



Den Chief Training

Event Details

Be A Den Chief!

A Den Chief is a youth leader who assists a Cub Scout or Webelos Den. If you are already a Den Chief, would like to be one, or serve as an adult Cub Scout Leader, don't miss this training event! In the course, you will learn the necessary skills to lead and befriend Cub/Webelos Scouts. You will have fun, learn leadership skills, play games and participate in activities that help you understand your role in the weekly den meetings. Whether or not you were a Cub Scout, you will benefit from this activity-packed day.

Although this training can be taken by Boy Scouts of any age/rank, we recommend scouts be active in their troops for at least one year before serving as Den Chiefs.

Date: Saturday, March 8, 2025, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Location: Kingston Chase Pool Clubhouse, 1623 Hiddenbrook Drive, Herndon, VA. Some activities will be conducted outside, so dress for the weather.

Fee: Training costs \$30, which covers the cost of your own copy of the Den Chief Handbook, training course handout, "Trained" patch, and lunch.

What to Bring: Pen and notepad, Den Chief Handbook if you own it. Lunch will be provided.

What to Wear: Wear your complete field uniform.

Register: <https://scoutingevent.com/082-93903>

Contact

Roger Claff

Powhatan District Training Chair

claff@api.org

(703) 401-0762

When & Where

Kingston Chase Pool Clubhouse

1623 Hiddenbrook Drive

Herndon, VA 20170

Saturday, March 8, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

"You Are Boy Scouting!"

By Suzanne Wilson

A trained den chief plays a key role in conducting quality den meetings and encouraging Cub Scouts to make the transition from pack to troop.

He knows a lot about Boy Scouts—probably everything," says Webelos Scout John Gorzik, 11. He's talking about Justin Bay, 14, a den chief for Webelos Den 4 of Pack 429, chartered to the Route 66 Fraternal Order of Eagles 4307 in Bourbon, Mo.

At this den meeting, Justin (a Scout in Troop 429, chartered to the Bourbon, Mo., Boosters Club) coaches the Webelos Scouts in designing secret codes for their Communicator activity badge. The boys are a bit puzzled until Justin explains, "The object of this little game is to make your own alphabet."

"Ohhhh" Now they get it.

"Justin told me he was interested in becoming a den chief," says den leader Karen Smith, "and I knew I could use the help, so I said, 'Great!' The boys like playing with him and listening to him."

Several miles away in Union, Mo., new Webelos Scout leader Jennifer Metcalf goes over meeting plans with her den chief, Joel Brune. "I was glad to hear I was getting a den chief," she says. "I know so little about Scouting, and I don't know anything about camping."

Metcalf was "extra pleased" when Joel, whom she already knew at church, became a den chief. "He's a really good example," she says. "Everything he does, he does well." Joel, 15, is a member of Troop 442, chartered to the Union Rotary Club.

In Den 16's meeting, Joel is ready with answers to his den leader's questions like, "What's the correct way to carry the flag?" Later, working on the Traveler activity badge, the boys discuss what to pack for an overnight visit to Boy Scout camp. "Is it O.K. to take a pocketknife?" someone asks.

"You have to earn the right to bring a knife," Joel replies. He then explains how Boy Scouts can qualify for a Totin' Chip, the BSA recognition for Scouts who follow the Outdoor Code and who show proper care, handling, and use of a knife and other woods tools.

A VALUABLE PRESENCE

A den chief is a Boy Scout who assists a Cub Scout den leader or Webelos Scout den leader at den meetings, pack meetings, and other events. He's a ready source of games, songs, skits, and skills, and he encourages the boys in their advancement.

His presence adds another important asset. He can tell them about Boy Scouting, with its outdoor activities, trips, summer camp, and opportunities for advancement. When it's time for them to move up to a Webelos Scout den or a Boy Scout troop, his example and encouragement can help them decide to make that transition.

"The den chief is one of the keys to the transition to Boy Scouting," says Ernest R. (Tommy) Thomas, associate director of the BSA Cub Scout Division. "He provides the model that the kids look up to ... If you've got a good den chief, he will generally take the kids right on into the troop with him."

The job also benefits the Scouts. By utilizing skills necessary for working with boys, den leaders, and pack leaders, den chiefs can fulfill their leadership requirements for Star, Life, and Eagle ranks.

TRAINING: A GOOD START

Twice a year, the [Greater St. Louis Area Council](#) offers a daylong den chief training session. Last December, Justin and Joel joined 131 other Scouts and 52 troop leaders, den leaders, and parents for a Saturday training conference at Hazelwood West High School.

The day was a mixture of advice and fun. Its purpose, said conference chairman Scott Waller, was "to familiarize the new den chiefs with the nature of the job—in case they get a den leader who doesn't know what a den chief should do."

Like the opening of a good Cub Scout meeting, the day began with a gathering activity, a "Yummy Puzzler" for which the Scouts matched descriptive clues to candy bar brand names (for example, "Greasy digit" stood for Butterfinger.) The staff followed the official BSA conference manual, starting with "Your Job as Den Chief" and moving on to leading songs, wearing den chief insignia, helping at Cub Scout day camp, and teaching skills, skits, and games.

Don Neeley, Gravois Trail District vice chairman, tackled "Your Job as Den Chief," stressing the importance of setting a good example for Cub Scouts.

"To them, you are Boy Scouting," he told the den chiefs. "By your example, these kids are going to learn how to be good Scouts." He also noted that the key to getting along with Cub Scouts is having "a good sense of humor, patience, and the ability to have a lot of fun."

The Scouts, most of whom were 12 to 14 years old, took notes, practiced the Cub Scout sign, laughed at presenters' jokes, and learned to anticipate Scott Waller's regular appearance between sessions. During breaks, Waller asked questions like "How many words in the Scout Oath?" and rewarded correct answers with prizes like a safety strobe to attach to a backpack.

Prize winners were confronted with Waller's intriguing question: "Now, would you like to keep your prize or trade it for what's inside this bag?"

"We have a big crowd," explained Waller. "We have to keep them happy."

HANDLING A 'CAN OF WORMS'

The "Can of Worms" session presented possible den situations that required action. Three or four Scouts huddled together to come up with an action plan, then read their ideas to the conference.

How to encourage boys in advancement? Justin's team suggested the den chief bring in his old Cub Scout shirt and show the awards the boys can earn.

How to change a disruptive boy's behavior? The Justin group wrote down "duct tape" as a joke, but then read their more practical idea: Take him aside and ask why he's behaving this way. Joel's group said to make him feel important and responsible, give him opportunities, and get him involved.

Terry Madden, troop committee chairman, brought humor and liveliness to his presentation on teaching skills. He explained there would be no pop quiz (not really a part of the course) if Scouts would shout "ding ding" every time he said "hubba hubba." This happened frequently.

Madden asked a Scout to demonstrate taking a camp stove apart. The clueless Scout looked at him in amazement. The point: "First you have to know the material and the skill."

If a Cub Scout talks while you're explaining a skill, Madden said, you look at him and say "right?" or put your Column Wrap hand on his shoulder. Find out how much the boys already know, demonstrate the skill, go slowly. Let them demonstrate their proficiency and praise them.

'SOMEONE TO LOOK UP TO'

Webelos Scout den leader Cindy Luecke of St. Louis attended the conference with her son Chris, 14, who is also her den chief. "This made Chris look at himself as more of a leader," she said, "and it's good to see kids here of the same age and rank. He feels part of that kind of group."

Another mother and son duo were Cub Scout den leader Gail Nobe of Arnold, Mo., and her son James, 12. She said the conference reinforced what she had told him, that being den chief gives the Cub Scouts someone to look up to. "And it's cool because other kids are here; James is the only den chief in our pack."

At the end of the conference, Joel Brune and Justin Bay rated the experience as fun and worthwhile. "It's going to be easier to conduct a meeting," Joel said. "I've been through Cub Scouting. But as a leader instead of a Cub Scout, this will help me immensely."

In their den meetings now, Justin and Joel are in the center of the action, comfortable, confident, and helpful. They are Boy Scouting.

No one knows their value better than the boys in the dens. Beau Metcalf, 11, the den leader's son, says about Joel, "I think he's great. I really like him helping out, and my mom doesn't have to do so much work."

"He gives us encouragement," says Daniel Sappington, 11, talking about Justin. "He helps keep us in line, and he's an example."

Contributing editor Suzanne Wilson lives in Joplin, Mo.

DEN CHIEF INSIGNIA

A den chief wears the den chief insignia on the left uniform sleeve. The Cub Scout pack presents him with the den chief cord, worn on the left shoulder. Cord colors: blue and gold for Cub Scout den chiefs; blue, red, and gold for Webelos den chiefs.

By completing the requirements for the Den Chief Service Award, a den chief earns an award certificate and may wear the red, white, and blue Den Chief Service Award cord as long as he is a Scout.

WHAT SCOUTMASTERS SAY ABOUT DEN CHIEFS

Mark Murray of Troop 442 is Den Chief Joel Brune's Scoutmaster. He believes that Boy Scouts who have been Cub Scouts have a better understanding of the program, which can help their effectiveness as a den chief. "I tell them, up to this point you've been on the receiving end of things," he says. "Now it's time to give something back."

Darrell Bosse of Troop 429 is Den Chief Justin Bay's Scoutmaster. He says being a den chief provides leadership experience for younger Scouts who might find it difficult in another leadership position to have authority over his peers. As a den chief, he can have a successful experience leading Cub Scouts or Webelos Scouts. "It gives them a lot, leading younger boys."

Fred Brown, Greater St. Louis Area Council director of training and advancement, is Scoutmaster for Troop 271. He's seen how experience as a den chief can also improve a Scout's participation in his troop.

"Three boys from our troop went through den chief training last year," he says. "In the troop, they began taking more responsibility for their actions and for patrol functions on their own, without being told."

—S.W.

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The Leader's Bag of Magical Wonders

By Laura Biggs

Illustration By Marvin Friedman

During unexpected program lulls, a handy dandy collection of tricks and gimmicks can hold the attention of restless Cub Scouts.

- Where to Find Magical Ideas

It's lunchtime at day camp, and the guest entertainer is late. A hundred Cub Scouts are fidgeting and starting to poke each other.

Time to bring out what I call the "Leader's Bag of Magical Wonders." It looks ordinary enough, lumpy with a few simple items. However, in the hands of a clever leader, the items inside can work like magic during an unexpected lull at a Cub Scout event or activity.

The first time I saw the magical powers of such a collection was at a Cub Scout Leader Basic Training session. We were set to watch a videotaped segment when the VCR failed.



After five minutes the machine was still out of order, so our trainer whipped out two red feathers. She lined us up in two teams. The first person in line each took a feather and threw it like a spear down the hall. They retrieved it and threw it again and again until they reached the end of the hall. Then they raced back and handed the feather to the next in line. Each person in turn repeated the exercise, until one team finished before the other. I looked around, and, behold, everyone was cheering and laughing.

The VCR never did work, but the training was a huge success, thanks to a leader who knew how to work magic with two red feathers.

BALL, ROPE, AND NECKERCHIEF

Since then, I've taken note whenever I've witnessed these leader/magicians at work. The following are just a few examples:

At Cub Scout day camp, a tired young camper tripped and bumped his knee. There was no blood, but he was crying. A leader sat down beside him and pulled from his pocket a length of rope—not much, perhaps a yard. Slowly, he ran one end here, the other there, forming simple knots. The boy, fascinated, took hold of the rope, winding it under and over, trying the knots. Soon his tears dried up, and his face glowed with renewed spirit.

At a den meeting, a particularly wound-up boy blew through the door and threatened to distract all the others from their craft projects. The den leader produced a pair of twisted nails, entwined in a puzzle. The agitated boy slowed, sat down, and his commotion stopped as he became captivated in the attempt to separate the nails. Soon he succeeded and happily joined the others in the craft.

Another den activity took less time than expected, and the boys began chasing each other around the yard. The leader pulled off her neckerchief and blindfolded one of the Cub Scouts. The rest formed a circle around him. Each tried to sneak up and touch his blindfolded comrade without first being tagged by him. The boys played in silence, except for frequent bursts of laughter, and soon their parents arrived to pick them up.

A game at a pack meeting had become particularly rambunctious, and it was time for the boys to calm down for the awards ceremony. The leader displayed a tennis ball. While tossing and catching it, he started everyone singing "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean."

As long as the ball was in the air, the group sang vigorously, but whenever the ball bounced, everyone had to stop. Soon every eye was watching the ball, and by the time the song ended, the boys were ready for the ceremony.

FILLING YOUR OWN SACK

Fetch a small sack or box and start thinking what you can put in your Bag of Magical Wonders.

Do you know how to fold some really cool paper airplanes? Toss in a pad of paper. Can you teach a coin trick? Put in a supply of nickels. Do you like mechanical puzzles? So will a Cub Scout. And don't forget the wondrous versatility of such objects as string, beanbags, and balloons.

You can also include a list of your favorite songs, jokes, and cheers.

The next time Cub Scouts sit waiting for the lunchtime speaker, produce your Bag of Magical Wonders and pull out some bubble gum. Bring the den chiefs on stage, give them each a piece, and ready, set, go! They unwrap the gum, pop it in, and start chewing.

Watch the Cub Scouts wildly cheer on their den chief, until a bubble appears. Then they start the countdown—10, 9, 8, 7 . . . Pop! Try again!

The late-arriving speaker just may be greeted by a chorus of enchanted boys. That's what happens when a leader knows how to make magic.

Laura Biggs lives in Danville, Va.

WHERE TO FIND MAGICAL IDEAS

For more magical ideas, check out these resources:

- *Cub Scout Leader How-To Book* ([BSA No. 33832A](#)).
- *Cub Scout and Webelos Scout Program Helps* ([No. 34304E](#)).
- *Boys' Life* magazine.
- *Don't Try This at Home! Science Fun for Kids on the Go*, by Vicki Cobb and Kathy Darling (Camelot, 1999).
- *Tricks, Stunts and Good Clean Fun*, by Bob Phillips (Havest House Publishers, 1996).
- Bits and Pieces (www.bitsandpieces.com) and Tavern Puzzles (www.tavernpuzzle.com), for inexpensive mechanical puzzles.
- Local science or children's museum gift shops.
- Educational toys and games retailers (such as ZanyBrainy).
- Educational supply stores.

—L.B.

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The Boy Scouts of America



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Den Chief Training - Warm-up Questions

Please answer these questions honestly and truthfully. Please DO NOT put your name on the page.

- (1) My favorite color is _____
- (2) My favorite ice cream flavor is _____
- (3) My favorite point
of the Scout Law (trustworthy, loyal, etc.) is _____
- (4) My favorite sport is _____
- (5) I would rather (circle one):
 - (a) give a 5-minute speech in front of my troop
 - (b) do a skit with my patrol at camporee
 - (c) do all the planning and preparation for a 2-night campout with my patrol
 - (d) pick up trash for 1 hour as a service project
 - (e) have a 5-minute Scoutmaster's Conference and a 10-minute Board of Review
- (6) I like going to school (circle one) Yes No
- (7) Which do you like better, Math or English? _____
- (8) My favorite merit badge is _____
- (9) Which is more fun:
camping, or working on your favorite merit badge? _____
- (10) I like holding frogs (circle one) Yes No

Den Chief Training Warm-up Questions – Top Answers from 1238 responses

(1) *My favorite color is:*

Blue – 404	Black – 95
Red – 254	Orange – 83
Green – 239	Purple – 57

(2) *My favorite ice cream flavor is:*

Chocolate – 299	Strawberry – 72
Vanilla – 231	Cookies and Cream – 60
Mint Chocolate Chip – 118	Mint – 38
Cookie Dough – 82	Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough – 36

(3) *My favorite point of the Scout Law is:*

Trustworthy – 183	Cheerful – 82
Helpful – 158	Kind – 77
Friendly – 154	Clean – 62
Brave – 143	Reverent – 61
Loyal – 141	Obedient – 25
Thrifty – 106	Courteous – 21

(4) *My favorite sport is:*

Soccer – 209	Basketball – 161
Football – 204	Swimming – 75
Baseball – 200	Lacrosse – 56

(5) *I would rather:*

Do a skit with my patrol at camporee – 530
Have a 5-minute Scoutmaster's Conference and a 10-minute Board of Review – 257
Pick up trash for 1 hour as a service project – 172
Do all the planning and preparation for a 2-night campout with my patrol – 171
Give a 5-minute speech in front of my troop – 81

(6) *I like going to school:*

Yes – 757
No – 442

(7) *Which do you like better:*

Math – 805
English – 398

(8) *My favorite merit badge is:*

Rifle Shooting – 135	Shotgun Shooting – 50
Swimming – 125	First Aid – 43
Archery – 62	Wilderness Survival – 42

(9) *Which is more fun:*

Camping – 929
Working on Your Favorite Merit Badge – 270

(10) *I like holding frogs:*

Yes – 687
No – 477

Den Chief Can of Worms

You arrive at the den meeting to find that neither you nor the Den Leader has any activities planned.

At the end of the den meeting, the Den Leader tells you she's disappointed, because she thinks you didn't do a very good job controlling the scouts or helping out during the meeting.

The Den Leader wants to give a wood-burning demonstration to the Wolf den. Just as he turns his back one of the Wolf Cubs reaches for the hot wood-burning iron.

The Den Leader asks you to give an important announcement about what the scouts are to bring to the next den meeting. The scouts are making too much noise for you to be heard. You call for quiet, but the scouts ignore you. A couple of them tell you to "get lost."

The activity for the den meeting is to teach the scouts how to use a compass, but nobody – including you and the Den Leader - remembers to bring one.

The activity for the meeting is to build birdhouses. The meeting is more than half over. You've been very busy showing scouts how to use a hammer. You look up and see one scout sitting in the corner staring at the wall, doing nothing. He hasn't started his birdhouse.

It's softball day for the den, and there's a close play at third base. The two scouts get up and start punching each other, calling each other names, and swearing at each other.

You are halfway through the 6-mile day hike. You take a quick count of the den and notice one of the scouts is missing.

The Den Leader asks you to come up with a skit for the next pack meeting. Trouble is, there is no den meeting scheduled between now and the pack meeting, and you are sure the scouts will need to rehearse.

It's den-meeting night, but you have tons of homework.

The Den Leader asks you to arrange for and lead a tour of the local fire station.

The Den Leader wants to do astronomy at the next den meeting. He asks you to call around and find out if any of the parents has a telescope. You call all of the parents in your den, but no one has a telescope.

The Den Leader is planning on leading the Wolf den on a 15-mile day hike.

Your Den Leader is teaching the Whittling Adventure to your den. The knife slips suddenly and she cuts herself badly. She is bleeding a lot. What do you do?

One of the parents has brought peanut butter cookies for snack time. At snack time, one of the scouts comes up to you and says he's not allowed to eat anything with peanuts in it.

It's time to teach the Whittling Adventure, but one scout says his mom won't let him come anywhere near a knife of any kind.

It's been a great meeting. All of the scouts showed up, the gathering activity was lots of fun, good opening ceremony, announcements, a song, and a cheer. Now everyone's working on his birdhouse. Just as you get going on them, a scout comes up and says, "This is no fun. I want to go home."

Before the meeting a scout steals another scout's cap and starts teasing him with it. "Na, na, you can't catch me!" He starts running all over the place, and all of the scouts chase after him.

Everyone shows up for the meeting, but half of the scouts aren't in uniform. The other guys don't have their uniform shirts tucked in, and they look a mess.

Today is bike safety day, and everyone is supposed to show up at the parking lot with his bike. Everyone does – except three scouts forget to bring their helmets.

It's the day of the den's big Bike Rodeo, but one scout doesn't bring a bike with him. He's afraid to tell anyone else, but he whispers to you that he doesn't know how to ride.

The den's service project is to pick up litter on the school grounds. Everyone is given a bag for trash and gloves. The scouts work in pairs picking up trash for two hours, then meet back at the parking lot. Everyone's bag is full of trash except for one scout. He only picked up a small handful of candy wrappers. You are to distribute patches to every scout who helped out. Should this scout get a patch?

In the middle of the meeting, two scouts ask to use the bathroom. They're gone a long time. The Den Leader asks you to investigate, and you find them stuffing wads of paper towels into the toilets, flushing, and laughing as water spills everywhere.

You're supposed to go to the retirement home to sing holiday carols, but only one scout shows up.

You've had a great den meeting, complete with opening ceremony, a song, a cheer, a great project to make neckerchief slides, awards, and a snack. You're now done – except you still have 25 minutes left before the hour is up.

Throughout the meeting, a scout keeps offering to help, even though there's nothing for him to do. Meanwhile he hasn't started to build his model, and the other scouts are nearly done.

It's a special den meeting, with all of the scouts and parents present. The scouts are to show off all of the projects they have done all year long. One of the parents is treating the entire den to pizzas for dinner. He asks you to come along with him to pick up the pizzas.

It's time to put on for the entire pack the big skit you've been working on for a month. Everybody's there and they know their parts. You're just about to go up in front of the pack - only trouble is one scout says he doesn't feel well. He thinks he's about to throw up.

You and the other Bear den decide to have a softball game for your next den meeting. You and the other Den Chief are in charge of the game. You've played about 15 minutes, and the other den has already scored 13 runs. Your scouts are complaining that the game isn't fair.

One of the scouts in your den is way ahead of the other scouts in working toward his rank badge. Along the way he has also earned lots of awards and temporary patches, and he's very proud of them. He wears his uniform crowded with awards, and his very full patch vest, to every meeting. Trouble is, the other scouts have started ignoring him, and have started complaining to you that he's a show-off.

Your Den Leader tries to teach your den how to tie a bowline. You can see that he has taught the scouts to tie it incorrectly. But he's not aware of his error, and he moves on to the next knot.

In the middle of the den meeting, the Den Leader asks you to demonstrate first aid for a broken arm and a broken leg. You have not yet taken the First Aid merit badge, and you have absolutely no idea how to do this.

You show up on time for your first den meeting. The scouts in your den start coming in, one by one. The Den Leader comes up to you and says, "I asked for a Den Chief, and I'm glad you are here, but the truth is I have absolutely no idea how to make use of you."

It's the day before the den meeting and you have not heard from the Den Leader at all. You have absolutely no idea what your assignment is for the den meeting or if you are to prepare anything in advance.

You have served several months as a Den Chief, but the Den Leader has never mentioned the Den Chief Service Award or talked to you about qualifying for it.

You have been a Den Chief for six months. At the next den meeting the Den Leader comes up to you and says, "I've really enjoyed having you as a Den Chief in this den, and I hate to see you go. But I understand your term-of-service ends this week."

Your baseball practice ends at 6:00, and the Den Leader wants you at the weekly den meeting around 6:00 to help set up. The den meeting starts at 6:30. There is no time to stop back home and change into your uniform.

Your den meetings take place in the cafeteria of the local grade school. As the meeting comes to an end one week, you notice the scouts have scribbled all over one of the tables in crayon.

A friend of yours tells you he wants to become a Den Chief. He says he has no idea how to do it, though.

