**WELCOME TO TROOP 204!**

Thank you for your interest in Scouting and in Troop 204. Our Troop is one of the oldest Boy Scout troops in Montgomery County- over 80 years strong! We are an active Troop and maintain a roster of approximately 30 boys ranging in age between 11 and 17. We generally camp once a month and support our community with a variety of volunteer activities throughout the year, including Eagle Scout projects, in which the boys can gain SSL hours.

**MONTHLY CAMPING TRIPS**

The heart of our activities are our monthly camping trips. The older boy scouts plan these trips which typically include backpacking, caving, rafting, biking, riflery, canoeing, orienteering, beach camping in September and family skiing in February. Upcoming fall 2017 outings include:

 ● Sept. 16-17: beach camping, Assateaugue Nat’l Seashore

● Oct. 6-8: backpacking (TBD)

● Dec. 9-10 rifle shooting, Broad Creek Boy Scout reservation

**SUMMER ACTIVITIES**

This summer from June 24-July 1, 2017, our Troop will camp for a week at **Goshen Boy Scout Reservation (BSR)** located in the George Washington National Forest of western Virginia where the boys get to complete various merit badges and partake in other fun activities.

Older Scouts are also eligible to participate in challenging **High Adventure trips**. From July 9-15, 2017, the Troop will be going to the Florida keys as part of the **Coral Reef Sea Base High Adventure** sailing trip. Next summer, we will be hiking and camping at the **Philmont Scout Ranch** in New Mexico from July 27-August 8, 2018. In recent past summers, the Troop went hiking and camping on the **Northern Lights High Adventure** with the Fairbanks, AK Midnight Sun Council near Denali National Park, Alaska (2016); to the **Philmont Scout Ranch** High Adventure (2015); and canoeing on the **Northern Tier High Adventure** in Ontario (2014).

**THE BASICS**

* **MEETINGS:** During the school year, Troop 204 meets every **Wednesday from 7:30 – 8:45** **p.m.** in the **Scout Room** at **Bethesda United Methodist Church** at 8300 Old Georgetown Rd at the corner of Old Georgetown Rd. and Huntington Parkway.
* **WEB SITE:** Our primary source of communication is via our web site at: [**http://troop204bethesda.scoutlander.com**](http://troop204bethesda.scoutlander.com). Parents are given accounts and full access to the site.Please let us know if you have any trouble logging in
* **UNIFORM & HANDBOOOK:** Your son will need his own **Boy Scout Handbook** and **Scout uniform-** these are available from the Scout Store located in the National Capital Area Council (NCAC) scout headquarters at 9190 Rockville Pike (at the corner of Rockville Pike and West Cedar Avenue).
	+ It is recommended to buy a Scout handbook COVER to keep the book dry and protected as it endures Scout adventures. It is also a good place to store pens, etc. Use a sharpie to put the Scout’s name on it!
1. **Class A Uniform** includes:
	1. Scout Shirt
	2. Scout Pants and Shorts or Convertible pants
	3. Patches: NCAC shoulder patch, Troop numbers (204)
	4. Epaulets (Cub Scout colors are blue, Boy Scouts’ are forest green)
	5. “Badge Magic” adhesive – you’ll love the no-sew feature for patches.

[they can help you collect these items at the Scout Store]

* + 1. Note: Some enjoy sewing, and find that a sewed-on patch stays on longer and keeps the uniform in better condition because the badge magic adhesive collects dirt and never can be removed. Both methods work; it’s up to your Scout!
1. Our gift to you: a **Troop 204 Neckerchief**!

**FIRST MEETINGS: EARLY ADVANCEMENT TO SCOUT IS OUR FIRST GOAL!**

Your son will be assigned to a Patrol led by one of our older Boy Scouts in the Troop; this Patrol Leader is a Scout who has achieved the rank of First Class or higher. During the first few meetings, the Patrol Leader will explain the Boy Scout rank and merit badge systems as well as help him complete the requirements needed to attain the “Scout” rank which culminates in your son’s first Scoutmaster conference. Achievements such as **rank advancement** and **merit badges** are recognized and celebrated at our **Court of Honor dinners** in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. Merit badges relating to various skills or interests are obtained with the assistance of adult merit badge counselors individually, in group programs, or at the Goshen scout camp.

The requirements are simple and early advancement will give your son a sense of accomplishment as he begins his journey.  The Introduction found on pages 1-40 in the Scout Handbook includes all the information your son needs to know to achieve Scout rank in the first 2 or 3 meetings. Finally, please review together the short pamphlet about Youth Protection located in the front of the Handbook.

**A PARENT’S ROLE**

While this is a boy-run Troop, we need active parental involvement to make things work. A few ways you can help include doing one or two of the following things:

* **JOIN THE TROOP COMMITTEE**: Our Troop Committee, which includes parents, adult leaders, and our senior Scout (known as the “Senior Patrol Leader”) meets the third Sunday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at a nearby residence. Troop program planning and support decisions are considered– and we need your input! We will also need you to fill out a simple adult registration form to join the committee.
* **ADULT LEADERS AND DRIVERS**: Be an Adult Leader on a campout or two (or more if you like) during the year – you’ll have a great time watching the amazing work that the boys do collectively. OR be a driver – we always need drivers even if you choose not to camp.
* **TRAINING**: NCAC offers numerous excellent training courses for adult leaders and parents, including online courses (at [www.myscouting.org](http://www.myscouting.org) – where you will need to create a user name and password) —and instructor-led training activities. These are intended to ensure that our adults meet requirements for their leadership positions, and that they are well equipped to safely plan and oversee our outdoor activities.
* **MERIT BADGE COUSELORS:** Parents can volunteer to be counselors for various merit badges, depending on particular skills and interests. You need to fill out an adult application form to be a MB counselor. If interested, please contact any of the Troop 204 adult leaders to help get started.

• **ADULT PARTICIPATION IN OUTINGS:** The Scouts need all the adult support we can give! It is always encouraged to have as much adult participation as possible, as long as it is consistent with the Boy Scout ideals, methods and rules. As such, all adults who participate in outings need to take online Youth Protection Training (YPT), and other online training courses for specific hazards depending on the outing’s activities. Also, the Boy Scout program is much different than Cub Scouts because the Boy Scouts have a larger role in decision-making and much more independence; it is the adults’ role to create a safe environment for learning. Troop 204 has struck an excellent balance, so we ask new parents to take Boy Scout training and consult with experienced Troop 204 adult leaders so we can all provide a consistent adult message while on outings.

**HOW TO REGISTER**

Before your son can attend any camping trips or other Troop outings, he needs to be registered with the Boy Scouts. Registration is easy and can be taken care of during our regularly scheduled Wednesday night Troop meetings. Annual dues are $175 and include your son’s membership with the local scout council, insurance fees, a subscription to Boys Life magazine, and contribution to troop activities. Our membership year follows the calendar year (January-December). Any Scout joining the Troop prior to the start of a new year will pay a reduced pro-rated registration fee.

**Thank you for considering Troop 204**! We look forward to seeing your son join us in our many Troop activities! And please, contact any one of us any time with questions or comments.

Yours in Scouting,

Jeff Popkin, Scoutmaster (jspop@mac.com)

Gary Davis, Ass’t Scoutmaster (gary.t.davis@nasa.gov)

John O’Boyle, Ass’t Scoutmaster (jdoboyle@aol.com)

Michael Bergman, Committee Chairman (mdbergman@rcn.com)