

Advancement Ceremonies

Taughannock District Cub Roundtable

December 2008

Ceremonies often cause panic attacks! Don't panic! There's really no need. There is no "official" way to hand out a rank patch, an arrow point or anything else. Even ten year-old boys have an amazing ability to ignore any mistakes that may get made in the course of a ceremony. So, what are some of the frequently asked questions:

Is there an "official" way to hand out badges?"

No ... do what seems best for your scouts.

Can parents be involved?

Yes ... it's likely a pretty good way to get parents involved.

Who should be involved?

Again, there's no "official" list of who is involved. In setting who is involved, think of the purpose of the ceremony: to recognize the work the scouts have done and the work of those who helped them.

Why have a ceremony at all?

Recognition. There are few things as sweet to anyone's ears as hearing their own name in recognizing their achievements - - whether its boys, leaders or parents.

What items should be handed out at a ceremony?

Anything. It makes sense to have the complexity of the ceremony governed by the item being given. You can do a little ceremony at the end of a meeting to hand out a Tiger bead, a little more ceremony for a campout path and, obviously, a lot more ceremony for a rank badge.

When should you have ceremonies?

As often as is needed to ensure that the scouts' work is recognized in a timely manner. You can have ceremonies in den meetings, regular pack meetings or special events - like Blue & Gold dinners.

Do we have to hand out ranks at Blue & Gold dinners?

In a word "no." You can hand out ranks at any time.

Do we have to follow a particular script?

No ... and you don't have to rehearse ... you can read from scripts ... and there are lots of those! You can find quite a number of advancement ceremonies at some of the computer resources we talked about last month:

- **usssp.cubmaster.org** -
- **<http://www.scouting.org/CubScouts/Leaders/CubScoutHelps.aspx>**
Many of the program guides include proposed advancement ceremonies

A few notes from our District Commissioner:

Registration / Advancement Concerns:

A few Cub units have run into problems which have been highlighted by the online advancement system - specifically, they've entered advancement for boys who are not registered. When this happens, National sends a rocket to the Council, and the Council has to get the boys registered or explain why they're not.

If it's just that the registration paperwork has crossed in the mail, as it were, no harm, no foul. We're not talking about that. The units either don't have, or won't submit, the registrations.

From what I can determine, there are a few reasons for this: (a) the boys are active Cubs, but the units are sitting on registrations until later - even until the end of the year - to see if they'll stick around before they send the money to council to register them; or (b) the boys aren't active - maybe even aren't even members at all - but the units are entering advancement before it happens, so that they'll have badges sitting around in case the boys earn them.

I can see the motivation - in (a) they're helping their retention statistics since no one drops out in the first year because they're never officially there in the first place, and the pack gets to keep their registration money, and in (b) they're stockpiling badges so they can hand them out for "instant advancement". However, although I can see the motivation, the procedure is problematic in so many ways, it's got to stop.

I once told a Council Executive that if he ever said the word "liability" again, I'd walk out - but I'm afraid we have to bring it up. As you know, if the units have unregistered but active Cubs, they are leaving themselves and their sponsors open to liability which will not be covered by National's insurance. The boy also isn't covered by the Council's Health and Accident Insurance, so if he's hurt at a meeting or outing, the parents would have to cover the medical expense - OK if they have health insurance, but potentially expensive if they don't. So, if the boy's attending meetings, he must be registered, and quickly - within a few weeks of the time he begins to attend meetings. Sean suggested that packs should collect the registration fee and form right away when they hold a recruiting event - that way, the parents are committed right from the start.

As to reporting nonexistent advancement in order to get badges, I suspect this is an unintended consequence of the effort in the last few years to get Cub packs to report advancement at all. The Council now won't sell badges without advancement forms, so units are making up phony advancement so they can have badges. That's counterproductive - the unit is reporting advancement which didn't happen (OK, not yet - but from what we can see, much of it never will happen), which (a) distorts the figures; and (b) since they won't be destroying badges they bought for boys who weren't members, you know they also won't be reporting the actual advancement by the other boys to whom they gave the badges later on, so all the records will be screwed up.

I understand the concern about recognizing advancement as soon as possible after it happens - but that doesn't mean that a pack necessarily has to have the actual badge to hand the Cub the instant he completes the last requirement. There's nothing at all wrong with having printed certificates or cards or paper temporary badges you can pin to the uniform, pending receipt of the actual badge. The advancement can be reported on-line or on a paper form properly when it happens, and the real badge can be awarded when it arrives.

Toys for Bunnies:

The local chapter of the House Rabbit Society asked if the Cubs would be interested in making toys for rabbits in local shelters - specifically, toilet paper or cut-up paper towel rolls stuffed with hay. I can vouch for the fact that a hay-stuffed toilet paper tube is the bunny equivalent of Tickle Me Elmo or Barbie. The HRS notes that "this could be a good opportunity to talk about ecology and recycling as well as bunnies and animal care and giving to others."

If any of the local packs are interested, I suspect the HRS could provide flyers about rabbits and suchlike. For that matter, I'd be happy to talk to the pack, show some pictures and provide a real bunny for the Cubs to see.