



Willistown Troop 78

An Open Letter to the Willistown Troop 78 Family

April, 2020

Dear Willistown Troop 78 members, alumni, friends and families,

Many of you are used to getting a letter from me each year, in which I ask you to donate to Chester County Council's Friends of Scouting ("FOS") annual fundraising drive. Some of you are so familiar with the letter that you've memorized my typical message: That it costs Council about \$250 a year to put a child through Scouting; that FOS provides a significant amount of Council's operating budget; that Troop 78 as a unit is the biggest FOS supporter in the Council.

Council personnel are not permitted to go to their office and are all working from home, so you will not be getting a paper letter through US mail from the Council under my signature this year. But my sense of urgency about FOS and the need for you to participate are not diminished – in fact, both are heightened this year.

Please consider the following:

- **COVID-19 is having a major impact on our FOS fundraising efforts for the 2019/2020 Scouting year.** While we pay dues each year, the truth is that the dues that Scouting charges do not begin to cover the real cost of putting a youth through our program. Further, most of the dues money goes to National and is not retained by Council.

Council volunteers typically give in-person FOS presentations at Pack meetings and Courts of Honor to encourage attendees to give to FOS. FOS, in turn, provides about 20% of the funds for Council's operating budget. **However, because of COVID-19, we have not been able to have these in-person presentations, and we won't have any for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, we anticipate a 50% year-over-year decline in FOS contributions for the 2019-2020 Scouting year.** Council recently hired a new head of Development to help us to think "outside of the box" about fundraising. She will help us to evolve our fundraising model – but right now, we are still depending on FOS to raise funds, and a model that depends on in-person solicitations is not efficient during the COVID-19 crisis, when people cannot get together. That's why your donation is particularly important this year.



- **Troop 78 has ALWAYS been an FOS leader, but about 80% of our contributions come from fewer than 20 families.** We are blessed to have some wonderful benefactors supporting the Troop. Most of our key FOS contributors have not had a Scout in the Troop for many years. Yet, they continue to contribute, because they recognize the value of Scouting. The benefits that our sons have enjoyed as Troop 78 Scouts come in large part from the legacy that this core group provides. It is important that the rest of us continue that tradition of giving if our Troop is to remain among the best Scouting programs in the Council, in the region, and in the country. If every registered family in Troop 78 donated \$100 to FOS, *and* our key contributors kept their donations at last year's level, our collective FOS gift to Council would increase by 50% above last year's total. We are the standard against which other units are judged when it comes to FOS. Let's all make it happen!
- **Your gift can increase if your place of work offers matching contributions.** Unfortunately, not enough of our donors utilize the matching gift programs that their workplaces often provide. Your gift to FOS could double if your place of work offers matching gifts. Please contact your HR team at your place of work to see if this valuable benefit is available to you.

I recognize that your own family is impacted by COVID-19. Some of you may have had your salaries reduced, or lost your employment completely. Some of you may be suffering from the virus, or be taking care of family members who have contracted COVID-19. You are all in my thoughts and prayers, and I certainly understand if you are not able to contribute this year. BUT, if you are among the fortunate individuals whose income has not been affected by the outbreak, then please – answer the need and make your contribution to FOS today. The need is great and the opportunity is now. Think about what Scouting did for you, or for your child, and donate.

Kindly mail your check, made payable to “Chester County Council, BSA,” to me at my home address (see below). Or, donate on-line at <https://donations.scouting.org/#/council/539/appeal/1444>. In either case, please – donate today. We're counting on your support!

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, please call me at 267-615-4236.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jim Bennett'.

Jim Bennett 116 Signal Hill Lane Berwyn, PA 19312