

Gerald Ford, the thirty-eighth President of the United States, is an Eagle Scout. Neil Armstrong, known as the first man on the moon, is an Eagle Scout. Steven Spielberg, a legendary film director, is an Eagle Scout. Notice how, dead, or alive, I used the present tense to describe the rank of these individuals. I did not say they were Eagle Scouts; they are Eagle Scouts. The rank of Eagle is not something that happened in the past, it continues to happen as being an Eagle Scout is a way of life. Scouting is a way of life.

These people have all made their mark on the world, a path led to them through Scouting. They have worked restlessly to achieve their goals, despite challenges they faced, and used their abilities to demonstrate leadership along the way. Leaders have to make decisions, be problem solvers, face adversity, and follow their moral obligations – all principles of Scouting. These qualities and traits instilled in youth through Scouting are a rare comradery, making this program incredibly unique. Teaching young girls and boys the values of responsibility, loyalty, leadership, and camaraderie at this age equips them for life in the reality we live in. In the everchanging society that we are a part of, these characteristics are fundamental for children to possess and carry with them into adulthood.

But these Scouts among hundreds of thousands of others, all have something in common – they have all represented the Boy Scouts of America with the uniform. The sense of pride accomplished by wearing this uniform is second to

none. All of the different components of the uniform combine to form a harmonious unit, much like Scouts in America. Although there is much more to a Scout than the uniform they wear, it encapsulates everything that Scouting stands for. From the leadership to the unity to the citizenship, the uniform and the values embodied within it resemble the true importance of Scouting in America.

Just like the belt, Scouts are supportive. Scouts function as a team, almost like a family, fostered upon cooperation and communication. Whether it is at a troop meeting or on a camping trip, Scouts are almost always working together. Building the trust and skills to work in a team empowers everyone to continue pushing towards the goal. For instance, when I went to my first summer camp as a member of the Scouts BSA, a lot of the younger girls in the other patrol were struggling to set up their gear. They were getting very discouraged and were ready to give up, but my assistant patrol leader and I walked over to them to assess the situation. With a pep talk and some hands-on help, all of their equipment was assembled, and their spirits were lifted. We worked together to support them by identifying the problem and expressing understanding for their stress since it was their first campout ever. They were eventually relieved, and I had the proudest moment when I saw them offering to help others serve meals in the dining hall later in the week. The younger patrol even taught us some things like a new camp game and a different way to tie a knot! All in all, being supportive and cooperating

allowed everyone to learn some new things, encouraging self-improvement. As we demonstrated peer learning from all different ages, there were many moments of innovation and creativity conveyed too. By utilizing teamwork and communicating with each other appropriately, our support grew. In terms of America, this skill teaches Scouts measures that go beyond the troop setting as there are countless situations in life where this skills will be emphasized. From personal to professional life, knowing how to effectively speak and collaborate with other people is vital to success. It encourages respect, open-mindedness, and active listening as well, all are necessary to grow into the rounded individual that Scouting teaches.

Likewise, the slide on the neckerchief holds it in place, as Scouts must hold on to their values. Scouts are taught to remain true to their morals and beliefs, while being respectful of others. The Scout Oath and Law that are constantly recited have true meaning and significance to them as they can serve as a guide for one to abide by in their daily life to the best of their ability. As we mature over time and face various social situations such as transitioning into college, our values will be challenged. Being dually enrolled in college while being a high school student, I faced many situations where I was surrounded by people older than me with equally mature mindsets. In my social psychology course, there was a discussion about religion and certain stereotypes about religious individuals. While it would have been easier to sit quietly, I knew that I had to voice my opinion about how I

felt. As soon as I stood up for my values, other people joined in the conversation too. I felt so proud when others began talking about their beliefs, knowing I helped give them the confidence to do so. Although my opinion created some friction in the discussion, I was true to myself and that was worth it. While being an active listener and being open-minded is implemented in Scouting, it is also important to stand by your morals, considering that a Scout is reverent. I was willing to consider their perspective but not so quick to change my own just to conform to social pressure. This is principle taught through Scouting is important to America as it gives a solid foundation to continuously build ethics upon as we age. Giving adolescents the strength to honor their values, while still considering others, is significant as an American to respectfully exercise the freedom of speech and right to an opinion.

Additionally, the position patch worn on the left sleeve signifies leadership which is performed in various ways through the assigned duties of each position. While the senior patrol leader is considered the highest youth position in a troop, all the other jobs are equally important to enable the troop to function as efficiently as possible. The senior patrol leader is responsible for planning and managing the troop meeting and outings but is part of their job to listen to suggestions from all. I had the opportunity to serve as senior patrol leader in two Scout BSA troops (after I transitioned from one troop into another) which widened my horizons and

expanded my mindset. Being able to demonstrate leadership skills in two different environments with completely different sets of people challenged me to adapt my skillset to best fit the needs of others. My first troop was very camping-oriented while my second troop enjoyed working on merit badges the most, so I catered to the group. Being able to listen to the requests of my fellow Scouts and not just take control to do the activities I wanted, helped form trustworthy relationships within the troop. Seeking feedback and support from my Scout peers demonstrated I had their best interests at heart. Engaging actively like this showed I cared about everyone and treating everyone as a valuable asset to the troop empowered everyone to work harder, maximizing our troop's efficiency. Overall, Scouting implements the principles of leadership through these positions which symbolizes its importance to America. Scouting is endowing our next generation of politicians, doctors, teachers, and lawyers with this skill to succeed and make a positive transformation in the country, by having the ability to turn a vision into a reality through leading others. Politicians who seek to reform the law and doctors who have the goal to cure diseases can motivate others to help accomplish these goals through leadership.

Nonetheless, the merit badges serve the purpose of being career explorations, just as a Scout explores. While the Eagle required badges are intended to practice the core values of life preparation, the elective badges gives

insight into new areas. This opportunity helped me discover so much about myself, that I still carry with me years later. The personal fitness merit badge discovered my love for tennis, the citizenship in the community merit badge formed my aspirations to run for city council, and the fingerprinting merit badge intrigued my career interest in forensic science. Exploring these new subjects at a young age helps pinpoint future aspirations and goals. Discovering something you love, at any age, is so rewarding and Scouting assists in finding that passion. This passion fuels people to continue to do what they love and makes them want to keep learning more about it. Continuously learning and growing fosters self-development and broadens horizons, as it is important to America for people to strive for more if they are able to improve. Never settling for the minimum encourages hard work, an asset in many areas of life.

Moreover, the council strip patch worn on the left sleeve resembles the local community and the mission as a Scout to make it a better place. Volunteering in the community is a vital part of Scouting as it empowers youth to be part of making the change they want to see in the world. It allows them to be an active citizen and have a role in creating the community they want to live in. Such an accomplishment provides young men and women with the sense of achievement and confidence by doing good for others. For my Eagle Scout project, I constructed a flagpole plaza in my local cemetery to represent those actively serving in our country's military and

those who have given their life doing so. Each flag represents a branch of the military, and this memorial also functions as the site of many local ceremonies, such as the city's Memorial Day gathering. Seeing people of my community come together at the place of my project makes me feel so fulfilled. There is no other way to describe the feeling of wholeness that overcomes me knowing that the work and time I put into my project is leaving a lasting impact on Apopka forever. This experience has enabled me to build my leadership abilities and character as well, by witnessing how the outcome of my efforts has benefited my community. Through volunteering, the community is positively impacted but it also creates unity by connecting people through this common goal. Scouting implements this fundamental truth which is important to America because giving back has the opportunity to create a cycle for others to continue to do the same.

Lastly, the American flag patch evidently stands for citizenship of the nation and a Scout's duty to the country. This duty is of utmost significance and a Scout represents this in all their walks of life from being a student to a sibling to a Scout. The flag is worn on the right sleeve to appear facing the observer, creating the illusion of the flag flying in the wind as the wearer walks forward. The Scout stands for pride, integrity, opportunity, strength, freedom, and the true meaning of being an American, as they embody the flag on the uniform. Scouting instills these values into young Americans who will grow up with the respect for their country, only

building upon it as they age. Introducing these core principles in childhood will have an impact on their life as an adult as they are now prepared for what is to come.

America needs the youth's generation to be endowed with the values of hard work and morals to better the future of our world and our society. Scouting spreads this positive impact and the lifelong values that it inspires will continue to spread.

Scouts are our future, and they are equipped with a skillset that gives me confidence and faith in the future of our country. While those traits may be challenged throughout life, a Scout is taught to be a team player, a believer, a leader, and a citizen, and that can never be taken away from them.