



A+ Alumni Relations

The A in OA

Session Objectives

- **Explain** the benefits of a successful alumni program and what that program looks like in action.
- **Demonstrate** how to successfully integrate alumni into the local council and program.
- **Guide** participants to plan their own alumni events.
- **Enable** participants to plan a full calendar year of events in their council.

Session Length: 55 Minutes

Appendix Resources

- Event planner rubric
- PowerPoint presentation

Required Materials

- Laptop with projector display
- Printed handouts
- Flip Chart & Markers
- Name Tags and Pens

Trainer Preparation

The trainer for this session should prepare by researching the Area or Council's Alumni program to make the training more applicable to this specific group. Each council's specific Alumni situation will be different. Alumni are valuable resources, not just financially. With Scouting in the news and press more recently, some alumni are less than pleased. They remember "the good old times". There are new, exciting things that can be shown to the alumni and ways that they can become involved with their Area or Council!





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Session Narrative

Introduction: What is an Alumnus?

2 minutes

Think of your greatest memories as an Arrowman; when you were the happiest; who was around; what contributed to those feelings? One day, most of us will move on in our lives to other directions that take us away from Scouting and the Order of the Arrow. As we leave Scouting, we become an Alumnus. There are the memories of Scouting that our alumni carry every day, some giving back to Scouting, and some not knowing the need that Scouting has for them. Just think: what would you do without Scouting?

The overall goal in this Session is to explore meaningful ways to Re-connect with Alumni; to Re-kindle enthusiasm in our Alumni about Scouting and the Order of the Arrow; and to Re-engage our Alumni back into the Program.

Opening Activity – Ice Breaker

14 Minutes

Trainer Instructions: Simulate the beginning of an alumni event. Pass around nametags and a sign-in sheet then conduct the ice breaker activity. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate how to begin an event involving alumni. Nametags should include name and essential information. Essential information could include the year that they earned Eagle Scout, the years the person was on camp staff, their profession, etc.

Now take 5 minutes to pair up with someone that you do not know and introduce yourself to them. During this process, get to know them and answer the questions below.

We will get back together and you will introduce this person to the group and share this information with the group.

Who I met: _____

What are 2 interesting facts *outside of scouting* that you have learned?

- 1.
- 2.

What are 2 interesting facts *related to scouting* that you have learned?

- 1.
- 2.

Allow each person to discuss these questions in front of the group. (Approximately 9-10 minutes total)





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Why Our Alumni Are Important?

10 Minutes

Trainer Instructions: Poll the room with these two questions: Why do you think it is important to reconnect with Scouting Alumni and OA Alumni, and why it is important to sustaining Scouting and the OA? Write down several of these points on a flip chart or white board.

Scouting has an estimated 50 million alumni living today, only a small percent of which remain involved. The Order of the Arrow is in a unique position to reconnect with these individuals to show them that Scouting still cares about them. Scouting would not work without alumni. A staggering [PERCENT] of registered adult leaders in Scouting are actually alumni! [NOTE: Percent of registered alumni adult leaders may be different in each Council. Attempt to find this percentage prior to the session and report this in the session. If unavailable, reference the percentage as high.]

Trainer Tip: Do not stress the need for financial support. That is not the only resource that alumni are able to give and it will scare them away.

Why do you think alumni may be hesitant to get involved with Scouting? Involvement isn't always nice and easy. Friends of Scouting and other fund raising campaigns frequently ask for money. Among other reasons, life schedules are busy and individuals may be hesitant to making another commit that takes more time. There is an art to motivating alumni to reconnect with Scouting in a way that does not make them feel pressured.

What are some examples of the benefits that alumni can give to your Order of the Arrow lodge?

Trainer Instructions: Ask for examples and comments, then finish with these points in the discussion.

Diversifying lodge program: A broad base of alumni with diversified skills and interests can contribute to almost anything a group of lodge officers aspires to do. Alumni could be part of a consultant group with both experience from having gone through the program and skills to complement the program.

Networking: Much like a university alumni organization, the Scouting Alumni Association offers an intricate web of connections in all businesses and across the United States and beyond. Employment and professional advice can be shared and connections made. Employment opportunities can also be found within the Scouting Alumni Network.

Mentoring: Alumni have a diverse set of skills and backgrounds, many of the same that youth Arrowmen have. These alumni could help jumpstart a young Arrowman's career or even help him decide he doesn't like that field after all. Rather than finding a source straight out of industry, the Arrowman can look to someone who has a similar background and something in common: Scouting.

RECONNECT

5 Minutes

How do we re-connect with Scouting and OA Alumni?





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There are two basic groups of alumni: those alumni with Scouting on the mind; and those alumni not thinking about Scouting. There are challenges in reconnecting with both groups of alumni.

Those alumni with Scouting on the mind will welcome communication and any information about scouting in your local Council and your Lodge. Those alumni not thinking about Scouting may need to be approached differently, but these individuals may not want to be contacted. There are multiple ways to get in touch with alumni. Depending upon the group that an alumni may fall, you may need to utilize different methods of communication in order to effectively grab the attention of an alumni.

What are some ways that your Lodge re-connects with Alumni?

Trainer Tip: Ask the room if they know of any means of communication focused on alumni. Going through all of the communication channels is not entirely necessary. Choosing 2-3 to go over in depth is the most efficient use of time and will also avoid boring your participants!

- Alumni Website

The alumni website collects information about alumni and feeds it to the councils in which they live. Each council has access to this database, many leaving it untapped.

<http://www.scoutingalumni.org/>

- Harris Connect Search

Tool used by the NESAs committee to collect alumni information. Councils have access to database.

- E-mails and Text Messages

Simple communication tool that is widely accepted across all ages.

- Online Groups

Websites like Facebook and LinkedIn house groups for Eagles, Scouting Alumni, OA Alumni, etc. Posts relate to questions or ideas and even ways to get involved.

<https://www.facebook.com/ScoutingAlumniFriends/>
<https://www.facebook.com/NationalEagleScoutAssociationBSA/?fref=ts>
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/141369/profile>

- Facebook Advertising

Advertisement of the group or page your council is using is useful as long as they are directed and budgeted correctly. Examples of successful Facebook campaigns could be shown using #DareToDo on Facebook (also on Twitter and Instagram).

- Newspapers/Newsletters





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Getting on the NESAs or the council mailing list allows for scheduled communications. It allows for the recipient to choose when he reads the information and whether to act or not.

- Word-of-Mouth

People are the best type of advertisement- they allow for a personal connection and a stronger draw to get involved. Not just any person can be an ambassador for Scouting. The ambassador has to be similar to the subject - whether in interests, age, career, etc.

RE-KINDLE 15 Minutes

Once we communicate and reconnect with Alumni; how can we re-ignite their spirit?

Occasionally, a camp staff alumnus may randomly show up at a scout event after a long period of absence. His presence may provide a brief period where the encounter is slightly awkward, and may even produce a few strange looks. Think about it: camp staff groups are perceived as “chummy” and they know mostly everything that goes on in camp. So when a stranger randomly shows up, the group should make an effort to extend an open hand of welcome. Building upon this thought, when starting to think about recruiting long-removed alumni, why not consider hosting an event that will provide an alumni a good reason to break their habit of not coming around? How about an **alumni reception**? That all sounds well and good, however, as with any successful event, an alumni reception must be planned down to every last detail.

A successful alumni reception event has four key attributes: *personal outreach, low cost, low commitment, and gradual steps*. Personal outreach allows for the person to feel wanted. A low cost makes the event or activity do-able for all age groups. Low commitment means that the person isn't going to be asked for money or to fill a position. Everything must be done in a systematic and gradual approach.

Trainer Tip: Stress the four key attributes. Interest, like trust, is hard to gain and easy to lose. As soon as an alumnus feels pressured against their desires, they may become turned off for life. A lot of universities run into this problem because they ask recent graduates for money.

Another key aspect to an event is to have involved people present who will actively engage the alumni participants in meaningful conversation.

Group Activity: Planning an Alumni Reception Event at Your Next Conclave

Trainer Instructions: Participants should be in groups of four to five with diversity of ages across the group.

How are you going to recruit Alumni to Attend? How are you going to recruit folks from your Lodge to staff the reception?

M&M Method of Recruitment

Trainer Tip: Go over the M&M method of recruitment prior to starting the activity. Go through the whole explanation and assign groups, but then go over the proven method.



Alumni Participants:

1. *Memories:* Queue the good memories that Scouting has provided prior to and during the event. This “feel good” tactic will convince them that involvement is necessary. Recall the smell of a campfire, and the funny group song around the campfire.
2. *Marketing:* Tell the story, sell the vision. Show where Scouting’s place in the world is, as a top-notch youth leadership and civic engagement program. It is the largest and most diverse interdisciplinary training program in the world, teaching scouts everything from outdoors skills to nuclear chemistry.
3. *Membership:* Friends and neighbor’s children. Show the alumnus that everyone needs Scouting and that Scouting needs him.
4. *Manpower:* Find a place (once they are ready) that fits their needs and circumstances. Consider their schedule’s availability, who they would like to work with and their skillset. And once they are “invested” in the program, the fifth M can be attempted. Too strong of an attempt, and that alumnus will be lost forever. Once the connection is made, the primary contact (person of similar age-group, field, etc.) should know if their situation allows for donations.
5. *Money:* At the appropriate time, extend an opportunity for an alumni to make a financial donation. It is important that the funding opportunities (Friends of Scouting, Council Endowment) be explained to the donor so that there is an understanding of how the donation will be utilized. Any and all levels of financial donations are welcome and appreciated. A refusal to donate should never make an alumni feel like they are not wanted or appreciated. There may be a later time that this alumni may be re-approached about a future donation.

Lodge Staff Participants:

1. *Communicators:* Engage Lodge members who can clearly communicate a message to participants at the Alumni Reception.
2. *Passion:* Engage Lodge members who are passionate about the success of the Lodge and the continuation into the future.

RE-ENGAGEMENT

7 Minutes

OK, we’ve entertained an Alumni group in a reception event held at our Conclave. What Next?

Find a place where an alumni feels welcome and where they can contribute. For example, a teacher may fit well on the Council or Lodge Camping Committee. An attorney might fit well with facilitating merit badges associated with his profession, or assisting the Council Executive Board with legal matters. A tradesman might fit well with the Council Facilities Committee or be in charge of the Lodge service projects for ordeal weekends. There’s always a place for an alumnus to become involved- it’s just finding the right fit.





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Let's examine various ways to re-engage our Alumni:

Position Commitment

There are numerous ways to involve alumni at various levels of the Council and Lodge.

1. *Lodge:* Your Lodge is always in need of new energized folks to help in various ways. Consider roles you could ask an Alumni to assume in your Lodge; i.e. Chapter Adviser, Associate Lodge Adviser, Event Adviser, Fundraiser Adviser.
2. *Council:* The Council Executive Board is a great place to get involved for an alumni who may not have time for weekly meetings. Roles can require various levels of commitment and time; from being a Vice-President to just being a Board Member at Large.
3. *District:* The district is typically a higher level of commitment due to events and more frequent meetings. Districts play host to events that bring troops together, but more importantly they support troops by providing trainings and experienced helpers.
4. *Troop:* Troop involvement is an even higher level of commitment because it can involve weekly meetings, going on monthly campouts, and even going to summer camp.
 - a. *Committee:* The committee is a smaller commitment, but it is still a lot. The committee is the body of adults that works behind the scenes, taking care of the logistics and other details.
 - b. *Assistant Scoutmaster:* The assistant Scoutmaster group is meant to assist the Scoutmaster in his duties. The Scoutmasters get close with the scouts, advises them and guides them through the program. They are where “the rubber meets the road”. It is, undoubtedly, the most commitment a person can make in scouting

Non-Committal Involvement

An alumnus who may not be ready to give up “an hour a week” may be more apt to respond by jumping in as needed to help out on a specific task or event. These opportunities can be offered in various levels of commitment. Lodge or Council opportunities should fit both the abilities and desires of an alumni. Some of these opportunities might include the following:

1. *Campmaster:* A program that allows for Scouters to take responsibility for troops doing weekend camping at a council camp. This allows for Scouters and alumni to get involved at camp, do some service, and re-realize the real purpose of Scouting. It is a commit-as-you-go plan.
2. *Work Crew:* Camps always need something done and rangers/caretakers can only do so much. OA Ordeal weekends are full of work projects that need adult guidance. Skilled tradesmen or hobbyists can always be of service at camp. Being part of a work crew is a good option for very busy alumni.
3. *Projects:* Lodge and Councils always need work done such as website maintenance, help with the budget or even program brainstorming. Projects give the chance for an alumnus with a specific amount of time and certain skills to commit.





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If you are in a fortunate position that giving money is the only way an alumnus wants to, or is able to, be involved in Scouting, you should take advantage of the situation and continue to develop and grow the relationship with the alumni in a positive way that ensures trust between the donor and the Council or Lodge.

The relationship of an alumni in the development of monetary contributions might be better handled by an informed adult leader or adviser. This person should be well informed about methods and ways that an alumnus can best contribute to the Lodge or Council, i.e. FOS Campaign, Council or Lodge Endowment, etc.

Convincing an alumni to contribute their hard-earned money to Scouting can be a delicate process that requires tact and experience. A trusting relationship with the alumni donor is the best way to achieve successful results. Securing donations for Scouting also requires showing a specific need that falls within the interests of a donor. For example, one alumni donor may want to improve the aquatics program at summer camp while another donor may be happy with a Friends of Scouting donation towards the Council's yearly operating budget. The key is to identify that area of interest.

Trainer Tip: Federal and state laws require that monetary donations be allocated as the donor requests. Failing to comply will result in prosecution. You should always review the current Tax Laws regarding deductibility of any donation.

Conclusion

2 minutes

Trainer Instructions: After participants complete the activity show one of the two provided videos to recap the entire session. Video one, for an older audience focuses on older alumni who are grown and have children of their own, Video Two aims to recruit younger, college age Scouting alumni. Choose based on the audience of your session. If video capability is limited, simply ask if there are any questions

Video one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxmdVIm-Kyw>

Video two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tigR48o3o>

Thank you for taking time out of your conclave for attending this session. The skill you learned here today will help to grow the Scouting program and provide exceptional opportunity to the youth of America.

