

On May 23, 2013, during its annual meeting, the Boy Scouts of America held a historic vote concerning its membership policy and whether to delete certain aspects that prevented all youth from participating in the BSA program. The 1400 delegates in attendance, representing every BSA Council in the United States, voted overwhelmingly to approve the revision to the membership policy and thereby remove any disqualification for youth members based solely on sexual orientation.

How the Change in Membership Policy Affects Marin Council

While the resolution is important nationally, for Marin Council, it is truly an affirmation of our existing principles and practices concerning youth membership. We have consistently taken a strong position that regardless of sexual orientation, sexual topics in general, and conduct including pointing out another individual's sexual orientation, are just not a part of Scouting in Marin. We feel that Scouts should be judged by their conduct, their actions, and their character which is consistent with the Scout Oath and Law.

Nationally, however, with increasing societal consideration regarding the discrepancies of gay and lesbian rights, the topic of individual Scout sexual orientation needed to be addressed directly and uniformly across all BSA councils. While the BSA does not, and should not, have an agenda on this complex issue, it had unwittingly become a focal point in the ongoing na-

tional discussions involving sexual orientation. Since Scouting nationwide represents more than 2.6 million youth and 1 million adult members, many diverse beliefs needed to be reconciled. In this context, the BSA developed a comprehensive process to confront the question of individual Scout sexual orientation head on.

Locally, the Marin Council was part of the most comprehensive listening exercise in Scouting's history. Despite a wide divergence in views across the country, the debate was both thoughtful and respectful, giving priority to the best interests of our youth members. Our board of directors supported the resolution because it strongly reinforces that Scouting is a program designed for the needs of youth, and should be available to every boy and teenage girl that is committed to being guided by the Scout Oath and Law.

Some BSA members fear the resolution might be too much change. Programmatically, nothing will change in our delivery of Scouting. The Scout Oath and Law are foundational ideas that everyone should be exposed to and that benefit all our young people. Most importantly, this resolution will not introduce sexuality into Scouting; it will however introduce more youth to participate in Scouting.

For others, the resolution was not enough change. Our mission is directed to serving youth and in that the measure was only able to address a portion of our total membership, the youth, it is indicative of the complexity of this societal issue. However,

this resolution addresses a potential inequity as it might relate to any of our 2.6 million youth members, nearly 70% of all Scouting participants, and is a profound step forward that we feel should be supported.

What Do We Do Next?

What we do best! Continue to fulfill our mission to help Marin's as well as the nation's young people prepare for adulthood by instilling in them the importance of being: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent.

Marin Council's two thousand youth members will spend this summer camping, learning new skills, performing communi-

ty service, and making lots of new friends. Their involvement in Scouting will continue to improve their lives and our communities in uncounted ways, much as it has always done.

With the membership policy now changed to reflect nationally what we have always believed here in Marin, we would invite those individuals, families, alumni, and institutions that have pulled away or shied away from Scouting in recent years over this debate, to return and join with us again to help Scouting reach even more youth. We welcome your help and support in this new era of Scouting.

Young people—all young people—need Scouting more than ever.