

Extraordinary People

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In my book, anybody who answers the call to service in Scouting as an adult volunteer is a pretty extraordinary individual.

Extra-ordinary.

You get it?

Scout volunteers do extra things.

I'll give you an example. Ordinary folks will bring their sons to a Scout meeting. Extraordinary folks are already there to make sure that the Scout meeting is possible.

Ordinary folks will pack their sons up and send them out camping. Extraordinary folks will pack themselves up and go camping along with everybody else.

Ordinary folks may enjoy a quiet evening at home, or a round of golf, or a night at the movies. Extraordinary folks attend meetings. They attend all kinds of meetings. Troop meetings and crew meetings and pack meetings and den meetings and patrol meetings and summer camp meetings and Cub day camp meetings and high adventure meetings and district meetings and commissioner meetings and executive committee meetings and troop committee meetings and pack committee meetings, and for Pete's sake, subcommittee meetings to get ready for the other meetings.

They spend a week at camp. They may even take two weeks at Philmont, or Sea Base, or Northern Tier. They don't complain – it's great fun. But it's also vacation time.

And the paperwork. The paperwork! They fill out membership forms and tour permits and advancement forms and health forms and fundraising forms and form request forms and permission slips and blue cards and certificates, and they maintain websites and e-mail lists and calendars and newsletters and agendas and meeting minutes.

And they go to Roundtables and Pinewood Derbies and OA weekends and Camporees and Jamborees and Webelos weekends and day camps and Wood Badge sessions and courts of honor and Blue and Gold banquets and Klondike Derbies and First Aid meets. They counsel merit badges. They train their fellow Scouters. They join a volunteer staff. They'll serve on a council committee or they'll serve on a district committee. They'll go to council dinners and district dinners. They'll pick up Scouts and they'll drop off Scouts. They'll set up chairs and they'll take the chairs down.

And then they go and pick up the popcorn. And then they get the popcorn and they put it on a table in front of a cold storefront and huddle there for hours hoping that people will buy the popcorn. And once they do, they take the money and then they deliver the popcorn and then they turn in the money.

They show up early, and they stay late, and for some strange reason, they just love it.

Ordinary people have a dining room table at which they sit and dine. Extraordinary people have a dining room table that is covered with books and handouts and photocopies and bags of craft supplies

and camping gear and the things that the Scouts left at the last meeting.

Ordinary folks make sure that their children are happy and well-educated and prepared for adulthood. And extraordinary folks do this too for their children. But they also make sure that the other people's children are happy and well-educated and prepared for adulthood.

Ordinary folks if they get a little extra money, they might go get a new suit of clothes, or a big plasma TV, or maybe even a slick two-seater sports car. Extraordinary folks, if they get a little bit of extra money, might get a new Scout uniform, or a new sleeping bag, or a tent, or maybe a backpack, or maybe they'll just grab some popsicle sticks and glitter and glue and pipe cleaners and magic markers and construction paper and some scissors and, you know.

Most of the time extraordinary folks have to pass up the slick two-seater sports car and coax another year or two out of the old beat-up mini-van or pickup truck because, you know, it'll carry more gear, or more Scouts, or a little bit of both.

Ordinary husbands and wives get to go out to dinner. Extraordinary husbands and wives get to go out to dinner occasionally. But ordinary husbands and wives get to go out to dinner where there's no speaker, or program, or gangs of sugar-crazed Cub Scouts running around.

They go away on romantic weekends and they even have family vacations, these ordinary husbands and wives, but extraordinary husbands and wives would consider a Blue & Gold banquet or a district dinner or a council dinner or an OA banquet to be a date. Their weekend trips are anything but romantic, and any family vacation usually involves a really big family that cooks over an open fire and lives in tents.

That is some extraordinary stuff.

There's no shame in being ordinary. The world needs lots of good, steady, ordinary people to keep things moving along, but the world would be a much less interesting place without the extraordinary people who freely give themselves to a noble cause like Scouting.

People may not be lining up to give you a handshake and say thank you, but here's a little pat on the back from me. Thanks for being a Scouter.