



# FACT SHEET

## Scouting Serves the Jewish Community

### **BSA Mission Statement**

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

### **The Charter Concept**

The Boy Scouts of America can be described as a delivery system. It is a network of more than 300 autonomous councils that franchise program opportunities to youth-serving organizations. This is accomplished through a yearly renewable charter. The BSA offers training programs, activity guides, support systems, and use of camps to the leadership of Jewish organizations interested in additional methods of strengthening the value systems of their members, the children of their members, and possibly other young people in their communities. Jewish organizations can control the program content, membership, and any religious requirements within the basic context of the Scout Oath and Law.

### **Scouting as a Jewish Youth Group**

Jewish institutions have used the Scouting program since 1916. Jewish leaders Dr. Cyrus Adler, Frank Weil, and Mortimer Schiff helped guide the development of the Scouting movement in the United States. Today, Scouting is flourishing in Jewish communities.

### **Working Together to Benefit Young People**

Scouting and Jewish institutions work together to promote the religious education of Jewish youth and encourage Jewish identity. BSA programs in Jewish institutions can serve as a vehicle for strengthening Jewish values, provide a sense of belonging, enrichment, and education, offer motivational support and increase parental involvement. In addition, the National Jewish Committee on Scouting (NJCS), in cooperation with the Jewish Educational Services of North America, has developed supplemental Jewish program resources and literature to augment existing BSA program materials.

Local BSA council professionals work with Jewish institutions to explain how the programs will assist the Jewish community. The council also provides volunteer support services. In many communities, councils have Jewish committees on Scouting.

### **NJCS Mission Statement**

It is the mission of the NJCS to promote Scouting for Jewish youth by securing new Jewish chartered organizations and by continuing to provide individual Scouts and units with quality programs and service.

### **BSA Program Options—A Ready-Made Support System for Jewish Institutions at All Levels**

**The Tiger Cub** program is for first-grade (or age 7) boys and their adult partners. There are five Tiger Cub achievement areas. The Tiger Cub, working with his adult partner, completes 15 requirements within these areas to earn the Tiger Cub badge. Program themes geared to the Jewish community are also available as a supplement to the existing Tiger Cub program.

**Cub Scouting** is for second- through fifth-grade boys who participate weekly at the den level as a small group and monthly at a pack meeting, where several dens come together.

**Boy Scouting** is a program for boys ages 11 through 17 that is based on a vigorous outdoor program and peer group leadership under the counsel of an adult Scoutmaster. (Boys may also become Boy Scouts if they are 10½ and have completed the fifth grade.)

**Varsity Scouting** is a program for young men ages 14 through 17 that is built around five program fields: advancement, high adventure, personal development, service, and special programs and events.

**Venturing** is a contemporary program for young men and women ages 14 through 20. Crews can be oriented toward a special interest, or an existing youth group can register as a Venturing crew and take advantage of high-adventure bases, camps, insurance, and other resources.

### **Special Activities**

Boy Scouts may participate in special activities, including Scout jamborees; the Order of the Arrow, Scouting's national honor society; and the National Eagle Scout Association for Eagle Scouts, the highest rank in Scouting.

Venturers may participate in local and national activities and events. Venturers are also eligible for national scholarships and other awards.

Besides local council summer camp opportunities for Boy Scouts and day camps for Cub Scouts, many exciting experiences, including national high-adventure bases, are available for Venturers and older Boy Scouts. These high-adventure bases are located in Minnesota, Florida, and New Mexico.

### **Jewish Relationships**

A professional staff member within the BSA's Relationships Division serves as an adviser to the NJCS, which is composed of Scouters of the Jewish faith from throughout the United States.

### **The National and Local Council Jewish Committees on Scouting**

The NJCS was founded in 1926 by Dr. Cyrus Adler. The committee has the responsibility to:

- Promote and strengthen relationships with national Jewish organizations
- Develop literature and support materials
- Recruit rabbis for national and international events, as required
- Provide support to local council Jewish committees and to BSA council professional staff members who directly assist synagogues, day schools, Jewish community centers, and other Jewish institutions

This support includes:

- Analyzing the needs of Jewish institutions and, in conjunction with BSA local council professionals, organizing Tiger Cub dens, Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, Varsity Scout teams, and Venturing crews
- Promoting and administering the Maccabee (first through third grades), Aleph (third through fifth grades), Ner Tamid (Boy Scouts), and Etz Chaim (older Boy Scouts and Venturers) religious emblems programs
- Promoting Scout Sabbath services
- Making arrangements for rabbis or laypeople to conduct religious services at Scout camps, camporees, and other appropriate occasions

## Individualized Learning Programs—Jewish Emblems

The NJCS provides an additional Jewish stimulus through its religious emblems program.

- The Maccabee emblem is intended to involve the families of boys in first through third grades as partners in the experiences related to the award. To earn the Maccabee, a Cub Scout must complete requirements in six categories: Jewish personalities, holidays, vocabulary, symbols and objects, community helpers, and heroes.
- The Aleph emblem is earned through a home-centered set of activities for Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts (third through fifth grades), centering on the Torah, prayer, holidays, American-Jewish heritage, the synagogue, and Eretz Yisrael.
- The Ner Tamid emblem provides an opportunity for Boy Scouts to enhance their knowledge of Judaism through advanced activities that strengthen the youth's relationship with his rabbi. Central to the Ner Tamid are service projects for the synagogue or other chartered organizations that are organized and completed by the Scout.
- The Etz Chaim (Tree of Life) Award is designed for Boy Scouts in high school, ages 14 to 18, and registered Venturers, ages 14 to 20. The purpose of the award is to encourage young adults to explore adult Jewish roles in the context of family, community, and Jewish people. The requirements can be completed in six months and require a counselor.

## Scholarship Programs

Four scholarship programs have been established for Jewish Eagle Scouts who have earned the Ner Tamid emblem: the **Frank Weil Memorial Scholarship**, established in memory of Frank Weil; the **Chester M. Vernon Memorial Scholarship**, established in memory of Chester M. Vernon (provides the Scout selected with a four-year scholarship); the **Marvin & Florence Arkans Scholarship**, established by Marvin and Florence Arkans, and the **Gideon Elad Scholarship**.

## Adult Recognition

The Shofar Award is granted by local councils to recognize outstanding adult service in the promotion of Scouting among Jewish youth.

## Financial Aspects

Youth participants help pay their own way by paying dues to their pack, troop, team, or crew treasuries and by approved money-earning projects. Part of the attraction of Scouting is that synagogues, Jewish community centers, day schools, and other chartered organizations rarely incur additional expenses.

## Support Materials

The BSA publishes two magazines for its members, *Boys' Life* and *Scouting*. In addition, there are handbooks for each phase of the Scouting program, merit badge pamphlets, leaders' books, training pamphlets, program helps, and supplemental Jewish program resources.

## Unit Leadership

Unit leaders are selected and approved by the local Jewish organization. The local council and Jewish committee can assist in recruiting leadership.

## Information

Information regarding unit formation, Jewish committees on Scouting, Jewish emblems and recognitions, and other materials are available through the BSA local council service center or from the Relationships Division, S326, Boy Scouts of America, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079; 972-580-2171; [www.jewishscouting.org](http://www.jewishscouting.org).

The following Jewish organizations have endorsed the Scouting program:

- National Jewish Committee on Scouting
- Rabbinical Council of America
- Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America
- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism