

# Ethics in Scouting

Can we do more?



# 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.”



# Advancement Requirements that Deal with Ethics

- **Tenderfoot:** Repeat from memory and explain in your own words the Scout Oath, Law, motto, and slogan.
- **For all Levels:** Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your everyday life.



# Merit Badges that address Ethics

- American Business
- Athletics
- Backpacking
- Citizenship
- Family Life
- Journalism



# Other Resources:

- “Youth’s Frontier: Making Ethical Decisions”
  - Somewhat dated (1985) and brief
- DELTA Ethics in Action Program  
(Viking Council, Univ. of Minnesota)
- <http://www.usscouts.org/profbvr/ethics/>



# A different approach

- Address ethics and decision making “head on”
  - We promise to keep ourselves **physically strong,**  
**mentally awake and morally straight**
- Give Ethics the same level of importance as the Citizenship and Physical Fitness Merit badges



# Proposed Ethics Program

- “Be prepared”
  - Ethics requires thinking and preparation
  - Use a Merit Badge type pamphlet
- Work in small discussion groups of 6-12 Scouts
  - Life Scout and above (or 13 and older)
  - Meet a half hour before the regular meeting for 6-8 weeks
- Caution: Stress the importance of discretion and respect



# Outline:

- Be clear about the subject:
  - What are Values, Virtues, and Ethics?
  - What is meant by Integrity and Character?
  - Why be ethical?
- Compare Scout Law to other codes?
  - Ten Commandments
  - West Point Cadet Code
  - Business codes of ethics



# Virtues

- Discuss the virtues listed in the Scout Law
- Additional virtues
  - Perseverance
  - Wisdom
  - Self-control
  - Humility and civility
  - and others



# Key concept: How to make decisions

- More than one basis for decision making
  - Absolute rules
  - Act for the common good
  - Golden Rule
- Dilemmas - When you are forced to violate a virtue
- Importance of Integrity



# Leave No Trace

- Why is Leave No Trace considered an ethic?
- Why ethics are sometimes more effective than laws



# Material Available:

- Merit Badge pamphlet
- Worksheet for development of an ethical code (adapted from “Moral Intelligence”)
- Merit Badge requirements
- Merit Badge “Workbook”



# Our Results

- We have worked with a group of 6-12 Scouts
- Want to submit to the BSA to be considered as a Merit Badge
- Scouts feel that it should be Eagle required.



## For more information:

A draft of a Merit Badge on Ethics pamphlet can be downloaded from the Troop 351 website:

<http://troop.bsa351.org>

Please send any comments and suggestions to:

[john.shriver@uah.edu](mailto:john.shriver@uah.edu)

