

Troop 111 Eagle Courts of Honor - Planning and Execution

So your son finally made it! Congratulations! Next up is his Eagle Court of Honor. This outline was designed to help you plan and execute your son's Eagle Court. This is your copy - feel free to annotate as we're going along - and don't forget to ask questions! Remember, there's only one opportunity to do it right – so let's not waste that opportunity. Questions to Consider:

If there are multiple Eagle Scouts all awaiting their Courts of Honor, do you want to do a combined or separate ceremony for your son? (Note: Combined are less expensive for each family, respectively, and will be better attended, but also "shares the spotlight," which is less acceptable for some Scouts and/or families.)

Do you want your son's Eagle Court to be part of a general Troop Court of Honor (which has been our tradition, but is less common lately), or as a separate, "Eagle-Only" Court of Honor? (Again, Troop COH's are usually much better attended, and also put less stress on the Troop leadership versus running separate COH's.)

If you want a separate COH, do you want it to be entirely private, or run with Troop participation. (Private ceremonies usually have only invited Scouts as guests and to help run certain aspects of the program, e.g., the flag ceremonies. Otherwise, the COH would be open to the entire Troop membership; i.e., it would be similar to a regular COH, except that it involves only the Eagle Ceremony.)

Discuss Dates. If Troop COH, when is the next general COH? If you want a separate COH, what are your desired dates? (List three options, availability of relatives is usually the primary issue, but vacations and sports, school, and Church functions involving your family should also be taken into consideration!)

Where to Hold? (The Parish Center is most usual, but others are possible, e.g., the Knights of Columbus Grand Hall; Lacey Woods or Upton Hill Park, etc. – Discuss!)

Who will reserve this choice? When will they make the reservation? If you're not using the Parish Center, is there a cost involved in making the reservation at an alternate venue? How much? [Note that the cost is the responsibility of the family!] What if the desired locale is already taken - what is Plan B? – Different date?, Time?, and Locale? What about weather?

Awards/Discuss. Council provides Eagle package, including Eagle Medal and one patch, Mother's and Father's Pins, and various certificates and letters of congratulations. This must be picked up at Council (and signed for) by a responsible party. Who will handle this? Do they

know where to go?/Discuss if No. Who will maintain custody up `til the COH? (Note that all this is USUALLY handled by the Troop – but not always, especially if the time frame is tight.)

Other Awards - Troop 111 provides either an Eagle Bolo Tie or Neckerchief and Slide. Would the Scout prefer the Bolo Tie or the N/C and Slide? (most choose the bolo tie).

The Scout Shop also sells all sorts of additional Eagle Scout memorabilia, e.g., rings, knives, plaques, watches, you name it, they've probably got it. Do you want any of this stuff? If so, suggest family goes to Scout Shop and review items and make selections. [Note that these additional items would be purchased by the family.]

Troop Eagle Plaque/Discuss. The Troop maintains Eagle plaques with all our Eagle Scouts' names engraved; new Eagles are added at no cost to the family. The Troop usually handles this, but you need to check that it will be done. We use Dan Kain in Merrifield. Discuss protocol (Scout's full name, with middle initial(s), no nicknames, plus the full date of the Board of Review (not the date of the Court of Honor!)) Location of the plaque? (Church Vestibule.)

Congratulatory Letters/Discuss. You will automatically receive several congratulatory letters from various BSA Executives with your Eagle package. You can also get a letter from the President, the Governor, and local congressmen and senators, the Arlington County Board, and other politicians, merely by writing to them and informing them that your son has received his Eagle Scout. Some folks very much like these letters; it's up to you to pursue.

Local Press/Discuss. Most local newspapers will publish a small article on your son (with his picture, or a picture of his Eagle Project), if you contact them about a month ahead of the COH (they probably will not send anyone to the COH, unless you're someone important whose name they recognize.) Papers you might consider include the Arlington Catholic Herald, Northern Virginia Sun Weekly (for Arlington), the Arlington Journal, or the Arlington Courier. Others are possible as well. Forget the Washington Post or the Washington Times – not a prayer. If interested, ask for copies of prior writeups as exemplars; the Troop has a few.

Eagle Court (A) Personal Appearance/Discuss. This is one "for the ages," and most Scouts like to look their absolute best. Or at least their parents want them to. Impeccable Uniform, haircut, shined shoes, everything. Keep in mind as approaching the COH, get things up to snuff.

Eagle Court (B) Scout Layout/Discuss. Traditionally, the Scout will cover several tables with personal memorabilia pertaining to his career in Scouts. This includes, but is not limited to, Eagle Project Notebook, All Scout Awards, Patch Collection, Photo Display, Letters of Congratulations, and the Troops' Eagle Plaques (now listing your name). The Scout needs to start getting these things together, and plan their layout.

Eagle Court (C) Guests/Invitations/Discuss. How many guests do you intend to invite? Along with the Scouts, how many total are expected (ensure that the Hall you intend to reserve can handle this number of people!) Formal invitations (Eagle logo) are available at the Scout Shop - use for everyone? - or just non-Troop guests? Note that all members of the Board of Review and anyone who wrote a letter of recommendation for you should be invited. If you're a transfer Scout, should invite friends from former Troop (if they're local). Someone from the Church, preferably the Pastor, should be invited as well (and can offer the invocation at the beginning of the COH!)

Eagle Court (D) Programs/Discuss. Program sheets (Eagle logo) also available from the Scout Shop, in lots of 50 or 100 (I think). These can be run through a laser printer. We have many former examples, or you can do one on your own; if prefer the latter, get exemplars of former COH's to get correct protocol.

Eagle Court (E) "Ah, the memories!" Many families now record their son's Eagle COH. Others take a million photos. Either option, this needs to be done by someone other than Mom or Dad - they'll both be involved in the ceremony! Do you want to tape? Hire a professional photographer or use a willing volunteer for photographs? Both? Discuss!

Eagle Court (F) Food/Discuss. Virtually all Eagle COH's provide food, but this can vary from just an "Eagle cake" and some drinks all the way up to lavishly catered banquets. [Some families have spent thousands of dollars of their son's Eagle COH's!] Questions:

Cake and drinks only, more substantial snacks and drinks, light meal, full meal, or major sit-down affair?

For combined Troop/Eagle COH's, you may ask the Troop's families to assist you in putting together a meal (but not to share in the costs of catering.) Many families who wish a major affair will handle the catering themselves, but ask everyone else to bring snacks and drinks, pot luck items. Other families cater for adults, and get pizza and soda for the Scouts and other younger guests. The options are endless. Note that the Hall may have additional options - or limitations. So what do you want to do here? The Troop will provide a small stipend for families who are having their Eagle CoHs at a Troop CoH (currently, \$50 per Eagle Scout).

If families will be asked to bring items, will you assign dishes or do "pot-luck?" Who will coordinate this? There are several Troop COH coordinators who can assist/advise you on this.

The Scout Shop (again) has many Eagle items for use in dinners at Eagle COH's; everything from napkins, placemats, and cups to full tableclothes and embossed (plastic) silverware!

However, note that (although it isn't outrageous), it ain't cheap. Do you want to use these items? Which ones? Who will get? When? (Note sooner is better - don't get "skunked!") We have some of these items in the Scout closet, leftover from previous CoHs – but usually not much.

If major affair is planned, do not forget to allow set-up and cleanup time in your reservation slot. As a rough estimate, it takes about 90 minutes to set up a full COH, and about 45 minutes to break it down.

If older siblings, parents, or grandparents, achieved Scouting Honors, please provide a (written!) synopsis of that as well. (These facts will be utilized in the preliminary introductions.)

Eagle Court (G) Review Basic Eagle COH Ceremony/Discuss. Note that higher options are available (but are more complex to plan and run, and take longer.) Are you happy with this one, or do you want more? (Discuss options if more desired.) Note that you need to select candidates (preferably Eagle Scouts!) for:

- * 100 Scouts
- * Voice of the Eagle
- * Charge to Eagle
- * Induction of Eagle

Finally, if the Eagle Scout desires, he can coordinate with the Senior Patrol Leader to pick members of the Flag Ceremony Honor Guards, and the escorts for his parents (and himself); again, Eagle Scouts should be utilized for escort duties.

Heirloom Eagle Medals – Several Scouts have received Eagle medals that their fathers, uncles, grandfathers, or some other relative earned long ago. If you wish to do so, please discuss.

Eagle Court (H) Eagle Scout's Speech/Discuss. All Eagles give a brief (3 - 5 minute long) speech at the conclusion of their induction ceremony. This is an opportunity to thank parents, etc., and also to discuss what Scouting has meant to them, and what's in their futures. Some Scouts talk about the "road to Eagle" to the younger Scouts in attendance. Whatever you want to do - but start writing it soon! – not the day before the COH!

Future Meetings/Timeline/Discuss. How much time do you need to get preliminary estimates done? Date of next progress meeting. Final review of who's doing what between now and then. Question and Answer period.

Dr. Bob, ASM-111 (2013 Update)