

“It is hard to be a patrol of one.”

The Den 438 Project



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Executive Summary

The Den 438 Project addresses the challenges posed by the BSA's policy of single-gender dens for fifth-grade girls in their Arrow of Light (AOL) year, which often leads to isolation for those in solo dens. Inspired by a real-life encounter, Den 438 was created to foster socialization among these girls.

Commissioners play a crucial role in enhancing unit service by identifying needs and supporting the establishment of collaborative dens. In the Dan Beard Council, 70% of packs with AOL girl dens have two or fewer Scouts, highlighting the need for this initiative.

Den 438, named after the Council's national number (438) aims to unite girls for social interactions and collaborative work on AOL Adventures and Achievements, preparing them for their transition to Scout BSA girl troops. The project plan included outreach, training, and regular meetings, with an emphasis on creating a supportive environment.

The pilot program successfully retained 100% of participating AOL Scouts, who completed their requirements and crossed over to Scouting units. The initiative demonstrated the importance of commissioner involvement in creating inclusive scouting experiences and has led to requests for program expansion.

The Den 438 Project serves as a model for other councils to address similar challenges, emphasizing the importance of community and collaboration in the Scouting journey.

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Introduction:

In Cub Scouts, as of August 2024, the national policy is for single-gender dens for fifth-grade girls in their Arrow of Light (AOL) year program, which presents a unique challenge.⁽¹⁾ This policy, intended to prepare girls for the transition into single-gender Scout, BSA Troops, can result in solo dens, isolating these young girls from the collaborative spirit that defines the scouting experience.

This Doctor of Commissioner Science project thesis explores the inspiring genesis of Den 438, an innovative council-level Arrow of Light (AOL) den created to address the concerns expressed by a Cub Scout Den Leader during a chance encounter at the Little Miami district Roundtable. This encounter highlighted the potential isolation faced by her daughter, who would be embarking on her AOL year and her journey as a solo den member due to the single-gender requirement.

Drawing upon this real-life experience, this thesis delves into the process of developing Den 438 as a solution to foster collaboration, community, and a sense of belonging for fifth-grade girls in their AOL year. It explores the motivations behind the creation of this council-level den and the impact it had on the scouting experience for packs with very few fifth-grade girls.

Through an examination of the challenges faced by solo dens, the thesis explores the national policy's intentions while recognizing the unintended consequences of potential isolation. It delves into the extensive research, planning, and collaboration required to establish Den 438 as a supportive environment where these young girls can work together, develop leadership skills, and prepare for their transition to single-gender Scout, BSA Troops.

Moreover, this project sheds light on the importance of commissioner involvement in identifying and addressing specific needs within the scouting community. It highlights the critical role that commissioners play in initiating and facilitating innovative solutions that enhance the scouting experience for all participants.

By documenting the journey of Den 438, this thesis serves as a valuable resource for commissioners and scouting leaders seeking to replicate this model in their own councils. It provides insights into the process of establishing a council-level den, the impact on participant engagement and satisfaction, and the lessons learned along the way.

This work aims to inspire and empower commissioners, den leaders, and scouting stakeholders to create inclusive and collaborative environments that ensure every Scout, regardless of circumstances, can fully embrace the transformative journey of Cub Scouting and lead to increased retention. Through the lens of Den 438, we explore the power of addressing challenges head-on and forging a path towards a more inclusive and fulfilling scouting experience.

[Connection to Unit Service](#)

Addressing the need for collaborative dens, as exemplified by the establishment of Den 438, relates to a commissioner's role in providing unit service. Unit service is a vital aspect of a commissioner's responsibilities, which involves supporting and assisting units in delivering a high-quality scouting program. By recognizing and addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by units, commissioners can enhance their unit service efforts.

When a commissioner identifies the need for collaborative dens, particularly for solo or very few fifth-grade girls, they demonstrate a deep understanding of the unit's dynamics and the obstacles

they face. By championing and supporting the establishment of collaborative dens like Den 438, commissioners directly contribute to the unit's success and overall scouting experience.

Commissioners can provide unit service in several ways within the context of collaborative dens:

- **Guidance and Support:** Commissioners can provide guidance and support to den leaders, offering their expertise in areas such as program delivery, advancement, and youth leadership development. They can offer resources, share best practices, and help den leaders navigate the unique challenges associated with collaborative dens.
- **Relationship Building:** Commissioners foster strong relationships with den leaders, ensuring open lines of communication and trust. By maintaining regular contact, commissioners can stay informed about the den's progress, address any concerns or issues, and help when needed.
- **Promoting Collaboration:** Commissioners play a crucial role in promoting collaboration among units. They can facilitate networking opportunities, encourage den leaders to share ideas and experiences, and organize joint activities or training sessions. By fostering collaboration, commissioners help create a supportive community where units can learn from one another and enhance their scouting programs.
- **Advocacy and Resource Allocation:** Commissioners advocate for the needs of collaborative dens within the district and council. They can raise awareness among council leadership about the importance of supporting these dens and allocate necessary resources, such as funding, training opportunities, and materials, to ensure their success.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Commissioners monitor the progress and performance of collaborative dens, ensuring they meet the desired objectives and standards. They provide feedback, conduct evaluations, and offer suggestions for improvement, contributing to the continuous growth and development of the dens and the units they serve. ⁽⁶⁾

By addressing the need for collaborative dens, commissioners actively engage in unit service efforts, working to create an inclusive and supportive scouting environment. Their involvement in supporting these dens directly impacts the quality of the scouting experience for all participants, fostering stronger units and contributing to the success of the scouting program.

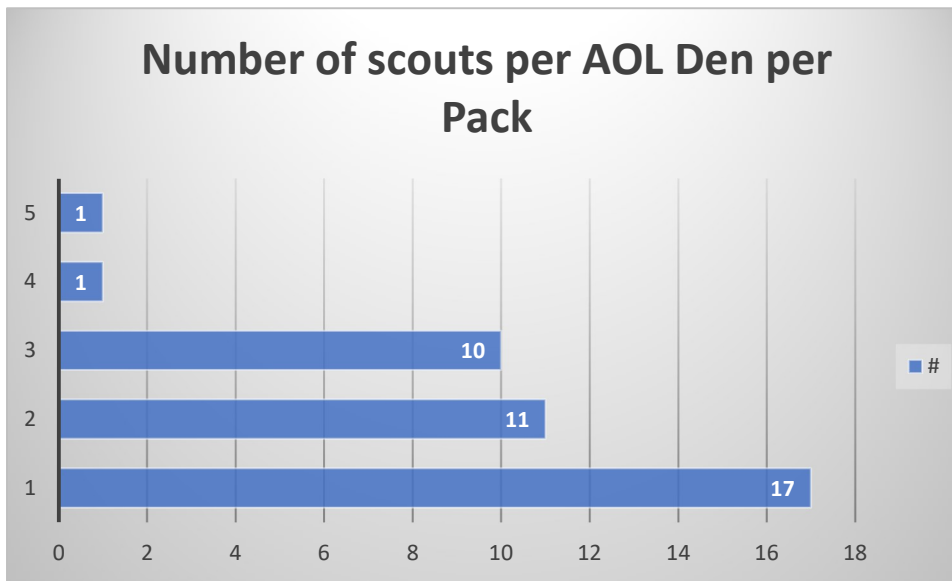
Problem Statement

The Scouting America has specific policies ⁽¹⁾ regarding single-gender dens for Arrow of Light (AOL) Cub Scouts, who are typically in the fifth grade. According to the latest guidelines, Arrow of Light dens must remain single gender. This means that boys and girls are placed in separate dens at this level ^(1,2,3,4).

This policy is designed to prepare them for joining single-gender Scouts BSA troops, which they will transition into after completing the Arrow of Light rank ^(1,3). Scouting America believes that maintaining single-gender dens at this stage helps ensure a smoother transition and better alignment with the structure of Scouts BSA troops ^(1,3,4).

As of August 2024, there are 61 female AOLs in the Dan Beard Council (#438) distributed across 41 Packs in the districts. ⁽⁵⁾

Table 1 # of Scouts Per Pack Per AOL Den



As shown in the chart above seventeen Packs in the council have one female Scout in their AOL Den and eleven Packs have two female Scouts in their AOL Den. This means that across these

forty Packs with AOL Girl Dens 28 (70%) of the Packs have two or fewer Scouts per AOL female dens. ⁽⁵⁾

Table 2 Female AOL District Distribution (5)

District	Female Count	# Packs
Little Miami	20	9
Trailblazer	11	6
Fort Ancient	10	6
East Fork	8	6
Fort Hamilton	7	6
Whitewater	3	4
Queen City	2	3
Grand Total	61	40

Table 3 Average # of AOL's Per Den per Pack (5)

Avg	1.85
Mean	1.63
Median	2.00
St Dev	1.00

Vision

The idea behind Den 438 is to retain AOL girls in the Dan Beard Council (#438) in the Scouting program, to help them achieve the rank of Arrow of Light rank and to give them a sense of belonging and a place to socialize. Currently by design, Scouts in their AOL year (September – March) are separated into single-gender patrols to prepare them to transition to single-gender troops. Due to membership numbers in the Dan Beard council 42% of packs have just 1 girl in the Pack that is working on their AOL Rank which effectively isolates these girls into a patrol on one. Since it is impossible to operate as a patrol of one, many of these ladies become disenfranchised with the Scout program and drop out of Cub Scouts before transitioning to the Scouts, BSA program. To help with retention, an assistant council commissioner conceived of a

pilot program in the Dan Beard council (#438) to see if retention of girls could be improved by bringing these individual AOL patrols together, enabling social interactions and allowing them to work together as patrols on Adventures and Achievements. The pilot started with the creation of a vision and the project plan shown below. Initial communications were set up via a Facebook group and other social media platforms.

This is the vision that was shared on Facebook: ⁽⁸⁾

At Den 438, we believe that every girl deserves a supportive and empowering environment to grow, learn, and thrive. We are a council-level Cub Scout Arrow of Light Patrol, exclusively for AOL girls, offering an incredible opportunity for fifth graders to work together in a sisterhood, preparing them for their transition to Scout BSA girl troops.

In many packs, female fifth graders find themselves in solo patrols, lacking the camaraderie and collaborative spirit that comes with working in a group. Den 438 aims to change that by bringing these talented and ambitious girls together to work on Arrow of Light achievements, both required and elective.

The purpose of Den 438 is to complement existing packs, not to replace them. Girls will continue to be members of their current pack, and in those respective packs, they will receive recognition for their accomplishments in Den 438. Den 438 serves as a unique opportunity to foster a sense of community and belonging, providing a platform where girls can work together, share experiences, and support one another.

We will determine the central location for our monthly meetings soon. This central location will ensure convenience and accessibility for all participants, allowing girls from different packs to come together and build lasting friendships.

Join Den 438 and experience the power of unity, sisterhood, and personal growth. Together, we will embark on adventures, develop new skills and interests, and practice sportsmanship and exemplary citizenship. We believe in encouraging everyone to do their best, not just for themselves but for the den.

Contact us today and join Den 438, where girls shine bright, and dreams come true!

Plan - Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

A simplified high-level Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for establishing Den 438. Keep in mind that specific tasks and timeline may vary based on local requirements and circumstances.

1. Project Initiation
 - Define project scope and objectives.
 - Identify key stakeholders and form a project team.
 - Allocate necessary resources, including personnel and funding.
2. Planning Phase
 - Conduct research on local regulations and guidelines for establishing a new den.
 - Identify potential central meeting locations and determine availability.
 - Develop a comprehensive project plan, including timelines and milestones.
3. Recruitment and Promotion
 - Develop promotional materials (flyers, brochures, online content) highlighting the benefits of Den 438
 - Reach out to existing packs and communicate the opportunity to join Den 438
 - Coordinate with local schools and community organizations to promote Den 438 to interested families.
4. Location Selection and Setup
 - Evaluate potential central meeting locations based on accessibility, amenities, and availability.
 - Secure the chosen location for regular den meetings.
 - Coordinate with the facility management to ensure necessary setup, including seating, equipment, and supplies.
5. Den Leadership and Training
 - Council Den Champion
 - Identify and recruit den leaders who are enthusiastic about supporting an all-girls Cub Scout den.
 - Provide comprehensive training and orientation for den leaders, covering Cub Scout program specifics, safety guidelines, and leadership skills.
6. Den Meeting Planning
 - Develop a meeting schedule, including the frequency and duration of den meetings.
 - Plan engaging and educational activities aligned with the Cub Scout Arrow of Light program requirements.
 - Coordinate with den leaders to ensure proper preparation and availability of necessary materials.
7. Financial Management
 - Establish a transparent financial system for collecting and managing dues.
 - Define the process for tracking expenses, reimbursements, and budgeting for supplies and resources.
8. Reporting and Documentation
 - Establish a system for tracking den attendance, achievements, and advancements.

- Regularly communicate progress and updates to key stakeholders, including council leadership and participating packs
 - Maintain accurate records of the den's activities, including photos, testimonials, and success stories.
9. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
- Conduct periodic evaluations to assess the den's effectiveness, participant satisfaction, and areas for improvement.
 - Solicit feedback from den leaders, parents, and Scouts to identify ways to enhance the den's offerings and experiences.
 - Document lessons learned and best practices to help other councils replicate the successful establishment of similar dens.

Results

An initial schedule was created on different days of the week and at various times to work around existing pack meetings and to avoid weekends to not interfere with camping and other pack-level events. Three locations (Scout Achievement Center, Camp Michaels, Camp Craig)

AUGUST 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2+	3
4	5+	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13+	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21+	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29+	30	31

www.a-printable-calendar.com

were chosen throughout the council to allow for flexibility in travel.

The initial socials were held in August of 2024.

The meetings were structured as a social event, with two experienced 21+ Scouting (1 female) leaders

and 1 Den leader present to interact with the AOL Scouts and a unit commissioner on hand to interact with the Scouts' adults and answer concerns.

The same Cub Scout AOL Achievement (Bobcat Achievement) was taught at each social per month so as not to require multiple social attendance per month and to allow for flexibility if

family schedule conflicts occur. This also works around Council Coordinated meetings and allows for Unit Troop & Pack meetings.

Bobcat Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Bobcat Arrow of Light.

Requirement 1 Demonstrate the patrol method by choosing a patrol name and electing a patrol leader. Discuss the benefits of using the patrol method.	Requirement 2 Get to know members of your patrol.	Requirement 3 Recite the Scout Oath and Scout Law with your patrol.
Requirement 4 With your patrol create a Code of Conduct.	Requirement 5 Demonstrate the Scout sign, Scout salute and Scout handshake used by Scouting America. Show how each are used.	Requirement 6 Learn the Scouting America slogan and motto.
Requirement 7 With your patrol, or with your parent/legal guardian, visit a Scouting America troop.	Requirement 8 At home, with your parent or legal guardian do the activities in the booklet "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide."	

At the end of the meeting, snacks were provided, and plans were made for a meeting in September and an October campout being planned amongst families that participated in the August socials. An opening flag ceremony was held, led by the den leader, and the Scout oath and law were taught along with the Scout sign, salute, and handshake. The Scouts were encouraged to form into patrols, to produce patrol names, yells, and flags, to get to know the members of their patrol, to elect a patrol leader, and to start work on a patrol code of conduct. Adults were reminded that they were Akela and responsible for signing off requirements for their AOL along with the Pack Den Leader. Packs were still responsible for rank recognition, and Den 438 was a mechanism for required work to be accomplished in a group setting.

September 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 +	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 +	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

The September Socials were set up based upon the best times and locations for those who participated in the August socials and were in a similar format; however, the focus was on the Outdoor Adventurer Achievement.

After opening flag ceremonies were completed, patrol corners were conducted, and any AOLs unable to attend the August socials were welcome and integrated into the existing patrols, or if enough newcomers attended, new patrols were formed. Skill time focused on the Scout essentials and the SAFE checklist. We located Camp Craig on the city map and identified our campsite on the camp map so adults knew where we would be meeting for the October camping event. During patrol corners, patrol leaders led discussions about allergy concerns as well as food preferences. Discussions about codes of conduct that were started in August were finished. Den leaders demonstrated packing a typical pack of camp gear that would be needed for the upcoming October campout. The meeting ended with a brief minute and snacks.

Outdoor Adventure

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Outdoor Adventurer.

Requirement 1

Learn about the Scout Basic Essentials.

Requirement 2

Determine what you will bring on an overnight campout – including a tent and sleeping bag/gear – and how you will carry your gear.

Requirement 3

Review the four points of Scouting America's SAFE Checklist and how you will apply them on the campout.

Requirement 4

Locate the campsite where you will be camping on a map.

Requirement 5

With your patrol or a Scouting America troop, participate in a campout.

Requirement 6

Upon arrival at the campout determine where to set up your campsite: kitchen, eating area, tents, and firepit. Help the patrol set up the patrol gear before setting up your own tent.

Requirement 7

Explain how to keep food safe and the kitchen area sanitary at the campsite. Demonstrate your knowledge during the campout.

Requirement 8

After your campout, discuss with your patrol what went well and what you would do differently next time. Include how you followed the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace Principles for Kids.

The October 2024 Social was an outdoor camping event at Camp Craig Grand Canyon campsite with Scout BSA troops that occurred the weekend of Friday, Oct 25 – Sunday, Oct 27. Den 438 leaders and Scout BSA troops arrived Friday night to set up camp and prepare for AOL arrival on Saturday morning. AOL Scouts and their families arrived starting at 9 AM Saturday and set up tents with activities scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM. Activities during the day centered around requirements for the Personal Fitness, Citizenship, and First Aid Achievements, along with the elective adventures: Estimates, Into the Woods, Into the Wild, Knife Safety.

AOLs were split into their patrols and sent around to stations to work with Scouts from various female troops from the Dan Beard Council who taught the various electives. This served as a recruiting tool for the units and gave the AOLs and their families a chance to meet and interact with several different troops. The Scouts of these troops were able to use the EDGE method and show off their skills and proficiencies. Scouts who were working on first aid rank requirements

or cooking or camping merit badges had opportunities to work on trail cooking and camp cooking requirements with merit badge counselors and Unit commissioners were on hand to facilitate unit connections. Saturday evening ended with service to the council Spook-O-Ree event and a campfire event back in camp with s'mores. Sunday included a Scout's own service, a few wrap-up requirements, breaking camp, and start-stop-continue activities.

Personal Fitness Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Personal Fitness .

Requirement 1

Plan a balanced meal that you would eat when camping. Prepare that meal using the gear you would use on a campout.

Requirement 2

Examine what it is to be physically fit and how you incorporate this in your life. Track the number of times you are active for 30 minutes or longer over a 14-day period. Share with your patrol or family what you enjoyed and if you feel you are living up to the Scout Oath of being physically strong.

Requirement 3

Be active for 30 minutes with your patrol, a younger den, or at least one other person in a way that includes both stretching and moving.

Requirement 4

Review your Scouting America Annual Health and Medical Record with your parent or legal guardian. Discuss your ability to participate in Arrow of Light patrol and pack activities.

Citizenship Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Citizenship.

Requirement 1

Identify a community service project that your patrol or pack could accomplish. Use Scouting America's SAFE Checklist and develop a plan to conduct the service project safely.

Requirement 2

Participate in a service project for a minimum of two hours or multiple service projects for a total of two hours.

First Aid Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete First Aid.

Requirement 1

With permission from your parent or legal guardian, watch the Protect Yourself Rules video for the Arrow of Light rank.

Requirement 2

Explain what you should do if you encounter someone in need of first aid.

Requirement 3

Demonstrate what to do for hurry cases of first aid: serious bleeding, heart attack or sudden cardiac arrest, stopped breathing, stroke, poisoning.

Requirement 4

Demonstrate how to help a choking victim.

Requirement 5

Demonstrate how to treat shock.

Requirement 6

Demonstrate how to treat the following: cuts and scratches, burns and scalds, bites and stings of insects and animals, and nosebleed.

Requirement 7

Make a personal first-aid kit. Demonstrate the proper use of each item in your first-aid kit.

Estimations Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Estimations.

Requirement 1

Estimate food measurements.

Requirement 2

Estimate the time of day.

Requirement 3

Estimate the height of a distant object.

Requirement 4

Estimate the distance between two points.

Into the Wild Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Into the Wild.

Requirement 1

Visit a place with a variety of wild animals. Select one of the animals and observe its behavior. Use your selected animal to complete the remaining requirements.

Requirement 2

Create a model of your animal's ecosystem.

Requirement 3

Investigate how your animal coexists with other animals in the wild.

Requirement 4

Describe how humans interact with your chosen animal's ecosystem.

Requirement 5

Discover how wildlife management benefits your animal.

Into The Woods Adventure

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Into the Woods.

Requirement 1

Visit an area with trees and plants and conduct a tree inventory. Select one tree and complete the remaining requirements based on that tree.

Requirement 2

Determine if your tree is deciduous or evergreen.

Requirement 3

Determine if your tree is native or was introduced to your area.

Requirement 4

Find out how your tree deals with wildfire.

Requirement 5

Learn how wildlife uses your tree.

Complete the following requirements

Activities to fulfill these requirements are listed below. Choose one activity for each requirement to complete Knife Safety.

Requirement 1

Know the safety rules for handling and using a knife.

Requirement 2

Demonstrate the knife safety circle.

Requirement 3

Demonstrate that you know how to care for and use a knife safely.

Requirement 4

Demonstrate the proper use of a pocketknife to make a useful object on a campout.

Requirement 5

Choose the correct cooking knife and demonstrate how to properly slice, chop, and mince.

Conclusion / After Action

With the completion of the October campout, Den 438 had successfully completed its vision. The individual AOL's Scouts that had participated had completed the requirements needed to reach the rank of AOL. They had interacted with several different Scout BSA troops and were well-positioned to select one to cross over to with the coming of spring. They had made friends and socially connected with other AOL Scouts. Most importantly retention was achieved. 100% of the AOL Scouts that participated in the pilot were retained and crossed over to Scouting units because of the pilot. Scouts who may have felt isolated and discouraged had made new friends and interacted with others their own age from across the council and had grown closer. They had a new set of outdoor skills and as a result were stronger overall Scouts from an outdoor perspective. From a commissioner service perspective, we provided help and gave with a servant's heart.

Some of the challenges faced were overcoming the initial fear from packs that we were trying to poach their Scouts. Once we overcame that suspicion and they realized that the Pack retained

their Scout and was responsible for membership, for rank approval, for advancement, and that we were a social club for their female AOL Scout's resistance melted away. Feedback has proven there is a desire to continue Den 438 into the future. Additionally, requests have been made to expand the program beyond just the AOL year and should include WEBELOS year as well. We have discovered **that it is hard to be a Patrol of one** and we believe this is a need within other councils as well and that they should consider adopting this program solution following this play book and that Council Commissioners can be instrumental in bringing this program to the attention of Scout Executives as an offering and providing this model as a solution.

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Photos from October Outing













DBC Den 438



Ronald L. Bacu is at Camp Craig.

Admin · October 26, 2024 · Loveland · 🌐



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