



State of the Council Report - David Hunt, President March 8, 2021

Greetings to the Suffolk County Scouting family – Scouts, Scouters, friends and family. My name is David Hunt and I am the president of Suffolk County Council.

Thirteen years ago, I volunteered to help a local troop as an assistant Scoutmaster and Eagle Scout coach. Somebody mentioned something about an hour a week... Two years later it expanded to include District volunteering, and then in 2014 I was asked to join the executive board of the council. I have been a vice president of the council for the last 5 years. In every capacity, I have found the most passionate and dedicated people that I have ever met.

Our blessing is the amazing people at every level of Scouting, united in our passion for kids and seeing them grow. We are the most extraordinary organization that I have ever had the pleasure of joining.

Whatever your contribution to Scouting, I thank you. Volunteers power every facet of our organization. It is amazing that we can provide all that we do for 10,000 or more kids, with a professional staff of only 13 people, and 3,500 adult volunteers.

Because we are a family, I want to speak openly and honestly about the challenges that we currently face:

As the media has reported, the national organization of the Boy Scouts of America has filed an amended Plan of Reorganization with the Bankruptcy Court as part of its Chapter 11 process—a critical step toward emergence.

As part of the Scouting Movement, Suffolk County Council has a voice in the BSA's Chapter 11 process through the Ad Hoc Committee of Local Councils, and a role in working toward a global resolution that will (1) appropriately fund a Trust to equitably compensate victims and (2) ensure the future of Scouting in our area, and throughout the country, for many years to come.

In order to fund that Trust, our Council, along with 252 other Councils, will need to make a significant monetary contribution. This is just a part of the funding that will also come from National BSA and insurance companies.

Settlement talks are ongoing, in what our Ad Hoc Committee attorneys have described as a roller coaster in the dark. So, not only are there ups and downs, but also an inability to see what is coming. However, it is clear at this point, that the Council's settlement cost will be at least \$1 million, and perhaps significantly higher.

I learned many years ago as an 11-year old Scout to "Be Prepared," and that is what we are going to do! Last week, in anticipation of what will be required, the executive committee of the Council voted unanimously to place the building that presently houses our Council headquarters





on the market. The building is the largest unrestricted asset we have and is debt-free. We are confident of our ability to secure replacement office space for Council operations that will allow us to continue all our programs uninterrupted. The sale proceeds will hopefully allow us to meet the needs of the bankruptcy settlement.

A single case of child abuse is one too many, so as most of you know, the BSA has the gold standard of youth protection today. Let's speak about those barriers to abuse: The barriers include criminal background checks, mandatory annual youth protection training, two-deep leadership and no one-to-one contact requirements, as well as mandatory reporting requirements.

This is a far cry the 1960's and 1970's when most abuse cases occurred, and none of these barriers existed in the BSA or any other youth organization.

On the bright side, I am happy to report that Scouting in Suffolk County is alive and well! We remain as committed as ever to delivering Scouting's unparalleled experiences to young people throughout our communities.

Our Council is the little Council that could:

- 8% of our Scouts earn Eagle rank, nearly twice the National average
- In 2019, 15% of all the Eagles in New York State came from Suffolk County Council

An in 2020, DESPITE a worldwide pandemic,

- 226 Scouts earned Eagle Scout rank
- There are now over 500 girls in our programs, and we have our first female Eagle Scout
- Our Scouts earned 12,000 MBs last year, provided over 63,000 hours of community service.
- Scouting for food collected over 100,000 pounds of food to help support our community members in need
- We finished the construction of McMorris Lodge at Baiting Hollow Scout Camp and it will be ready for use this summer.
- Baiting Hollow was one of the very few Scout Camps that ran a camp program in 2020. To meet NY State requirements, our intrepid staff quickly transitioned from a sleepaway resident camp to a day camp experience for both Cubs and Scouts BSA. I was there, and have never seen happier kids, whether at the archery range, climbing tower, waterfront, or a merit badge class.

And the Scouts and Scouters of this Council have stepped up as well. The past year has seen virtual troop and pack meetings, virtual merit badges, and all sorts of events re-created to conform to pandemic guidelines – outdoor unit meetings, day-long camporees, the McMorris





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walkathon, Blue and Gold celebrations, and virtual Pinewood Derbies. I even attended a virtual Court of Honor!

Yes, we have adversity that faces us in the form of the National BSA bankruptcy and the pandemic. What can we do about these challenges?

The answer is that we can strive to be the strongest Council that we possibly can, and I am going to ask for your help:

- Would you please consider summer camp at Baiting Hollow this year, or consider a second week of camp for your Scouts, with or without your unit leadership? We will provide leadership for provisional troops. We have many specialty camps, including the very popular Trail to Eagle camp, where we offer most of the Eagle-required merit badges. If every unit in the Council committed to a summer program at Baiting Hollow one year out of four, we would be full to capacity. This would be a huge economic benefit for the Council.
- Growing membership and making sure our program is available to all youth, particularly disadvantaged youth, is critical. You can help by keeping your units as strong as you can, and fully engaging with our fall recruiting campaign. Please call on us, and your district, when you need help. That's why we are here.
- Monetary contributions to Friends of Scouting and Secure the Adventure help us deliver programs to youth. Thank you so much for your past generosity. If your budget allows, this has been a very challenging past year, and we can use your help. And it is as easy as accessing the Council website.

This is what I know deep in my heart – we will find a way! Adversity engenders growth, change and creativity. And nothing stops a Scout...or a Scouter. For 111 years, Scouts have stepped up during local and national crises, including world wars, economic downturns and epidemics. The 1935 National Jamboree was postponed because of a national polio epidemic. Scouting still continued.

So, we will find a way. We will not only survive, we will thrive!

Thank you for your time today. Our Scouts are going to change the world. And I know that we are united in our desire to give them the tools to do that. I look forward to serving you and helping us navigate the stormy waters that surround us now to sunnier times.

May God bless us all, and keep our kids safe.

