

Plan now for a great crossover ceremony



A technical glitch silenced the soundtrack for Pack 183's crossover ceremony last winter. Despite the hiccup, the Scouts had a great time and the ceremony was a success, according to Laura Dombroski, committee chair for the Vernon, N.J., pack.

"That's when you know you're doing something right," she says. "It doesn't need to be some big glitzy thing; it could just be simple."

That's not to say you don't need to plan ahead. In fact, Dombroski's pack sets its crossover date during its annual planning meeting over the summer and begins serious planning a few months out. Pack 150 in nearby Sparta, N.J., does much the same thing, according to Assistant Cubmaster Bob Brady.

As another crossover season approaches, *Scouting* magazine asked Brady and Dombroski to share their keys to success.

Setting a Date

You obviously can't do much planning until you set a date. While your regular meeting night is an option, weekend dates allow you to spend a little more time. This year, Brady's pack chose a Friday in March; Dombroski's pack chose a Saturday in February.

"We've always done it on Saturday in the late afternoon into the early evening," Dombroski says. "There's sports on Saturdays regardless of the time of year, so that time of day usually is a little better."

Even without the constraints that weeknights impose, Brady handed out Arrow of Light awards at the February pack meeting, not at the March crossover ceremony.

"If we did them all on the same night, I was afraid that some Tiger Cub would get bored with the presentation, as cool as it is," he says. "We didn't want to make the meeting all about the kids who were leaving the pack, even though that was the highlight of the evening."

Recruiting Participants

Once you've set a date, it's important to recruit the people who should participate, especially representatives of the Scouts BSA troop or troops your Scouts will be joining. That was easy for Brady — he's the Scoutmaster of his chartered organization's girls' troop, and the Cubmaster is the Scoutmaster of the linked boys' troop. If your troop relationships aren't that tight, you might have to track down the right Scouts BSA leaders.

In either case, get on troop calendars as early as possible, especially if you're planning a weekend ceremony that could conflict with a troop outing.

"If I put on my Scoutmaster hat, I don't particularly care which weekend per month we go camping," Brady says. "We just have to figure out what works with the schedule."

If you want to involve your Order of the Arrow lodge in the ceremony, as Brady's troop does, try to lock them in early.

"We booked them back in October to make sure we had them available the night we wanted them," Brady says. "Otherwise, packs end up having meetings on weird nights to get them."

Dombroski recommends thinking about other people who should be involved. For example, her pack merged with another pack two years ago, and a couple of last year's fifth-graders began their Scouting journey in the other pack. She made sure their original leader was involved in the crossover ceremony, even though he'd only been marginally involved with the den recently.

"He stood up there with them, because he was with them most of the time before that," she says.





Personalizing the Ceremony

With the major details in place, you can develop and fine-tune your ceremony script. Here, too, advance planning makes a big difference.

Early in the program year, Dombroski asks families and den leaders to submit photos of their Scouts for a crossover slideshow. People who are organized and tech-savvy respond quickly, but others need time to comb through the photos on their phones and computers. She also polls each family to learn about their children's best Scouting memories, their favorite foods, their favorite subjects in school and other fun facts — information that can go into the slideshow.

"Doing that online with [SurveyMonkey](#) or [Google Forms](#) gives the parents the leeway to do it with the Cub Scout at their leisure and not be under pressure at a meeting," she says. "If you do that early enough, they can take their time with it."

It's also important to customize the script you're using. For example, many scripts talk about the journey from Lion to Arrow of Light, but today's female Cub Scouts started the journey much later.

"We added one or two extra sentences on the fly into the ceremony saying, 'And some of you joined the trail at the Webelos level' — something to that effect," says Brady. "It worked out just fine."

And when things work out just fine, you can congratulate yourself on a job well done. Even if the A/V system breaks down.

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