

Troop 370- An Eagle Scout Primer

So, your son has passed his Eagle Board of Review and you are waiting for the paperwork to come back from National. It is not too early to start planning his Eagle Court of Honor. Pooling the collective experience of several Eagle Scout parents in the Troop, here is a brief outline of a planning process that works well:

- 1. Pick a location/date and time.** Everything hinges on this. We have had CoH at summer camp, or the scout's own church, but most are at Pax Christi because everyone knows where it is and it has nice facilities – they do the stage & table setup, and even make the coffee. If you would like to have it at Pax, contact the scheduling people by calling the church office directly. Get it confirmed in WRITING. It isn't real until it is confirmed in writing from the church. Here are a few things to think about when setting the date/time:
 - a. Weekends have worked better than week days; afternoon & evening works best; coordinate with church Mass times too.
 - b. Check the School, Troop, Family and Church calendars to make sure there are minimal conflicts with other events. Summer, October, May and football season are generally very busy months.
 - c. You can combine it with one of the quarterly Troop Courts of Honor as well if you'd like.
 - d. If you want a priest or minister involved, ask them right away. See also 'Script' below.
- 2. Get his picture taken.** There are photographers that offer "special packages" on Eagle photos- check the Northern Star Council website for specifics. They even have the badge and metal to put on temporarily for the shoot. You will need to pick up a neckerchief and slide from the Scout Shop eventually for the ceremony. So, you might as well get it now and use it for the pictures. These packages include sending one free 8x10 to the Scout Office for display. They keep that photo. Professional photos are not required, but they are relatively inexpensive. You could also take your own "head shot" with a flag background and use it for the program.
- 3. Develop invitation and Guest list.** The invitation process is wide-open, it can be as simple as an email out to everyone with the details, or as formal as printed invitations from a wedding store. Many people use a combination of a "save the date" email followed by a hard copy invitation. The Scout shop sells nice blank invitations. You could print up a little insert with the details (and maybe that picture you just took) and use the blank as a cover. The guest list should be broad: Family, friends, troop mates, the members of the Board of Review, those that wrote recommendation letters, those involved/benefited in the Service Project, etc. If you are going "hard copy", invitations should be mailed at least four weeks before the event. There will obviously be people who can't come, but you would like them to send a note, letter, etc. acknowledging your son's accomplishments. There are lists of politicians, dignitaries, etc. that will do this if asked. Addresses and detailed lists are on the web. The Council will get letters from the current House, Senate, and President.
- 4. Think about decorations.** Northern Star Council provides a decorating kit. Call the Scout Office and reserve one. It contains a banner, table decorations, etc. so that you don't have to buy things you will only use once. You may also want to create a few photo boards with pictures of your son's scout career (see 'slide show' below) or bring scrap books, mementos (pinewood derby cars, etc), a copy of his service project, etc. to put out on a table in the back of the room. People can browse this display before and after the ceremony.
- 5. Plan the script.** There are hundreds of scripts floating around on the internet. You could use any of them. But, do realize there IS a format that seems to work that takes the CoH from general scouting practices, through ranks and into your sons own experiences -culminating in the award itself by the Scoutmaster. There is an excellent book at the scout shop on how to plan the whole script with great examples. The troop has a circulating copy. Once you have a draft of the script your son needs to ask people to speak the different parts. Have him do that and give each speaker copies of their parts so they can practice. If you want a priest or deacon to do the Benediction, etc., book them early- their schedules fill fast. The MC is usually a fellow Eagle Scout; there are also parts for other Scouts to do: the flags, honor guard, etc. Don't forget about getting someone to run the AV equipment. Print the script out in big type (14 pt +) and put it in a binder that can be placed on the podium so all speakers can follow along.
- 6. Plan and print the Program.** Like the invitations, the Scout Shop has program covers that you can use to insert your own program printed at Kinkos, etc. It should include: the order of the ceremony from the script, a photo of your son,

and a summary of his scouting career. It may also have a section for a note of thanks and some general Scouting stuff on ranks, Eagles, and/or BSA history. You need 50-75 to give out at the door.

7. **The Head Table.** The Council supplies the Eagle award Kit (Eagle Ribbon, parent's pins, and mentor pin) but if you wish more than one mentor pin you can pick that up at the Scout shop yourself for a small fee. The troop provides a copy of the Legacy of Honor book and will make provisions for a flag to be flown over the Capitol in Washington, DC. The flag is usually delivered after the event.
8. **Pull the slide show together.** It has become a tradition to put a presentation of old photos together that showcase your son's scouting involvement. It is often put in PowerPoint, etc. and played near the end of the ceremony. Check on how you will actually get that large file to the event site and make sure it works with their projection equipment. Flash drives have worked pretty well, but test it first especially with music.
9. **Contact the Eden Prairie Foundation.** This group gives a donation in your son's name to a charity of his choice. Look them up on the web and get the form to fill out naming your charity designee. Also, invite the Foundation to the CoH for the presentation of the gift. You may also ask the group that will receive the gift to send a representative to accept it; if they don't your son will accept for them.
10. **Plan the Reception.** Your family is hosting this party so do what works for you and your budget. You could have cake & coffee, serve snacks, or give them a light dinner if you'd like. Just realize the time commitment and the fact that you do not want to be stuck in the kitchen during the ceremony. The troop does not have a "hospitality committee", but there are usually a few people that come forward to help- just ask. Relatives are good for this too. The troop has one or two boxes of Eagle CoH stuff that you can use. This includes some napkins, plates, candles, decorations, etc.- maybe even some invitation, thank you cards, etc. Check out the boxes from the quartermaster before you buy a bunch of party supplies. Depending on how much family is traveling in for the event, you may choose to follow up the ceremony and reception with something more at your home (open house, dinner etc.). This has been done, but is not in any way required.
11. **Get there early and enjoy.** Set up will takes about an hour. People start coming about 15 minutes early. So, plan accordingly. You've spent a month or more planning this thing and, until his wedding or high school graduation, you will not need to go through anything like this again. So, take a deep breath, relax and be the proud parents today – let someone else worry about the ice cream melting or the mic not working.
12. **Save your receipts.** The troop will reimburse you for some expenses including: Slide & neckerchief; invitation and program covers; half sheet cake or equivalent; punch, & Coffee. This is rather limited as the troop wishes to assist you and provide a minimum of hospitality. That is, your family is hosting this event; the troop is supporting you.
13. **Send notes of thanks right away.** Gifts and cards will be given and therefore notes of thanks should be sent promptly within two weeks. Remember to thank all the speakers, the groups that donated the award kit (Eagles and American Legion), the church for the facilities/help, etc. A gift to the Scoutmaster and/or Eagle Advisor is thoughtful, but not required.

Good Luck ! and talk to any of the Eagle Advisors for more details.