

## Council program fee FAQ

### **Q: Why is the Three Fires Council implementing a program fee?**

A: The Three Fires Council for several years has been exploring alternate funding models including a Council program fee to make the council more financially sustainable and to serve Scouting families better. This fee structure will enable the Three Fires Council to better budget, plan and support members through quality programs. As a result, Council staff and district volunteers will be able to spend more time on unit service, program delivery, membership recruitment and leadership development.

### **Q: What is the Council program fee?**

A:     \$60 for Cubs, Scouts BSA and Venturers. (12 months)  
       \$24 for pack, troop, and crew volunteers. (12 months)  
       \$12 for Exploring members, volunteers  
       \$0 for non-unit volunteers.

The Council program fee will be in addition to the annual 12-month \$66 National BSA youth membership fee and \$42 adult leader fee.

- The Three Fires Council will collect 10 months of fees with the 2021 re-charter (January-October)
  - Youth  $\$55 + \$50 = \$105$
  - Adult  $\$20 + \$35 = \$55$
  - Exploring  $\$10 + \$35 = \$45$
  - Non unit volunteers  $\$12 + \$42 = \$54$  \* (12 months April-March)

The Council program fee replaces current annual insurance fees and the annual Family Friends of Scouting fundraising campaign. With the Council program fee, traditional district activities such as Camporees, Klondikes, Cub-o-rees, Cub-Day-ones, District Pinewood Derbies and adult leader training such as Training Academy and Training Expo will no longer charge a participation fee. The Council program fee includes all insurance, free cloth badges of rank for all members, Eagle Scout recognition kits and adult leader recognition. The fee also includes free tent camping at Three Fires Council properties, Camp Freeland-Leslie and Camp Big Timber.

### **Q: Why is the fee structure changing? The old system seemed to work for me.**

A: The Council program fee is to ensure that Three Fires Council camps and programs have the resources needed to support the 13,000+ scouts and 5,000+ volunteers without asking for more money every month. The Family Friends of Scouting (FFOS) campaign demands a significant amount of time from both volunteers and staff – eliminating this campaign will provide time that can now be spent on program, outreach, leadership development and unit service. Over

the past decade, the council has posted annual budget losses and has had to borrow from unrestricted reserves. That is no longer possible or financially sustainable.

**Q: Could a Council program fee discourage enrollment/make Scouting unaffordable for families?**

A: We recognize that any change in pricing structure may influence a family's decision to enroll in Scouting, but at \$10/month, (for Council program fee and BSA membership fee) BSA programs are a significant value above other youth activities. The Council program fee will also reduce the number of times during the year that families are asked to pay for Scouting events. Scholarships will be available to Scouts and families based on financial need. The Council also provides units a no-risk fundraiser to help families underwrite the cost of Scouting (Popcorn). Last year the average Scout earned nearly \$200 through the annual popcorn sale to support their Scouting adventures.

**Q: What happens if we move or leave the program? Will we get refunded?**

A: The program fee is for the calendar year and fees cannot be refunded; however, Scouting families that move can have their program fees transferred to a new unit or new council.

**Q: Are other Councils charging a program fee or charging less?**

A: Yes, however every council is unique and sets its own budget. We believe that the inclusion of insurance, district events, camping at council properties, volunteer training, free cloth rank badges and increased staff support for membership, program and leadership development make the Council program fee an excellent value. We choose to make as many services available at no additional cost. By setting the fee at this point, we will avoid the need to make frequent adjustments.

**Q: Is there a family discount rate?**

A: Currently, neither the BSA nor the Three Fires Council has a family membership option; however, this is being considered and may be implemented in the future.

**Q: When/how will fees be collected?**

A: Council program fee will be pro-rated on a monthly basis just as the BSA membership fee is prorated for members joining during the calendar year. The Council program fee will be collected on an annual basis at re-charter time (December). Families will pay a pro-rated fee to unit or council at time of enrollment either online or by cash/check. Re-enrolling members will pay their unit during re-chartering. Units can pay online or to the council office by cash or check.

**Q: Can I pay in installments?**

A: Not yet. In 2020, the program fee will be collected when a member joins or when the member re-charters. We hope to add a monthly subscription service before the end of fiscal year 2021.

**Q: Will units still charge dues above and beyond the BSA and Three Fires Council fees?**

A: Units still may charge dues but should consider why and how much. Since the BSA membership fee and Council program fee cover many of the unit costs previously covered, units should carefully consider council-sponsored fundraisers like Popcorn to further reduce the need for unit dues.

**Q: How often will the Council program fee increase?**

A: The Council Program fee will be matched to the National Membership fee and will be prorated to the month the member joins. Membership enrollment is the calendar year (January-December).

**Q: What can a family expect to pay for a full year of Scouting?**

A: Cub Scouting-

- \$66 Membership fee,
- \$60 THREE FIRES COUNCIL Program fee,
- First year full uniform \$120,
- Monthly pack activities \$160,
- Day Camp/Resident Camp \$200
- **\$600 annually.**

Scouts BSA/Venturing-

- \$66 Membership fee,
- \$60 THREE FIRES COUNCIL Program fee,
- First year full uniform \$120,
- Monthly troop activities \$200,
- Summer camp \$360
- **\$800 annually.**

Compare to band program at \$1,000, baseball or soccer at \$2,500, hockey or cheer at \$3,000.

**Q: What activities will be “no charge”?**

A: District activities such as Camporees, Cub-o-rees, Klondikes, and Pinewood Derby will no longer charge a registration fee if the participant’s registration is received prior to the deadline (2 weeks in advance). This allows the volunteer leadership planning and leading these events to confirm supplies and staffing for those events. Registering within the two-week window may incur a \$5-\$10 fee.

**Q: Now that District events and trainings are “no charge” they will most likely become more popular; how will council change them accommodate more people to control costs?**

A: A strict pre-registration window of two weeks will be enforced. In addition, the single largest cost for single-day events is food expense. Therefore, participants will be asked to bring their own lunch for all single-day events. This will also free up more volunteers for program support vs. food services.

**Q: What if families still want to donate to the Three Fires Council? What will happen to the Family Friends of Scouting campaign?**

A: With this new model, the Family Friends of Scouting (FFOS) campaign will be retired. The Three Fires Council will still pursue donations under the Friends of Scouting name, but donations will be solicited via direct mail, email and invitation to special community events. No more donor presentations at Blue and Golds, pack meetings, Pinewood Derbies or Courts of Honor. The thousands of hours dedicated to FFOS will be freed up to focus on program delivery and membership/leadership development.

**Q: What trainings will be included in the Council program fee?**

A: All position-required training (IOLS, BALOO, Scoutmaster Basic) as well as events like Training Academy and Training Expo. Attendees will be required to register in advance. Those registering within the 2-week window will be charged a small fee. Training requiring a third-party vendor will still have a small fee (for example CPR).

**Q: Why require a two-week pre-registration window?**

A: Registering for an event in advance allows the volunteers who are running an event/training course to plan in advance.

**Q: How do District events get added to the “no-charge” list?**

A: No new events will be added to the current menu of District activities for program year 2021 and 2022. After this evaluation period, district committees can make a proposal to the Council Program Committee for additional events to be added to their district calendar.

**Q: What events will not be included in the “no-charge” list?**

A: Council Camping programs such as Day Camp, Family Camp, Resident Camp and Summer Camp as well as Merit Badge University (MBU), advancement & STEM activities will continue to charge a participation fee. Advanced leader training such as NYLT, Woodbadge, Powderhorn, Wilderness First Aid, and Okpik will also continue to charge a fee - prices will be locked into 2020 prices for 2021 and 2022.

**Q: How will the money be spent?**

A: Council program fees will remain local and be used by the Three Fires Council to support local programs, camps, scholarships, volunteer training, insurance and unit service.

April 17, 2020

To: Unit Volunteers  
From: Clint Scharff, Scout Executive  
Re: Council program fee

In March, the Council Board adopted a Council program fee that will be implemented with new members joining this fall and with re-charter this December. We've spent the last month working on details and are ready to communicate this change to our members and volunteers.

The Council program fee applies to all traditional BSA youth members (Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA and Venturers) and volunteers. The program fee is in addition to the BSA membership fee. This fee does not apply the Exploring program, or to Lion or Tiger parents, or merit badge counselors.

The program fee for youth will be \$60/year prorated to \$5/month at time of enrollment; the fee for volunteers will be \$24/year or \$2/month at time of enrollment. (the council will collect 10 months of fees with the 2021 re-charter).

The program fee will replace the current insurance fee (\$12) collected at re-charter and new enrollments. It will also replace the Family Friends of Scouting campaign. No more presentations at pack meetings and troop meetings for donations. The Friends of Scouting campaign will take on a more professional "university" type feel through email, direct mail and invitations to community donor events away from unit meetings and programs. This will "free up" thousands of volunteer and staff hours to focus on program, service and membership growth.

Moving forward, members and volunteers will no longer pay additional fees for District activities such as Camporee, Cub-O-Ree, Klondike, Winterall, or Pinewood Derby. In addition, all required BSA training will be provided to leaders at no additional charge. This will include BALOO/IOLS and supplemental basic training such as Training Academy and Training Expo.

Additional benefits of the Council program fee include free cloth-rank badges at all program levels from Lion, to Eagle and Summit. There will be no charge for tent camping at CBT and CFL. The program fee will continue to pay for insurance costs, liability, auto, and camper accident/sickness for youth and adults. It will also fund volunteer recognition (awards, knots, certificates which are an important part of volunteer retention).

Keeping the cost of Scouting affordable for every family is a major concern. NO family will be left behind. Every family that wants a Scouting experience for their child will be included. The Council will be modifying its campership/scholarship request forms to ensure we are awarding need-based scholarships and to collect data that will help us further fund those scholarships.

This week the Council will be launching a micro-website available from the Council homepage [www.Threefirescouncil.org](http://www.Threefirescouncil.org) with resources about the new program fee. There are still details to work out, but we wanted leaders and families to know as soon as possible so that units can plan budgets and program appropriately. Included on that site will be a FAQ, letters to parents, unit leaders, and district leadership as well as a simple infographic and video message.

No one likes to increase cost, especially in this environment, and we all know that Scouting's cost and value is extremely competitive with other youth activities. We want to assure you that this change is unrelated to the National organization's financial situation. It is about the Three Fires Council's financial sustainability, creating a steady and dependable cash-flow model that will improve programming and facilities, and allow the council to maintain and IMPROVE service and program to units, volunteers and members. These dollars will stay in the TFC to deliver quality program and service to our local members.

April 17, 2020

To: District & Council volunteers  
From: Clint Scharff, Scout Executive  
Re: Council program fee

In October of 2019, the BSA announced a membership fee increase. As a result, the TFC changed its plan on insurance fees, raising them to \$12. A price increase is seldom wanted news, but perhaps the worst part was the late timing of these announcements which put everyone in a very difficult position.

With that in mind, the Council is providing notice to all its members that the \$12 insurance fee collected for 2020 will be replaced with a program fee in 2021.

The program fee will be \$60/youth member and \$24/adult volunteer (does not apply to the Exploring program, Lion or Tiger parents or Merit Badge Counselors). (the Council will collect 10 months of fees with 2021 re-charter).

What District/Council leaders need to know:

- This is not in addition to the insurance fee; the \$12 per person insurance fee is going away.
- The Family Friends of Scouting Campaign will be retired at the end of 2020 - no more presentations for donations at pack/troop meetings and activities - no more presenter or Family FOS coordinator training. It is our hope to pivot that effort into membership outreach, unit support and volunteer development.
- A revised Scouting scholarship program to ensure that financial assistance is awarded based on demonstrated need so no family is left out.
- Members/leaders pay only one program fee based on primary registration. If you are registered in multiple units or outside the unit, the program fee is collected with your primary registration. A Scout registered in a troop and a crew pays only one program fee.
- Starting in 2021, district activities such as Camporee, Cub-o-Ree, Klondike, Winterall, and Pinewood Derby will no longer charge members a fee to participate.
- Starting in 2021, all basic and supplemental training will also be available to TFC volunteers at no additional cost (BALOO, IOLS, Training Academy, Training Expo).
- No new activities will be added to the calendar in 2021 to allow Program and Finance Committees time to evaluate program fee impact on operations.
- All cloth-rank advancement will be provided to all TFC members at no charge (Lion-Eagle & Summit).
- All volunteer recognition - knots, certificates and awards will also be provided through these funds.
- CBT and CFL will no longer charge units to tent camp on weekends.

- District leadership will receive additional guidance on budget planning for 2021 activities this fall.
- These fees will stay local to support local programs and camps and improve service to units and grow membership.
- A micro-site will be available from the Council homepage with resources to help leaders and parents better understand this change. [www.threefirescouncil.org](http://www.threefirescouncil.org)
- Please help units with their program & budget planning with this new program fee in mind. Units should consider adjusting “unit dues” in light of what is now included in the program fee.
- As scouters, we believe and know that the value and still relatively inexpensive cost of Scouting is a great deal compared to other youth activities that do not offer the leadership and life skills that come from a quality Scouting program, but many families may need help seeing that. We have deliberately not tried to explain away this change as “it is still cheaper than hockey or baseball or band or any other youth activity.” A member of Scouts BSA in his/her first year can expect to pay \$900 for uniform, fees, campouts and summer camp. A Cub scout can pay \$700 for uniform, fees, activities and Summer day-camp. Through unit fundraising like Popcorn, most can earn their own way for the entire year.

As District and Council leaders, you play an important role. We hope that by moving a significant amount of volunteer labor from the Family Friends of Scouting campaign to program, membership and service, this will have a major impact on retention and growth while simultaneously moving the Three Fires Council to a more sustainable business model.



**April 17, 2020**

**To:** Scouting Parents

**From:** Clint Scharff, Scout Executive

**Re:** Council Program Fee

Starting with the 2021 re-charter cycle, the Three Fires Council is adopting an annual program fee. The program fee will be \$60/year per youth member and \$24/year for adult volunteers. This will be in addition to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) membership fee. (the Council will collect 10 months of fees with the 2021 re-charter).

Here is what this means to you as parents. All district activities like Pinewood Derby, Camporee, Cub-o-ree, Klondike and Winterall will no longer charge a fee for members to attend. Units will also no longer be charged additional fees for camper insurance, weekend tent camping at Camp Big Timber or Camp Freeland Leslie, or for rank advancement from Lion to Eagle and Summit.

Secondly, as you probably know, "Every youth deserves a trained leader." We realize that ongoing training may be a financial burden for some leaders. With that in mind, Council will no longer charge adult volunteers to attend the training they need to deliver safe, quality programs to your Scouts including BALOO, IOLS, Training Academy, and Training Expo.

While Scouting provides an incredible value in both cost and in return, we recognize that any additional cost to the program might negatively impact a family's ability to join the BSA. Therefore, Three Fires Council is revamping its scholarship program to ensure that no family is turned away and that scholarships are awarded based on financial need.

Finally, adding the program fee replaces the annual insurance fee and the Friends of Scouting fundraising program. For those who have been supporters of the Family Friends of Scouting campaign, thank you! Your support is critical this year, and we hope you will continue to make a charitable contribution to enable Scouting to grow. Individuals who want to continue to make a charitable contribution to the Three Fires Council will still be able to do so through a more sophisticated and less intrusive model of Friends of Scouting, which will rely on email, direct mail and invitations to community donor events and not take time away from your Scout's unit program.

The funds collected from the program fee will remain here in the Three Fires Council to develop better programs, facilities, membership outreach and leadership development. A resource page can be found on the Council website [www.ThreeFiresCouncil.org](http://www.ThreeFiresCouncil.org) with more details.

Thank you for choosing Scouting for your family. We hope to continually improve and deliver better service, better programs and better facilities so that your Scout has the best possible Scouting experience and learns the skills needed to grow and thrive for a brighter, better future.

### Council program fee timeline

October 2019	BSA changes bylaws to allow for Council program fees
December 2019	TFC establishes working group to gather data and propose TFC program fee
January 2020	Research firm onboarded to evaluate market relative to program fee
February 2020	Board reviews research data, enables officers to establish policy
March 2020	Board approves Council program fee
April 2020	Council Program fee details reviewed and discussed at Annual Meeting
May 2020	Council webpage launched, RT presentations, messaging to district, units and families
August 2020	Fee implemented for new members Blackpug modifications to district events so new members do not pay fees "Out of council" set up in Blackpug for non-TFC units/members 2021 council budgeting to reflect program fee anticipated impacts
Oct.-Dec. 2020	Fee collected for re-chartering members

2021

Evaluate impact to membership/volunteer retention

Evaluate impact to budget

Evaluate impact to Council/District Program

Potential implementation of monthly subscription service

Potential implementation of "family membership plan"