



## **Talking about Scouting's Leadership Standards (With regard to sexual orientation and religion)**

Maintaining Northern Star Council's focus on kids while answering questions about Scouting's leadership standards requires preparation. Here are some talking points to keep in mind. **Remember: they are "talking points", so you need to get comfortable with the ideas more than the words.** The key is that you can use these points to establish a productive focus in one-on-one or small group discussions.

(Remember that media contacts must be referred to Kent York at the Scout Service Center – 763 231 7271 or mobile 612 760 8430.)

### **Our Key Message:**

***Northern Star Council welcomes all people who can help to further Scouting's mission of youth development. Actions and behavior are the means by which all leaders are held to a high standard of community values.***

### **Additional Points to Consider:**

#### **Scouting is a Safe Haven for All Children**

Scouting packs, troops, crews and posts provide a supportive environment for all young people, regardless of background or circumstance, designed to foster personal growth. That is our mission and our focus.

#### **We have a diversity of beliefs and world views among our leaders and our families who register 75,000 children in our local programs**

Scouting focuses on what unites us - the young people themselves - and our role in helping them grow into capable, caring adults.

#### **National BSA is also working to respond to a changing America**

Facing the challenge of reflecting the nationwide diversity of beliefs and opinions, Scouting's national leadership is committed to an ongoing, thoughtful and deliberate process of assessing and developing leadership standards based on accountability for one's actions.

#### **We have 22,000 local volunteers and in the twelve years since the Supreme Court decision, have not removed anyone for being gay**

Whether you are heterosexual or not, you are held to a standard of appropriate behavior - that you will not place your sexuality or sexual advocacy in the context of our youth program. The parents and leaders within every pack, troop or crew have always applied

a standard of appropriate behavior in their decisions about who can serve in a leadership role.

Our expectation of our youth members is exactly the same. Treat your companions with respect and demonstrate appropriate behavior yourself.

### **Questions on Scouting's Duty to God**

Our youth and adult application both contain excerpts from the "Declaration of Religious Principle" which states that "... the Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God ..."

The BSA in no way defines God, is absolutely nonsectarian and does not require participation in an organized religion. It is up to each member and their parents or prospective leader to determine if their personal beliefs allow them to meet this requirement, and feel comfortable in saying the Scout Oath and Law, or relevant promise in each program. You must choose.

### **Local kids, local parents, local community**

Local Scouting is by default a reflection of local values. "Be Prepared" to know and understand your pack, troop, or crew's values on things like the following:

1. Kids come first. If a Scout has a gay parent or parents, what would your pack or troop's practices be to ensure that the child has a great Scouting experience?
2. We are a youth development organization. If a child's questions about their own sexuality or belief in God somehow become an issue in Scouting, what will your pack or troop do to help the family to help their child?
3. Scouting's policy about sexual orientation and volunteer leaders applies to those who have placed sexual advocacy above their Scouting involvement. How will your pack or troop determine when that has happened?

If you decide your unit should discuss some of these issues (either in response to a specific matter or in advance of one) and you want some help, the Northern Star Council can provide guidance.

While Scouting is not a forum for creating social change, Scouting is a reflection of the larger community. Two of the greatest strengths of the "Great American Experiment" are that while we do not always agree with one another, we can still assemble as groups of like-minded people for an important cause, and we can still respect the will of the majority both inside and outside of those groups.

Our kids count on us to teach them this.