

Community-based Scout Shows

Beginning in 2009, the North Star District will be making a major change in the Scout Show format that has been used in the past. Instead of holding one large district Scout show, "community-based" Scout shows, Scout Days, or Scout Open Houses, will be held in each community or area in the district that has Scouting. The change is partially in response to concerns about increased travel costs; more flexibility in scheduling; and as a way of recruiting new members from a unit's local community.

The objectives of the current Scout show concept

The current Scout show concept has always been to:

1. Provide a learning experience for all Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturers, and Explorers. Youth members benefit from the excitement of determining a booth theme, planning the activity, and displaying the complete project.
2. To provide unit members with a project they can work on together. Youth and adult leaders benefit from the experience gained through teamwork.
3. To provide an opportunity for unit members to put their talents to good use. Youth members can show their families as well as the community what the Scouting program has to offer today's youth.

Basically, Scout Shows, also known as Scout Fairs, Scout Expos, or Scout-O-Ramas are expositions displaying Scouting Skills and activities - a trade show of Scouting, which fosters community awareness and support of Scouting by showcasing Scout activities to the general public.

The "cons" of the current Scout show concept

The "cons" of the current Scout show concept (especially in rural, spread-out districts) include:

1. The only units that benefit from a recruiting opportunity at a district Scout show are the units from the community where Scout shows are held. Units from distant communities recruit few (if any) new members by participating in such shows.
2. District Scout shows are scheduled on only one specific day each year, providing units with a very narrow "window of opportunity" to participate. The North Star District has a number of troops each year who are unable to participate in the district Scout shows because they've scheduled snow outings way in advance - because of limited snow outing facility availability.
3. Because of distance, many units are unable to transport everything necessary to have a unit booth of the quality they'd like to have, or to participate at all.
4. Because of the rising cost of fuel, many parents and families of distant units, and for other financial reasons, find it's becoming increasingly difficult to get people involved in district Scout shows.
5. District Scout shows require large facilities, which often times are unavailable when a district would like to hold them, or are available at a prohibitive cost.
6. District Scout shows have been traditionally scheduled during a time of the year when weather limits them to

indoor activities only, providing the public with a limited or “watered-down” perspective of what Scouting is. Being able to schedule Scout shows outdoors would provide much greater visibility and a greater choice of booth topics. Currently many Scout shows are held indoors - out of public view, or limited to school gymnasiums, where most passersby just assume what’s going on inside is a basketball game.

It was noted that Scout Troop booths have become less impressive and lack-luster compared to Cub Pack booths, largely because of their inability to present more outdoor themes and activities in their booths.

The Community-based district Scout show concept

The community-based Scout Show concept was chosen as a way to increase participation by units, leaders, and Scouts, and parents at Scout shows in each community; to help units be able to better recruit new members from their perspective communities; to improve the quality of Scout shows; to get more local people involved in Scout show planning; and, basically to bring the Scout show concept more into line with today’s challenges.

Community-base Scout shows provide unit’s much better recruiting opportunities by holding Scout shows within in their own communities - something they don’t have at district shows.

A community-based Scout Show makes a great Fall Scouting Kick-off and annual recruiting event.

A community-based Scout show can be organized and run by individual units, or be a joint effort by all units in a community.

Unit or community Scout shows can be held in smaller venues than district shows, and can be held either indoors or outdoors, depending on the time of the year they schedule their show. Local Scout shows can be held in community centers, schools, parks, empty lots, or even someone’s backyard.

In many cases, units or communities can start setting up the Scout show days in advance, rather than the night before, or just prior to the show.

Having scheduling flexibility, units or communities can choose to hold Scout shows outdoors, which gives Scouting greater visibility in the communities, and allows units to offer more outdoor booths and activities. This should increase the participation by more Scout Troops.

Such flexibility makes unit scheduling easier, and would help eliminate the dilemma of units having to choose between participating in the Scout show or going on a previously-scheduled campout or other activity.

Having community-based Scout Show helps reduce or eliminates the need for people having to set aside an entire day to drive to, attend, and drive back from a district Scout show, thus giving people more flexibility in their personal schedules. One common reason for units or Scouters not participating in Scout shows is because they couldn’t get away all day.

The Community-base Scout show concept encourages involvement by groups and agencies from the local community to educate and inform the community about their programs at the same time. Groups that could be invited to get involved in a local Scout show includes, the Scout District, Order of the Arrow chapter, the Girl Scouts, police departments, fire departments, Sheriff’s offices, food banks, fish & game organizations, etc. Having outside community groups helps draw more people to see what Scouting is all about.

Note: Scout shows should not include outside groups or organizations that may use a local Scout show to recruit membership or compete for the time and involvement of the members of the Scout units or their leadership.