

**How to conduct
A successful**

OPEN HOUSE!



GREATER ST. LOUIS AREA COUNCIL
Boy Scouts of America

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Why do young people join your Post? Isn't it because they think that the unit offers them something unique? We think that this is true, but we also know that the young men and women who join your unit, will, in almost every case do so because you, or one of your youth members, invited them to!

The next few pages will guide you to a successful recruiting effort. Read on ...

Open House Plan

August to October – the beginning of the school year – is the best time of all to invite young people to your program. Although, recruiting new members to your post can be successfully done any time, if properly planned. Tell your story to potential members before their activity calendar gets filled up. An **Open House** program is an ideal way to spread the word. But it takes advance planning to do a good job and make the most of this opportunity. Follow these steps to make sure you are covering all the bases for a good program ...

Invite your Commissioner to the planning session and Open House. He / she is an excellent resource to your unit.

A) HAVE A OFFICERS' PLANNING SESSION

If officers aren't available, form an adult planning committee. Leave time for the new officers to give input on program items. Hold this meeting at least 30 days before the Open House.

- ◆ Share plans and materials in the Fall Program Preview Kit.
- ◆ Make a commitment on the number of new members you will enroll. In determining the number, consider unit leadership, program equipment and meeting room.
- ◆ Review total Open House plan and **make assignments** (who will do what)! Then explain the Open House program to all youth members.
- ◆ Set-up at least a three (3) month program, review and add to this as each month passes. Always stay three (3) months ahead in your program planning.
- ◆ Set the date for your Open House and a Secondnighter.

B) SEND OUT INVITATIONS

About _____ before the Open House, a personalized invitation is sent to each prospective new member. For prospects, use names of friends from cards submitted by youth members or "children of employees or members of your chartering organization." Also, names and addresses of those youth from neighboring high schools that are interested in the specialty interest area your unit offers. Contact your Commissioner or Exploring/District Executive to obtain labels from the Career/Recreational Interest Survey and develop the invitation letter. **Note:** Use your imagination to spice up your invitation and Open House program – grab their attention and interest.

C) FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALLS

A telephone call to prospective members is made a day or two prior to the Open House in order to get a final count to give status to the invitation. *People respond to personal contact.* Set-up a phone calling team of five (5) or more members to accomplish the task. Use a set phone-calling format (script) to guarantee all are relaying the same message. Use your resources, make arrangements with a business or your chartering organization that might have a bank of phones to use for an evening from 5:30p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Have refreshments and snacks – make phone-calling fun.

D) THE OPEN HOUSE

Have a well-planned program! (SEE THE “SUGGESTED AGENDA” FOR AN EXAMPLE).

- ◆ Make guests feel welcome! Review with your members some of the techniques of making young people feel like they are really wanted as a member of your program.
- ◆ Distribute a written schedule of activities for the next several months. Help them make the decision to want to join. Let them see what things exciting activities you have to offer. Make sure that you have an activity planned shortly after the Open House.
- ◆ Distribute “Program Capability Inventories” out to parents to fill out. Express the need for parental help.
- ◆ Fill out membership rosters for persons joining.

E) THE SECONDNIGHTER

(either a week or two weeks after the Open House) – THIS COULD BE A REGULARLY SCHEDULED POST MEETING.

- ◆ Follow-up by phone / reminders of this meeting.
- ◆ Follow-up on prospects who could not attend the Open House by sending a card, letter, or e-mail and calling the night before.
- ◆ Register new members who could not pay at the Open House.
- ◆ Program should include a tour or exciting program.

F) SUBMIT APPLICATION ROSTERS

Turn in the rosters of new members as they join in the weeks to follow to the Exploring Division. The registration fee is individually calculated for your unit. Please note the fee is prorated by month. SEE THE SCHEDULE ON THE VOLUNTEER LEADER APPLICATION.

G) ROSTER CHECK

Around December 15, the Exploring Division will conduct a "Roster Check" with all units. Insurance concerns require us to register all youth who take part in activities and meetings.

SUMMARY

In order to provide a concise, successful method to ensure a lasting program, there should be these ingredients during the Open House meeting:

- 1) A genuine feeling of welcome.
- 2) Attendance by top members of the sponsoring organizations.
- 3) Describe activities that may be offered, but note that the program is developed by the youth themselves.
- 4) Applications should be completed (even if they don't have the registration fee with them that evening) and fees collected.
- 5) Have your new members sign-up for the upcoming activity that your unit has planned.

NOTE: A key action meeting or activity should be planned for all members to attend within a week or two after the Open House. Promote this.

- 6) It is important that the Open House run quickly, smoothly and with enthusiasm and excitement.
- 7) Exploring's relationship with the BSA can be easily explained by using well know examples such as:
 - a) Exploring is a program of Learning for Life a division of the Boy Scouts of America, just as Cadillac is a division of General Motors.
 - b) Exploring operates within the BSA much the same as your high school does with the Board of Education. The middle school and grade school are part of the Board but rarely do the three programs intermingle. Exploring is designed for high school aged young adults.

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Checklist Steps to a Successful Open House

Deadline Date	Task To Be Completed	Person(s) Responsible
<p>_____.</p> <p>(30- 45 Days in Advance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Set Open House date, time and location. ◆ Review Open House Plan at Officer’s Planning Session. ◆ Set Goal for new members at Open House. ◆ Develop a tentative three month program. ◆ Obtain Student Interest Survey results from the Exploring/District Executive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____
<p>_____.</p> <p>(21 Days in Advance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Plan Open House Agenda - assign parts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____
<p>_____.</p> <p>(10-14 days in Advance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Produce & Mail Open House Invitation Letters. ◆ Include Program Activity Calendar. ◆ Mail Invitation Letters to Last Year’s Members. ◆ Mail copy of Invitation to Exploring/District Executive. ◆ Mail Letter to School Guidance Counselor. ◆ Post in-House Employee Letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____
<p>_____.</p> <p>(The Day Before)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Last Minute Phone Calls to Former Members. ◆ Using Survey List, make Reminder Calls to Prospective New Members. ◆ Confirm Youth & Adult Applications on hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____

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<p>_____</p> <p>(Day of Open House)</p>	<p>Finalize Last Minute Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Access to Meeting Room secured. ◆ Double-check Program Agenda Assignments. ◆ Refreshments secured. ◆ Last minute Phone Calls made. ◆ Hand out Program Calendar & Applications. ◆ Activity Displays are out. ◆ Guests are greeted and sign 3 x 5 cards or sign-in sheet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____
<p>_____</p> <p>(Day After Open House)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Thank you letters sent. ? Mail Reminder Letter to new members of next meeting. ? Forward Registration Forms & Fees to Council Service Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ _____ ➤ _____ ➤ _____

Helps On Your Prospect List

PROSPECT LIST

A Career/Recreational Interest Survey indicates those youth that are interested in your career or recreational interest. Contact your Commissioner and/or Exploring/District Executive for the names of interested youth. Each crew/ship member lists three to five prospective members within his/her circle of friends and acquaintances. They record their names, address and phone number on a card and give them to the vice president of membership. The vice president eliminates duplicates and presents the list to the post membership.

YOUR LETTER OF INVITATION

Letters to youth must be personalized. “Dear Student” letters normally do not work and will not get teenagers to come and sample the Exploring Program. Follow the plan as outlined by the sample letters provided. It is recommended that posts use the chartering organization letterhead, which is signed by the head of the organization. Letters of invitation should be to the point, not too long, and should highlight the most exciting specific activities that the Explorers can expect to participate in. Emphasize what teens can do if they get involved with Exploring now and possibly in the future.

Messages most likely to attract attention of teens are:

- “... financial success ...”
- “... hands-on learning approach ...”
- “... challenging experiences ...”
- “... college endorsement ...”
- “... increased opportunity to obtain a job in an exclusive field ...”
- “... fun and entertainment ...”

NOTE: The term “Scouting” or “a program of the Boy Scouts” is not used the letter. The relationship of Exploring to the Boy Scouts of America is explained at the Open House.

REGISTRATION

Contact your Commissioner or Exploring/District Executive with your Open House date. The sooner the date is selected, the better recruiting response will result. Advance registration will help your Commissioner or professional staff member coordinate their efforts to support you.

Turn in registration forms and fees to the Exploring Division as soon as possible. This officially registers your new membership within your unit.

If you need HELP, this is what the Commissioner and professional staff is all about. There is a person available who will work directly with your post. We want to help you have a successful unit; membership and program are two of the key elements.

Open House Sample Agenda

1. **Gathering**

Have displays, photo albums, etc. around the room showing past activities
Welcome them, and hand out name tags, sign-in on 3 x 5 cards.
Involve them in some “hands on” activity for early arrival.

Post Members

2. **Introduction and Welcome to the Group**

Welcome everyone thanking them for coming. Youth officers and adult leadership introduce themselves.

Post President or Advisor

3. **Greetings from the Head of the Organization**

This person provides the group with a brief background of the organization’s interest in sponsoring an Explorer post and their commitment to the post. This brief talk should be motivational in tone.

Organization Head

(Be sure to help this person beforehand in the correct use of Exploring language so that they feel comfortable and appears knowledgeable.)

4. **Description of Exploring & the Exploring Program**

You may wish to use a slide or film about Exploring. This selection should be interesting and not too long.

Post President

Consider creative ways to have youth officers explain the meaning of Exploring. For example: if this is an existing post, have the president share highlights of the past year. For a new post, have a president from another post introduce Exploring.

5. **Description of Upcoming Program Activities**

Give out copies of your planned program, with dates and times, for the first three months. During the meeting, you should explain the election of youth officers and their responsibility to lead the program for the Explorer post.

Vice President of Program

6. **Hands-On Activity**

Design a hands-on activity for everyone to participate in or a tour of the chartered organization’s facilities.

All

7. **Questions & Answer Session**

Post President and Advisor

8. **Invitation to Join**

Explain the registration process. Explain the registration allows them to participate in local council and national Exploring activities. Have them fill out the application form and collect fees.

Advisor

9. **Refreshments & Fellowship**

All

(Company Letterhead)

Sample Letter of Invitation

(Career Post)

Dear _____ :

I understand we have a mutual interest in the field of _____. I invite you to become a member of our Exploring program with other students in the area who have the same interest. The purpose of this program is to give you the best information we can about careers in _____ through hands-on projects, guest speakers, tours, and discussions. Our group will meet twice a month throughout the school year with qualified, successful men and women in this field.

Participation in the program has helped students in the past to obtain college endorsement and increased opportunity to secure a job in this field after graduation.

Our first meeting will be __(day and date)__ beginning at _____ p.m., in our company's __(building or room location - include address)__. I will be a brief meeting to acquaint you with the program and the people from __(company name)__, and to answer any questions you may have. We will conclude with light refreshments. Your friends or guests and parents are welcome to attend the first meeting. Let us know you are interested in planning to attend; call _____ at _____ between _____ and _____ p.m., weekdays or e-mail me at __(e-mail address)__. The courtesy of a prompt reply is appreciated by __(date)__.

Registration in Exploring is \$_____ and should be brought to the meeting to expedite enrollment when you decide to join. For more information ask your school guidance counselor about Exploring, or check out our Web site at www.learning-for-life.org. Click on the Exploring icon. Your future is one of the best reasons to look into different careers now. I am looking forward to meeting you and sharing our "know-how" and facilities.

Sincerely,

Signed by Chief Executive Officer

NOTE: This letter should be typed with the blanks filled appropriately, on company letterhead.

Each letter should be signed personally, in blue ink.

Mail the letters seven to ten days before the Open House date. Do not send earlier or later.

Enclose your post program outline.

Sample Letter to In-House Employees

To: All Employees
Subject: Exploring Program

The (company name) is about to establish an *Explorer Post* for high school students. Studies have shown that the teenagers of today are very concerned about the career decisions they face tomorrow. Our Explorer program will give interested high school students an opportunity to gain knowledge and insight into the (career field) through guest speakers, presentations, and firsthand experience.

This Explorer post will meet twice monthly throughout the school year. Should you or any of your family or friends be aware of a high school teenager who would be interested in this program, please convey the information that there will be a "Open House" meeting to fully explain the program potential to the student and their parents on (date and time), in the (location). It will be a short meeting concluding with light refreshments.

Anyone interested in attending should contact (person and phone number) between _____ and _____ p.m., weekdays or send an e-mail at (e-mail address). The courtesy of a prompt reply is appreciated. Registration in Exploring is \$_____, and should be brought to the meeting to expedite enrollment should he or she decide to join.

All of us are proud of our company and this is an opportunity to share our pride while helping the youth in our community.

Sincerely,

Signed by Chief Executive Officer

(*Company Letterhead*)

Letter to School Principals, Guidance Counselors and Career Related Classroom Teachers

This is a sample letter to high school faculty informing them of students from their high school have been invited to an Open House.

Dear (*name of faculty member*) :

We have written to a number of your students inviting them to attend a meeting conducted by our company. (See attached letter of invitation).

The purpose of the meeting is to establish an Exploring Post (career club) for those students who have expressed an interest in our field. It is intended that this group will meet approximately twice a month. The specific directions that the program will take depend almost entirely upon the interest of the group, the expertise of our staff, and the facilities of our company.

We learned of the students' career interests from the Exploring Division of the Boy Scouts of America local council. We understand that last spring the Exploring Division conducted a "career interest survey" for all students, through the help of your career education/guidance department. The students invited to this meeting are interested in careers of _____ , _____ and _____ . The names are indicated on your school's copy of the career interest survey. If there are other students not listed, but would be interested in becoming involved, please pass along a copy of this letter to them or have them e-mail me at (e-mail address) .

We and the Exploring Division of the local Boy Scouts of America council, most cordially invite you and any of your associates to this meeting.

Sincerely,

Signed by the Chief Executive Officer or Post Advisor
(*signed personally if possible in blue ink*)

(*Company Letterhead*)

Invitation Letter to Former Explorers

Dear _____ :

I hope you had a great summer, and all is going well for you at the beginning of a new school year. As (*Advisor / President*) of Explorer Post (number) , sponsored by _____ (*chartered organization*) . I would like to invite you to again be a member of our Post. We will be having our Open House meeting on _____ (*day, date, time and location*) .

Feel free to come and bring any of your friends. The cost to join as a former Explorer is \$7.00. Please bring the amount with you.

We are planning to have a super year in Exploring. We are looking forward to seeing you again!

Sincerely,

Signed by Post President or Advisor
(*each signed personally if possible in blue ink*)

The Student Interest Survey

Each year, the Exploring Division of the Greater St. Louis Area Council, BSA, conducts a career and recreational interest survey in public and private high schools. This is possible because of the support and cooperation of school administrators and guidance counselors. Approximately 40,000 male and female high school students complete this survey each year. Choices are made by the students from a list of career, recreational or special interest areas.

The survey data is compiled and printed, providing the following information to the schools and the Exploring and Venturing programs:

- ◆ Student's top three Career choices
- ◆ Student's top two Recreational/Hobby choices
- ◆ Student's after graduation plans
- ◆ Complete listing of careers and recreational choices by order of preference

Each high school participating in the survey receives, at no cost, a copy of their students' survey results. This information greatly assists the school with their counseling responsibilities.

From the survey data, addresses are printed for each student and grouped by career and recreational interest area. These addresses, grouped by interest area, are then grouped by zip code area. The next step is to match these interests of the youth with a company or organization from their area of the city, suburb or outlying area that deals in the same career/recreational field of interest. Once an organization or company agrees to sponsor an Explorer Post or Venture Crew, a letter of invitation is written on their letterhead and signed by the company or organization head. The letter of invitation is then mailed to those students, from the area, who have expressed an interest in the given interest topic. The letter invites the students to attend the "Open House" to find out more about the Exploring program.

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