

Soaring News

News on advancement for the Susquehanna Council

Edition 26-1

January 2026

This newsletter is prepared by the Susquehanna Council Advancement committee as a resource for leaders of cub scout and Scouts BSA units and merit badge counselors. Its purpose is to provide current information on changes regarding advancement, as well as clarifications of advancement requirements and tips, reminders, and guidelines on advancement.

Headlines

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Scouts BSA

None.

Merit Badges

[Merit Badge pamphlets](#) – **USE them (now available for free).**

[Updated Merit Badge Requirements in 2026](#)

[Requirements prior to meeting with a MB Counselor.](#) {Important info repeated from content in Edition 24-3, 25-1, and 25-2}

[Applying to serve as a merit badge counselor](#) – **very important to provide qualifications for each merit badge.**

Council Certificate of Merit

The Council Advancement Committee has established a Council Certificate of Merit, with the approval of the Executive Board, as a council-controlled means to recognize the contributions of adult leaders to the council's Scouting program by their achievements or service. The Council Certificate of Merit provides a way to formally recognize: 1) the contribution of an adult leader that is below the threshold for a national-level award, or 2) the extended service of an adult leader.

A Council Certificate of Merit can be awarded for either achievement or service. The Council Advancement committee has established criteria for consideration and approval of a council certificate of merit for achievement or service.

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The essential information to understand the process for submission of a recommendation and review and approval of each award is available in the council's Advancement Policies and Procedures (P&P), section 6.3. The P&P includes: 1) the criteria for recommendation of each award; 2) the procedure to submit a recommendation; 3) the process for review and approval of the award; 4) the approval authority for the award; and 5) the required forms. To access that information, click [here](#).

Forms to submit a recommendation for award of the Council Certificate of Merit

The criteria for recommendation and approval of the award is on the back of the form. To access and download the form click on the link to the form.

[Council Certificate of Merit – Achievement](#)

[Council Certificate of Merit – Service](#)

Reporting community service hours.

Susquehanna Council needs all units (Packs, Troops, Crews) to make sure that they are reporting all hours completed for community service. The easiest way to do this is through Scoutbook. Other unit management systems do not share this data with Scoutbook, such as Troopmaster or Scout Manager. If your unit does not use Scoutbook please report your unit's service hours through submission of an excel spreadsheet and send it to: susq533@gmail.com. The spreadsheet and contact information for these reports has been sent to all Key 3 leaders in the council. The spreadsheet is also available on the council's website in the Forms section [{link}](#). If you need assistance with reporting these hours, please reach out to your District Executive.

Service to the community is a cornerstone of Scouting America. Units in Susquehanna Council provide several thousand hours of service each year to organizations in their community. Reporting these hours is crucial for two reasons: 1) the number of hours helps to quantify and make tangible the contribution provided to the community and 2) this information is used to help get support for the Scouting program in the Susquehanna Council. Total service hour statistics are used in the application for several grants that the Susquehanna Council applies for each year, and the total number of hours for some of these grants correlates to the amount the Council is granted. These statistics are also used when communicating with other service agencies in the communities such as Kiwanis Clubs, Lions Clubs, VFWs and more. These agencies look at the statistics and use them to determine if they will donate to the Susquehanna Council. Thus, reporting service hours is crucial to help obtain funds for the council's expenses and assist in keeping fees lower.

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A significant resource available

Go to the advancement section of the council's website, if you need any of the following:

- Information to answer many (most) questions, such as
 - BSA or Council policies and procedures for advancement.
 - Current requirements for rank advancement.
 - Current merit badge requirements and info for counselors, including the application and training.
 - Information to assist Life Scouts, unit leaders, and parents to plan for and complete the requirements for Eagle, including guides and all forms.
 - Headlines with information on current topics.
- Points of contact for advancement questions.
- Other resources for current information.
- Link to the site: <https://susquehannascouting.org/advancement/>

Make it a start point and go-to resource for advancement information and all advancement related forms. Strongly suggest that you bookmark this page or the Council's website on your computer for quick access. Tell us if you think something is missing and we will look into adding it.

Cub Scouts

- **Cub Scout Program.**
Attention Cub Scout leaders and parents.

Please remember to check all adventure requirements at each den level, as many requirements have changed with the new program. For example, each den now earns the Bobcat adventure every year, and the requirements vary depending on den level. Once your Cub Scouts have earned adventures, take the time to enter their hard work into Scout Book (even partial adventures).

Remember that adventures should be awarded frequently to keep Cub Scouts motivated to continue to work toward additional adventures.

The most current information on the program can be obtained by going to the Cub Scout page on this site [{link}](#).

This is the BSA's official website with the archive information on the program updates [{link}](#).

- **Transitioning from the Cub Scout program to Scouts BSA.** The Council Advancement Committee has created a guide to provide information to assist parents, guardians, and Scouts in understanding the differences between the Cub Scout program and Scouts BSA program for a smoother transition [{link}](#).

Scouts BSA

None.

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Merit Badges

➤ **Merit Badge Pamphlets – USE them (now available for FREE).** Scouts are strongly encouraged to use the merit badge pamphlet for the MB as a resource to learn about the subject of the MB and prepare for completion of all requirements. The pamphlet provides a wealth of information related to the MB's subject and most of the information needed to complete each requirement. The pamphlets are available for a FREE on-line download from Scouting America ([link](#)). Also, links are available to other information to help in learning about and completing specific requirements.

➤ **Updated Merit Badge Requirements in 2026.**

Attention Scouts and merit badge counselors.

At the start of every year, BSA National publishes updates to the requirements for selected merit badges. The update of the requirements for a merit badge will include one or more of the following types of changes: 1) modification of a previously established requirement, 2) addition of a new requirement, 3) deletion of a previously established requirement, and/or 4) reordering of previously established requirements.

In 2026, BSA National has updated the requirements for the following sixty-seven (67) merit badges, including nine (9) merit badges that count towards the requirements for the Eagle rank [highlighted]. The updated requirements go into effect on 1/1/2026.

American Indian Culture (formerly Indian Lore)

Archaeology

Athletics

Automotive Maintenance

Bird Study

Canoeing

Chess

Citizenship in the Community

Citizenship in the Nation

Citizenship in the World

Coin Collecting

Composite Materials

Cycling

Digital Technology

Emergency Preparedness

Engineering

Exploration

Family Life

Fishing

Fly Fishing

Forestry

Geology

Graphic Arts

Moviemaking

Multisport

Music

Nuclear Science

Oceanography

Painting

Personal Fitness

Pets

Plant Science

Programming

Public Health

Radio

Reading

Robotics

Rowing

Safety

Scouting Heritage

Sculpture

Search and Rescue

Signs, Signals, & Codes

Skating

Small Boat Sailing

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Home Repairs
Horsemanship
Inventing
Journalism
Kayaking
Law
Lifesaving
Mammal Study
Mining in Society
Model Design and Building
Motorboating

Snow Sports
Space Exploration
Surveying
Swimming
Traffic Safety
Truck Transportation
Veterinary Medicine
Water Sports
Weather
Whitewater
Wilderness Survival

Any Scout starting any of these sixty-seven merit badges in 2026 must meet the new requirements. Anyone can find the most current requirements for every merit badge, including the merit badges with updated requirements, on this site and on the page “The Merit Badge Program”, then finding the “Requirements” section and clicking on the link.

The specific requirements that have been changed are identified on the page “All Merit Badges A–Z”.

Any Scout that started any of these sixty-seven merit badges prior to 1/1/2026 may complete the merit badge utilizing the requirements previously in effect which are available in Scoutbook.

A summary of the change(s) for each merit badge is available at this [link](#). A detailed depiction of the change(s) for each merit badge is available at this [link](#). However, only use the requirements provided on the main website (as stated above) and use the information in these documents only as tip off to the changes.

➤ **Requirements prior to meeting with a merit badge counselor.**
Attention Scouts and unit leaders.

In order to address concerns expressed by a number of unit leaders, the Council Advancement Committee has developed and approved a policy that requires Scouts to meet with a unit leader before contacting a MB counselor to begin the completion of requirements or registering for an on-line MB opportunity. The policy formalizes a longstanding expectation in the Guide to Advancement that each Scout first meet with the unit leader before pursuing completion of a merit badge. The purpose for establishment of the requirement is twofold:

1. To verify for each MB if the counselor is registered in Scouts BSA and is approved as a counselor for that MB (by any council).
2. Provide an opportunity for the unit leader to review with the Scout whether the offering provides an acceptable opportunity to learn and complete the requirements as written for the MB, if the Scout is considering an on-line offering.

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The complete version of the policy, including procedures to follow and some additional guidance, can be obtained by going to the “Advancement Resources” page on the council’s website [{link}](#). The policy is in Section 3.4.

➤ **Applying to serve as a merit badge counselor – very important to provide qualifications for each merit badge.**

“In order for a request to be complete, the merit badge counselor must provide a list of qualifications for each merit badge for which the counselor requests approval. The list must provide specific information that demonstrates the individual’s qualifications in the subject of the merit badge, such as training or education completed, certifications received, and experience (work or personal activity). The counselor should use as much space as necessary to provide their qualifications (such as using additional lines on the form or attach an extra page). The counselor must provide copies of appropriate certificates with the Information form.” {Extracted from 3.1.1.f., Susquehanna Council Advancement Policies and Procedures}

Providing specific qualifications for each merit badge to serve as a counselor is essential to the approval process and will greatly contribute to a more rapid review and approval.

Significant Links

- Susquehanna Council’s Advancement pages [{click here}](#).
- Guide to Advancement: <https://www.scouting.org/resources/guide-to-advancement/>
- Advancement News from the National Advancement Program Team, Previous issues are available at: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/scouts-bsa/advancement-and-awards/advancement-news/>
- Merit badge requirements: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/advancement-and-awards/merit-badges/>
- Advancement and awards: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/advancement-and-awards/>
- Information for Life Scouts in the Susquehanna Council to help in attaining the rank of Eagle: <https://susquehannascouting.org/advancement/boy-scouts/information-and-resources-for-life-to-eagle-advancement/>