OPERATIONS UPDATE

08-5

OA LodgeMaster System

Over the last three years the national Order of the Arrow committee has been developing an integrated membership management system to support council OA operations. Called OA LodgeMaster, the system is now up and running in more than 195 councils. The latest status of the council rollout can be followed by going to: www.oalodgemaster.org and following the link at the end of "Current Version".   The migration status is shown for all 302 councils having Order of the Arrow organizations.

On February 1, 2008, OA LodgeMaster Desktop, version 1.1.1, was released. It added a number of fixes and enhancements to the previous release:

- A new database engine,

- Full multi-user security,

- Windows Vista support, and

- An improved install process.

Version 1.1.2 was released on April 25. This latest release includes new functionality and other enhancements along with a number of additional fixes.

Feedback on the system has been very positive. Some comments have been received that a few council Scout executives have denied the Order of the Arrow the use of the OA LodgeMaster System because they did not consider it to be a nationally sanctioned effort. This is not correct.

The OA LodgeMaster System was developed by the national Order of the Arrow committee and OA members around the country. It has been fully supported and funded by the Order of the Arrow and will continue to be so. Complete security and privacy protection is provided from the appointment of the administrator to the management of each transaction. It was never intended that the data entry and maintenance tasks would be placed on the already overburdened council office staff. OA members can and should do this.

To get your council set up to use the OA LodgeMaster System, go to www.oalodgemaster.org to learn more about the process. And remember, it's free!

OA Membership Verification

In March 2005 the national OA committee announced the availability of a new ScoutNet process to verify the BSA registration of dues-paid OA members. The new capability was distributed to all councils in the February 2005 ScoutNet production release. Complete details of how to use the process were included with the announcement.

The OA Membership Verification process needs to be run several times during each calendar year. Councils renew unit and district charters at different times throughout the year to balance registration workloads. Therefore the BSA registration status of OA members will change each time a unit/district charter renewal is processed. It is important to remember that all OA members must be registered in someway in the BSA. Without BSA registration they cannot be OA members and cannot be counted or recognized in the Order.

Updated Literature

New editions of the *Order of the Arrow Guide for Officers and Advisers* (GOA) and the *Field Operations Guide* (FOG) are available for download and printing at the OA Website: http://www.oa-bsa.org. The new FOG contains an updated national OA committee organizational description and a revised Appendix 3 – Ceremony Team Evaluation. The appendix has been revised to require team members to wear their current OA sashes with their American Indian regalia; not to wear wigs or parts of the flag; and to provide guidance on wearing shorts, T-shirts, socks, and appropriate footwear. A statement has also been added that the BSA policy regarding weapons must be followed by ceremonialists.

The new GOA lists the new national chiefs and vice chiefs since the 2006 edition; updates the national OA committee organizational description; adds the themes and attendance at NOAC 2006 and NCLS 2007; adds *ArrowCorps^5*; adds references to the *OA Lodge Finance Manual*; updates the Quality Lodge Recognition Petition; specifies that chapter officers will be a chief, a vice chief, and a secretary; corrects a number of chapter organizational and role issues on page 16; states that chapters are not permitted to have funds separate from the lodge custodian account; and affirms that Vigil Honor ceremonies must be conducted at the lodge level.

OA Lodge Finance Manual

The *Order of the Arrow Lodge Finance Manual* is now available for download and printing at the OA Website: http://www.oa-bsa.org. This is the same edition that was distributed on the *2008 Lodge Program Resource DVD*. This is a new publication which replaces the previous *Lodge Budget and Financial Records* book.

Unit Elections

Electing candidates from medium to large size troops and teams can be a challenge. The basic problem is that many Scouts, especially the older ones, don't really know the younger Scouts and are reluctant to vote for them. This can be a significant problem especially with youth who are quiet and introverted.

Noticing their low election results, a number of Scoutmasters have developed a procedure to directly address this situation. It has produced significant improvements in the election results in these units. Some Scoutmasters announce the youth's rank, number of nights of camping, and service hours as the names are read. Others include similar information on the ballot of names. Another technique is to print the individual Scouting record of each candidate, listing his name, grade, rank, number of merit badges, summer camp years, camping nights, leadership positions held, and special awards or events attended. Regardless of the procedure used, the purpose of this is to help the unit members know something about the candidates before they vote. It works and produces much better election results.

The Scoutmaster still decides the names to appear on the ballot, listing only those who have demonstrated Scout spirit and who meet the OA eligibility requirements. A Scout whose name is being withheld because of Scout spirit needs to be told why in advance. Also, some Scouts may not be interested in becoming OA members. The Scoutmaster should offer the eligible candidates the opportunity to "opt out" of being on the annual ballot prior to its printing.

Most troops and teams have found that the results should be announced immediately after the election. The benefit here is that the Scout does not have to stew over whether or not he was elected. Early announcement of results also helps ensure families plan as soon as possible to have their Scout available for the Ordeal weekend. The call out can occur later.

This procedure has been tried and tested. It produces 50 to 100% better election results and is worthy of your consideration.

OA Event, Activity and Program Promotion

It is the policy of the Order of the Arrow to promote its events, activities and programs through media that are directly controlled by the national Order of the Arrow committee or the Boy Scouts of America. Promotion through media not directly controlled by the national Order of the Arrow program or the Boy Scouts of America (i.e., Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, etc.) can create potentially damaging and uncontrolled connections with individuals, organizations, events, or activities that may not reflect the values of the Order of the Arrow and the Boy Scouts of America. Further, such promotions may also be construed or interpreted as endorsement or support of a particular medium or other organizations, events or activities which use that medium. Members of the Order of the Arrow are free to use such media when it is clear that they are doing so as individuals.

2008 National Quality Lodge

The Quality Lodge Recognition Petition for 2008 is significantly different from the petitions used in previous years. There are still ten required and five additional objectives that must be achieved to be recognized as a National Quality Lodge at the end of 2008. However, the new petition requires that the lodge Key 3 and council Scout executive jointly identify and approve the five additional objectives to be accomplished during 2008. The key phrases here are: "jointly identify", "approve" and "during 2008". The first two of these things need to occur very early in the calendar year if the third is going to have a chance of happening by the end of 2008. The lodge Key 3 and the Scout executive must choose three objectives from the list of nine suggested on the reverse side of the form. The last two objectives can come from the same list or they can be locally developed. Time is escaping. If you haven't had this meeting and identified your five objectives, it's not too late. If you wait another three months it will be more difficult to accomplish and you won't be realizing the benefit of this new direction: to accomplish things that are important to the local council.

Quality Lodge Pins

Councils with certified Quality Lodges for 2007 are eligible to purchase pins for youth and adult members of the lodge. *Only the most recent pin awarded may be worn,* and it must be mounted against the left vertical border of the flap. The pins may be purchased for $1.50 each from the national office.

Ordeal Ceremony Requirements

The conduct and content of the Ordeal ceremony, including the Pre-Ordeal, is spelled out in the Order of the Arrow's *Guide to Inductions*, which may be found at the OA Website: www.oa-bsa.org/resources/pubs/. As stated on page 40: "Because the four Ordeal challenges must work together to achieve the intended effect on the candidates, it is essential that they are administered in a single 24-hour block of time: first the night alone, then the day of toil, with the silence and scant food applying to the entire period."

The *Guide to Inductions* reflects national policy. A council may not alter the content of any of the ceremonies or the manner in which they are to be conducted any more than it can unilaterally change membership or advancement requirements for the Boy Scout program. A council's OA organization will not qualify as a Quality Lodge if it fails to follow national policy, including policies contained in the *Guide to Inductions.*