

National Scout leader wowed by Boy Scout Troop 400 – March 23, 2011

De Tan Nguyen, director of multicultural markets, Boy Scouts of America was ready to move to Huntsville after spending a day here learning about Boy Scout Troop 400 and how it is supported by the Urban Emphasis Scout Leaders Council.

“It is difficult to serve ethnically diverse communities and my national assignment is to help local councils to organizing committees like the “Urban Emphasis Scout Leaders Council” here in Huntsville become more successful,” Nguyen says.

Nguyen likes to do that by sharing success stories from communities which do a good job impacting the lives of young people.

“I will use what I’ve learned here about Troop 400 to share with other councils around the country to show that it can be done,” Nguyen says. “It starts with a group of caring adults and if it can happen here in Huntsville, Alabama, why can’t it happen in places like Miami, Chicago and Cleveland?”

Nguyen attended a meeting of the Urban Emphasis Scout Leaders Council and saw a presentation by Scoutmaster Albert Farrar, Sr., about what sets Troop 400 apart.

Farrar says the troop’s enrichment program provides the following for all youths in the community, not just those who participate in scouting:

A computer lab with limited Internet access; tutorials for all grade levels; and access to the Homework Alabama website. In addition, a reconditioned computer and computer maintenance training is provided (limited to one per household). Local churches and businesses donate old computers for the program.

What sets the Cub Pack and Boy Scout Troop apart?

Members receive:

- Tutoring at all grade levels.
- Financial incentives to improve their grades. Good grades can earn them up to \$26 every nine weeks.
- Financial assistance for school field trips and other activity fees, which is important because many of the troop/pack member’s family cannot afford the fees.
- Free school supplies. Members start the first day of school with every school supply they need for their grade level.
- Free haircuts and grooming tips –(barber comes to Scout Hut)
- Teen pregnancy prevention awareness – is handled more by Girl Scouts now, but still an important lesson.
- Wood-working workshops at Lowe’s and Home Depot which helps with Derby Days and other projects if the members have no one else to help them.
- Local, state and national tours, like the capitol in Montgomery or Washington, D.C.
- Leadership training.
- Work introduction training – they earn money for spending and savings by attending parking lots surrounding the Von Braun Center. The funds generated are used strictly to help fund incentives and other programs for the troop/pack members.

Farrar says there is also a summer employment training program where the troop members interview and work for \$75 a week. They are paid \$25 and the remaining is put into escrow. At the end of the program, the scouts are issued a check for the balance that's only available for deposit into a savings account to help teach the young men about the importance of saving money.

The cubs and scouts also participate in:

- Community Service projects like the Community Garden, where vegetables are grown and given away to area residents.
- An opportunity to explore 120 career possibilities through the Merit Badge program.
- Improve writing skills with monthly essay contest which also has a small monetary incentive.

In addition, the pack enjoys winter and summer camping trips, hiking, caving, climbing, fishing, boating, swimming, whitewater rafting and ski trips.

Membership is free and open to all youth between the ages of 7 and 20 – and to adults with a desire to help children develop into good citizens.

Nguyen was excited about what he saw in Troup 400.

“I’m putting all of this in my toolbox,” he says. “Scouting is needed in this type of community more than any other and what I see here is so good it gives me goose-bumps.”

Nguyen says it inspires him to see a group of leaders so excited about what they do.

“I will help other local councils learn about what you do here and it will have an impact all over the country,” he says.

The Boy Scout Troop, Cub Pack & Venture Crew 400 provides youth development training in a safe, drug-free nurturing environment for all children in public housing and the surrounding areas. They meet at the Albert Farrar, Sr., Scout Hut, 426 Dallas Avenue. Farrar is the scoutmaster. He can be reached at 256-859-1936 (home) or 256-683-7536 (cell) Other contacts are Cubmaster Pam Morgan, 256-652-9550 or Crew advisor Johann Moore, 256-509-3406. The troop’s website is www.troop400hsv.com