

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY – Boy Scouts Liaison – Keith Hobson (completed by Jean Kresse)

Boy Scout Staff – Eric Thorsbakken

Need for Program:

General goals and objectives of the Boy Scouts is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices throughout their lives by instilling the values of scouting. Story County programs supported by ASSET (United Way of Story County) funds covers youth from all of Story County communities. Currently scouts are present in Story City (3 units), Gilbert (2 units), Slater (3 units), Ames (11 units – includes 2 at Beloit/LSI).

Eric Thorsbakken, with the scouts for nearly 3 years, is the staff member responsible for a 4-county area (Story, Boone, Greene, and Hamilton). In January 2017, that will increase to an 8-county area and Eric will add Tama, Hardin, Marshall and Guthrie). The staff member currently overseeing these counties will be shifted to hourly and assist in the program development.

Throughout the 4-county area they have a smaller number of donors that generates about \$50,000. Popcorn sales generates most of the private dollars (1/3 goes to unit; 1/3 to the Mid-Iowa Council; 1/3 to the vendor). ASSET support is about 20% of what they bring in and is important.

Program Strengths:

- Most of the youth served through the Boys Scouts in Story County are in the Ames community (11 units); there are 3 units in Nevada, 3 units in Story City, 2 units in Gilbert and they are working to develop a presence in Colo. There are about 800 youth involved in scouts.
- Strong in the area of volunteers; have some volunteers that have served multiple years.
- Den Leaders host meetings in their homes.

Program Challenges:

- Communication among volunteers is a challenge. Not all volunteers utilize the same medium (social media, email, text messaging, phone, etc.).
- The ratio between volunteers and professional staff is high; making it difficult for staff to connect personally and regularly with volunteers.
- For the most part they have overcome the challenge of connecting with youth since most schools have replaced Friday Folders with Digital Backpacks. Ames schools does provide mailing labels for those families with sons; however the other districts do not. They rely on Charter Organizations (churches) to help promote the scouting program by hosting sign-up events.
- Marketing budget is small which impacts their ability to recruit scouts and volunteers
- They are seeing a decline in the number of boys involved in scouts in the rural communities

Internal Management Practices:

- Advancement program tracks how often scouts advance, total number of boys and how many advanced within the year. This year they had 85%; last year they were at 90%; the year before it was 75% .
- Focus on Education is to promote interest and experience in potential career fields through their merit badge counselors. Their curriculum also promotes reading and literacy skills for our 1st and 2nd graders in particular.

General Assessment: Overall strong state-wide operation; support in Ames and surrounding communities through various programming and support of volunteers is strong.