

## Welcoming Millennial Moms to Cub Scouting

While individual members of any generation show considerable variety in values, personality, and behavior, there are certain common experiences and prevalent characteristics of millennial moms that have a major impact on the extent to which they involve their families and themselves in the Cub Scout program.

### A. Most noteworthy are the following typical attributes of millennial moms:

- ✦ Millennial moms are eager to support causes and nonprofits that inspire them and that they see as making notable positive difference in the world, i.e., combining family-oriented timeless values with effective processes. They look for heart-to-heart connections. They want to involve their children in meaningful activities and are eager to support causes that promote family involvement in helping others. They want to feel passion for the cause.
- ✦ Millennial moms expect to be active volunteers and are generous in sharing their time and skills. They have cared about community service all their lives, logging countless hours on school and organizational projects as students. Volunteerism has been a “normative expectation” for them. As part of the institutionalism of volunteerism, they have been taught to be leaders and coordinators and have developed organizational confidence. The millennial generation may well be the most active volunteers America has ever seen.
- ✦ Millennial moms choose involvement with groups that they see as organized and technologically aware. Time is precious and not to be wasted. Most have little patience with cumbersome bureaucracy or out-of-date processes. They are tech savvy and see no reason for an organization not to use the latest electronic advances.
- ✦ Millennial moms value honesty, kindness, open-mindedness, and fair treatment, particularly in youth programs. Many are reluctant to involve their children in any group that seems hypocritical in any way. Their social consciousness is imbued with emphasis on equal treatment for all. They are on the lookout for divergence between what people say and what they do. They want to be welcomed and see other families being welcomed, without discrimination or pre-judgment. They want their children to learn respect for everyone.
- ✦ Millennial moms see themselves as the major decision-makers for their families. Whether single or among the 60% living with a husband or partner, they feel responsible for decisions regarding their children. However, they welcome support from family and friends and tend to value mentoring from elders.
- ✦ Millennial moms use social media to provide constant connection with people and causes they value and to access the latest “voice of experience” ideas for parenting and life skills. Their smartphones are an extension of their identity. They make quick judgments about organizations based on the appeal of the website as they view it for a few seconds on a smartphone. They see themselves as strong influencers of others (and are themselves strongly influenced by their peers) in “mom group” social media.
- ✦ Millennial moms are better educated than previous generations. They place great value on learning and training. They expect extensive training/preparation for any task. They are eager to access online resources to help them prepare their children for what they will experience in a program or learning opportunity. They are uncomfortable feeling personally unprepared and expect all adults who influence their children to be well prepared. They do not take chances with organizations that have untrained leadership.
- ✦ Millennial moms expect options in volunteerism, particularly short-term opportunities. Many consider it irresponsible to make a long-term commitment before “testing the water” and experiencing success with short-term projects. They look for appealing opportunities that will allow them to “make a difference” in a small way to determine whether the organization is a good fit. They do not like to be pressured.
- ✦ Millennial moms seek youth programs that combine safety and trained supervision with active fun and learning. They expect adult program leaders to have extensive training and experience. They want their children to make friends as part of a positive group dynamic where they learn by doing and develop helpful, thoughtful leadership. Many are looking for programs that help their children experience adventure and build both confidence and independence, sometimes in reaction to the perception that their own “helicopter” parents were over-protective.
- ✦ Millennial moms expect to learn and work as part of a team and want their children to learn teamwork. They’ve grown up in a culture of cooperative, project-based learning. They treasure a sense of belonging and working together with peers. They expect to build upon each other’s ideas. They value the help of experienced mentors. They have mastered “blended” work using both online and face-to-face resources and connections.
- ✦ Millennial moms view volunteerism as part of their personal professional leadership development. Young professionals expect their volunteer experience to foster skills that will translate to the workplace. They plan to highlight those skills and their volunteer work ethic as they develop their professional resume.

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The ideas presented here are compiled from extensive study of related literature as well as countless discussions with millennial moms and those who work with them. These discussions have evolved through work with multiple volunteer organizations as well as professional research on best practices of educators (including the ways they build parent involvement). This overview is not an abstract of the results of any one scientific study or meta-analysis but instead represents an informal summary of what I have learned.

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## Welcoming Millennial Moms to Cub Scouting, continued



### B. Reflecting on the understandings presented in Section A leads to the following suggestions for growing BSA membership through improving the experience for millennial parents.

| ACTION STEPS  | BSA | COUNCIL / DISTRICT | UNIT |
|---|-----|--------------------|------|
| 1. Build websites that appeal to millennial moms, showcasing how Scouting benefits youth, family, and community.  | +   | +                  | +    |
| 2. Develop enhanced technology for the recruitment and joining processes.   | +   |                    |      |
| 3. Actively market Scouting nationally and locally through heart-to-heart, inspiring connections. Use multiple venues targeted for moms, including social media.  | +   | +                  | +    |
| 4. Consider requiring training for volunteers before they assume leadership positions.  | +   | +                  | +    |
| 5. Revamp Cub Scout leader training to include more emphasis on fostering positive group dynamics and providing program that is both safe and confidence building.  | +   |                    |      |
| 6. Enlist current Cub Scout moms in contributing to social media parent groups where they can feature scenarios about how Scouting is helping their sons & the community.   | +   | +                  | +    |
| 7. Have trained leadership in place for each den (including Tigers) before new families are recruited. Expect that new parents will “phase in” to leadership positions.   |     | +                  | +    |
| 8. Be extremely well organized at recruitment night and the first few meetings/events. Provide personal, print, and online resources to help parents learn about the program.   |     | +                  | +    |
| 9. Welcome every family in multiple ways, repeatedly focusing on helping family members to feel that they belong (including through #6 above).  | +   | +                  | +    |
| 10. Expect that every family will help in some way and provide options for initial volunteerism in a variety of short-term, team-based ways. Prepare brief, appealing job descriptions and access to online resources for each task. [Do not expect new parents to become den leaders when the family joins.] | +   |                    | +    |
| 11. Provide easy online access to the Cub Scout program elements so that parents can learn what their children will be experiencing. Make national and local Scouting sites part of the continuous connections that millennial parents use every day.   | +   | +                  | +    |
| 12. Respect each parent. Provide personal recognition and thanks for each person’s contributions. Continuously show parents that their efforts are valued and that they are important members of the team.  |     |                    | +    |