

# Roundtable

BY MARK RAY

## WHAT I'VE LEARNED

### Lauren Hopper

This volunteer is growing Scouting in the inner city.

#### FactSheet

##### Lauren Hopper

**YEARS AS A SCOUT VOLUNTEER:** 6

**CURRENT CITY:** Worcester, Mass.

**CURRENT POSITION:** Scoutmaster, Troop 4

**DAY JOBS:** Bookseller at Barnes & Noble and direct-support professional for the Seven Hills Foundation

**MOST SATISFYING MOMENT IN SCOUTING:** Taking the troop's older Scouts to Washington, D.C., where four of them were selected to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Afterward, the adults walked up to find the Scouts "all sitting in prayer, praying for the fallen soldiers."

**FAVORITE CAMP AND WHY:** Treasure Valley Scout Reservation, Rutland, Mass. "I was on staff there (as aquatics director), which was a great experience, and I have all these memories of taking these guys there every year."

**THE ONLY GIRL AMONG** her brothers and cousins, Lauren Hopper grew up as a Boy Scout tagalong, always envious that she couldn't fully participate. As an adult, she has gotten that chance, following in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother, both of whom were BSA volunteers. (Her father and grandfather were active Scouters, too.)

For the past six years, Hopper has volunteered with Troop 4, chartered to the Nativity School of Worcester, a tuition-free private school that serves boys from low-income neighborhoods. Thanks to the school, the Mohegan Council and other supporters, Troop 4's program rivals those of troops with far more resources. Six of its members have become Eagle Scouts so far.

#### **WHAT'S IT LIKE TAKING INNER-CITY KIDS CAMPING FOR THE FIRST TIME?**

For most, it's their first time out of the city. We have a mentor system in place where a high school Scout picks a middle school Scout to work with. This gives new Scouts the support of someone who was in the same situation

a few years ago. A couple of them on their first trip needed the noise of the

city. One of the older Scouts downloaded city noises to his phone, and they were able to fall asleep.

#### **YOUR SCOUTS DON'T COME FROM FAMILIES WITH A SCOUTING TRADITION. HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOU?**

There's not that automatic trust and respect for Scouting that a lot of communities have. You have to be patient and flexible until you can create that trust level and that bond with the family.

#### **WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU'VE DONE THAT?**

A lot of our families are very religious, so we decided on our camping trips that we would hold nondenominational church services. That way, the parents feel comfortable letting their kids come and miss church. It's a privilege for the Scout who gets to lead the service.

**HOW MANY LANGUAGES DO YOUR FAMILIES SPEAK?** Over the years, we've had French, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Burmese, Creole, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish (Puerto Rican and Dominican dialects), Igbo, Twi,



Swazi, Ga and Swahili. There are so many different languages, it's hard to reach all of the parents. A lot of the families can't help their Scouts with bookwork at home because they don't understand what they're reading.

#### **WHAT OTHER BARRIERS DO YOU FACE?**

None of our Scouts know how to swim when they come to us. The YMCA has been wonderful at partnering with us for the use of their pool. We do so many water activities. That's a huge motivator.

**WHEN DID YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND THESE SCOUTS' HOME SITUATIONS?** My first year, I asked a Scout in a board of review what he'd learned in Scouting

# Camping Nights, Defined

No glamping allowed. Here's what does and doesn't count.



that he used in his everyday life. He said: how to give first aid for bullet wounds and how to remain calm while you're applying first aid. We know he had to use that Scouting skill.

**BUT THEY'VE OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?** The first year at summer camp was what you'd expect it to be for the first year. The past two years, I've had Scouts come up to me asking to switch into our troop. Our Scouts have so much fun, everybody looks up to them and they win all the activities. It's just been amazing to see this transformation.

**HOW ARE YOUR FORMER SCOUTS DOING?** We've had 82 Scouts, including our current members. Of those who aged out, all but one have gone on to college. Of our four Scouts who aged out last year, three got full academic scholarships to the college of their choice, and one got a partial scholarship to a very prestigious program at the college of his choice.

**SO THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?** It takes a huge community effort, but it's worth it. If you could take just one kid out of the projects and put him into college because of the Scouts, you would have a success story. And we've had all these Scouts who now know what opportunities lie outside the city and can understand the importance of receiving a higher education. I hope what we have achieved can be replicated in other cities. ✦

 **READ MORE** advice from other Scout leaders at [scoutingmagazine.org/wil](http://scoutingmagazine.org/wil)

**IN SCOUTING'S EARLY YEARS,** camping was pretty simple. You slept under the stars. Or the roof over your head was an Army surplus pup tent — or maybe a lean-to shelter you built. These days, Scouts spend the night in cabins, yurts and museums — or even on aircraft carriers.

So what kind of camping counts for Boy Scout advancement? Read on to find out.

**WHAT DO THE BOY SCOUT RANK REQUIREMENTS SAY?** For Tenderfoot requirement 1b, a Scout must spend at least one night on a patrol or troop campout in a tent he helped pitch. For Second Class requirement 1a, a Scout must have tallied five separate troop/patrol activities, at least two of which must include overnight camping. First Class requirement 1a calls for 10 separate troop/patrol activities since joining, at least three of which must include overnight camping. In all cases, the Scout must “spend the night in a tent that you pitch or other structure that you help erect, such as a lean-to, snow cave or teepee.”

**WHAT DO THE CAMPING MERIT BADGE**

**REQUIREMENTS SAY?** For requirement 9a, a Scout must camp in a tent or under the stars at least 20 nights at designated Scouting activities and events, which may include one long-term camp experience of up to six consecutive nights.

**WHAT ABOUT AN OVERNIGHT IN THE CHURCH BASEMENT?** For rank advancement, that could count as one of the troop/patrol activities but not as overnight camping. It wouldn't count for the Camping merit badge.

**WHAT ABOUT CABIN CAMPING AT OUR COUNCIL CAMP?** Same answer as above.

**WHAT ABOUT CAMPING WITH A FAMILY OR SCHOOL GROUP?** That wouldn't count. Both the rank and merit badge requirements specify that the camping must be part of a patrol or troop activity.


**WHAT ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN A COUNCIL HIGH-ADVENTURE TREK?** Both the trek (up to six nights) and any shakedown trips that involve camping would count toward the Camping merit badge. These

trips wouldn't count for rank advancement, which specifies troop and patrol activities.

**OUR SUMMER CAMP SETS UP TENTS BEFORE WE ARRIVE. IS THAT OK?** For the Camping merit badge, yes. For rank advancement, no.

**AM I MISSING ANY OTHER DETAILS?** Be sure to look at the requirements that surround the camping requirements. For example, on one of the Second Class campouts, a Scout must explain how he practiced Leave No Trace (requirement 1b), and on a separate campout, he must choose his campsite (requirement 1c). For requirement 9b of the Camping merit badge, a Scout must do two specific activities on any of his campouts, such as hiking up a mountain or planning and carrying out a snow camping experience.

**CAN CAMPING NIGHTS COUNT FOR BOTH RANK AND MERIT BADGE ADVANCEMENT?** Yes, since the requirements match up and have the same basic intent. ✦

 **FIND MORE ANSWERS** to common questions at [scoutingmagazine.org/faq](http://scoutingmagazine.org/faq)



# Bright Lights, Fast Cars

Lessons from the Pinewood Derby World Championship.



**FOR THE PAST** three years, Times Square has been home to the Pinewood Derby World Championship, organized by the Greater New York Councils. The 2017 event attracted 276 Cub Scouts — representing 26 different states and 60 BSA councils — along with more than 2,000 spectators.

Chances are, your pack's or district's Pinewood Derby isn't quite that large. But Matt Gaor, who has chaired the New York event all three years, says the lessons he has learned apply at every level. It's true what

they say: If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.

## The Three P's

Gaor says your Pinewood Derby will be successful if you remember the three P's.

"Make sure you've got the right *people*, wrap it in *process* and have the right *policies* in place," he says. "You have to think of this like a project you're managing and break it down into manageable chunks."

► **PEOPLE** means having the right volunteers in the right roles. For

example, Gaor's safety chief once ran airport security for John F. Kennedy International Airport. You won't need that level of expertise in a church basement, but you do need someone who understands the race-management software you're running.

Gaor formed teams for command, program, logistics, administration and public safety so every task was covered, and he used the Incident Command System structure to create clear lines of communication. Any volunteer who noticed a problem could report it up the chain of

command to his or her chief, who would take it to the leadership team.

Gaor also made sure the head of each team had a deputy ready to take over in an emergency (or to move up to the chief's role the next year).

"By definition, a deputy is someone who can replace the chief if something should go wrong," he says.

► **PROCESS** means thinking through everything from setup through tear-down long before race day. A good example is electric power.

"Where are you plugging things in?" Gaor asks. "How are you doing electric cord management? Are you duct-taping cords to the floor so people don't trip over them?"

For a Pinewood Derby, Gaor says it's important to have a sensible inspection process. For example, if a boy's car is too heavy, the inspector shouldn't send him away to fix it without completing the inspection. Otherwise, the boy might end up standing in line again only to find out something else is wrong.

"And have an expert," Gaor says. "If you have two inspectors, one of them should be the guy the other guy turns to and says, 'Is this OK?'"

► **POLICY** means rules — especially the rules around what gets a car disqualified and how heats are run. The New York rules weren't clear enough the first year, and Gaor had to deal with more than 300 emails from parents.

"For year two, we really put our thinking caps on and went nuts with the rule base," he says.

It's not enough just to have rules. You also have to communicate them clearly. Rules for the Pinewood Derby World Championship are posted on

the event's website and cover it all: car specifications, the check-in process, the number of heats and who gets trophies.

"The big mission was that it should be as seamless as we can make it for the boys and as pleasant as possible for the adults," Gaor says.

### The Fourth P

There's one more P — technically, a B.P.: You have to Be Prepared.

"I can't stress the Boy Scout motto enough," Gaor says. "We over-prepare for this thing. We may put 500 or 600 hours of preparation into this six- or eight-hour event."

You probably won't need that much planning for your event, but Gaor says it's important not to get complacent, especially if you run the same basic activity year after year.

"If nothing changes, you need do

nothing," he says. "But something always changes, so Be Prepared."

In 2017, for example, rain forced the Pinewood Derby World Championship out of Times Square, but Gaor already had a rain location lined up in the nearby Marriott Marquis. Another year, a Scout accidentally unplugged power to the racetrack, forcing a delay in racing. Fortunately, a Scouter on hand was also a magician.

"He had all his junk in the trunk of his car," Gaor says. "He ran over and grabbed it and entertained the boys for the 30 minutes we needed to recover from this issue."

Thanks to that magician — and the behind-the-scenes magic of Gaor and his team — the Pinewood Derby World Championship was, indeed, a world-class event. ✦





# Red-Handed, Red-Faced

What happens when someone cheats on a test.



## The Dilemma

Best friends Jill and R.T. seem like polar opposites. Jill easily gets straight A's and will probably qualify for a full ride at a dozen universities — even though her family is so rich she doesn't need the money. R.T. gets A's and B's most of the time, but he really has to work for them. And since his family can't afford college, he knows his future is riding on every grade he earns.

R.T.'s big problem is that he's a terrible test-taker. He pays attention in class, understands the material and does well on his homework. But put a test paper in front of him, and his brain turns to jelly. (He gets queasy when he thinks about having to take the ACT later this year.)

The day of a crucial geometry test, R.T. decides to cheat off his friend. He copies only a couple of Jill's answers — and even works backward to show how he got to those answers — but

then Jill looks over and sees what he's doing. Jill says nothing at the time but confronts R.T. in the hallway after class.

## For Discussion

Have your youth read the dilemma, then discuss these questions:

- ▶ Should Jill turn in her friend? Why or why not?
- ▶ Does the amount of cheating R.T. did affect your response? Why or why not?
- ▶ Does the fact that R.T. could work backward from the answers he copied matter? Why or why not?
- ▶ If Jill does turn in her friend, is there anything she can do to soften the blow?
- ▶ If she doesn't turn in her friend, does that make her just as guilty? Why or why not?
- ▶ Imagine Jill decides not to turn in her friend but also makes him

promise to sign up for a test-prep class. Is that a fair solution? Why or why not?

- ▶ R.T. really needs to make good grades to get into college. Does that make a difference in whether his action is justified? Why or why not?
- ▶ R.T.'s main problem is test-taking, not learning the material. Does that make a difference in whether his action is justified? Why or why not?

Finally, invite your youth to roleplay different outcomes for this scenario, with an adult leader playing the role of the teacher. Discuss which option is the most fair to everyone involved. ♣



# Treasure the Tradition

One volunteer's winning formula for teaching the Indian Lore merit badge.

## DALTON SMITH'S TROOP 241

Scouts were volunteering at an American Indian festival in Canton, Ga., when he had an epiphany. The event, he realized, was more than just a good service opportunity. It was also a great time for Scouts to work on the Indian Lore merit badge. After all, where else could Scouts find dance competitions, crafts, skills demonstrations and representatives of multiple tribes all in one place at one time?

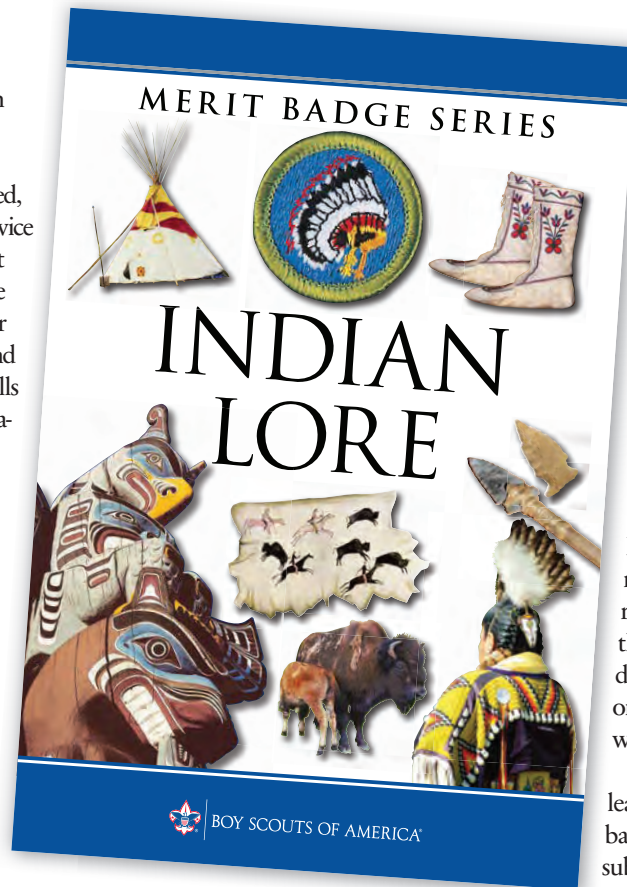
"Instead of the Scouts learning from a summer camp instructor, they're learning from Native Americans who are passionate about their heritage," he says.

Six years later, Smith runs the Indian Lore merit badge workshop at the festival each May for the Appalachian Trail District, part of the Atlanta Area Council. He says it's a great way to leverage the event's resources and introduce new Scouts to the merit badge process. Here are four tips for doing the same thing at festivals in your area.

### Do Your Homework

Before Scouts go to the festival, Smith connects with individual exhibitors who can help teach specific requirements. He makes sure they understand the details of the requirements and tells them when to expect Scouts to arrive.

"Over the years, these exhibitors now are looking for these Scouts," he says. "They now tailor their program to the Scouts because they know what the requirements are."



### Counselors vs. Instructors

Smith doesn't ask exhibitors to register as merit badge counselors. Instead, he sends small groups of Scouts around the festival alongside registered counselors.

"The majority of the instruction is done by the exhibitors, and the actual counselor is pretty much handling the procedural portion and just making sure that exhibitor is covering adequately that portion," he says.

This approach aligns with the *Guide to Advancement* ([scouting.org/GuideToAdvancement.aspx](http://scouting.org/GuideToAdvancement.aspx)). As page 50 explains, "it is permissible for guest speakers, guest experts or others

who are not merit badge counselors to assist in the counseling process . . . under the direction of a registered and approved counselor who is readily available on-site and provides personal supervision to all applicable BSA policies and procedures."

### Partials Are OK

Smith's program, which runs two hours per session, isn't designed to yield completed merit badges. Instead, Scouts have to complete some requirements back home. For example, requirement 4a has them learn three games, which they can do at the festival, and teach one game to a group of Scouts, which they must do later.

"By design, the boys will leave with a partial to give the badge a little more credibility or substance," Smith says.

### Make Advancement Fun

To Smith, earning a merit badge should be as natural as getting a suntan when you go outside.

"We're having fun, we're learning and, as we go through it, the actual earning of the merit badge should just be the natural progression," he says. "At the end of the day, my No. 1 responsibility is to keep you safe. No. 2 is to make sure you're having a good time while you're learning." ♣



**FOR MORE TIPS** on teaching merit badges to your Scouts: [scoutingmagazine.org/mbclinic](http://scoutingmagazine.org/mbclinic)

# A Good Kind of Scary

Understanding and fighting anxiety disorders.

**DR. BRIDGET WALKER** MAKES her living scaring people, and she's proud of it. A practitioner of cognitive behavioral therapy, she knows the best way to fight fear is to face it, as she describes in her new book, *Anxiety Relief for Kids* (New Harbinger Publications, 2017).

## Defining Anxiety Disorder

A little anxiety can be a good thing — prompting a child to study for his big test or practice for her piano recital — but a lot of anxiety can be a problem.

“The dividing line is when the fear becomes so great that it causes a lot of distress and/or it makes the person not able to do certain things,” Walker says.

Anxiety disorders among children are very common and are not something kids grow out of.

“Untreated or inadequately treated anxiety issues in children are associated with greater and more severe mental health issues in adulthood,” she says. “So it's really important to address them.”

## Avoidance and Safety Behaviors

When faced with anxiety, kids engage in what Walker calls “avoidance and safety behaviors.” The boy who's afraid of dogs won't go to soccer practice because there might be a lot of dogs at the park. The girl who is a perfectionist over-prepares for tests to an excessive degree.

“What we know is that those behaviors in the short run will calm your fears, but in the long run, each time you do that you teach your brain to be afraid,”

Walker says. “It's like you're telling your brain you can't handle it.”

Unfortunately, parents inadvertently feed their children's anxiety by enabling it. For example, a parent will pick up a child when a dog comes near — even though the dog is on a leash and not at all aggressive.

## Exploring Exposures

The cognitive behavioral therapy approach is the opposite of avoidance. First, the counselor figures out exactly what the child fears in a particular situation (the fear structure). Then he or she develops a series of exposures that allow the child to face fear in

controlled doses.

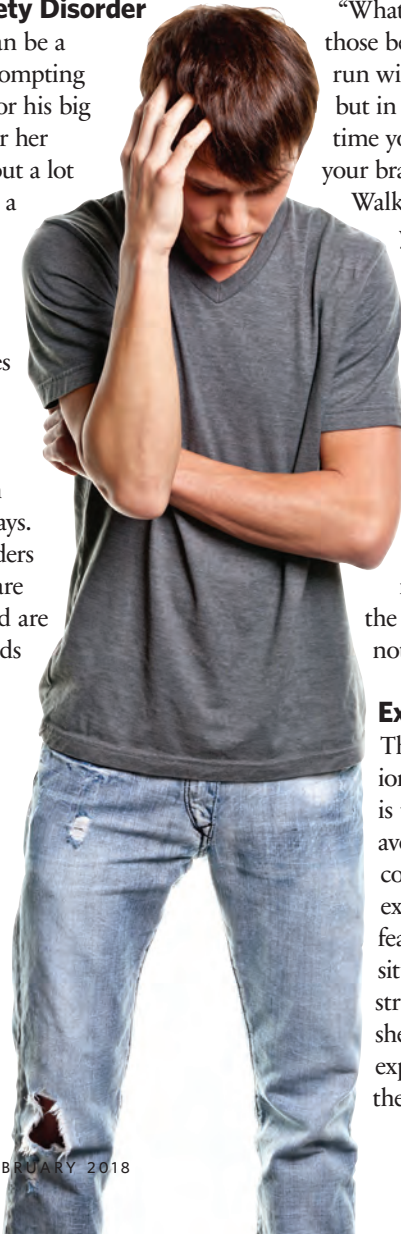
It's essential, Walker says, to figure out an accurate fear structure before planning exposures. In *Anxiety Relief for Kids*, she describes two girls who both get good grades but are afraid to speak up in class. Camilla has perfectionistic tendencies, so an exposure for her might be to try answering a teacher's question when she's only 50 percent sure of the answer. Haley has social anxiety — she worries about what other kids think of her — so an exposure for her might be to drop her books in the hallway and see if other kids react the way she fears they will — by laughing at her or shunning her in the future.

## Finding Help

Walker encourages parents who are worried about their kids to seek out counselors experienced in cognitive behavioral therapy. Several professional organizations have locator services on their websites, including the Anxiety and Depression Association of America ([adaa.org](http://adaa.org)), the International OCD Foundation ([iocdf.org](http://iocdf.org)), and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies ([abct.org](http://abct.org)).

Don't just go with the first counselor you find, though. Instead, ask them to describe in detail a treatment plan they've used.

“I think it's important for parents not to be intimidated,” Walker says. “Just ask the questions.” ✦



 **FIND MORE** parenting advice at [scoutingmagazine.org/yourkids](http://scoutingmagazine.org/yourkids)