

# Troop Guidebook

Welcome to Troop 623. This Guidebook is intended to let you know a little about our troop. The First Congregational Church of St Joseph sponsors Troop 623. The church is located at 2001 Niles Ave, St Joseph. Troop 623 belongs to District 6 (northern Berrien County) of the Southwest Michigan Council. Membership in the troop is open to all boys regardless of where he lives or what his church affiliation is. The requirements for any boy to join Boy Scouts are that he be eleven (11) years old or completed fifth grade and that an official BSA registration be completed and signed by a parent or guardian. Parents are also asked to attend a troop meeting and sign the attached form that states that these guidelines have been read and understood.

## Registration and Dues

New boys to the troop are required to complete an Official BSA Registration Form, a medical form and parents are asked to complete a Parent Interest Survey Form. All scouts are required to read the attached Guidebook.

Current dues are \$30.00 a year. This amount is subject to change by the Troop Committee. The dues cover registration fee, insurance and advancement awards. Dues can be paid for directly or can be deducted from fundraiser earnings (See Fundraisers). The full \$30.00 is collected between October 1 and December 1. Scouts who have not paid their dues in full by December 1 will either have the amount deducted from their fund raiser earnings account or not receive any advancement items. Scouts will not be re-registered until dues are paid. Costs for camp-outs and other activities are paid prior to those activities and are divided up among those participating.

Dues for first year Scouts will be charged on a prorated schedule. Contact the Troop Treasurer for the correct fee when registering.

## Scout Handbook

It is strongly recommended that each Scout have a copy of the Scout Handbook. These books can be purchased at Dunham's Sports on M-139, the Local Scout Office located in the Vincent Place building (6<sup>th</sup> floor Suite 602) 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor or the Scout Service Center (1035 Maple St, Kalamazoo). Information in the books is very useful to Scouts and parents and should be read very carefully. Boys not having books will find it almost impossible to work on and keep record of advancement. Handbooks should be brought to each troop meeting and to most activities. It is also recommended that each scout have a copy of the Field Book.

## Scout Uniform

The standard uniform of Troop 623 consists of long scout pants and short sleeve scout shirt. The shirt will require minimum patches consisting of: American flag patch, council shoulder patch, and troop numbers. Rank patches and leadership patches are also expected to be put on the shirt. We are trying to become a full uniform unit and will strongly encourage boys to buy and wear the above uniform as a minimum. The above uniform is considered Class A. An alternate Class A uniform during the summer consists of the short sleeve shirt, green khaki Scout shorts and scout knee socks. An acceptable Class B uniform consists of any combination of scout T-shirts or knit shirts.

Uniforms are expected to be worn at all troop meetings, while traveling to and from activities and during other special functions. When uniforms are worn they will be worn in the proper manner; buttons buttoned and shirttails tucked in. Uniforms are expected to be kept in a clean and neat condition.

# Troop Organization

The troop is organized into the following groups of people.

- 1) Troop Committee                                      Composed of parents and other adults who set troop policy.
- 2) Adult Staff    Scoutmaster and Asst.. Scoutmaster(s).
- 3) Patrol Leadership Council                      Senior Patrol Leader, Asst. Senior Patrol Leader and Patrol Leaders.
- 4) Patrols    Groups of 5 - 8 scouts.

# Troop Meetings

The troop holds regular troop meetings in Fellowship Hall at the First Congregational Church. The meetings are Monday nights from 7:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M., unless announced otherwise.

A normal troop meeting consists of:

- 1) Opening
- 2) Announcements
- 3) Skill Instructions
- 4) Patrol Meeting
- 5) Skill Competition
- 6) Final Announcements
- 7) Scoutmaster Minute
- 8) Closing

The meeting is run by various boys in the troop under the leadership of the Senior Patrol Leader. The first meeting after a weekend activity is generally for event critique, equipment clean up and inspection.

# The Patrol Method

Troop 623 operates under the Patrol Method of Scouting as developed by Sir Robert Baden-Powell in England. This method was developed on Brownsea Island in the early 1900's. BP found that a group of eight people was the most efficient method of developing leadership and accomplishing goals. Today, a patrol consists of 5 - 9 boys under the leadership of a Patrol Leader. The boys of the patrol elect the Patrol Leader. His primary responsibility is to represent and make known the wishes of his patrol at the Patrol Leadership Council. The Patrol Leader is also responsible for relaying information from the PLC to the patrol; ensuring people are assigned to required tasks and the conduct of patrol members. Patrol members participate in all activities as a team. Part of learning to lead is by first learning to follow. It is important to understand that the boys run the troop. The adult leaders provide guidance. The Patrol is the Key and the Patrol Leader is the Key Man.

## Advancement (The Trail to Eagle Scout)

Advancement from Scout to Eagle is an important part of the scouting experience and is completely explained in the Scout Handbook. Troop 623 has adult leaders to help and advise the boys on advancement. One leader is an Asst. Scoutmaster that has been assigned to train and guide newer scouts in the skills and requirements needed to obtain the ranks of Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class. Other leaders are Patrol Advisors that help the boys with the advanced ranks. The Advancement Chairman is responsible for maintaining advancement records, scheduling boards of review and ordering patches. Scouts are responsible for completing advancement requirement on their own and for maintaining a complete record of their own advancement. Opportunities for completing advancement requirements will be provided to the scouts; it is the Scout's responsibility to take advantage of those opportunities. The troop has five basic rules about advancement.

- 1) It is strongly suggested parents do not sign-off advancement or merit badge requirements for their son unless they are working with a group of boys. It helps avoid any suspicion of favoritism. Parents can be helpful in locating qualified counselors and setting up approved merit badge programs. Prior approval should be obtained before seeking new Merit Badge Counselors.
- 2) Merit Badge Counselors must be registered prior to any work being completed on the merit badge. The Advancement Chairman reserves the right to disallow any advancement or merit badge signed-off by an unapproved individual.
- 3) Scouts must obtain a merit badge application (blue card) from the Advancement Chairman prior to starting a merit badge. The Scout will be given credit for completing a merit badge when he returns the card, which has been signed by his counselor, to the Advancement Chairman.
- 4) Boys will be encouraged to advance but will not be pushed to advance. Troop leaders are responsible to provide advancement opportunities but are not responsible for ensuring a Scout advances in rank. Parents are asked to periodically ask their sons about their advancement and help where they can. Even though parents are not allowed to sign off for advancement, that doesn't mean they can't help their son with requirements or review their work prior to it being submitted to the Merit Badge Counselor.
- 5) Even though the Advancement Chairman maintains records of each scout's advancement, it is each Scout's responsibility to maintain written proof of his advancement. Scout Handbooks provide places to have requirements signed-off and scouts will be given a signed card for each merit badge or rank advancement. Possession of a patch is not considered proof. Eagle rank will not be granted without documented proof that all requirements have been completed.

## Court of Honor

Every effort will be made to present Scouts with a merit badge or rank patch within a week of the requirements being completed. Additionally, the troop tries to schedule four Courts of Honor each year. A Court of Honor is a special troop meeting where all family members are invited. The meeting is held for the purpose of providing extra recognition to those Scouts that have earned rank advancement, merit badges or other accomplishments.

The whole family is encouraged to attend and should make a special effort to do so even if a Scout has not earned any special recognition because these special meetings are also used to discuss the troop's accomplishments and future activities.

Check the Calendar on the troop website at [WWW.BSATROOP623.ORG](http://WWW.BSATROOP623.ORG) .

# Discipline

Scouting activities are meant to be learning experiences in an atmosphere that is safe and fun for everyone involved. Scouting and Troop 623 have rules that must be followed in order for everyone to enjoy themselves. The rules of Scouting can be found in the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. Troop specific rules are listed in Attachment 1 of this handbook.

The "Spirit of Scouting" dictates high expectations for the behavior of troop members. Self-control and self-discipline are attributes expected from all Scouts in Troop 623. In order to ensure the health and safety of troop members and the effective operation of the troop, disciplinary actions may be necessary. Discipline and control must be treated as an individual matter, realizing that basic discipline is preventative in nature rather than regulatory or restrictive. Scouts will receive positive reinforcement when exhibiting appropriate behavior. Troop adult leaders are ultimately responsible for the behavior of troop members and therefore will be expected to enforce a fair and consistent disciplinary plan.

Disciplinary action will consist of four (4) levels. Certain conduct will result in the immediate escalation of the disciplinary level (i.e. use of drugs is an automatic Level 3 action).

- Level 1            Personal Conference: Action taken for first offence of less serious rules. Consists of a counseling session between adult leader(s) and Scout(s).
- Level 2            Letter to Parents: Action taken when Level 1 actions are not successful or for breaking certain more serious rules. Consists of writing a letter to the parents with a copy going to the Troop Committee Chair. The letter will contain the following:
1.        Description of inappropriate behavior.
  2.        Description of immediate disciplinary action.
  3.        Request for parents' cooperation in the matter and an offer to counsel with both Scout and parents.
  4.        Notification to Scout and parents that if improper behavior continues, disciplinary action will be raised to Level 3.
- Level 3            Disciplinary Hearing: Action taken when Level 1 & 2 actions have not been successful at correcting the problem or for extremely serious behavioral problems. Consists of a meeting between the adult leadership, Scout(s), parents and the Troop Committee. Disciplinary action may include such items as active probation (Scout continues to participate in activities), inactive probation (Scout does not participate in troop activities for a period of time), service project, reimbursement for damages, termination from troop or etc.
- Level 4            Termination: If the above actions fail to correct behavioral problems, the Troop Committee will notify the Scout(s) and parents that the Scout(s) are no longer welcome to participate in any troop functions. This action will require the majority vote of all registered adult leaders and committee members.

# Troop Activities

Most major troop activities are planned at least six months in advance and the times and dates are published in the Calendar on the troop website ([WWW.BSATROOP623.ORG](http://WWW.BSATROOP623.ORG)). Please keep track of these dates and help us avoid conflicts. The troop depends on parent support to see to it that their son attends as many troop activities as possible.

Schedule changes and additions will be communicated by special notices. Detailed information about monthly activities is usually handed out at troop meetings. We encourage all parties to watch the calendar and we especially encourage all parents to ask their sons about any handouts they may have received at the troop meetings (most parents don't see any papers until they pick the soggy mess out of the washing machine). A monthly newsletter is sent out. Again, important information is almost always posted on the website, and can be sent to you via your email when available, so please check it frequently.

Each month, a Flyer is sent to each Scout Family containing information on the upcoming event. Included are costs, location, brief explanation, special requirements, reservation due date, event coordinator name and phone number, and permission slip. Permission slip and payment (checks are preferable) must be turned into the event coordinator prior to the due date.

When a Scout has signed up for an event and does not attend due to illness or a death in the family, refunds will be made if possible. Any funds used to purchase tickets, food, reservations, etc., which cannot be refunded to the Troop will not be refunded to the Scout. The Troop Committee will make determination of refunds.

## Equipment

Troop 623 has been fortunate enough to have a number of individuals that have been willing to work hard at fund raisers over the years in order to purchase quite a bit of troop equipment. The troop currently has a trailer, tents, stoves, lanterns, cooking equipment, tarps, rain flies and other gear worth thousands of dollars. Scouts are expected to treat this equipment with respect and will pay for anything damaged or lost through carelessness. If any equipment wears out or becomes unusable the Quarter Master of the Troop should be notified. The Quarter Master will notify the Troop committee so replacement equipment can be budgeted for.

Personal equipment is something every Scout will eventually need. The Scout Handbook contains a list of items that every Scout is expected to have at each camp out. Special lists may also be posted on the web. Sleeping bags and good rain gear are almost a must. Money spent on a good sleeping bag is well worth it. Good bags will last a very long time. One large, soft sided, duffel type bag or backpack will be needed to pack personal gear for campouts. Scouts are asked to come to normal weekend campouts with only one bag of personal gear. Other items such as boots, backpacks and sleeping pad are items Scouts may eventually want. There are a number of experienced campers among the adult staff that can help selecting the best items and tell you where to buy the items.

## Active participation

All members of Troop 623 are expected to participate in all phases of the troop program. We have one of the best programs and the best Scouts and unless each person is willing to participate and do his share, the troop as a whole will be effected. This means regular attendance at troop meetings, monthly activities, service projects and fundraisers. Important planning takes place at the weekly troop meetings and it is vital that Scouts attend to help with that planning. We realize that there will be times when Scouts can not attend due to illness, family problems, sports or school functions. We would appreciate it if the Scouts would contact their Patrol Leader when they can not attend an activity. All members of the patrol should know how to contact each fellow patrol member.

## Parent Support

A key element in maintaining and improving the quality of Troop 623 is by having active parent support. To be successful, scouting must be a family activity. Parent support does not consist of driving your son to a troop meeting and picking him up. **We are not a baby sitting service.** Good parent support consists of the following:

- 1) Make sure your son attends all troop activities, arrives on time and is ready for them.
- 2) Encourage your son in his scout advancement.
- 3) Take an active interest in his scouting activities.
- 4) Attend parent meetings, courts of honor and other family activities.
- 5) Join the Troop Committee. The committee is made up of parents and meets once a month to set troop policy.
- 6) Become a Merit Badge Counselor for the troop. You don't have to be an expert in the area. There are 120 merit badges so there should be something you know about.
- 7) Support fundraiser projects. This is how we earn money for troop equipment and the scouts can earn money for activities.

## Fund Raisers

The troop depends on various fundraisers to gain operating funds for the year. In the past Troop 623 as participated in such activities as Popcorn Sales, Tri-state regatta brat sale, spring and fall craft shows and a chicken dinner. Currently, part of the profits from these events go to the troop fund for operating expenses and equipment purchases. Each Scout in the troop is offered the opportunity to work a set number of hours at each fundraiser. The second part (generally half) of the profits from each activity is then split up among the Scouts that work at that activity as follows:

- 1) A record is kept of all boys that participate in a fund raiser and how many hours they each worked.
- 2) An hourly rate will be calculated, for each fundraiser.
- 3) Based on the number of hours a Scout works, a dollar amount will be added to each Scout's personal account.
- 4) Funds in personal accounts can be used to pay for any scouting expense such as summer camp or even purchase of personal scouting equipment. No money can be given to a Scout because this could be considered income wages and be subject to taxation.
- 5) If a Scout leaves the Troop, all funds in his account revert to the general troop fund. If a Scout is active in the Troop when reaching 18 years old, he has 60 days to use the funds before they revert to the general fund.

## Communications

In any organization, communication is essential. We currently have a web page that contains all sorts of information (such as this guide). The Troop Calendar is maintained on the web and should have information about upcoming events months ahead of time. A monthly newsletter is also being sent out. It can also be sent to your email address if you can give it to us. A lot of information is passed out at the weekly troop meeting; that is why regular attendance is important.

For short notice communications, adult leaders will contact other adult leaders. The Senior Patrol Leader will contact the individual Patrol Leaders who will, in turn, contact members of their patrol.

It is important to keep the Troop up to date with accurate contact information.

## Summary

If you have any questions, call your Patrol Leader or any other member of the junior leader staff.

### **If you don't know, ask!**

This guidebook was meant to be a brief summary of "need to know" items. If we have forgotten something, feel free to contact any of the adult staff.

## Attachment 1 Troop Rules of Conduct

- 1) Each Scout is expected to know and abide by these rules. Ignorance will not be considered an excuse for breaking the rules. Common sense will prevail in all situations and interpretations of these rules.
- 2) Each Scout will have a phone number where their parents or a designated individual may be reached in case of an emergency or disciplinary action is required.
- 3) A Scout may be sent home from any activity if Level 1 disciplinary actions are not successful.
- 4) Scouts will respect other people's property and will not touch anything that is not their own without permission. Level 1
- 5) Scouts will show respect towards both adult leadership and any adult in which we come into contact with during Troop activities.
- 6) Stealing will not be tolerated. Any Scout caught stealing will be sent home. Minimum Level 2.
- 7) No running in camp. Level 1
- 8) No sheath knives, radios, televisions, CD/DVD/MP3/Tape/... players, or electronic games at troop activities without prior approval. Items will be confiscated and given back at the end of the activity. Level 1.
- 9) Uniforms are expected at each troop activity. Uniforms need not be worn to outdoor activities but will be brought along in case they are needed. Leaders are expected to set the example.
- 10) No littering. Level 1
- 11) Troop equipment will be respected. Equipment damaged or destroyed through carelessness will be repaired or replaced by the offending individual before he is allowed to attend another troop function. Minimum Level 2.
- 12) No bare feet around campsites. Level 1.
- 13) The number of people in a tent will not exceed what the tent was designed for. Level 1.
- 14) Troop members will follow the directions of both adult and junior leaders without argument. Patrol Leaders will not give directions to members of other patrols unless they have been left in charge of the group. Level 1.
- 15) No fires in or near tents. Level 1.
- 16) Scouts will not play with the campfire. First warning LEVEL 1, second warning LEVEL 2 and scout will be sent home on third offense.
- 17) No Scout will engage in any type of water sport without the permission of a registered adult troop member. Scout will be sent home. Minimum Level 2.
- 18) Obscene language, obscene gestures and subjects deemed inappropriate by adult leaders will not be tolerated.
- 19) Malicious teasing or put-downs will not be tolerated. Harassment of any kind, especially towards new Scouts will not be tolerated. Level 1.
- 20) Fighting will not be tolerated for any reason. All parties will be subject to Level 1 or Level 2 discipline, depending on the seriousness of the fight.
- 21) Scouts will not leave campsite without checking with the person in charge (the buddy system should be in effect at all times). The Scout will tell the person in charge exactly where he is going and exactly when he will be back. Level 1 or Level 2.
- 22) Cooking items will be cleaned, sanitized and stored right after meals and prior to starting any other activity.
- 23) Wild animals will be left alone. Level 1.

- 24) Vandalism will not be tolerated. LEVEL 2 and financial responsibility for damage.
- 25) Use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs by any boy is strictly prohibited. Adult leaders, while strongly discouraged from doing so, may use tobacco (only in areas designated for such use). Level 2 for tobacco. Level 3 for alcohol and drugs.
- 26) All medication taken on an outing shall be in a designated adults position during the duration of the activity and administered by the same.
- 27) Possession of firearms or explosive devices will result in the item being confiscated and the scout being sent home. Minimum Level 2.
- 28) Food and Snacks are supplied by the Troop and are to be eaten in designated areas. Any scraps are to be disposed of properly. No snacks, gum, or beverages (other than water) are to be brought by the Scouts. Level 1.  
  
For trips further than 100 miles each way, a light snack and beverage (20oz or less) may be brought with approval from the vehicle owner. Permission must be granted prior to loading personal gear into vehicle, any requests by the vehicle owner must be followed. Any items must be left in the vehicle.  
  
Food is not allowed inside tents. Level 2.
- 29) Scouts are subject to discipline for any behavior that is unbecoming a Boy Scout. These Rules are not meant to be all-inclusive. Situations will be judged on a case by case basis.