

The Order of the Arrow

Scouting's National Honor Society

For more than 90 years, the Order of the Arrow (OA) has recognized Scouts and Scouters who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives. This recognition provides encouragement for others to live these ideals as well. Arrowmen are known for maintaining camping traditions and spirit, promoting year-round and long term resident camping, and providing cheerful service to others. OA service, activities, adventures, and training for youth and adults are models of quality leadership development and programming that enrich and help to extend Scouting to America's youth.

Mission

The mission of the Order of the Arrow is to fulfill its purpose as an integral part of the Boy Scouts of America through positive youth leadership under the guidance of selected capable adults.

Purpose

As Scouting's National Honor Society, our purpose is to:

- *Recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and through that recognition cause others to conduct themselves in a way that warrants similar recognition.*
- *Promote camping, responsible outdoor adventure, and environmental stewardship as essential components of every Scout's experience, in the unit, year-round, and in summer camp.*
- *Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.*
- *Crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.*

History

The Order of the Arrow was founded by Dr. E. Urner Goodman and Carroll A. Edson in 1915 at the Treasure Island Camp of the Philadelphia Council, Boy Scouts of America. It became an official program experiment in 1922 and was approved as part of the Scouting program in 1934. In 1948 the OA, recognized as the BSA's national brotherhood of honor campers, became an official part of the Boy Scouts of America. In 1998, the Order of the Arrow became recognized as Scouting's National Honor Society when it expanded its reach beyond camping to include broader service to Scouting and the community.

Membership

The OA has more than 170,000 active members located in lodges affiliated with over 295 BSA local councils.

Eligibility

The Order of the Arrow membership requirements are:

- Be a registered member of the Boy Scouts of America.
- After registration with a troop or team, have experienced 15 days and nights of Boy Scout camping during the two-year period prior to the election. The 15 days and nights must include one, but no more than one, long-term camp consisting of six consecutive days and five nights of resident camping, approved and under the auspices and standards of the Boy Scouts of America. The balance of the camping must be overnight, weekend, or other short-term camps.
- Youth must be under the age of 21, hold the BSA First Class rank or higher, and following approval by the Scoutmaster or Varsity team Coach, be elected by the youth members of their troop or team.
- Adults (age 21 or older) who are registered in the BSA and meet the camping requirements may be selected following nomination to the lodge adult selection committee. Adult selection is based on their ability to perform the necessary functions to help the Order fulfill its purpose, and is not for recognition of service, including current or prior positions. Selected adults must be an asset to the Order because of demonstrated abilities, and must provide a positive example for the growth and development of the youth members of the lodge.

Induction

The induction ceremony, called the Ordeal, is the first step toward full membership in the Order. During the experience, candidates maintain silence, receive small amounts of food, work on camp improvement projects, and sleep apart from other campers. The entire experience is designed to teach significant values. All candidates for membership must complete the Ordeal.

Brotherhood Membership

After 10 months of service as an Ordeal member and fulfilling certain requirements, a member may take part in the Brotherhood ceremony, which places further emphasis on the ideals of Scouting and the Order. Completion of this ceremony signifies full membership in the Order.

Vigil Honor

After two years of exceptional service as a Brotherhood member, and with the approval of the national Order of the Arrow committee, a Scout or Scouter may be recognized with the Vigil Honor for their distinguished contributions to their lodge, the Order of the Arrow, Scouting, or their Scout camp. This honor is bestowed by special selection and is limited to one person for every 50 members registered with the lodge each year.

Lodges

An OA lodge helps the local Boy Scout council provide a quality Scouting program through recognition of Scouting spirit and performance, development of youth leadership and service, promotion of Scout camping and outdoor programs, and enhancement of membership tenure. Every Boy Scout council is encouraged to have an Order of the Arrow lodge. Each lodge operates under a charter granted by the National Council, BSA, and must apply annually for its renewal. The Boy Scouts of America will grant a charter to only one lodge per council.

Sections

An Order of the Arrow section consists of lodges within a geographic area of the region. Once every year, representatives of lodges in the section come together for a conclave to share in

fellowship, skills, and training. In addition, the section creates a monitoring/mentoring relationship with its lodges, provides leadership development opportunities, fosters understanding and adherence to national OA policies and procedures, and coordinates OA administrative and program functions. A section is lead by three elected youth officers, the section chief, section vice chief, and section secretary, who are advised by an adult section adviser and professional section staff adviser.

Each year the approximately fifty elected section chiefs are invited to a national planning meeting in Dallas, TX. The section chiefs form the conference committee for a national Order of the Arrow event, such as the national Order of the Arrow conference, which is held under the guidance of the national Order of the Arrow committee.

Region Leadership

The region chief is the youth leader elected annually by the section chiefs in his region. This election is held in conjunction with the annual national planning meeting. The region Order of the Arrow chairman is an adult adviser appointed by the region director. The professional adviser for the region is assigned by the region director.

National Leadership

The national chief and vice chief are Arrowmen elected to one-year terms by the section chiefs during the annual national planning meeting. They serve as members of the national Order of the Arrow committee, providing the opinion of youth Arrowmen on national OA policy. They also serve as the presiding officers for the national OA event. They are advised in their responsibilities by the national OA committee chairman and the Order of the Arrow team leader. The national OA committee chairman is appointed annually by the vice president/chairman of the national Outdoor Adventures Group. The professional adviser is the Order of the Arrow team leader, a national professional Scouter.

Revised 10/7/09