

White Plains Boy Scout Troop 73, B.S.A.

Providing Extraordinary Experiences for Boys Since 1955

A Parent's Guide

First and foremost, as Scoutmaster, it is my pleasure to welcome you and your son to White Plains Boy Scout Troop 73. There are many exciting times ahead for both of you and this guide was prepared to help get things under way. So sit back and relax, and prepare to enter Troop 73's *World of Scouting*. And, if after reading this, you still have some unanswered questions, do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience. Also, for another look at what we're doing, and how you can join in, please visit our website:

www.troop73bsa.com

Welcome to the Troop 73 family!

Yours In Scouting,

Michael S. Bennett
Scoutmaster, Troop 73

Registration

The very first thing that we will address is the registration process. Each year, **White Plains Troop 73** and all of our Scouts and adult leaders must register with the **Westchester-Putnam Council** of the **Boy Scouts of America**. **Troop 73** asks its Scouts for a registration fee of \$75 per year. Approximately \$25 of that cost covers each Scout's registration with the Council, their subscription to *Boys' Life* magazine, and insurance. The rest goes towards awards, campsite reservations, the purchase and repair of gear, and the day-to-day operations of the **Troop**. Parents who would like to be registered as adult leaders, in any capacity they choose - hands on with the boys or behind the scenes with administration and planning - are asked to pay just \$25 per year which just covers their registration with the Council, subscription to *Scouting* magazine, and insurance. It is hoped that *all* parents will register with the **Troop** and help out in some way. This yearly registration covers the calendar year of January 1 through December 31. If your son joins mid-year, please ask for the correct *pro-rated* amount. The new application form for youth membership is red, white and blue and consists of several copy-through pages. Fill out the appropriate information where indicated, for both youth and parent, ignoring the bottom section concerning fees. Return the completed application to the Scoutmaster, with a check for either \$75 or the determined pro-rated amount.

The adult form is similar in appearance. Please provide all of the appropriate information as indicated, again ignoring the references to fees, and return this form with correct payment at your earliest convenience. Please note there is a special section on the back of the front page which must be completed and signed in order to be processed as an adult leader with the BSA. And that's about all it takes to register with the **Boy Scouts of America** and **Troop 73**. But, please, read on...

The First Purchases

At first glance, it might seem that there would be many costly expenses in joining a **Boy Scout Troop**. But please don't rush out and start making purchases the first day. Uniforms, camping gear, and all the rest can wait. We'll have a few words about all that in a moment. There is one purchase, however, that should be made as soon as possible, and that is the **Boy Scout Handbook**. It can be found in some bookstores, as well as in clothing stores that sell the **Boy Scout** uniform. The best place to find it, however, is at our own local *Scout Shop* at the **Westchester-Putnam Council Headquarters**, located at 41 Saw Mill River Road in Hawthorne - just a few miles down the road from *Sams' Club* and the *Elmsford Multiplex Theatres*. This is a wonderful shop to familiarize yourself with, as they carry everything from books and badges to uniforms and even some camping gear. The handbook retails for about \$10-15 and contains many of the answers to a new Scout's questions about rank requirements, skills, and procedures – a parent's too. We refer to the handbook often in **Troop 73**, it should be brought to most meetings, and a Scout might be somewhat lost without having access to one.

Uniforms

Troop 73 takes great pride in being a close group - a real team. And just as the members of a sports team all wear the same uniform, the Scouts of **Troop 73** all wear the official **Boy Scout** uniform to weekly **Troop** meetings and many other activities as well. The uniform helps to promote a sense of unity and purpose within the **Troop**, as well as to let all who see us know who and what we are. The following is a complete list of the regularly worn **Troop 73 Boy Scout** uniform parts:

Scout Uniform Shirt (long or short sleeve)

(with all appropriate patches/insignia on shirt)

Scout Uniform Long Pants

(Scout shorts can be worn in warm weather if desired – *with* Scout Socks)

Scout Uniform Belt

Navy Blue Scout Neckerchief (no colored trim) w/Boy Scout Slide

Troop 73 Red Cap

(Can be purchased from Troop - \$15)

Troop 73 Green Tee Shirt for casual wear on some activities

(Can be purchased from Troop - \$10)

There are several shops in the area that sell the **Boy Scout** uniform (except the custom **Troop 73** hat and tee shirt). Again, the best place to find the **Boy Scout** uniform is at the Scout Shop in Hawthorne. Another option, before laying out money, is to try **Troop 73's** own *Uniform Exchange*. Danny Dapice is currently in charge of this program, so send him an e-mail at: danoant@aol.com and see if we have anything that might fit your son. Our supplies vary from one season to the next – especially with the recent changes in the *Official Scout Uniform*, but give him a try. And remember to donate back to this supply when your son outgrows his first uniform (and maybe his second or third). Above all, please don't feel pressured to rush right out and get it all immediately. While we do wear the uniform at most Troop meetings and many other functions, Scouts are still welcome to come and participate regardless of what they wear. Many Scouts will come to a Troop meeting directly from a ballgame and still be wearing their team uniform, or from play practice and be wearing regular street clothes. And that's fine. We'd rather have them there. As for the patches on the uniform shirt, please ask the Scoutmaster or other adult leader for the correct placement if you are unsure.

Troop Meetings

With some exceptions, **Troop 73** meets every Tuesday evening of the school year at the **White Plains Middle School, Highlands Campus**. If school is closed, either for holidays or bad weather, then the **Troop** usually will not meet. There are exceptions, however. So please consult our **Troop calendar** and *website* when in doubt. The *calendar* is updated regularly, as needed, and can be downloaded from the *website*. Weekly **Troop** meetings run from 7:30-9:00 PM and involve learning new skills, planning for upcoming activities, working towards rank advancement, competitions and more. Scouts wear their full uniforms and are expected to be on time, whenever possible. Please *do your best*.

Activities

The activities **Troop 73** takes part in are too varied and numerous to list here. They include camping trips, hikes, rock climbing, kayaking, fishing, caving, skiing, cycling, participation in parades and other civic events, visits to local places of interest, and more. And I hope that you and your son will want to take part in all of them. A **Troop calendar** is created and made available at the start of the season and is updated, as necessary, throughout the year. You can view or print out a copy at any hour of the day or night from our *website*: www.troop73bsa.com. Upcoming events are talked about at the weekly meetings and detailed information flyers are made available in advance at the meetings, on the website, and sometimes by e-mail. Flyers include meeting times, fees, a permission slip, a checklist, and a list of any other special requirements. Many of the **Troop's** activities require advance registration in order to properly facilitate planning, shopping, campsite reservations, etc. The trips are certainly worth taking the time to sign up for - please do not miss out on them because you missed a deadline.

In addition to all of this information, each Scout's *Patrol Leader* or *Guide* (an older Scout responsible for a group of Scouts called a *Patrol*) should be calling his Scouts every week, at least a day or two before the weekly meeting, to pass along details about upcoming events and answer any questions a Scout might have. If he isn't calling regularly, as he should be, please let the Scoutmaster know *immediately*. This is his responsibility and it is important to the proper functioning of the **Troop**. One of the goals of **Troop 73** is to help Scouts become responsible for themselves, and then - as they get older - to take on responsibility for each other. So while some Scouts have a duty to call others each week, *all* Scouts have a responsibility to make sure *they* get called. Rosters of the **Troop's** Scouts, with contact information, *are* available on the *website*, but only in the password-protected section. Please contact the Scoutmaster for the password.

As for the costs for these activities, they will vary greatly. Some trips require no money whatsoever. Often a Scout will only need to bring a lunch. On many camping trips, the Scouts need only pay for their share of their Patrol's food. An average camping trip might cost about \$20. Some trips, especially those that require the rental of special equipment (canoes or skis for example) or the fees for special programs (high ropes or summer camp) cost more. When larger fees will be required, this is announced well in advance and fund-raising projects are held in which Scouts can earn the money to pay for their own participation in the program, if they and their parents choose to do so.

No Scout should miss any of these activities for financial reasons. If you should find difficulty in financing any aspect of **Troop 73's** program, please bring this to the confidential attention of the Scoutmaster. Special arrangements can and will almost always be made. Our program is too good to miss out on for that reason.

Equipment

In addition to a uniform and the costs for some of the trips, another source of financial concern might be purchasing camping equipment. **Troop 73** does go camping nearly every month of the year. And everyone will need a backpack and a good outdoor-rated sleeping bag (not the kind for indoor slumber parties). But there is no need to run right out to the sporting goods store. Take your time and shop around. Get something that your son can grow into, but don't get the largest backpack available and assume he can carry it. Quality packs and sleeping bags can be expensive - but they do go on sale. Keep your eyes open. These items make great birthday or holiday gifts too! In the meantime, however, **Troop 73** has a supply of really nice *loaner* backpacks and a few sleeping bags available, and there are dozens of Scouts and leaders in **Troop 73** who have the right gear and would be happy to loan it to a new Scout, or his parents. By all means ask around or let the Scoutmaster or any adult leader know and we'll find someone to help.



Advancement

When your son gets his first handbook, take a look at it. Or, by all means, read it cover to cover. It will likely answer a lot of *your* questions as well. But one thing you will want to be aware of, in order to help guide your son and understand what some of our activities are geared towards, is the advancement process. There are different levels, or *ranks*, which Scouts earn. They begin with the brand new *Scout* and progress towards the highly acclaimed *Eagle*. Perhaps only about 3% of all scouts will reach that level. I hope that your son will want be one of them.

As you might expect, the requirements get more and more difficult the higher up a Scout gets. At first, Scouts need only to learn fairly simple skills such as basic first aid, safety rules, and some relatively easy knots. As they get farther along, they will work on merit badges, hold leadership positions, and participate in service projects. Eventually, if he sticks with it, your son will be planning the activities of the **Troop** and running its program. The adult leaders of **Troop 73** are really there just to supervise and guide. At **Troop** meetings, Scouts will be learning and practicing skills. Some of the Scouts will be learning and some will be teaching. In addition, some work may have to be done by the Scout on his own. He will be encouraged and reminded, but the real motivation must come from him. Of course, a *little* nudge now and then from parents is certainly allowed.

All of the requirements for each rank are listed in the handbook. Much of this is incorporated into our **Troop's** program so that the Scouts complete requirements in a natural way, during our meetings and on camping trips, sometimes without always even realizing that they are doing so. They are, of course, kept updated of their achievements. A chart showing the advancement of all **Troop 73** Scouts - which requirements have been completed and what remains to be done - is usually available for the Scouts to peruse at our weekly meetings and we try to keep it up-to-date. And the Scouts are encouraged to record their advancement in their handbooks at the meetings to reflect their progress.

Family Involvement

Finally, here's a word about your own involvement in the operations of **Troop 73**. To put it simply, it is up to you. Unlike the Cub Scouts and some other youth groups, boys don't need their parents to be present in order to participate in Boy Scout programs. But you are more than welcome, and strongly encouraged, to become as active as you would like and are able. We all have time limitations and you know best what yours are. I would like to add, however, that some of the parents of **Troop 73** Scouts often seem to have as much fun as their sons. Just watch a few of the Dads and Moms canoeing down the Delaware River or doing a high wire act at a *high ropes course* 40 feet in the air. Maybe that's not *your thing* - that's ok. But whatever *your thing* is, don't be surprised if you find it in Scouting. Take a look at the more than one hundred merit badges that exist - chances are that one relates to your occupation and at least one other is your hobby. And the activities of Scouting simply can't be beat. One Mom surprised us all - and herself - by climbing a 50' tree and then riding the zip line 200' back down to the ground. A Dad discovered that he was as good at paddling *up* the Delaware River as he was paddling *down*. Another Mom ventured deep underground to wade in waist deep water, bent over with her back scraping the roof of a cave. Other parents have found that they really enjoy coming along on trips to historical places like Gettysburg, Valley Forge & Boston - not to mention the Everglades, Florida Keys, and Yellowstone. Having the opportunity to see the world differently, with your son and through your son's eyes, can be a wonderful gift for both of you.

Scouting can be an awful lot of fun for Moms, Dads, and other family members too. And the benefits of spending this quality time with your son has obvious benefits as well. But let us make it clear that nothing is required of you beyond what you are willing and able to offer. Just getting your son settled into this outstanding program is a good start. Certainly there are many opportunities to contribute greatly in different ways. Wherever the **Troop** goes, we often need help in getting there. Rides are sometimes needed and any offers are appreciated. There are sometimes administrative duties to attend to and opportunities to counsel merit badges. And you would be surprised at the tremendous assistance just your presence may offer at a **Troop** meeting, even if you are just standing over in the corner watching the program. Whatever time and interest you may have, it will be appreciated and put to good use. Let the Scoutmaster or our Troop Committee Chairman know what you can offer.

As one final note on this subject, I would like to relate what one father told me after joining **Troop 73** with his son. While Scouting gives boys plenty of opportunities to become independent and learn and develop skills away from their parents' direct supervision, Scouting also afforded this father and son the opportunity to spend some time together, away from home, away from the rest of the family and the pressures of school and home life, in a unique and truly unequalled fashion. As the son grew older, and was less apt to *hang around with Dad* on these trips, Dad could still watch his son from a distance, growing and maturing. The son may not fully appreciate those times until he has sons of his own. But the father realized that he had gained something worthwhile almost immediately: a different perspective and a better understanding of how his son is growing up and of the man he is becoming.

That is just a taste of some of the many discoveries that can be made through the Scouting program and **Troop 73**. We welcome you to our family, and hope you'll stay a while. Please feel free to contact Scoutmaster Michael Bennett at (914) 949-4679, or Scoutmaster@Troop73BSA.com with any further questions or comments you may have.