



**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®**  
NORTHERN NEW JERSEY COUNCIL

January 27, 2017

Dear Northern New Jersey Scouting Friends,

As you are likely aware, a transgender youth named Joe Maldonado, eight years old, sought to join a Cub Scout pack in the Northern New Jersey Council but was unable to do so because of the National Boy Scouts of America (BSA) eligibility requirements. The council offered other options for Joe to participate in co-ed opportunities, however, the family declined and contacted the news media. Politicians subsequently commented. Unfortunately, the result has been an inaccurate accounting of what actually happened – Joe was not “kicked out of scouting” – so we wanted to be sure you knew where we stand. We appreciate that this is a complex and emotional topic. Bottom-line, Joe and transgender youth are welcome in the Northern New Jersey Council and we hope Joe joins us soon.

Our council remains committed to offering the benefits of scouting to ALL young people in our diverse communities including transgender youth. We are proud of the program that 4,000 volunteers deliver to more than 13,000 youth in the urban, suburban and rural areas of northern NJ. While doing so we must respect the membership policy of the National BSA and the unique character and benefits of the Cub Scout program focused on boys.

The National BSA does not have a specific policy on transgender youth but it does have clear eligibility requirements. The Cub Scout program is focused on boys aged 7-10 years old and there is compelling academic evidence on the benefits of single gender learning and development programs. As has been the case over the 100+ years of the program, gender is based on what is reflected on the youth’s birth certificate. As a result, Joe is not currently eligible to join Cub Scouts.

As an affiliate of the National BSA, our council must adhere to these guidelines whether or not we agree with them. Our council president and scout executive spoke directly with National BSA leadership about this matter and shared our perspective that we’d like to see the National organization further evaluate the issue as part of its continuous efforts to better meet the needs of today’s youth, families and communities.

At the same time, our council was eager to see Joe participate in scouting and provided several options for Joe to join co-ed scouting activities including Learning for Life and STEM Scouts. As part of our council strategic plan, we had petitioned National BSA to join the STEM pilot so that more youth, including Joe, could benefit. (Our application was quickly accepted.) These programs, as well as Venturing and Exploring, offer all youth exciting opportunities to develop skills, confidence and leadership which are the core benefits of scouting. Hundreds of young people in our council participate in these programs. It remains an option for the Maldonado family to enroll Joe in any of these available programs.

Joe seems like a fantastic kid and we welcome Joe to scouting. The Northern New Jersey Council is firmly committed to ensuring that Joe and all youth in our communities have the opportunity to enjoy positive youth development programs, like Scouting. Given the importance of this matter, we ask that you continue to treat it with respect and sensitivity.

Thank you for all you do for scouting.

YOUR COUNCIL KEY 3

  
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