



Jumpstart to GROWTH

Feature Article

Summer Programs and the Impact on Retention

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Doesn't it seem strange that most Scout Groups don't do any activities in the months that are best for getting outside and exploring our beautiful country? Scouting is a year-round movement and there isn't any excuse for not Scouting in the summer.

Studies have shown that one of the biggest influences on youth retention is summer activities. Sections that participate in summer camp or other summer activities have a 23% higher retention rate than those who do not. This could be because it provides a certain degree of continuity to the program or summer is just a better time to be outside enjoying the environment. Regardless of the reason, it is a fact that summer activities encourage youth to stay in Scouting longer, which gives us as volunteers more time to achieve our mission.

So what can you do as a section leader to keep your youth engaged over the summer? Here are some ideas.

Daytrips

With the younger sections it could be as simple as a hot dog roast at your local park or a hike at the nearest provincial park. With older youth there are a lot of exciting day activities that you could do: a bike ride, a canoe/kayak outing, a day at the beach, or a community clean-up. The possibilities are endless and don't forget how much later it stays light in the summer.

Summer Camp

Most councils across the country offer Cub and Scout Camp of one kind or another, encourage your youth to attend a Scout Summer Camp as a Pack or Troop. Even if the whole section isn't there, it will still give the majority of youth a summer Scouting experience. The Boy Scouts of America have done extensive research into the effect summer camp has on their youth. Here is a brief snapshot of the outcomes they have discovered:

- 80% made new friends or became closer with existing friends
- 72% learned a new skill from a peer
- 86% tried a new activity
- 78% felt they accomplished something worthwhile
- 81% of parents saw a positive change in their child after camp

Scouting started with a summer camp on Brownsea Island. Summer camp needs to be part of every youth's Scouting experience and it's up to us to make that happen.

If your Scout Group or section is serious about growing, a key part of your strategy needs to involve summer activities. These adventures provide continuity, excitement, adventure, friendship and fun. When you make it a priority for your section, you will find ways to make it happen.