Introduction:
It is of significant concern to the Boy Scouts of America that the number of youth participating in our programs has decreased over the past several years. During the June 14, 2012 roundtable, a brainstorming session was held to see what ideas the leaders of the Sycamore District, Blackhawk Area Council had that would help alleviate this dilemma. Small buzz groups (8-10 persons) were created with Cub Scout leaders and separate buzz groups for Boy Scout leaders/Venturing crew leaders. The ideas that they had are documented here.

Many of the ideas that the leaders suggested are not “program specific”, while other ideas are. We have done our best to segregate these ideas, but the reader should review all of the ideas listed. The ideas listed for a program other than their own, may be helpful to the reader if the reader adapts the concept to his/her level of the program.

Recruiting - Non-Program Specific Ideas:
When providing written materials (fliers, business cards, web sites, etc.) be sure that you provide a way for people to contact your unit. Don’t just provide information about when/where you meet. People may want to contact you prior to attending. A contact name and phone number and/or e-mail address are very important (ex: "For more information about Pack 123, contact John Doe at (815) 555-5555 or via e-mail: johndoe@yahoo.com"). Also add www.beascout.org to your written materials.

- Recruiting flyers are available through council. These are very colorful and eye-pleasing. You may customize the wording shown by working with your District Executive
- Update your unit information on www.beascout.org. If you have not yet done so, the site shows generic contact information for Blackhawk Area Council. Be sure to update information whenever there is a change
- Hold both a spring and a fall “Round-up” but don’t stop recruiting there – recruit all year long
- Recruit through schools:
  o Speak with school principals, guidance counselors, and/or key administrators to see how Scouting can be promoted within the school
  o Flyers/information table at school registration
  o Flyers/information table at school Open House
  o Set up a table at the school during “drop off” days for school supplies. This usually is a day or two before school starts
  o Flyer/information table at school activities such as
    ▪ PTA/PTO meetings
    ▪ Concerts
    ▪ Sports games (basketball, baseball, etc.)
  o Flyers/information to school administrators
  o Flyers/information to school guidance counselors
  o Participate in flag ceremonies (ex: Veterans Day, present the flag at sporting events or assemblies, etc.)
- Reach out to home school groups in your area
• Recruit through churches:
  o See if you can set up an information table or get information into their church bulletin
  o Pay special attention to those churches that do not have a Cub Scout pack or Boy Scout troop affiliated with them as this may be an untapped resource. You can check which churches have packs/troops at www.beascout.org
  o Key times to set up information tables may include:
    ▪ Registration date for the church’s Sunday school program (or CCD/Confirmation class/etc.)
    ▪ Church events such as picnics, pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, etc.
    ▪ Vacation Bible School
• Contact your Charter organization to see what they can do to help you promote your unit
• Your current Scouts are one of the best possible resources to get new youth into the program
  o Provide incentives to Scouts to recruit. BSA already has a “Recruiter” patch available. What other incentives can your group suggest?
  o “Bring a Friend” – ask your youth to bring a friend to your meetings/activities
    ▪ This could be any meeting or
    ▪ You could have a special “Bring a Friend” meeting
  o Provide your current youth with written material that they can give to their friends:
    ▪ Bookmarks
    ▪ Pocket size invitations
    ▪ Business card size information
• Invite those interested in joining to a Scout event:
  o Be sure to include the parents of the youth
  o Be sure that they can participate in the activity – no one wants to just “watch”, they want to “do”
  o The event should be a “taste” of Scouting and, initially, be limited to a few hours. Those that are very interested can attend another event that lasts longer if they are still interested but want a further “taste”
  o Showcase projects that the Scouts will be doing. Ex: balloon launches, crafts, rocket launches, Pinewood Derby, skill demonstrations, Dutch oven cooking, etc.
  o Ideas for social activities that could be used: ice cream social, pizza party for Venturing crews, WhirlyBall for Venturing crews
• Promotion/Advertising:
  o Post events/flyers at the community library
  o Flyer/information brochure on community bulletin boards
  o Flyer/information at Chamber of Commerce
  o Ensure that information is correct for your unit in any community information. Many communities publish a small booklet yearly listing local churches, businesses, and organizations. Be sure to update this information whenever there is a change in your unit contact information, meeting time/place
  o Promote Scouting on community signs
  o Request “Join Scouting” signs from council and post in areas where they will be seen – such as in front of businesses that are attractive to youth
  o Promote your unit’s events in the local newspaper – be sure to include contact information for someone within your unit
  o Put an ad in the local newspapers promoting joining your unit. You could advertise a fun “joining” activity
• Look into advertising at movie theaters on the “at the movies” previews before the movie. Ex: the one at the McHenry indoor is inexpensive
• Promote through church bulletins (see above)
• Community web sites – be sure that your unit is listed on your town’s web site with the correct contact information. Include meeting dates/times/locations and a link to your unit’s web site (if you have one)
• Contact the park districts in your community to see if they will allow you to post information at their facilities or set up a booth at their activities
• If your unit has a web site, make sure that the contact information is up to date. Periodically update the other information on your web page to “keep it fresh”

- Hand out recruiting cards/invitations at community/school events
- Include the Hispanic families by providing bilingual written materials
- Showcase Scouting through your fundraising activities:
  - Wear the proper Scout uniform
  - Present a positive image by being clean, polite, and professional
  - Provide flyers/information to those who ask
  - Store-front popcorn sales
  - Pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, etc.
- Have a physical “presence” at community events:
  - Community festivals, picnics, and parades (such as McHenry Fiesta Days, Marengo Settlers Day, Harvard Milk Day, etc.). Be sure to have a sign on your float or carry a sign promoting joining Scouting
  - Have a booth at the event (ex: lemonade stand – be sure to check health department codes first before doing anything involving food)
  - Pay attention to how both the leaders and the youth present themselves in public. A lot of times, image is everything
    - Encourage them to wear their uniforms (rather than a t-shirt) and to wear the uniform properly (shirt tucked in, neat and tidy, etc.)
    - Everyone should behave in a “Scout-like” manner
    - Friends and co-workers know you are a Scout or leader, even when you aren’t wearing the uniform. Act accordingly (following the Scout Oath and Law in your daily lives)
- Service Projects: When your Scouts are working on any community service project, make Scouting “visible”
  - If your unit has a trailer with your unit information on it, park it where people will see it while you work on your project
  - Display your unit and U.S. flags where you are working
  - When distributing bags for Scouting for Food, include a flyer about joining Scouting
  - Write articles for the newspapers detailing your service project – include pictures
  - Ask the organization that you are doing the project for to promote Scouting by displaying information about your project (some of the local schools actually put a display in their showcases)
- Word of mouth – tell everyone you know what a great program Scouting is
- Follow up with any prospective member by phone or e-mail
  - Be sure to have a “I want more information” box available any time you set up a recruiting display. Interested people can fill out a slip that gives their contact information. Be sure to contact everyone who fills out a slip
Recruiting - Program Specific Ideas: Cub Scout Packs:
• Speak to the kindergarten classes at the end of the school year to get them excited about becoming a Tiger Cub

Recruiting - Program Specific Ideas: Boy Scout Troops and Venturing Crews:
• Troops need to have a good relationship with the Cub Scout packs in their area
• Have trained Den Chiefs assisting with Cub Scout dens. They can discuss the fun things they have done to give the Cubs Scouts an incentive to want to join your troop.
• Don’t rely exclusively on Cub Scouts. Boys that were not Cub Scouts can join a Boy Scout troop or Venturing crew.
• Middle school is the prime age to recruit youth into a Boy Scout troop.
• Older youth may be interested to know that their Scouting experience may be beneficial if they join the military.

Recruiting - Program Specific Ideas: Venturing Crews:
• Girls. If you get girls to join, the boys will follow.

Retention - Non-Program Specific Ideas:
• Have a year round program. This doesn’t necessarily mean that you meet every week, but that you provide activities/meetings on a regular basis all 12 months of the year.
• Give the Scouts the opportunity to choose what they want as part of their program. Typically, Boy Scout troops and Venturing crews are led by the youth but Cub Scouts should also be given the opportunity to make suggestions as to what activities they would like to participate in.
• Establish and share your unit’s calendar with the families of the youth. This calendar should include all regularly scheduled meetings, outings, etc. If details (dates, location, etc.) need to change, contact the families as soon as possible. Be sure to check school calendars for possible conflicts!
• Sports are a big part of our youth’s lives. They don’t need to choose one or the other. Allow the youth to miss meetings or arrive late to a meeting to allow for their sports schedules.
• Follow the program that BSA provides. Make minor modifications when you need to, but using the basic program as outlined works very well.

Retention - Program Specific Ideas: Cub Scout Packs:
• Have smaller dens – the ideal size is 6 – 8 boys.
• Keep den meetings organized and fun.
• Work with the parents of your Tiger Cubs to ensure that they understand the program. They are a great resource for your Pack’s future leadership.
• Have a trained Den Chief working with each Cub Scout den. These older boys can talk about the fun things they do in Boy Scouts to give the Cub Scouts an incentive to want to stay in the program.

Retention - Program Specific Ideas: Boy Scout Troops:
• Encourage dual membership between a Boy Scout troop and a Venturing crew.

Retention - Program Specific Ideas: Venturing Crews:
• Focus the crew on one or two areas. Don’t do a bunch of different things. Variety is good for a diversion, but let the youth pick a couple areas to focus on.