The Legend of the Two Wolves By Roger Claff

The Cherokee elder began to speak
Of a legend told him long ago;
It was Cherokee wisdom shared by Creek,
Apache, Sioux, and Arapaho.

The elder told how when the land was new And all men lived by the simple ways, How having so little meant needs were few So, contentment reigned through all their days.

"And yet," said he, "Now I will tell you son," As across his face a grimace forms, "Theirs was a life not so easily won Twixt quests for food and shelter from storms."

"But the fiercest struggle a man can face Takes place deep within his very soul; There, buried deep inside that hidden place Nature doth exact its truest toll."

"For the fiercest wolves live within the soul; Like demons they fight to win the man; Destroy each other is their only goal; The sole survivor howe'er they can."

"One wolf is selfishness, envy, and hate, Arrogant pride, self-pity and guilt; Its loathing condemns the helpless to fate; Lies, o'er blood of our fathers was spilt."

"The other is kindness, friendship and peace,
Justice, compassion, patience, and love;
From truth the strength of its passions release,
Joyously free as blue sky above."

I thought for a moment about this fight As the elder sat back with a grin; I wondered aloud, "If might should make right,

Which one of the wolves was bound to win?"

The elder then paused, I think for effect, The flames flickered in front of his face; His glance was piercing, his response direct, Doubt of conviction absent a trace.

"My answer I urge you always to heed, Sure as the morning sun in the east; The wolf that wins is the one that you feed, Your desires fuel the triumphant beast."

In silence his words shot straight to my heart.

Wisdom so true I could not deny; While offering thanks I rose to depart, Hearing a voice, I could not say why.

As the years have gone by, often I speak This legend told me so long ago; It is Cherokee wisdom shared by Creek, Apache, Sioux, and Arapaho.

The tale once told and reflections begun, A nagging voice compels each to heed; "Answer me this," the voice troubles each one,

"Which wolf is it you desire to feed?"

The Golden Rule

(Marriott International Ad Campaign, August 2017)

It would be great if human beings Were great at being human, And if all of mankind Were made up of kind men.

It would be wonderful if common knowledge Was knowledge commonly known, And if the light from being enlightened Into every heart was shown.

It would be fantastic if the war to end all wars Was the last war that we fought; It would be amazing if we learned the lessons From every lesson we were taught.

It would be cool if our freedom To us was freely granted, And if every seed of kindness Would grow wherever planted.

It would be glorious if neighbors were neighborly And indifference a forgotten word; It would be awesome if we shared everything And being greedy was absurd.

It would be spectacular if the golden rule Was golden to every man, And the good things that we ever did Was everything that we can.

The Reclamation of a Covetous Old Sinner¹ by Roger Claff

In mid-December every year, I re-read Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, to vicariously experience Scrooge's redemption; to feel his joy at simple acts of kindness; to renew a personal vow to expunge sourness, cynicism, and selfishness from my life; and to again perceive people "as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." As a parent and a scout leader, I enjoy this story because of its straightforward teachable message about the connection between happiness and virtue, and the consequences of failing to recognize that connection.

"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!" Scrooge makes us uncomfortable, because Scrooge's selfishness is in every one of us. Who has not felt at times, at least in his heart, that "It's enough for man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's," or that "I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there"? Selfishness is reflexive and has its root in our survival instinct; we are "wired" to see to our own welfare, even at the sacrifice of the welfare of others. It is all too easy to become like Scrooge, driven by personal ambition and blind to the moral depravity of the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. Scrooge becomes a miserable miser, shutting himself off from the world and shunning all warmth, congeniality, and generosity. Scrooge becomes "hard and sharp as flint" and "solitary as an oyster" by his own design and intention.

As a resident of the career-driven Washington, DC, metro area, I find that Scrooge's isolated, cynical me-first character saturates the culture around me; unfortunately, I see Scrooge reflected in my own words and actions all too often. As a parent I must ask myself this question, fairly and honestly: would my family be best served if I adopted Scrooge's personal ambition at the expense of all other considerations? There are many who pursue this path, and yet, is this the disposition I am seeking to instill in my son? Whenever I use my career or personal interests as an excuse to evade my son's request to spend time with me, there is the voice of Scrooge saying to my son, "It's enough for man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's." Such a disposition not only serves to make me "hard and sharp as flint" and "solitary as an oyster," but passes those same traits on to my son, who himself will be a father one day.

I think few parents at the time their children are born would willingly choose a me-first approach to parenting, or wish to pass on this kind of legacy. Careers and personal goals are seductive and demanding, however; as the years go by many display personal ambition over commitment to family, to the detriment of their children's happiness and well-being. If selfishness comes naturally, then what motivates acts of selflessness or charity? The Ghost of Jacob Marley's pointed and emphatic rebuke of Scrooge asserts that we have an obligation as a matter of will to overcome our intrinsic selfishness and accept our responsibility to be compassionate, if we are to be members of the family of man: "Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business." Scrooge could not see that his happiness depends upon this "comprehensive ocean" of personal charity. True poverty – poverty of the soul – comes not from lack of material wealth, but from a failure to serve others for the common good. Scrooge observes about the wandering Spirits, "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever."

Happiness is not a commodity that can be procured through the acquisition or expenditure of wealth alone, nor can happiness be readily secured in isolation. Happiness, joy, personal satisfaction, and contentment are rather to be found in our interactions with others, particularly in our ability to be helpful, to serve others, and to make people's lives better. To be happy, and just as importantly as parents, to teach our children from whence true happiness derives, we need to roll up our sleeves, screw up our courage, wade out into the real world, and seek, without expectation of compensation, to make life better for our fellow man. Scrooge recalls how ol' Fezziwig "has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil." The effect is reciprocal and catalytic: when others are made happier by the service we render, their disposition is reflected back to us as approval or reinforcement of our actions, giving us a sense of self-satisfaction and in turn making us happier. Ol' Fezziwig and his wife are all the merrier for the high spirits of their guests.

The good news for Scrooge – and for us as parents – is that the choices we make, whether to be miserable or to be happy, to live in isolation or to share our lives with our children and our neighbors, to live in selfishness or to show compassion and caring, are entirely reversible. As Scrooge plaintively implores, "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change." We must all find for ourselves the "…chance and hope of escaping [Scrooge's] fate."

For me, I made the conscious decision to become actively involved in my son's life, and in the lives of the boys in our community as a Boy Scout leader. Through scouting I have had, and continue to have, the rare privilege of helping to shape a positive environment for my son and his peers, to encourage their sense of wonder and discovery, to develop in them – and me – a sense of service and commitment to helping others, and to build their character into that of a leader. Today my son is an Eagle Scout, a National Honor Society student, and is applying to colleges to study civil engineering. But of all his accomplishments, I am proudest of the fact that he is a young man of character and virtue, with a sense of pride in himself and a genuine sense of commitment to serve others. Such joy, happiness, and contentment as I have derived from this pursuit I could never find in any personal ambition, confined, as it were, to "the narrow limits of [my] money-changing hole."

¹From *Character*, newsletter of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University, Spring 2006.

ROBBIE by Roger Claff

Shenandoah National Park is a beautiful place in the fall. By Columbus Day the leaves start to change colors and the park's predominant oak/hickory forest begins to turn to a marvelous mixture of red, gold, and yellow hues. The air is crisp and cool, not a cloud in the sky, perfect weather for hiking, perfect weather for being in the out-of-doors.

The particular occasion for enjoying such blissful surroundings? Our Cub Scout Pack's annual Columbus Day Webelos adventure hike. I am an Assistant Scoutmaster with our Boy Scout Troop. Every Columbus Day, I and a couple of our teenage Boy Scouts accompany the Pack's Webelos Scouts – fourth- and fifth-grade boys – along with their leaders and parents on a day hike of the Pack's choosing. On Columbus Day 2004, the Pack decided to ascend Mary's Rock from Thornton Gap in Shenandoah National Park, a reasonably steep 1¾-mile climb gaining roughly 1,200 feet in elevation over that distance. After taking in the magnificent views from atop Mary's Rock, we were to walk along the Shenandoah ridge to the Pinnacles Picnic Area, extending the total hiking distance to 5¼ miles.

And so we started out, a rambunctious group of a dozen or so Webelos Scouts accompanied by a couple of Boy Scouts and a cluster of contented, albeit slower-afoot, parents and leaders. The views from the top were amazing, and we were in high spirits as we descended and started hiking along the ridge. About 1 mile from the end of our trail, I noticed an animated conversation taking place between a couple of leaders and a small fourth-grade Webelos Scout with a crew-cut and a baseball cap. The boy was plaintively pleading his case. The boy was holding in his hand a pair of expensive prescription sunglasses, presumably found along the trail.

"But why can't I keep them? Nobody will ever know!"

Oh my.

I called out and motioned for the boy to come over to where I was standing. Meanwhile his fellow scouts continued to file past us on the trail.

"Robbie, what's the Cub Scout Promise?"

A sheepish look appeared on the boy's face.

"To not take sunglasses I find?"

Trying to avoid the issue.

"No. I asked you, what's the Cub Scout Promise?"

Robbie glanced nervously over his shoulder. More scouts and parents passed by, continuing on up the trail.

"But nobody will ever know!"

"What's the Cub Scout Promise, Robbie?"

Cornered and resigned, Robbie shrugged his shoulders. More of the group passed us by. Robbie realized he had no choice.

"I promise to do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to help other people..."

"What was that you said!?"

"To help other people..."

"Would it help the person who lost the glasses if you kept them?"

"But he'll never know!"

"Does that matter?"

"He'll never come back and look for them!"

"Well he might."

"But I want to keep them!"

"But Robbie, you promised!" Do you want to break your promise!?"

Silence.

"Ok, Robbie, I'll tell you what I think we should do. I'll keep the sunglasses with me until we have finished the hike. Then I will take you to the Park Service entrance gate so you can turn the sunglasses in to their lost-and-found. What do you say?"

Robbie glanced nervously over his shoulder again. The last of the group had passed us by and was continuing up the trail. The group was now a metaphor for Robbie's slim hope of somehow navigating his way through the moral dilemma with sunglasses still in hand. One last chance remained....

"Can I keep the glasses if nobody comes to claim them?"

"Robbie, that's up to the Park Service. If you want, you can ask them."

That thought seemed to lift his spirits a little. We resumed our hike along the trail, now well behind the others.

A couple hundred yards up the trail a thought suddenly occurred to him, an angle he had never considered before....

"But what if a bear got the guy and ate him up, and that's why his glasses came off!!!?"

I practically doubled over in laughter!

The hike ended shortly thereafter as we emerged from the woods into the Pinnacles Picnic Area. We jumped into our cars, and I made sure Robbie remembered his appointment with the Park Service. I drove him to the entrance gate and handed him the sunglasses. He and one of his leaders carefully crossed the road and began speaking with the uniformed Park Service official, though I couldn't hear the conversation from where I was parked.

Robbie and the leader returned. Robbie jumped into the front seat and buckled his seat belt.

"I left the glasses with the guy and didn't even ask if I could keep them if no one claimed them!"

"Now Robbie, aren't you happy you did the right thing?"

"Well...."

Robbie wouldn't admit it, of course, but the broad ear-to-ear grin on his face betrayed his joy at resolving his moral dilemma the right way, the scout way, on the side of helping others.

The grin on his face was exceeded in length only by the one on my own.

The Dash

Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning to the end. He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears.

But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth.

And now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash.

What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged. To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more, And love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile, Remembering that this special dash might only last a little while. So, when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, Would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

A Final Thought

What Will Matter

by Michael Josephson

Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.

There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.

All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten, will pass to someone else.

Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.

It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.

Your grudges, resentments, frustrations and jealousies will finally disappear.

So too, your hopes, ambitions, plans and to-do lists will expire.

The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.

It won't matter where you came from or what side of the tracks you lived on at the end.

It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.

Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.

So what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought but what you built,

Not what you got but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched,

Empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew,

But how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.

What will matter is not your memories but the memories of those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.

Choose to live a life that matters.

(Source: http://charactercounts.org/pdf/WhatWillMatter.pdf)

The Scout Hymn Ralph Reader

Now as I start upon my chosen way, In all I do, my thoughts, my work, my play; Grant as I promise, courage new for me To be the best, the best that I can be.

Help me to keep my honor shining bright, May I be loyal in the hardest fight; Let me be able for my task and then To earn a place among my fellow men.

Open mine eyes to see things as I should,
That I may do my daily turn of good;
Let me be ready, waiting for each need
To keep me clean in thought and word and deed.

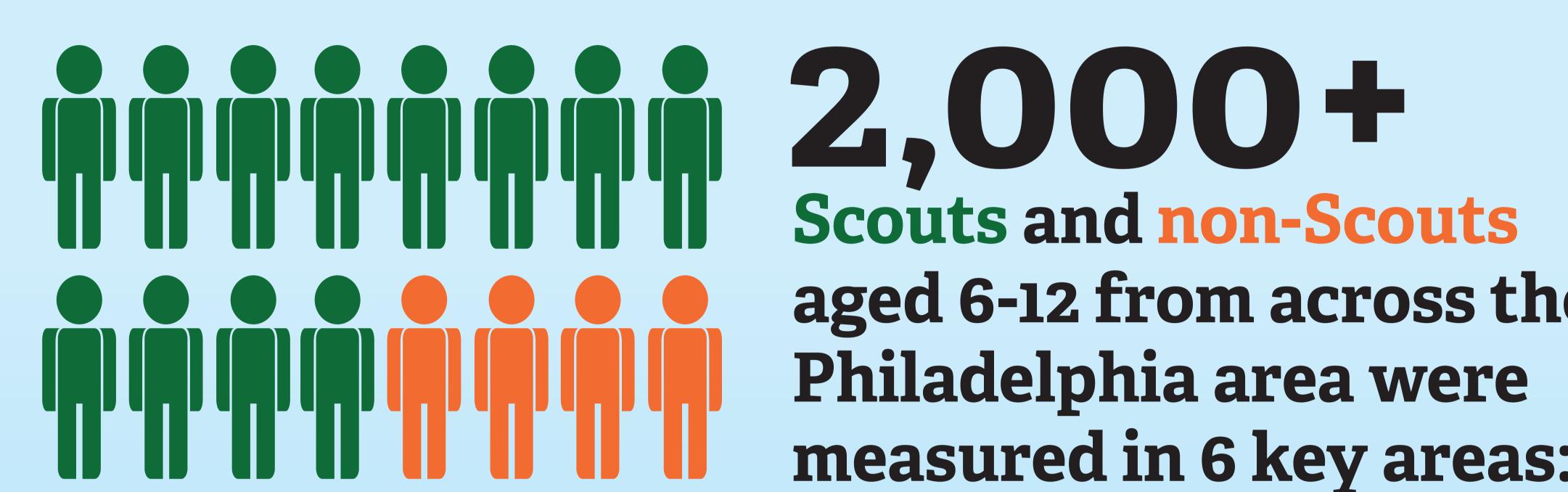
So as I journey on my chosen way, In all I do, my thoughts, my work, my play; Grant as I promise, courage new for me To be the best, the best that I can be.

May the Great Master of All Scouts be with us until we meet again. (Source: *The Scout Hymn by Ralph Reader*)

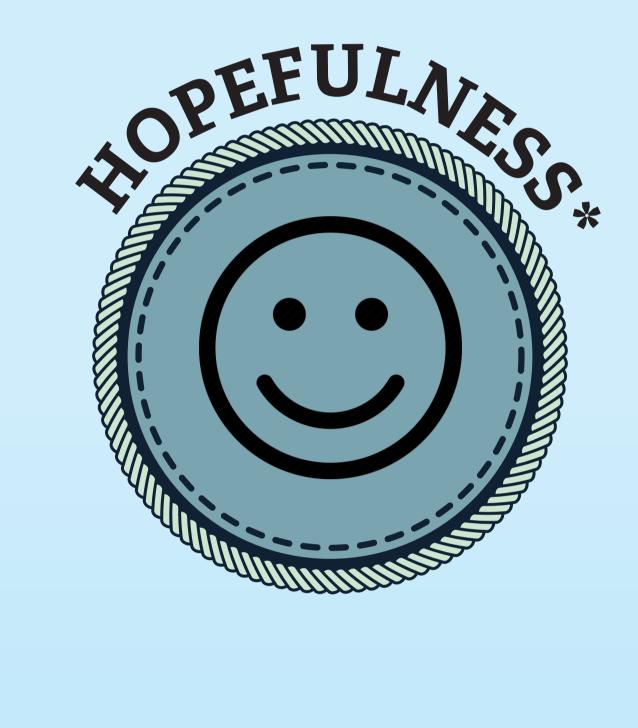


DOES SCOUTING WORK?

We all know Scouting's goal is to prepare young people for life, but does it work? Scouting was put to the test over the course of three years, when a research team from Tufts University worked with the Boy Scouts of America's Cradle of Liberty Council to measure the character attributes of both Scouts and non-Scouts — all with a goal of better understanding the character development of youth as it was happening. The project, which was funded by the John Templeton Foundation and led by Dr. Richard M. Lerner, surveyed nearly 1,800 Cub Scouts and nearly 400 non-Scouts under age 12 using both interviews and survey data. In the beginning, there were no significant differences in character attributes between the two groups. By the end, however, the differences were striking in several areas:

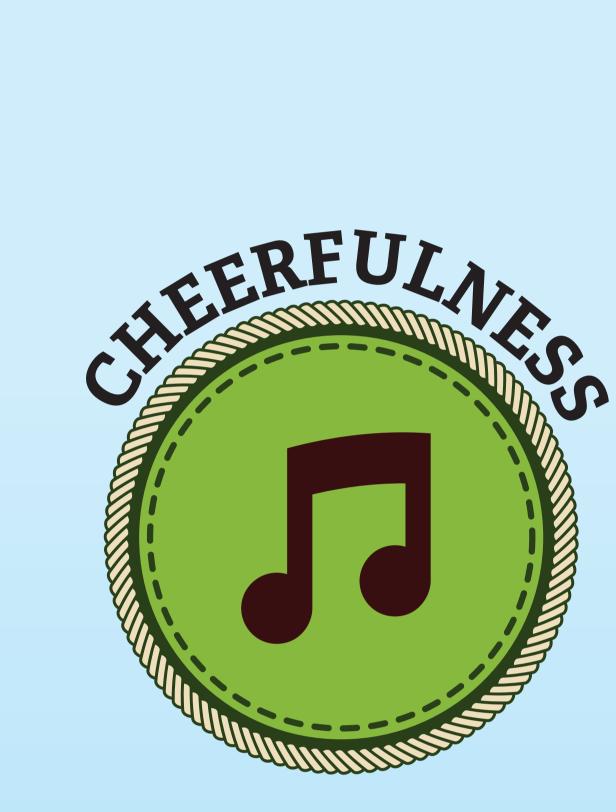


aged 6-12 from across the Philadelphia area were measured in 6 key areas:





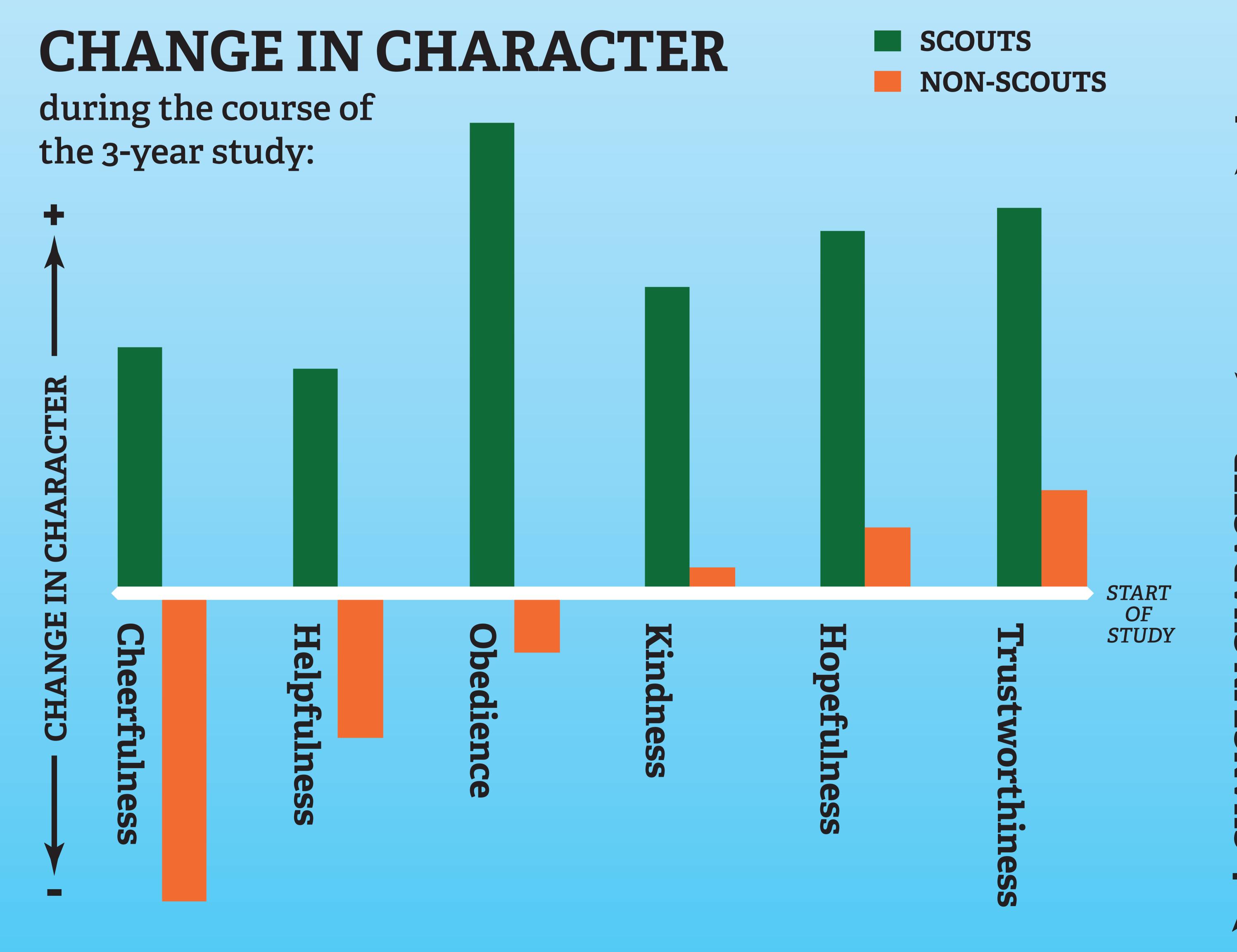








*Hopeful Future Expectations



KEY FINDINGS:



The more time kids spend in Scouting, the better the outcomes in character development



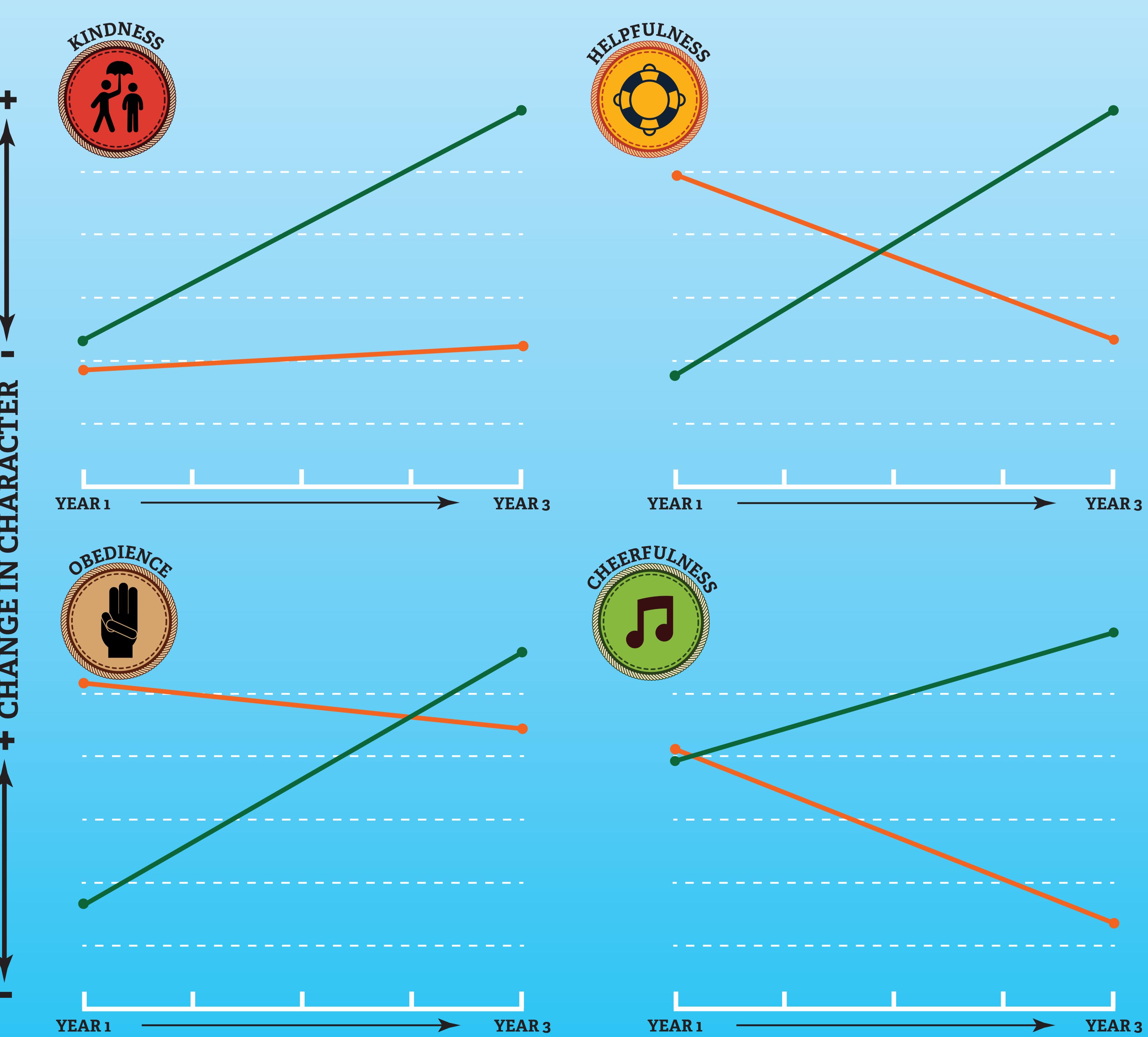
Those who attend meetings regularly report higher outcomes virtually across the board when compared to Scouts with lower attendance



Scouts are more likely to embrace positive social values than non-Scouts



Scouts who are **more engaged** in the program report higher outcomes in nearly every category



With fun and discovery at every turn, Scouting makes the most of right now. But what's more, it builds positive character and provides young people a foundation they can stand on to embrace opportunity, overcome obstacles, and make new discoveries.

SCOUTING WORKS.