

Boy Scout Troop 549
Information and Policies for Scouts and Parents

(Rev. 05/2006)

*All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind are convinced that the
fate of empires depends on the education of the youth.*

--Aristotle

Introduction and History of Troop 549

Welcome to Troop 549! We are glad that you are a part of our Scouting Family! You are setting your son out to on the grand adventure of Scouting. This is a tremendously important and rewarding endeavor that you will be able to share.

The values we strive to instill in each boy are based on those found in the Boy Scout Oath and Law (see Boy Scout Handbook). There are three aims to scouting:

- Growth in moral strength and character
- Development of citizenship
- Development of physical, mental and emotional fitness

This handbook will help you and your son understand how the troop functions and each of your rolls within the troop.

Our Chartered Organization is St. Paul Presbyterian Church, 7200 Bellaire Blvd. (located at the corner of Bellaire Blvd. and Hwy. 59). Our troop was founded in 1957, and we are proud of the service that our Scouts have given and the achievements they have earned over these many decades. Our Troop members come from families who live all around Houston, The Meadows, Alief, Stafford, Missouri City, Katy and Sugarland. We are a Troop with boys of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

The following information will explain the operations and policies of Troop 549 and is intended for Scouts and parents of the Scouts who are now in the troop or plan to join the troop.

Youth Membership

To join Boy Scouts, a boy must be 11 years old and in the fifth grade, or 10 1/2 years old and in the fifth grade and have earned the Arrow of Light Award as a Webelos Scout (Cub Scouting), but not yet have reached the age of 18.

Usually a boy should visit more than one troop before he chooses to join one. It is best to choose a troop that is near one's home so that it is convenient for him to get to activities. The boy's parents should accompany him to the first meeting. After a discussion with one of the Adult Leaders, the boy and his parents will fill out the application form, pay the troop registration fee, and receive a BSA health history/physical/consent to medical treatment form, to be turned in within two weeks. A Scout must be registered (Troop registration fee paid) to participate in Troop activities and campouts (as per BSA National policy).

Adult Membership

The operation of a successful Scout Troop depends upon the services of volunteer adult leaders. Our Scoutmaster (SM) is Rob Heinly (713-729-0634(h)/713-291-3460(c)). Our Chartered Organization Representative (COR), who is the liaison between the church and the Boy Scout unit, is Dr. Robert Moore, (713-774-0314). Our Committee Chairman (CC) is Shari Heinly, (713-729-0634(h)/713-291-1463(c)).

Adults who wish to hold a leadership position must be registered with the Council and complete Youth Protection Training (available on the SHAC website: www.samhoustonbsa.org). Those adults who wish to become Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM), Committee Chairman, or a Scoutmaster must complete Basic

Adult Leader Training and Youth Protection Training. Basic Adult Leader Training is available to any adult who is interested in understanding what Scouting is about and who would like to have some fun!

Meetings

The Scouts meet every Monday night in the Fellowship Hall/Currie Hall at St. Paul, from 7:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Scouts must stay on the premises while a Troop Meeting is ongoing.

Parent meetings (often called committee meetings because the Troop Committee Members give their reports to you at this time) are held on the first Monday of every month in the Church Library or Parlor, from 7:30 p.m. till about 8:45 p.m. It is important to attend so that you get all the information on activities that your son may have inadvertently neglected to give you! Scouts are busy guys!

Registration Fees

The registration fee for youth membership in Troop 549 is \$50.00 per year. This covers the fee for registration with the Sam Houston Area Council, a subscription to Boy's Life magazine, the troop (BSA) accident insurance policy, and partially pays for the badges and awards earned by the boy, routine supplies and equipment and other troop expenses. (Note: the cost of awards and advancement in any troop far exceeds this registration fee.) If a family already subscribes to Boy's Life, the annual dues are reduced by the yearly cost of the magazine at the request of the parents, at the time annual fees are due.

Adults may become registered with the Troop by completing a BSA registration form and paying \$20.00 to the Troop. This secures BSA medical insurance coverage for the adult while participating in Scouting activities.

*All annual registration fees (adult and boys) must be received by October 31 of each year.

*In the event of financial hardship, written request for special payment arrangements must be submitted to the Troop Treasurer. Such a payment plan is subject to approval by an executive session of the Chairman, Treasurer, and another delegated Committee Member.

Scout Dues

The Scouts are encouraged to be responsible for some of their expenses, therefore the boys have made it a Troop policy that each Scout should pay 25 cents each week (or one dollar at the beginning of each month) to his Patrol Leader (PL), to be collected by the Troop (boy) Treasurer and deposited in the Troop account by the (adult) Troop Treasurer. This is in keeping with the Scout Law, A Scout is Thrifty, and helps to pay his way.

Parental Assistance

Scout Leaders are there to provide guidance and encouragement. Parents can do much to help their son by expecting him to follow the Troop rules for safe behavior and to show respect for his Leaders, his fellow Scouts, and himself at all times.

All parents are encouraged to become a part of the Troop Committee or Adult Leadership, which results in a great Troop program for the boys. Parents of each Scout are expected to contribute to the success of the Troop by devoting time and effort to Troop activities.

Ways in which each parent can help include:

- Helping your son to be properly uniformed & promptly paying Troop fees.
- Being on time to events (especially campouts).
- Volunteering to drive to campouts
- Encouraging your son to participate fully in Scouting activities & projects.
- Attending monthly parents meetings (held the first Monday every month), to better understand the program and advancement process & to get vital information.
- Attend Courts of Honor and Scout Sunday Celebrations.
- Registering as an adult leader with BSA.
- Giving time & sharing your talents
- Perhaps register as a Merit Badge Counselor.

Camping

Troop 549 plans one campout every month. The camping/event calendar is prepared by the Scouts in the Leadership positions every August and is given to all of the Scouts and Leaders in September. If you require a copy of the calendar, come to a parent's meeting and ask for one. All of the monthly information is discussed at these meetings.

While camping is encouraged and definitely part of the Scouting program, it is not a requirement that the Scout attend every campout. Some camping trips are required as part of team building in preparation for adventure patrols, but that prerequisite is discussed in advance and must be completed if the Scout wishes to participate in that event.

Cost of monthly campouts is \$15.00** per person (Scout, Adult, Leader, or youth guest) for food and patrol chuckbox supplies. Each patrol must plan its menu, purchase food and prepare its own meals, therefore camping fees must be paid to their Patrol Leader on the Monday (five days) before the campout. If the fee is not paid, or arrangements made, the Scout is not to show up on Friday, expecting to go on the camping trip. Camping fees are not refundable for any reason due to the fact that the food for the weekend is already purchased, unless the scout or his parent contact his Patrol Leader and the Scoutmaster NO LATER than the Wednesday before the campout. Cash payment is preferred as a boy will be doing the shopping.

There is also a \$10.00 per person fuel fee for each campout, which should be given to the driver of the vehicle in which you or your son will be riding.

**Additional expenses for day events, activities or special stops (for snacks, meals, or mid-trip meals) will be announced in advance. In general, it is a good idea for each Scout to take a few dollars for refueling stops at a convenience store/gas station on the campout return trip. We prefer that each Scout learn to handle his own personal finances responsibly.

Our camping and activity schedule is planned by the boys, one year in advance. Check the calendar and let our Transportation - Camping Chairman know that you will be going! It's a good time to join in the outdoor experience and have some fun while the boys show you their skills!

Parents, adults, and siblings may go camping with the Troop. Siblings must be with their parents at all times and may not interfere with the activities of the Scouts. Siblings may not sleep in the tents with Scouts. Scouts may not sleep away from their patrols unless it is to satisfy a merit badge requirement (such as Wilderness Survival).

Guests, Adult Leaders and Parents will camp with the Leadership patrol and will pay their camping fees to the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) on the same Monday that fees are due for the campout. These individuals will be included on the Leadership Duty Roster for duties and are strongly discouraged from becoming involved with their Scout's patrol. You may plan to read a good book, take a nature hike or go into a nearby town, etc., as long as you communicate your plans with the Senior Patrol Leader and the Adult Leaders.

The boys are there to develop a "team" of Scouts with their patrol. We encourage them to provide their own solutions to difficulties which will arise and provide supervision for safety and guidance as needed.

The Troop will leave on time for each event or campout. Unless otherwise stated, we gather at the church at 5:30 p.m., load the trailer and vehicles and depart by 6:30 p.m.

*Scouts are advised to eat before arriving at the church since the only stops being made that evening are for gas, not meals. A map will be left on the Scout room door for latecomers, whose parents will have to deliver them to the campsite.

Transportation and Camp Site Fees

Parents are asked to help by driving the boys to and from campouts and are invited to camp with the Troop. Usually, if everyone chooses to drive on two campouts a year, every weekend is covered.

BSA policy allows persons 16 years of age, with 6 months driving experience and a valid drivers license (not permit), no record of accidents or moving violations to drive on a camping trip so long as there is an adult in the vehicle who is 21+ years old.

*However, except in the case of medical emergencies, our Troop policy is that all drivers transporting youths must be 21 years or older. Scouts with valid drivers licenses may drive their siblings (Scouts) or others to Troop meetings only with the permission of all parents. Local Tour Permits are required by BSA for trips of less than 500 miles one way, and National Tour Permits are required for trips of more than 500 miles. Standard passenger vehicles must be safe and meet minimum State insurance requirements. We drive with our headlights on and carry cellular phones as often as possible to facilitate safety.

Campsite fees are paid by the Troop. Adult drivers are asked to pay for gas and any vehicle entrance/parking fees; however you may wish to purchase a Texas Parks and Wildlife Conservation Passport which allows your vehicle and up to eight passengers to enter without a park fee. It is available for \$50.00 per year through the TPW at any State Park and may be used by your family on personal trips.

The Troop has an annual Group Entrance Permit for the State Parks which covers most, if not all, of the entrance fees.

For each campout or event there will be a designated parent to be the communication liaison, to be called in case of an emergency or other need. The Camping/Transportation Coordinator will give out this person's telephone number to the parents of participating Scouts. It is the parents' responsibility to ask when the event will be ending and to be on time to retrieve their Scout(s).

All Scouts are expected to help unload and store equipment properly upon return from a camping trip. Please do not take them home until this is done!

Summer Camp / Winter Camp

Our Troop goes to Summer Camp, usually, the last full week in July and to Winter Camp between December 26th - 31st. These Long Term Camps are an excellent opportunity for the boys to earn Merit Badges, enjoy nature, meet new friends and practice their Scouting Skills.

Troop 549 goes to El Rancho Cima, Camp Pirtle, Camp Karankawa, Camp Strake, Sid Richardson, along with other camps. Attending these long term camps is highly recommended. The benefits are numerous, but include the opportunity to earn 4 or more merit badges, team building, leadership opportunities, and of course a lot of fun!

The costs of Summer Camp and Winter Camp varies slightly from year to year. Each event costs between \$180-\$200. Costs are kept to a minimum by providing parent transportation to and from the event.

It is recommended that a new Scout should attend at least two monthly camping trips with the Troop before attending Summer or Winter Camp, as these events can be tough on a first time camper.

*Campership assistance for Summer Camp (within the Sam Houston Area Council) or Philmont High Adventure can be arranged if you contact the Troop Treasurer or the Committee Chairman in writing as soon as you know you may have need of assistance. (Assistance is available through council resources, but applications must be completed at least three months in advance. Parents are asked to pay for a portion of the fee according to their ability to pay).

Financial Assistance for Long-Term Camps outside the Sam Houston Area Council and Winter Camp

The Troop wishes every boy to have the opportunity to attend long-term camps (Summer and Winter Camp) with the troop. There are many benefits, which are described above. If the Troop is attending Summer Camp outside of the Sam Houston Area Council, the Troop may provide financial assistance, which will be reviewed confidentially, on a case-by case basis. Please contact the Committee Chairman or Troop Treasurer in writing at least three months prior to the deadline for payment of fees. This policy also applies to Winter Camp, since the Sam Houston Area Council does not have a campership program for Winter Camp.

The Scout Law states, "A Scout is Thrifty." A Scout should help to pay his own way. The Scouts have the opportunity to help earn some or all of their Summer and Winter Camp fees by participating in the fall popcorn sale. More details are discussed in the Fundraising section. If a Scout does not do his best to sell popcorn to help pay his own way, the Troop Campership Sub-Committee (Chairman, Treasurer and a

third Committee Member) may choose not to approve the request for financial assistance. The Scout should strive to sell enough popcorn to pay at least 50% of the cost of attending each camp.

Day Events/Special Activities/Service Projects

When the Scouts plan their program for the year, they include occasional "extra" activities such as bowling, a movie, pizza party, etc. These are optional and are included to add a day of fun for any Scout who wants to spend time with his Scout brothers. It fosters team building and friendship as well as Scout spirit.

Other special events include Scout Sunday at St. Paul Presbyterian Church, a time to share fellowship with the congregation of our Chartering Organization. The Scouts are an integral part of this service and truly make it an experience for the whole family.

Our unit participates in several Service Projects throughout the Year. Some of these include Scouting for Food, St. Paul's Halloween Carnival, Eagle Service Projects and others as they become known.

Adventure/High Adventure Programs

Whenever adult leadership is available, the Troop conducts an adventure trip for experienced Scouts, who are at least 14 years old and who meet other trip criteria as set by the leadership of the crew. It is an opportunity to strengthen their friendships in Scouting and to challenge them to use the skills they have learned over several years with the Troop. These trips are planned individually by the boys and adult leaders. Contracts for required campouts, hikes, fees, etc. must be adhered to in order that a Scout may attend. BSA and Troop safety policies are followed. Advance preparation outside of regular Troop meeting time is usually required.

Every other year, Troop 549 has taken a high adventure trip lasting about two weeks, to Philmont Scout Ranch, in New Mexico or other places. Most of these trips are limited to boys who are 14 years old by January 1st, (or have completed 8th grade) the year of the trip. These trips can be arduous and may involve backpacking with heavy packs, and other challenges. The cost is about \$650.00 per person, including travel arrangements. Extra personal gear is necessary, such as a framed backpack, hiking boots, rain gear. The cost of these items is determined by the Scout and his family and is additional. It is wise for boys to begin to save for this trek a year in advance.

This is not a required event and while some financial assistance is available from BSA, the Scout and his family must pay most of the fee. The Troop is not obligated to pay any of this fee but in years past we have secured funds from generous friends and leaders. Portions of these fees are refundable only if the Scout is unable to attend due to personal illness.

Fund-Raisers

Troop 549 works hard to keep costs to a minimum. The Troop participates in several fund-raisers each year to help cover the costs of equipment, supplies, and special camping.

Every fall, we participate in the annual Boy Scout Popcorn sales, the proceeds of which go toward each boy's Summer Camp and/or Winter Camp fund. Scouts (and parents if they wish) are encouraged to sell popcorn. This provides a way that each boy may help finance his own Scouting Adventures. Any unused funds or fees will revert to the Troop general account when a boy leaves the Troop.

Other fund raisers include Egg Roll sales, selling pizza and drinks at the Church Halloween Carnival and occasionally hosting a pancake breakfast, BBQ lunch, spaghetti dinner or car wash at the Church. Boys are never forced to participate, nor are they given a quota. These fund-raisers are designated to be shared directly with the boys through the Troop general account, which will be used to purchase Troop equipment, pay state park campsite fees, and other necessary Troop expenses.

Advancement & Boards of Review (BOR)

There are many definitions of advancement, but the Scouting definition might simply be "the art of meeting a challenge." Boy Scout advancement provides the ladder of skills that a Scout climbs at his own pace, and the higher he climbs, the more challenging his tasks.

There are four steps of advancement:

Upon joining the Troop, a boy will be awarded the Scout badge, after they meet with the Scoutmaster to review the requirements listed in their Scout Handbook. Under the guidance of his SM and the Leadership patrol (SPL, ASPL, PL & JASM's) he uses his Boy Scout Handbook to complete specific tasks and develop specific skills in order to earn additional ranks. After having a conference with the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster, to determine that all requirements have been fulfilled, all candidates for the Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life and Eagle Ranks appear before a Board of Review for rank advancement.

This group consists of at least three and not more than six adults, including at least one Trained and Registered Adult Leader. The Committee Chairman and Advancement Chairman are regular members of these boards. Parents and committee members may assist with Boards of Review for rank advancement if they are interested. Ask for the guidelines from the Committee Chairman or Advancement Coordinator.

The reviews are friendly, moderately formal (so that the Scout realizes it is important to be prepared for the review and that the adults are prepared to listen to what he has to say), and usually last between 10 and 20 minutes, depending upon the rank. The Scout must be in full Class A uniform and must bring his book to the review, or the review will be delayed until he can properly present himself, or his Board of Review will be rescheduled for another day.

It is Troop policy that Boards of Review (BOR) for advancement must be scheduled no later than the Monday before the Court of Honor and only after the SM conference has been held. Impromptu boards may be held on campouts if the Scout is prepared and the SM conference has been completed, provided that there is a Trained and Registered leader and two other adults (not ASM or SM) to convene the review.

Notification must be given to the Advancement Chairman or the Committee Chairman one week before the Board of Review so that the committee members may be notified to put the BOR on their calendars. On the Troop calendar there are asterisks to note specific Mondays when BORs' may be scheduled. It is not to be assumed that adults will be available.

Please see the Troop records for proper procedure for conducting, counseling, deferring a BOR, and conducting a BOR for disciplinary purposes.

Health & Safety

Sam Houston Area Council prohibits the use of sheath knives and hatchets (hand axes) on Council property. The boys do not need them. Please do not buy them. Troop 549 prohibits them on all activities, regardless of where we are camping. A simple regulation BSA Scout knife or two-bladed pocket knife is more than adequate. A Boy Scout must learn the proper handling and use of a knife and ax, and demonstrate this knowledge before he may carry a knife or enter the ax yard at camp. Troop 549 uses the Totin' Chip to signify that a Scout has earned this approval. If he has not earned the chip, he may not use his knife. Abuse of sharp tools will result in confiscation of the knife or ax. Parents will be notified if the misbehavior continues.

Troop 549 has its own camping equipment and encourages the boys to use this rather than personal gear. Occasionally, the need arises that a boy may bring a tent, but we encourage camping with the buddy system (if the tent size is adequate) since it is a safety procedure and encourages the boy to work with others and in a group. The Troop has propane lanterns which are never to be taken inside of a tent and will be used under adult supervision. Liquid fuels (including charcoal lighting fluid) are not allowed on BSA property and are not to be taken camping with the Troop at any time, other than Philmont or a specially designated high adventure trip and only under the direct supervision of a registered adult who has been trained to use the liquid fuel equipment.

Weapons of any sort (including sling shots) will not be taken on any campout or event, nor are knives or other equipment to be used as a weapon under any circumstances.

Scouts are strictly forbidden from having cellular phones at any time during a campout. Please leave them at home. Adults are allowed to have cell phones for communication with other drivers and for emergency purposes. Scouts are forbidden from using any cell phone during a campout. Cell phones, Gameboys, electronic games, radios, headsets, etc. are not part of the outdoor experience and are not to be used during the campouts. They will be confiscated and returned to a parent or guardian upon return from the trip. However, electronic games or music players with headphones may be used while traveling at the discretion of the driver, but they must be left in the vehicle during the campout. **Troop 549 and the drivers are not responsible for loss or damage to any item left in a vehicle. Bring your electronic items at your own risk.** Occasionally, the Scoutmaster and Troop Committee may request that all electronic devices remain at home.

Scouts will refrain from damaging or abusing equipment belonging to the Troop or another Scout. He will be held responsible for replacing items which are damaged or ruined as a result of willful misconduct.

We discourage the use of profanity - A Scout is Clean, in body, mind, and spirit. Scouts are expected to follow the 12 points of the Scout Law. While we know there will be disagreements and general rough housing, excessively disruptive, physically aggressive, or threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Acts of willful harm to another (Scout or Adult) will result in an immediate suspension of privileges and a Board of Review for Discipline.

Parents may be called to retrieve their son from a campout or event if the Scout acts in a disrespectful, unsafe or harmful manner.

A Scout will receive a clear warning from an Adult Leader, to be followed by counseling by the SM and another Adult Leader, to give the Scout an opportunity to find his own solutions.

If necessary, the Scouts' parents will be called for a conference (called a Board of Review for Counseling), to help devise a plan of improvement (a Troop Contract).

If the behavior persists, or a Troop contract is violated, he may lose the privilege of attending the next Troop campout or event, possibly including Summer or Winter Camp. In the event of this happening, the Troop is not obligated to refund money already deposited with Council camps or spent toward attending the event.

Medications

It is required that parents communicate whether their son is taking any medications, the reason for use of medication, and if possible provide a detailed note including instructions for dosage, administration, side effects, food interactions, etc. to the Health and Safety Coordinator at the time the health and consent forms are given to the Troop.

If the Scout will need medication while he is on a campout or event, including antibiotics or other short term medications, the medicine must be given to a responsible adult leader in medicine bottle clearly labeled with dose, time to be given, doctors' name and prescription name. (Extra labeled bottles are available if you ask the pharmacist). Please send only enough medicine for the duration of the event plus one extra dose, in case of accidental spillage or loss. Scouts are not to keep their medications in their personal gear. The adult in charge will quietly remind the boys to report for med call. Parents should ask for the return of any unused medications and the labeled bottle upon return from the campout.

Training

Adult training sessions on a Troop, District, and Council level are held regularly. Adult Leaders in Troop Leadership positions (SM, ASM) must be registered immediately and trained within three months after being assigned the position. We strongly encourage parents and committee officers to attend Troop Committee Challenge Training. It can be fun and is very valuable toward understanding the Troop Committee's role in the Boy Scout Program. Adults that will be camping on a regular basis are highly encouraged (not required) to take the same training as the SM and ASM. This training currently has two sections: a one day indoor class called Scoutmaster Specific, and a weekend campout called Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills (IOLS). These courses explain the Patrol Method and show how a troop is boy-lead.

Scouts elected or appointed to key positions such as Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL), Patrol Leader (PL) and Assistant Patrol Leader (APL), as well as others, are required to attend the Troop Leader Training (TLT) workshop which is held on a Saturday, soon after Troop elections are completed, every six months. As the Scouts advance in rank and leadership experience, they may be asked to help lead this training event.

Best Wishes for success in Scouting!

Your Scoutmaster and Troop Committee