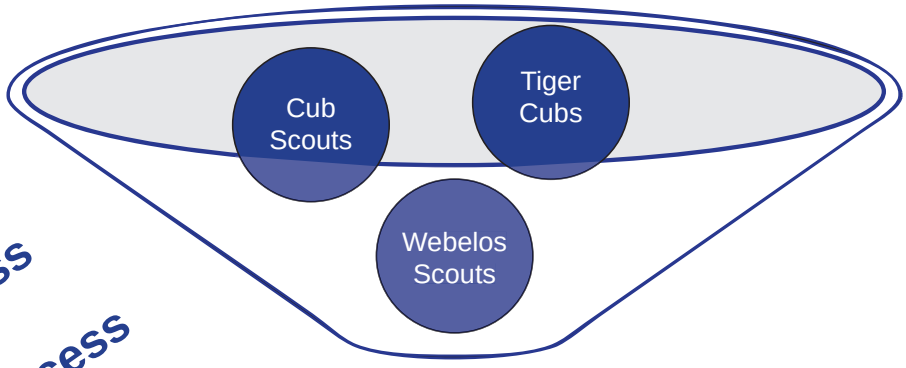
RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS



School Access
or
No School Access

MEMBERSHIP

This Guide Is for: **Membership Chairs**

Unit Commissioners

Cubmasters

Den Leaders

Parents

Prepared. For Life.™

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

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RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

To help your pack be successful at recruiting new Scouts, we've compiled this list of ideas. Try them; refine them; put a new spin on them. Whatever you think will work best! Then let us know what worked well and what didn't, so we can continually revise this document. By sharing our ideas, we will all benefit!

IN-SCHOOL RALLY (Free)

Tried and true. Very effective when you can use it! Rallies (boy talks) are no longer permitted by all school districts. But even where there is no school district prohibition, you'll need permission from the principal and cooperation from teachers. Gather eligible boys, either all together or by grade level. Lunch or recess time is usually successful. Usually timed for the day of or the day before JOIN SCOUTING NIGHT (JSN).

- Presentation should be short; five–seven minutes maximum. The boys do not want to miss all their recess time.
- Have a show-and-tell of what FUN they can have in Scouting. Emphasize "boy" activities such as archery, BB guns, camping, pinewood derby®, building with wood, leatherworking, games, crafts, etc. Bring poster or display board with pictures and bring props (derby cars, a bow (no arrows, of course), derby trophy, neat example of a craft item, etc.).
- Tell them to bring their parents to JOIN SCOUTING NIGHT TONIGHT in the gym (or wherever), at 7 o'clock (or whenever). Try this in the form of a cheer where they repeat it back to you several times: What? Where? When?
- Give them a flier, if allowed, and have them fold it like a sword (or an airplane, or anything else easy). That's their very first Cub Scout craft. Have them take it home and put it on the refrigerator! Why, because Cub Scouting is cool, of course!
- Have existing Scouts wear uniforms to school that day so they are clearly identified as Scouts and then get them to "talk it up!" at lunch, at recess, on the bus.

See further discussion below on other activities the day of JSN.

FALL/SPRING RECRUITING EVENT ($–$$)

This can be any sort of fun activity that would entice elementary-aged boys to come checkout Scouting. This can be simply inviting potential recruits to an already scheduled summer Pack activity, or it can be a separate event focused primarily on recruiting and held very near to JSN. Ideas for an event include:

- **Derby day**—Take your derby track outdoors (school parking lot might be a good location), and have lots of cars for the boys to race. Everyone, fathers included, loves to race those cars!
- **Cub Olympics**—An outdoor field day of games and fun; various activities. In the heat of summer, consider a "water themed" day, full of water activities. Sponge races, water balloons, a water obstacle course, water art, etc.
- **Water bottle rockets**—Talk about a boy magnet!
- **Fishing event**—Do you have access to a good spot for "kid" fishing? Dads like this one, too. Be sure to bring extra poles and bait.
- **Swimming party**—Does your pack have a summer swim party at a public pool? Make it a dual-purpose event and invite your target membership.
- **Bike rodeo**—Set up a championship course of fun! Have engraving, on-the-spot bike inspections, helmet sizing, etc. Local police and/or firemen will often visit these events, if requested.

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

- **Treasure hunt**—All kids love treasure hunts. Now they have a fancy name: geocaching! With parent volunteers, GPS systems, and a bit of Web research, there are LOTS of great spots to geocache. You can even hide your own "treasure" in advance. Have a picnic and break up into teams. This involves tromping through parks, sometimes over mud and streams! Boy fun ALL the way. Of course, you can do it the "old fashioned" way too, with treasure maps coffee-stained to look aged, and a few holes burned in strategic spots. Rip the map into pieces so they have to find all the pieces (provide individual clues) to put together the jigsaw puzzle map, and then go find the treasure.
- **Ice cream social**—Nothing sells better than ice cream during the hot summer months! Have some crafts and games, and ice cream treats!
- **S'mores and fun**—Who can turn down a s'more? No one, of course, so expect a turnout. Have crafts and games. Shooting off water bottle rockets in a big field is also a great way to cool down on a hot summer day. Just be sure to have a water source, as once the kids get started with those rockets, it's hard to keep up with the demand.
- **Trailer climb**—Know someone with an 18-wheeler? Boys love to climb in and all over a truck!
- **Leatherworking/woodworking**—Boys love to hit things with a hammer. If not enough activity for an event, these are great secondary activities for any other event.

Be sure to send out invitations (postcards or fliers) to your target membership. See discussion below concerning mailings.

Give existing Scouts an incentive to invite a friend or LOTS of friends. A patch (official recruiter patch, if appropriate), a small prize, a nominal gift card. Whatever works best with your boys and your budget. It can be one-level recognition if they bring a boy to the event and/or a second-level recognition if that boy joins the pack.

- Have a **sign-in sheet** to capture the contact information for all attendees. Have appropriate pack leadership follow up with specific invitation for JSN.
- Have **Join Scouting forms (youth and adult)** available on-site to sign them up immediately—no need for high pressure, but if the parents are ready to sign up, by all means, close the deal.*
- Have **refreshments** (water, lemonade, cookies, chips, easy things).
- Have a **secondary activity** for overflow, such as a craft or game if kids get bored with the first activity or you have a big crowd and not everyone can participate at once. For example, leatherworking is popular and not something most non-Scouts have been exposed to.
- Have a **display board** with pictures of the pack having fun doing pack and den activities.
- Better than a display board, show a **video** or slide show on a laptop computer of your unit's boys having fun.
- Have current Scouts in uniform or pack T-shirts! They are the best advertising, and they want to share the fun, too!
- Have lots of **adult leaders and parents** present (in uniform/pack T-shirts) to talk with the recruits' parents. The more the merrier. People want to join a thriving organization.
- Join up with another nearby pack to share an event/summer activity. This doubles exposure and halves the cost. Win-win for all.

** SEAL THE DEAL. It's important to "ask" for the membership during the event. Our goal is to increase membership, and attendance at a recruiting function is the first step, but we need them to actually join. So ask! It doesn't have to be a hard sell. But be organized and prepared ahead of time for this step. Assign people to do this; have a script they can improvise with as needed.*

"Bill, I'm so glad you were able to join us today. Looks like Timmy is having a great time out there jumping off the diving board! I've really enjoyed getting to know you and your son this afternoon at our annual swim party, and I think your family would make a great addition to our pack. I'd like to invite you and Timmy to join us here at Pack 123." (Give the dad a packet with information and the application.) "Are there any questions I can answer for you? Take a few minutes to go ahead and fill out the application … I just happen to have a pen right here!"

But this part doesn't happen by accident, and if it's not thought out and planned, people will leave the event wondering what the next step is—maybe not knowing how to go about joining. It's harder to get them to join AFTER they leave the event. The easiest time to ask is right then.

PTA PACKET PICKUP/SCHOOL REGISTRATION (Free to $)

If allowed, have a **display table at your school's packet pickup/registration** event. These are usually held a few days to a week or so before school starts, and are often manned and organized by the PTA. Put up your display board (or computer with video/slide show) with all the fun photos and have informational fliers with the specifics of JSN and a brief description of Scouting FUN! Have a **contact information sheet** to capture as many names/phone numbers of interested parties as you can. For those that sign up, follow up via telephone or email with a personal invitation to JSN. Ask pack leadership who might be "working" the event as PTA volunteers to wear their uniform shirts so they are identifiable as Cub Scout leaders. You can print out labels for the leaders to wear as name tags that say "ASK ME ABOUT CUB SCOUTS!" Lots of parents, especially those new to the school, are looking for information about Scouting.

You could also sponsor a "**Cub Scout Coloring Corral"** at this event. Lots of parents have to bring all the kids with them, and would love to have a fun, safe place to park the kids while they go through the lines in peace. Have simple coloring pages, word searches, puzzles, and/or maybe a simple craft. Staff your "corral" with adult leaders and Scouts in uniform. Be sure to have a sign-in sheet, both to keep track of the kids and to capture recruitment info. Also, have your fliers, etc., on hand. Of course, you'll get lots of traffic that are not interested in Scouts, but this would qualify as a service project to benefit your school.

MEET THE TEACHER EVENT (Free to $)

With the principal's permission, having a table at meet-the-teacher time is a great way to catch some interested kids and parents. This can be low key, as obviously the main thing on parents' minds is meeting the teacher and helping their child feel comfortable in his new class. But a table in the hallway, with maybe a small game (spin the wheel) for a pencil prize, or a giveaway of a backpack first aid kit (a few Band-Aids in a snack-sized baggie), or maybe even offering fingerprinting (hey, get a few Boy Scouts who earned the fingerprinting merit badge to help) would allow the pack to provide a service and be a presence. It doesn't even need to be overtly focused on recruiting; you could just have a brochure available.

SCHOOL-SPONSORED PARENT INFORMATION NIGHTS (Free to $)

Many elementary schools have parent information nights very early in the school year, usually during the first two weeks. These are generally grade-level specific meetings where the teachers address the parents concerning what to expect that school year. Again, a visible presence is helpful. **Ask your pack leaders to attend their child's grade-level meetings IN UNIFORM** with a name tag (mailing label) with "ASK ME ABOUT CUB SCOUTING." Your principal may allow you to have an information table (display board, fliers, JSN info, contact information sheet, etc.), or if not, simply have fliers you can pass

out. Half-sheet fliers with information about JSN work well. You might even pass a small stack of fliers around the audience with a note on the top: “Take one if you’re interested; please pass on.” If these meetings are held prior to your pack’s recruiting event, be sure your flier has an invitation to that event as well!

YARD SIGNS (Free to $$)

The council will provide your pack with yard signs to advertise JSN. If you have the budget, consider having additional yard signs made specific to your pack. Make them bright and easily visible from a car driving by. For example, the goldenrod yellow and royal blue of Cub Scouting are good color choices. The signs can be dual sided and have generic information. The printing on these usually can be easily scraped off and the time/date information replaced in subsequent years for a nominal cost. Most of the signs can be easily reused with a little ingenuity, so save the signs and start building an inventory.

Place yard signs with Scout-friendly families among the neighborhoods and the most traveled routes in your market area. Put up the signs about two weeks before JSN and leave them up for at least a week afterwards, (for those who may have missed the event).

BANNERS ($$)

Consider purchasing one or two banners that say “JOIN CUB SCOUTING” or even “JOIN CUB SCOUTING TONIGHT, (name of school), (time),” dual-sided, if possible, that can be held up by volunteers during the carpool times outside the school on JSN. The print message should be generic enough to be used for many years (i.e., avoid use of dates). Such banners have alternative uses as well (e.g., carry the banner when your pack is marching in parades, or post the banner at your outdoor events for additional advertising). Again, bright, attractive, visible colors, and an easy-to-read message are key.

One creative unit displayed their banner on a Scout-friendly home across from the school’s entrance. They put the banner on the OUTSIDE of the property owner’s privacy fence.

POSTERS (Free to $)

You can put up posters EVERYWHERE you can think of, in your school, depending on principal approval, local library, local businesses, etc. Do whatever you can; usually the school has a bulletin board for such items. While not a great attention getter from the kids’ point of view, some parents actually do look at the bulletin board, so it’s an opportunity.

Many of these places will tape your poster to their window, so you may want to have it dual-sided so it can be read from inside and out! You can use the official BSA posters or make your own using basic poster board. There are even some software programs that allow you to make a poster-sized printout by using four 8.5" x 11"-sized “labels” and then sticking these “labels” on a poster board backing.

On JSN during the morning and afternoon carpools, you can also have volunteers holding JSN TONIGHT posters. Morning carpool may be the best opportunity as most elementary schools have dismissal time down to a seven-minute blitz! Be sure the posters have printing large enough to be easily read by drivers going by. See additional discussion on activities during the day of JSN below.

VIDEO (Free to $)

Make a video of your unit’s boys having fun. You can do this easily by checking out ANIMOTO.COM. Animoto is amazing. You can upload still shots or video clips, insert music and press a button and their patent-pending software will work magic on your material. Out will pop a link to a video. It’s cheap or free, depending on length. Thirty seconds or less is free. You can upgrade for $3 for a longer video and $5 for high resolution (recommended for showing video on a bigger screen).

Best of all, all your Scouts/Scouters can put this link on their Facebook pages and you can even upload it to YouTube.

VIDEO ANNOUNCEMENTS (Free)

With the principal's permission, present short video of your unit's activities during the elementary school's morning video announcements. This can be your unit's video or there are several alternatives available from the National Council and the local council.

PROPS (Free)

There's more than one way to advertise on the cheap! Shoe polish on car windows can say "JOIN CUB SCOUTS" just as easily as "GO TEAM." How about setting up a tent by the school, and if not on school property, you can set a small tent up in the back of a pickup truck. Put signage on the tent/truck and leave it parked in a highly visible spot during school arrival/dismissal times.

YOUR SCHOOL'S INFORMATION DISPLAY (Free to $)

Most schools have a receptacle where outside parties can place fliers, postcards, or other information. These are usually near the office or main entrance, or perhaps even in the cafeteria. Again, most elementary school students don't frequent these displays, but some parents do, especially those new to the school or the area. Place some fliers there with basic information about joining Scouting, and contact information for your pack's Cubmaster or other designated individual. A supply should be maintained year-round. You probably don't need a large supply, just 20 or so, and restock as needed.

You might need to get school district approval of your brochure prior to placing it in the information display. Check out the rules.

WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING (Free)

As with any product, word-of-mouth advertising is ALWAYS the cheapest and best advertising. Your existing Scouts (and parents) are a great source for new Scouts. Remind all your Scouts to invite their friends and neighbors, new kids at school or on the bus, and friends from Sunday school, sports teams, summer school, and other club events! Give the boys some small incentive and recognition items when they bring a friend, and maybe a larger incentive/recognition item if that friend joins the pack.

Have the boys wear their uniforms to school on den and pack meeting days. Have them talk about camping, archery, BB guns, pinewood derby. If their class has a show-and-tell, suggest they bring a Scouting-related item (especially if it's that HUGE first place pinewood derby trophy!). Just demonstrating what FUN they are having in Scouting will make other boys WANT to join.

Ask parents, especially leaders, to think of other boys in their sons' peer group that would be interested in Scouting and have them talk with those parents, extending a personal invitation to JSN or to attend a den meeting. While we have a strong focus on JSN, boys are welcome to join Scouting at ANY TIME. Many parents have a misconception that if their son doesn't join at JSN, he has to wait a whole year for another opportunity.

If a boy comes to an event, he is more likely to join, so encourage bringing guests to various pack events throughout the year and to den meetings as well. Some den meetings are more "guest friendly" than others, so when you have a particularly exciting meeting planned, encourage your Scouts to bring a guest.

Keep in mind that people from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to respond to a message from others within that same cultural group. Leverage the diversity in your pack by asking those individuals to specifically make some calls to others in their same culture.

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

DISTRIBUTION OF FLIERS/STICKERS THE DAY OF JSN

On the day of JSN, especially if rallies are not allowed at your school, you want to plan a "blitz" during the morning carpool and bus arrival time. Some school districts have strict policies regarding the distribution of information to students. In many of these cases, adults are NOT allowed to distribute any information themselves; only students can distribute information to other students. There may be restrictions on when (during the 30 minutes before and after school) and where (at the exterior entrances and exits to the building). Some districts allow for principals' discretion, so check out the rules and discuss your approach with your local campus administration.

Practically speaking, these rules often leave morning carpool/bus arrival as the best time even though it results in the longest period of time between the boys receiving the information and going home. Dismissal time at most elementary schools is very compressed, highly efficient, and streamlined. You could ask your principal to allow certain (or all) Scouts to be dismissed five minutes early so they can be in position by the buses and carpool lanes when all the other children pass by. Without such a head start, half the student population will already be gone by the time the Scouts are ready to start distributing the fliers.

Meet with your principal and see what she/he will allow. Provide information as to what you are proposing and get permission for as much as possible. However, assuming you are working with the morning time slot, here are some strategies:

- Have many Scouts and leaders present, IN UNIFORM.
- Position Scouts and leaders at all entrances to the school and at the bus arrival lanes.
- Have fliers and/or stickers ready to handout. Adults may pass stacks of fliers/stickers to the Scouts involved. Clarify in advance if your principal allows an adult to pass information directly to a non-Scout student.
- Encourage some Scouts to just be "cheering" as students go by:
  - CUB SCOUTING ROCKS!
  - JOIN SCOUTING TONIGHT!
  - CAMPING! ARCHERY! BB GUNS!
  - SCOUTING IS FUN!
- Ask if Cub Scouts can do the flag ceremony at school on JSN.
- Have leaders holding banners, posters, etc., at the carpool lanes to advertise to parents driving by.
- Have a video announcement (discussed above) played on JSN.
- Have leaders clean up any litter caused by students dropping the fliers/stickers so we leave a good impression with the principal.
- Have leaders write messages on their cars that they park in the parking lot (white shoe polish): "Join Scouting TONIGHT!"

MAILING INVITATIONS/FLIERS ($$)

If you can obtain a mailing list of your school's census (or create one from sources available to the unit), you can mail a postcard invitation to all the target families. Keep in mind that any mailing list purchased from your school district will represent a subset of the school's census as families have the option to request their information not be included. Supplement whatever list you have with additional names of boys in private school, home school, sports teams, church groups, etc.

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

Kids today are very media savvy. They are used to full-color, high-gloss, vivid advertising. Black ink on white paper doesn't make much of an impression, so if you can, use full-color ink with PHOTOS (have talent releases from the parents, if the photos are from your unit). If that's too pricey, use a colored sheet of paper with black ink. The vivid "brights" are certainly attention getting.

If possible, use a dual mailing. Have one postcard addressed to the boy, with a boy-themed message, emphasizing the FUN. Mail a separate card (different color) to the parents, with a parent-themed message, emphasizing the BENEFITS of Scouting.

Utilize first-class postage, if possible. If you are using BULK mail rates, carefully strategize timing of delivery to the home mailbox. Too soon, and people forget; too close, and they've made other plans. For first class, you can safely assume one to two delivery days; for bulk mail, it can be as long as six delivery days between mailing and in-home delivery.

Provide a specific invitation the postcard/flier to an event or to JSN, or both if they are very close together. Be sure to include a contact name and phone number for questions.

HANDOUTS ($)

In addition to handing out the JSN fliers (council provided), you can also hand out "party" invitations to your unit's recruiting event. Again, make it fun and attractive. Colorful. Make it look like an invitation to a birthday party. One side can be the party details; the other side, a message to the parents.

If you can send handouts before your JSN or recruiting event, consider handing them out over multiple days to increase the likelihood of the message making it home in the backpack. Space them a week apart, if you can.

TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN (Free)

As mentioned earlier, word of mouth is always the best method. You can plan an organized word-of-mouth campaign using phone calls. The key here is to have it formalized. Don't leave it to chance. If you just ask the pack to call their friends, some contacts will get three calls and others none.

Instead, divide up your directory information in some manner, by grade level and/or by cultural sub-group (to leverage diversity). Provide parents a script:

> ***"Hello, I'm Susie Smith, and my son Billy is in class (Sunday school/soccer/baseball/etc.) with your son Timmy. Billy has really enjoyed all the great times he's had in Cub Scouts this year (such as _____) and especially the camping trips (or whatever)! Billy asked me to call you to invite your family to our pack swim party (or whatever) next Sunday (details). Billy really hopes Timmy can come!"***

And if the family seems interested, be sure to have a reminder call just before the event.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA (Free to $)

Go paperless! You can purchase or develop an email list for your market. Send a group message or start a more individualized campaign (similar to that described for phone calls above). Use "EVITE" or other commercial invitation sites. Everyone likes to be invited. And, you can do all three: paper mailer/handout, telephone call, and email.

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

SOCIAL NETWORKS (Free)

Probably (hopefully) the early elementary school crowd is a tad too young for the social networking sites, but it's a good bet their parents have a Facebook page. Ask your pack parents to put a link on their Facebook page to your unit's website and to your unit's ANIMOTO video (see above), and/or put pictures of their son doing FUN Cub Scout things on their page. Take advantage of all the free advertising and marketing potential these social networks have to offer.

UNIT WEBSITE (Free to $$)

Does your unit have a website? If not, it's a good idea to make one. And if they can't find an affordable platform, how about setting up a Facebook page for your unit? Again, it's an easy and inexpensive way to get information out on electronic media.

Photos of cute, smiling boys, doing all the fun things Cub Scouts do, are the best advertisement.

Be sure to put contact information on your website/Facebook page. Consider creating a "Google Gmail or Hotmail email account specifically for Scout inquiries. You **don't** want to publish your regular email address.

OTHER VENUES (Free to $)

There are other events you can participate in or with:

- Neighborhood association events
- School BBQs and carnivals
- Community events
- Cultural events
- Joint Boy Scout/Girl Scout membership events

In any case, bring a "kid magnet" with you. You can attract attention with a bounce house, monkey bridge, big game, colorful spinning wheel, or unusual/unique activity (making rope for example). Have applications available. If the event would cover more than just one unit's market area, coordinate with other units to man shifts, etc. As always, capture contact information first thing and have a handout with YOUR contact (unit/district level) to give to interested parties.

In some cases, you will be providing a service by adding an event to the agenda. Alternatively, you can be there to specifically provide a service, such as litter control, check-in, parking, etc. Be in uniform and ready to smile and ask people about JOINING CUB SCOUTING.

OTHER POTENTIAL MARKETS

While most packs are based out of elementary schools, do think about other sources of elementary-aged children in your geographic neighborhoods. For example:

- Homeschooled children
- Nearby churches that do not have a pack association
- Nearby private schools that do not have a pack association
- Your chartered organization

RECRUITING IDEAS FOR CUB SCOUT LEADERS

You could potentially meet with age-appropriate Sunday school classes or have a rally at a private school. At a minimum, these organizations will most likely let you have information (flier) available at an information kiosk or bulletin board. Although a private school or a church would attract families from a much wider geographic base than just your elementary school, there may be some families who are looking for Cub Scouting in the area.

INCENTIVES (Free to $)

Most of us do what we are rewarded for, so give the kids and parents a fun reason to work hard at recruiting. Incentives awarded to individuals are often a patch or some sort of gift. Kids respond well to receiving a gift (think popcorn sales), and it doesn't have to be expensive. Even a $5 gift card to Toys R Us or McDonalds can do the trick.

Also, think about group incentives. Consider designing a plan that offers a fun reward on a den or pack basis. There could be incentives for the den that brings the most guests, or incentives if the total number of guests exceeds a set number, or if every den brings at least a certain number of guests. Then, do something fun like ice cream treats for all or a pizza party. How about, everyone who brings a guest gets to pelt the Cubmaster with water balloons? The Cubmaster will dye his/her hair blue and gold for the next pack meeting. Kids love to receive a privilege or watch an adult doing something silly. Make the goal attainable (we want them to win) and then follow through on the promise.

JUST ONE MORE (Free to $)

Don't stop at JSN. Clearly, recruiting should be ongoing year-round, but really continuing the effort through October and November can be very successful. Consider a "JUST ONE MORE" campaign. Encourage all your dens to add "JUST ONE MORE" boy to their ranks. The boys can think about who to ask. It can be more than one; their friends, a shy boy at school who needs a friend, someone new to class or the neighborhood, etc. If the den adds a boy, give them a shiny, spiffy certificate and great recognition at the next pack meeting or any of the other type of incentives discussed above. The best part is you don't have to do much. Just get the boys motivated. And, if every den added "JUST ONE MORE," it would have a big impact on our councilwide membership numbers.

For this and other recruiting resources, go to the Membership Impact Department resources website.

www.scouting.org/membership