

Cub Scout Round Table January 2020!

What is a Blue and Gold Banquet, you ask?

The Blue & Gold Banquet is an opportunity for Cub Scouts to celebrate Scouting's "birthday." It is typically held in February, close to Scouting Anniversary Week, but really it can be held at whatever time is convenient for your pack. Some packs hold the banquet at their regular pack meeting, while others plan a totally separate event. It can be as big or as small as your unit would like, but it should be special. Frequently, units use this as an opportunity to award the Arrow of Light and cross over the 5th grade Scouts to Scouts BSA. Some units like to have a theme, while others just have a Scouting or Blue & Gold theme.

There are many ways to have a Blue & Gold Banquet, but I will focus on the two extremes. Either of these can include Arrow of Light crossover, or not. You can find something in the middle, if you still want to have a special event, but want to keep it simpler.

First, you may want to keep Blue & Gold simple, as part of a regular pack meeting. You can make it special by having each den contribute Blue & Gold and Cub Scouting-themed decorations. This could be a great opportunity for your Bears to throw a carnival for the Grin and Bear It elective.

Or, your pack might want to go big, with an elaborate, themed Blue & Gold Banquet. You should decide during your annual planning meeting if you would like to go this route, because this will cost more. Do you want to include the cost in your popcorn goals or allow families to purchase tickets? Major things to consider with this type of banquet are the theme, the food, decorations, and activities. The internet is full of theme ideas. The last few years my pack's themes were Star Wars, Harry Potter, and Willy Wonka. All of them were popular and lots of fun. For food, many units like to keep costs down by having a potluck. Another less expensive option is to have the pack cook the food itself (things like hot dogs and hamburgers, spaghetti dinner, or pulled pork sandwiches are popular options). Additionally, you can order food from restaurants or, if you are really wanting to go fancy, a caterer. For your decor, you can save money by

having each den or rank decorate their tables or create some decorations for the room, or you can build the cost of decor into your event budget. Your theme will largely decide your decorations, but you can have a lot of fun with that. If you'd like to have activities, you can do simple games in your theme, have a photo area with a backdrop and props, or have parents volunteer to dress in character.

To give you an example, when we had our Harry Potter themed banquet, we ordered chicken, potatoes, and vegetables from Boston Market. We ordered macaroni and cheese for our vegetarian families. We served the food on platters family style to make it feel like a real Harry Potter banquet. In our beverage area, decorated as the Three Broomsticks pub, we offered "Butter Beer" and named our other drinks things like "Gilly Water" and "Exploding Lemonade." We assigned each rank to a Hogwarts house, and used inexpensive plastic tablecloths in the house colors, plus gold plates and cutlery. Centerpieces were battery-operated candles and random trinkets. Stations included Ollivander's Wand shop where each child received an inexpensive Oriental Trading Company Wand and Honeydukes candy store. Some of our leaders and parents dressed as characters from the books, and we had a Scouts BSA Scout come as Harry Potter.

Dessert at our banquet is always a baking contest, where Scouts can bring something either in Blue & Gold/Scout theme or in the theme of the banquet. We have an award (or two or three) for the best decoration, which saves us from having to actually taste everything!

If you wish to have your Arrow of Light ceremony and crossover at the event, you will need to make sure your Scouts have finished their rank requirements in time for ordering any special awards. Make sure your Scouts have been provided with plenty of opportunities to visit local troops and participate in a campout or other outdoor event with them, and invite the troops to which your Scouts are crossing over to attend the event, to welcome their new Scouts. Having your crossover for Arrow of Light Scouts at the Blue & Gold Banquet is a great way to make the ceremony very special, and crossing over around February gives these new Scouts time to get to know their new troops and participate in summer camp their very first year. It also is an opportunity for them to meet older kids who will be in middle school with them, which can ease that adjustment a bit.

What is a Pinewood Derby?

The Pinewood Derby is a racing event for unpowered, unmanned miniature cars, held at the Cub Scout level. With the help of adults, Scouts build their own cars from wood, usually from kits containing a block of pine wood, plastic wheels, and metal axles. These kits are sold for about \$5 each in the Scout Shop. The cars are then raced against each other on a special track. If your unit does not own a track, you can contact council to find out about track rentals. The winner of each pack's race is invited to compete against winners from other packs at the district level, and then the winner of each district race competes in the council finals. Each unit may only send one Scout to the district race.

When holding your race, you will want to be sure you research the rules for the council-level race, in order to ensure that your Scouts will be eligible to compete, and send these rules to your Scouting families before they start working on their cars. Each car should be inspected prior to the race, to be sure they conform to the standards you have set forth.

If you are able to, you may want to offer a workshop where Cubs can, at the very least, have their cars cut by responsible adults. Then they can take them home to sand, paint, and finish working on them.

Sometimes parents get overzealous and "take over" their Cubs' cars. You can help to avoid this by offering a race just for parents and siblings. We call this our "outlaw" race and we make the rules less strict - this makes the race even more fun for the parents, because they can really go for it when they make their cars.

You will want to be sure to have awards! There are trophies and medals available in the Scout Shop, and there are lots of websites filled with hundreds of trophy and medal designs for Pinewood Derby. We like TrophyDepot.com. We usually order around Black Friday when they offer 12-15% off. If you don't want to purchase trophies, you can make them yourself, with lots of great ideas available online. You could assign making trophies as a project to one of your older dens, if you'd like, too. In our unit we have small trophies for the winners in each rank, for the winners of the "outlaw" race, and larger trophies for the top three in the pack finals. We also do five small trophies in design categories. We do best Scout-themed, funniest, most creative, best use of color (a great one for the younger Scouts), and we allow the Scouts to vote for "Scouts' Choice." We always

have a back-up winner in mind for the other categories, in case the Scouts choose one of our winners.

For both Blue & Gold Banquet and Pinewood Derby, you will need to have plenty of volunteers, so be sure to enlist help from your leaders and parents. For Blue & Gold, we like to ask all the 4th grade Webelos parents to help out. Their Scouts are older and need less supervision, and it is how they pay it forward. The following year will be when their Scouts cross over and we don't WANT them to help out - they should get to just enjoy the special night with their Scouts!

Yours in Scouting,
Vanessa
Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner