



# 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
- NESAs alumni recruitment videos (links in session narrative)

### Required Materials

- Laptop with projector display
- Printed handouts

### Session Narrative

#### Introduction: What is an Alumnus?

**2 minutes**

Think of your greatest memories - when you were the happiest. Who was around? What contributed to those feelings? Raise your hand if any of those memories were related to Scouting in any way. If you raised your hand or not, you are fit to be a Scouting alumnus... even if you haven't left yet. These are the memories 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? Would that "1-hour" each week be filled or empty? Imagine a life without Scouting. That's the group we are targeting. Those who have gained so much from Scouting who, now, are disconnected.

#### Opening Activity

**14 Minutes**

**Trainer Instructions:** *Simulate the beginning of an alumni event. Pass around nametags and a sign-in sheet then conduct an ice breaking 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 he earned Eagle Scout, the years the person was on camp staff, company in a specific field, etc.*

**Trainer Tip:** *Do a "get to know you" activity. COPE-style games work best because they pull participants out of their comfort zone and allow for a more open discussion. Some examples can be found after the session narrative.*





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### Alumni Are Important

6 Minutes

Scouting has an estimated 50 million alumni living today, only a small percent of which are still involved in Scouting. 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!

**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.*

Alumni may be hesitant to get involved for various reasons: news isn't always nice, Friends of Scouting and other campaigns ask for money very frequently, and they don't want to commit to taking a position, among others. There is an art to getting alumni to feel the pull to reconnect with Scouting without being pressured to jump back in head first.

### Benefits

4 Minutes

**Trainer Instructions:** *Poll the room to find out the benefits that alumni can give to an Order of the Arrow lodge.*

Some examples of the benefits alumni can give to an Order of the Arrow lodge:

*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.

### Reconnecting with Alumni

5 Minutes

Alumni may be hesitant to get involved for various reasons: news isn't always in favor of the BSA, Scouting isn't actually "1 hour each week," and many alumni are far away from their home councils (which may not exist anymore). There are multiple ways to get in touch with alumni, depending on the type of alumnus in question. There are two basic groups: those with Scouting on the mind and those without. Challenges lie among both





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types of alumni: those with Scouting on the mind will welcome communication but may not have given any information to anyone and those not thinking about Scouting need to be approached but may not want to be contacted. Different methods of communication are necessary to grab the attention of all 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  
<http://www.scouting.org/Alumni.aspx>  
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.
- Harris Connect Search  
Tool used by the NESA committee to collect alumni information. Councils have access to database.
- 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/ScoutingAlumniAssociation/?fref=ts&ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/ScoutingAlumniAssociation/?fref=ts&ref=br_tf)  
<https://www.facebook.com/NationalEagleScoutAssociationBSA/?fref=ts>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2166470/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  
Getting on the NESA 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.

### Getting Them Around

15 Minutes

Everyone needs a reason to do something... for the most part. Rarely will a random alumnus show up at camp after 10+ years of absence. It lends to many awkward encounters and even a few strange looks. Think about it: camp staff are “chummy” and know mostly everything that goes on in camp, so when a stranger shows up, it doesn’t





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bode well for either party. Thus, when starting to recruit long-removed alumni, there must be a really good reason for them to break their habit of not coming around, so what better than an alumni reception? That all sounds well and good, however, the alumni reception must be planned down to every last detail in order to be successful.

A successful alumni 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 gradually.

**Trainer Tip:** *Stress the four key attributes. Interest, like trust, is hard to gain and easy to lose. As soon as an alumnus feels pulled to do something against their will, they will be 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.

*Group Activity: Planning an Event*

**Trainer Instructions:** *Participants should be in groups according to age to highlight differences in approach.*

Use materials for planning events and give groups an option to plan:

1. Pizza party at camp
2. Dinner reception
3. Trade-based reception

**Trainer Tip:** *These are only examples. If other event types work better for the audience, use those. Emphasize that the groups must plan the entire event, start to finish.*

*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.*

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. “Smell the smoke, sing the song.”
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.





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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:* Passion, reengagement, interest and knowledge are abundant... asking for money should be easier and better received.

#### Keeping Them Around

7 Minutes

No one stays a place where they don't feel welcome. Part of keeping an active alumnus is finding a need that fits his interests. For example, a teacher may do well on the camping committee. A lawyer could be useful teaching merit badges or counseling the actions of the staff. A tradesmen could make recommendations for and help plan building projects at camp. There is always a place for an alumnus to be involved- it's just finding the right fit.

#### *Position Commitment*

There are ample levels of involvement for those who have time and certain skills.

1. *Council:* The council board is a great place to get involved for someone who may not have time for weekly meetings, but can do work behind the scenes. Roles can be as committed as being a Vice President, just being a member of a committee, or even just being a member of the board at large.
2. *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.
3. *Troop:* The troop is certainly the most daunting level of commitment because it (generally) involves meetings every week, going on campouts, and dealing with a (sometimes) difficult group of boys and young men.
  - 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 is not as ready to give up "an hour a week" is more apt to jump at per diem (as needed) opportunities to help out. These opportunities could also be endless, as long as a council is thrifty in offering them.





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1. *Campmaster*: A program that allows for Scouters to take responsibility for troops doing weekend camping at a council camp. This allows for Scouters 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. 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*: 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.

### *Monetary Involvement*

Giving money may be the only way an alumnus wants to, or is able to, be involved in Scouting. It can be awkward and must be the last step in re-involving an alumnus. As soon as money is mentioned, sparks fly... and it's not always good.

Convincing people to spend their hard-earned money is a delicate process that requires tact and experience. The easiest way to acquire money for Scouting is to show a need that falls within their interests. Some alumni will want to improve the aquatics program at summer camp while others will be happy with a Friends of Scouting donation towards the operating budget. The key is to find 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.*

Rare situation: If the alumnus brings up money, accept right away and tell them how to complete their donation. A good practice is to mention all of the options: estate gifts, annual options, endowment contributions, and any other programs that the council offers.

### 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.*

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

Video two: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti\\_gR48o3o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti_gR48o3o)

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.

### Trainer Note

The trainer for this session should prepare by familiarizing himself or herself with the audience. Research about the area's program should be completed ahead of time in order





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to make the training more applicable. 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 to be shown to the alumni and that they can be involved!

### Ice Breaker Activities and Additional Role Plays

For opening activity some games have been provided as options to raise the comfort level in the room and allow for participants to get to know each other a little.

#### **Beach Ball Trivia**

Supply a beach ball and write different questions regarding interests and characteristics all over. Get the group in a large circle and start passing the ball. Designate a finger to use, and that will be the one which chooses the question for the person to answer.

#### **Shoe Game**

All participants must be in a circle and remove one shoe. The facilitator should start in the middle and leave his shoe there. The facilitator says a characteristic that describes himself and others in the group. All those who can be described by the characteristic must find another shoe to stand at that cannot be adjacent to their current shoe. Whoever is left in the middle must do the same until almost everyone has participated.

#### **Introduce Another**

Allow participants to talk one-on-one with each other for 2-3 minutes. After the 2-3 minutes, each participant must introduce the other to the group.

#### **Something You Haven't Done**

The facilitator starts by saying something that he has done and thinks that the rest of the group has not. If someone has done the aforementioned thing, they must stand and say something they have done that the rest of the group has not. The game continues until no one can stand when someone says they've done something.

#### **Find Someone**

Pass out index cards to the group and have them write an interesting fact about him/herself. Collect the cards and distribute them randomly to the group. Each participant must find who their new card belongs to and introduce him/herself.

#### **Personal Haiku**

Split the group into pairs and allow for 2-3 minutes of introductions. Each person must write and read a haiku about their partner using information from the introductions.

#### **Role Plays**

The following role plays to recruit can also be incorporated into the session as an activity option after the group activity. Split the class into pairs to practice.





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- Single business executive who travels a lot.
- Married school teacher with 3 children (all girls).
- College student about to graduate.
- Single plumber, middle-aged.

