. Your son will be responsible for ensuring that, and he should be instructing his workers on proper health and safety considerations. He should also have a first aid kit available at the location of his project. However, if you see anything that is unsafe, please immediately point it out to your son, for him to take corrective action. Of course, if someone is going to get hurt, please intercede immediately, and then inform your son.

While working on his project, your son should keep a daily log of his project activities, including who helped (by name and time), what materials were used, and what was accomplished. Do not offer to keep this log: it is your son's responsibility. If he doesn't keep this log, then he will have to rely on his memory, since once the project is completed, he will be required to complete a fairly comprehensive project write-up. The log will assist your son in his write-up, but the log will generally not be part of the write-up.

This process of identifying, planning, and completing the Eagle Scout project will be very stressful on your son. He will experience joys and disappointments. More than one scout has been driven to tears of frustration during the process. Your son needs your continuous support throughout his project. Please do not try to fix problems that inevitably crop up during the process. That is your son's job, not yours. And please try not to add to his stress level.

After the project is completed to the satisfaction of the beneficiary, your son should obtain a signed completion letter from the beneficiary. He should then start a write-up of his project work. If your son asks you to read or review his write-up, please do. Just remember, the write-up must be your son's work. Please resist the temptation to rewrite the report, even if your son is a poor writer. The project write-up is not intended to be a master work of literary genius. It is intended to convey to the reader what your son accomplished, and how he demonstrated leadership.

Just a reminder: 100% of his project work, including the write-up, must be completed before his 18th birthday. No exceptions.

Your son will also have to complete all of his 21 merit badges, 6 months in a position of responsibility in the Troop (since attaining Life Scout), and will also need to complete his Eagle Scout Application (with Scoutmaster and Troop Committee Chair signatures), all prior to his 18th birthday.

Once your son has completed this process, an Eagle Board of Review will be conducted, normally by the troop with a District representative. The Board of Review may take place after his 18th birthday, but generally not later than 3 months after his 18th birthday. You should have every reason to believe that your son will pass this Board of Review. Once he passes, his Application will be forwarded to BSA National Headquarters, for final approval, which normally takes 4-6 weeks. Once final approval is

received, please work with your son, and the Troop Committee, to plan your son's Eagle Court of Honor. The Eagle Court can be grandiose or simple, and should depend upon your son's wishes, your Troop's practice, and your budget.

At this point, every parent asks another series of questions: You've identified what I can and cannot do to help my son, but what if my son's Eagle Advisor is not helping out, or the beneficiary is unreasonable, or his scoutmaster (or committee chairman) is placing unreasonable demands on my son, or every Eagle Scout candidate in the troop? What can I do?

We've made an assumption so far in this material that every adult your son deals with is responsible and professional. But that is not always the case. Occasionally there are personality conflicts. Occasionally, the adults involved with your son are not available to him due to travel schedules or other issues. And occasionally, the adults involved with your son are in error with regards to the requirements for Eagle Scout, by improperly adding or subtracting or modifying requirements.

For example, there have been instances where troops have created a requirement that "no Eagle Project shall involve less than 250 hours of work", or "Eagle Projects will be approved only for churches in our town", or "Life Scouts must be at least age 15 before they can become Eagle" or "Eagle Project write-ups must be at least 10 pages in length, double-spaced". **These types of additional requirements are inappropriate and improper and are unacceptable to the Boy Scouts of America.**

If your son has issues or problems with his Eagle Advisor, your son should contact his Scoutmaster or Troop Committee Chairman. If that does not work, then you, as his parent, should contact the Scoutmaster or Troop Committee Chair. Similarly, if you believe that the Troop is placing additional unofficial requirements on your son, you should first address your concerns with the Scoutmaster or Troop Committee Chair. These could entail a one-on-one meeting with or without your son, or you could attend a Troop Committee Meeting.

If you do not believe that you have reached a satisfactory resolution of your concerns, you should contact the District Advancement Chair. If at that point you believe that your issues still have not been addressed, then you should contact the District Scout Executive.

There are other resources available to your son, and you, to help along the Trail to Eagle.

<http://www.scoutorama.com/project/>
<http://www.eaglebook.com/sites.htm>
<http://usscouts.org/advance/boyscout/bsrank7.html>
<http://www.scouting.org/factsheets/02-516.html>

Additionally, the District Advancement Chair periodically holds Life to Eagle Planning Meetings around Arrowhead District, specifically for Life Scouts and their parents. These meetings (typically held twice a year) cover all aspects of the Trail to Eagle, and address all of the issues covered in the letter. Contact your Scoutmaster to see when the next Life to Eagle Meeting is scheduled, or contact the District Advancement Chair.

The Trail to Eagle is an exciting time for your son. He will develop scouting memories that will endure for the rest of his lifetime. Enjoy this time with your son. Help him when he asks for it. Volunteer your thoughts and support. Try your best to make sure when you and your son look back, 3 months, 3 years,

30 years from now, that you and he are certain **that it was HE** who earned the Eagle Scout rank, **and not YOU**.

We look forward to hearing from and working with your son as he advances to Eagle! Please feel free to contact me if needed – Ed Gies at 410-833-3454 or mmdad@gte.net

Yours in Scouting,

Arrowhead District
Advancement Committee