

# Disabilities Awareness Ideas

## Overview

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- Increasing your Scouts' awareness and understanding about disabilities and those who have them is an excellent way to build character.
- On a secondary level, the parents of the Scouts are able to witness their Scouts experience something that they most likely have not had the chance to experience up to this point in their lives.
- Disabilities Awareness can take any number of forms, does not have to be done all at once, and can even be spread out over several years.
- Experiencing some of the hardships that those with disabilities must encounter promotes a better understanding of their condition. In addition, such an understanding by society often promotes solutions or resolutions, such as better medical equipment, accessibility issues, etc.

If you have any ideas, corrections, updates, or other suggestions, please feel free to contact me:

Steve Sarver  
scouts@sarverman.org  
815-751-5186

# Disabilities Awareness

## Presentation and demonstration at den or pack meeting

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- We had a guest speaker who had been injured in an auto accident and was confined to a wheelchair
- He talked about his experiences and let the Scouts ask him questions
  - Boy, did they ever!
  - I was concerned about the depth of the personal questions they were asking, but he anticipated this and told the Scouts that he was not embarrassed, and to not be afraid to ask those types of questions.
- He then let each Scout spend some time using his wheelchair
  - You could also do this with crutches
- In addition, he also brought hands-on exercises for the Scouts to demonstrate dyslexia, blindness, and loss of hearing.
  - The Scouts laughed a little bit...until they tried it.
  - After they tried the items, they stopped laughing.



# Disabilities Awareness

- Some other possibilities include:
  - Have a health professional come and talk to your Scouts about occupational therapy, speech therapy, or physical therapy.
  - Read about a famous person who has been physically or mentally challenged.
  - Hearing impairment—Muffle ears with earmuffs or bandages.
  - Sight impairment—Blindfold one or both eyes.
  - Physical impairment—Bind an arm or leg so that it cannot be used.
  - Speaking impairment—Cover your mouth or do not speak.
  - Volunteer and help someone with disabilities in school, sports or another supervised activity.
  - Visit a nursing home or elderly person and help someone with a meal.

# Disabilities Awareness

## Disability Awareness – Field Trip

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- I took my AOL den and their parents on a “field trip” to a local mall to have them do various tasks while using crutches or a wheelchair
  - (e.g., go from store to store with as little aid as possible, etc.)
- We then debriefed as to their experiences and how they dealt with the various difficulties that they faced.
- The activity started before we even got inside the mall.  
While still in the parking lot, I gave each Scout the following note:
  1. Starting right now [in the parking lot], consider yourself “disabled.”
  2. Pretend you are shopping for a birthday gift for a member of your family.
  3. Decide what you want to get, then go into at least three different stores and look for that item (you do not need to actually buy anything).
  4. After 45 minutes we will meet in the food court and talk about your experiences.



# Disabilities Awareness

- Other rules to follow:
  - Adults cannot use the wheelchairs or crutches – this is for youth Scouts only
  - When you are using a wheelchair, you cannot use your legs. You must use your hands to make the wheelchair go and cannot let anybody push you.
  - When using crutches, one foot cannot touch the ground, and you cannot switch which foot!
  - Be sure to switch off with the other Scouts so that everybody gets a chance to use the wheelchair and the crutches.
  - You must go to the second floor at least once, but cannot go outside the building, cannot use an escalator, and cannot use the glass elevator to get to the second floor (you can use it to come back down). [note: this was designed so that the Scouts had to look for another means of getting from one floor to another – specifically to look for the other elevators in the mall]
  - Do not go into a changing room or a restroom (note to parents – this is for reasons of youth protection); if you need to go to the bathroom, by all means do so but do not take the wheelchairs or crutches with you.
  - The play area is off limits.
  - Parents – please be sure that the Scouts do not injure themselves!  
However, please let them make decisions on their own as much as possible with minimal instruction or assistance.



# Disabilities Awareness

- Notes from our debriefing session
  - I asked if anyone had ever had to use a wheelchair or crutches before. One Scout talked about his experiences when he hurt his ankle in the first grade and had to use crutches.
  - I asked what they found difficult to do, they all said “Get around.”
  - They all said they got tired, their hands and armpits all hurt
  - I asked if anybody stared at them, they all said yes, and that this made them feel that they were not accepted.
  - We talked about handicapped parking spots, width, and location
  - The Scouts had no idea what curb cuts and inclines were until this trip
  - The Scouts noticed (and used) the push buttons for the automatic entry doors. They were flabbergasted when I told them that they were not always there, and they are a relatively new invention
  - The Scouts discovered it was often a problem to reach things on shelves
  - The Scouts discovered that getting on an escalator was ok, but getting off was very hard!
  - We did not physically do this, but we talked about getting in bathroom doors with crutches or wheelchairs, and why there are handicapped stalls.
  - The Scouts all emphatically agreed that aisles inside the stores were not wide enough
  - The Scouts all agreed that they did not like the fact that they went by the mall’s play area but could not use it. They also agreed that there was nothing there that children with disabilities could do.
  - I asked if they were familiar with wheelchair basketball. They were not, so we talked about that for a while.
  - We had a general discussion about how their school would help students with a disability, how their school day would be different if they had a disability, and what they would do differently if their best friend had to use a wheelchair. The Scouts were very engaged in this conversation!
  - I asked if they could name some items that could help a person with disabilities in their daily life. They quickly figured out “powered wheelchair” (and wished they had one for this trip!) but we also talked about chair lifts, magnifying glass equipment (for visual impairments), and other items.
  - I finished up with questions on if they now had a better understanding about disabilities and those who have them, what things they learned that they did not already know, etc. The consensus was that they had absolutely no idea how much more difficult things would be. They also realized that things took more time.

# Disabilities Awareness

## Disability Awareness – Activity Stations

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### Station 1 - Wheelchair Basketball

#### Preparation

- 8 wheelchairs ready
- 3 basketballs
- Assign 2 teams from each patrol
- Assign defense and offense (4 each)
- Sit Scouts down
- Quiet them down

#### Introduction

- Playing a game of basketball is a very physically active sport and actively involves all parts of your body.
- But what if you were unable to walk and had to be in a wheelchair?
- What if you drop the ball while playing--how do you pick it up?
- The basket stays at the same height--is it possible to make a basket from the wheelchair?
- Everyone will have a chance to play a short game of basketball from a wheelchair.

#### Event Directions

- Before we begin our game, you will have one minute to play around with three basketballs.
- When the whistle blows we will quickly begin our game.
- The same rules of regular basketball apply here.
- You will have only two minutes to play before the whistle blows and the second group plays.
- At the end of 5 minutes you will go to the next station.
- Wheelchairs are a very expensive piece of equipment, so please take care of them.

#### Conclusion

- At the end of time, blow whistle and immediately have them turn in the wheelchairs and basketballs.

# Disabilities Awareness

## Station 2 - Wheelchair Obstacle Course

### Preparation

- Have two wheelchairs ready
- Make sure all cones are set up
- Separate each patrol into two groups

### Introduction

- Did you ever try and go through a doorway while in a wheelchair?
- What about curbs on the sidewalk--how would you get the wheelchair up them when you are alone?

### Event Directions

- There will be two teams in this event.
- The object is to make your way through this course staying inside the cones.
- Once you make it to the other end, give the wheelchair to the next Scout in the line and you sit down.
- The first team done wins.
- Remember that wheelchairs are a very expensive piece of equipment, so please be careful with them.

### Conclusion

- Make sure you have all the wheelchairs.
- Ask for questions and reactions and ask them to put comments and recommendations in notebook.



# Disabilities Awareness

## Station 3 - Tent Pitching

### Preparation

- Each patrol will sit down ~d .~it for directions.
- Get them quiet.

### Introduction

- Pitching a tent is an easy job, isn't it? But what if you were blind? What if you could only use one arm? What if you only had one leg and had to use crutches or if you were deaf? If one of these disabilities happen to you--then pitching a tent would not be so easy. We are going to give you a chance to experience one of these disabilities when you pitch a tent. You will find that cooperation here is also as important as cooperation at school and at home.

### Event Directions

- Everybody will be disabled in some way: blindfolded, made deaf from ear muffs, have an arm tied behind his/her back, or have a leg tied up while on crutches. This will be a timed contest between 2 patrols in correctly pitching and taking down a tent. The patrol will have to work together in pitching the tent.
- Assign two Scouts to one of the four disabilities: each Scout should have a different disability than in a previous event.

### Conclusion

- Have each Scout remove their disability--help where needed.
- Ask for reactions (have them write these in a notebook).

# Disabilities Awareness

## Station 4 - Obstacle Course

### Preparation

- Have each patrol sit down in front of leader.
- Get them quiet quickly.

### Introduction

- I am sure you have all been through an obstacle course at one time or another. But how does a blind person walk through tires that are randomly placed on the ground? Or how does a person with only one leg crawl under a tent? What is an easy obstacle course for people with everything going for them becomes extremely difficult when you are disabled in some way, as you will soon see. Everyone will assume a different disability here than before.

### Event Directions

- Everybody will be disabled in some way for the obstacle course: blindfolded, made deaf from ear muffs, have your eating arm tied behind your back, or one leg tied up and be on crutches. This event will call for team work when you realize your buddy has difficulty “seeing” where the next event is.
- Assign two Scouts to one of the four disabilities. Each Scout should have a different disability than in a previous event.

### Conclusion

- Have each Scout remove their disability--help where needed.
- Ask for reactions and have them write these in notebook.

# Disabilities Awareness

## Station 5 - Deaf Language Interpretation

### Preparation

- Have messages prepared
- Make sure Scouts have partner
- Partners stand behind benches
- Quiet them down

### Introduction

- The leader signs the word “Hi” to Scouts. How many of you understood what I just told you? For the deaf person, that is the way he must communicate with those around. Letters and words are made with the hands and this is called the sign language of the deaf. For people who have always been deaf, they are unable to speak except with their hands. But they can do this quickly and well. How would you understand your favorite TV show if you could not hear the words? More and more, TV shows now have captions so that the deaf can also enjoy the show.

### Event Directions

- In this event, we will all pretend that we are deaf and will not have any talking--our only means of communication will be through sign language. You and your partner will have a message to convey to each other by using the deaf signing alphabet. Once you have finished transmitting your message and if there is extra time, try and make up your own message. Remember—NO TALKING. You can use a pencil and paper to keep track of the messages.

### Conclusion

- Bring Scouts together in front of leader.
- Correct papers.
- Ask for reactions and questions: Have them put these into notebook.
- Sign word “Bye.”

# Disabilities Awareness

## Station 6 - Interpretation of Messages Written in Braille for the Blind

### Preparation

- Have messages prepared and ready to pass out
- Have pencils
- Have Braille Alphabet cards
- Sit the Scouts in front of you
- Each Scout should have a partner

### Introduction

- Our sight is extremely important to us. Without our sight we would miss the beauty of this campsite. We would be unable to read the comics each day or watch our favorite TV show. For many people, they have never seen any of these things nor will they ever see them. Through the use of the Braille alphabet, blind people can read books and can use a Braille typewriter to write with. However, not all of our books or magazines are in Braille, nor can everybody have use of a Braille typewriter. We are going to show you the Braille alphabet and let you have a chance to read the Braille.

### Event Directions

- (Hand out messages and alphabet cards)
- Braille is a series of raised dots which the blind person reads with their fingers. For our experience today, we will read the dots with our eyes for you to get a chance to translate the dots. Under each set of dots, write the letter and then decode and follow out the message. If you have time, you may encode a message on the back for your partner to decode.
- Remember--a blind person only reads with their fingers--you have it easy today because you can use your eyes.

### Conclusion

- Bring Scouts together
- Collect papers and pencils. They keep Braille alphabet.
- Ask for reactions and questions--have them put reactions in notebook.