

A PARENTS GUIDE TO THE LIFE TO EAGLE PROCESS



Mon Valley District

Laurel Highlands Council

March 2012

Dear Scouting Parent,

Congratulations! Your son has reached the final ledge on his path from Tenderfoot to Eagle. The summit is in sight, but before him stands a final challenge: He must successfully plan and execute an Eagle Scout Leadership Project. This project will test his planning and leadership abilities like never before and it will also offer you a challenge as well. Throughout his Scouting journey, you have been there. Maybe you started out as his Tiger Cub Coach and you helped him build many Pinewood Derby cars. Then in Boy Scouts you helped him with his merit badges, packed his clothes for camp, and watched as he took on more responsibility in his troop. Now your job changes, you must step back and let him take charge in planning and carrying out his Leadership Service Project. **Remember that this is HIS project.** This may be the toughest than you think. Hopefully this guide will help you along this journey.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. My job is to help both you and your son successfully reach this final step.

Yours in Scouting

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Getting Started

So, how do you go about helping your son **earn his** Eagle Scout Rank? The most important thing that you can do is to be supportive and provide encouragement throughout the whole process. Many Scouts find themselves getting discouraged once they start on the Life to Eagle process. They look at the work that is required and feel that they could never get it done. Many, especially those who are closer to 18, find themselves distracted by other interests. I call this the “3 W’s”. That is: Work, Women, and Wheels. There are so many things that will be pulling your son in so many directions, that he will need your help in staying focused at the task at hand. You can remind him of the benefits of earning the Eagle Rank will last a lifetime. Keep in mind that your son must make the decision to attain his Eagle, but often it is your support and encouragement that makes the difference. Remember: **There are no exceptions to the “Prior to your 18th Birthday” deadline.**

District Life to Eagle Seminar and the Mon Valley District’s Eagle Guide

One of the first steps you should consider taking on the Life to Eagle journey, is to get a copy of the current Mon Valley District Life to Eagle Guide. The current edition is dated March 2012. There are several ways to get your copy. You can ask your leader for the units copy, download it from www.monvalleyboyscouts.org, or contact me and I can mail or e-mail you a copy. This guide will help you organize your project and answer many questions you might have.

Next, consider having your son, and also you, attend one of the two Life to Eagle Seminar’s that the district holds. One is always held in March at the district’s annual Merit Badge University at California University of Pennsylvania. The district will also be holding one in the fall. You will have the opportunity to ask questions, talk to fellow Scouts who have just completed their Eagle, share ideas with other Eagle candidates, and get information that can save you much time and aggravation.

How to Find a Project

This stops many Scouts in their tracks. They, and their parents, go completely blank when trying to find an adequate project. Your son will have to take charge and lead both Scouts and adults in order to complete his project. You may want to consider doing a project that meshes with your son’s interests. Your first step should be to talk to your Scoutmaster and other leaders. They might know things that need done in the community or in the district. Also check with your church, local school district, fire department, county parks department, or other nonprofit groups for ideas.

The restrictions on just what can be a project are found in the current Project Workbook. You can find it at: http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-927_fillable.pdf Remember that it is your son, and not you, that makes the calls and talks to people. Although there is not a minimum hour requirement for a project, most fall between 100 and 250 hours. One of the keys in doing a project is to make sure you do the little things that give the project a finished look. Some real life examples:

Example 1: A Scout wanted to caulk and paint all of the windows at his church, but was ignoring the front and side doors. I told him that most people would not see the work he had done, but would be focusing on why he did not paint the doors.

Example 2: A scout was planning to fix up a town park and picnic area. His work included repairing the pavilion and 10 of the 18 picnic tables in the park. When asked about the other 8 tables, he informed me that they needed repaired also, but his leader suggested that he was already doing enough work. I asked him what he thought the community would say about not having all of the tables repaired. He thought they would be upset, and wonder why he did not repair them also. The Scout rewrote his project to include these 8 other picnic tables.

Common Issues with Project Proposals

Over the years, I keep seeing the same problems crop up when reviewing a project with a Life Scout. Most of the issues center on a lack of planning.

- Missing “before” pictures.
- No drawings or schematics of the work to be done.
- Lack of an adequate project description.
- Work that should be done is missing.
- The project lacks enough elements to make it a successful project.
- The project lacks the “finishing touches” to make it complete.
- There is a lack of a definite goal.
- No authorization from the controlling legal authority. (Need School Board approval not approval from a teacher or principal of a school)
- Scout has not talked to the authorizing body himself.

Some examples:

Example 1: A project for the consolidation and renovation of town's war memorials was proposed. The Scout showed me his project, but did not include any photos of the current condition of the memorials, and did not state what repairs would be needed. Additionally, there were no drawings as to what the finished memorial area would look like. It is difficult to approve something if there is no definite idea as to what the finished project will look like.

Example 2: A project for putting together care packages for soldiers is proposed. The Scout has a list of the items he is putting in these packages, but does not have a clue as to how many he will ship. Without a definite goal, how do we know when the project is complete? Additionally, without a goal, he could conceivably assemble just one care package and call his project finished.

Example 3: A Scout meets with me to discuss installing handicapped seating at a theatre. In his entire Eagle Scout Handbook, there is only 1 barely legible sentence, written in pencil. He is told to come back when his project is more thought out, and better documented. When he shows up for his Eagle Board of Review, there is no write up of how the project went and no records. He was sent away to put together a more complete book.

Example 4: When putting together a project for the renovation of a memorial, the Scout neglects to include some vital work. He is installing flagpoles, but has made no provisions for the flags to be lit and he wants to do some landscaping, but not too much since he is close to his 18th birthday. When informed that the flags must be lit and the landscaping that is to be done needs to be more extensive than he wanted, he gets upset. What he wanted to do is a quick one day project to get his Eagle over and done. He thought that since he was so close to 18 that he could get by with doing a sub-standard job.

- *Remember that Eagle projects always take longer than you expect, and when you try to cut corners, you really hurt those Eagles that come after you.*

How to Write the Proposal

Once a project has been picked, it is time to write it up. The Project Workbook takes you step by step through this process. Additionally, the district's guide will help you organize your thoughts and get you to think about details you might not have been aware of. Remember to include all of the details, drawings, maps, and descriptions that are for approval. A stranger should be able to pick up your written proposal and complete your project. You can never pay too much attention to the details. There are examples available on the districts web site.

Approving the Project

After all of the planning and research has been done and the project has been written up, your son must now get the project approved. He must secure the signature of the organization, the troop committee, his Scoutmaster, and finally from the District Advancement Chairman. It needs to be your son who makes these calls. I will not set up a time to discuss a project unless it is the Scout, and not his parents, who call me.

Carrying Out the Project

Now comes the tough part. You and the other adults need to step back and let your son run his project. Remember that this is **HIS** project. Tempting that it may be, you need to make sure you do not take over the running of the project. Will he make mistakes? Yes he will. Will he sometimes make things harder than they need to be? Yep, that will happen. And throughout all of this you need to be there to gently offer advice, support, and encouragement. Some tasks will be adult only, like operating certain power tools, but your son needs to be the boss.

Writing the Project Report

Finally, after all of the work is finished, your son needs to make a write up of just what he did and how everything went. Someone should be able to pick up the report and understand how the project went without your son there to explain things. It should be the kind of report that he would turn in for school after completing a major class project and expect to get an A. Remember that for most of the members, if not all, of the board of review, this will be the only exposure they have to the project. This report is one of the ways your son demonstrates that he is ready to become one of the 4% of all Scouts who reach the rank of Eagle.

The Eagle Board of Review

When you have everything done, that includes the project, all of the badges, and the completed Eagle Application, you take it all to the council office and they will check it over. Once they have signed off, they will let your Scoutmaster and the District Advancement Chairman know that you are ready for your board. Here in the Valley, we do boards once a month, usually during the first week of the month, and no more than 4 at a time. Your son and Scoutmaster will be notified of when your board is to be scheduled. Please be patient! The members of your board are volunteers and do lead busy lives.

Final Thoughts

Just because you have completed a nice project, all of your required badges are completed, and all of the I's are dotted and the T's crossed on your application, there is no guarantee of getting your Eagle. You must successfully complete this board of review. We would like to remind Eagle candidates, and their families, that the reason fewer than 4 percent of all scouts earns the Eagle rank is a testament to its highest order. It is not a guarantee to be received. It is an honor to be earned. We typically have 20 to 25 Eagles a year here in the Mon Valley and have turned down only four Eagles' in the last 16 years so chances is your son will get through this.

I hope this has helped to ease your concerns over this last step on your son's Trail to Eagle. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Good Luck to both your son and you on this Eagle journey.

Mike

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