May 2026 — Annual Program Planning

James River District roundtable — May 7, 2026

New James River District Executive

Matt Connors, Heart of Virginia Council Vice President of Operations, introduced Zach Hite as the new James River District Executive. Welcome, Zach.

Cub Scouts Roundtable Commissioner transition

Dave Ansell, outgoing Cub Scouts Roundtable Commissioner, announced the transition of that role to Donnie Gladfelter. Thank you to Dave for his service to the district's Cub Scout leaders.

Commissioner minute: recording your unit's program in Scoutbook

District Commissioner Charlotte Pemberton reminded leaders that units are doing the hard work — running great meetings, planning campouts, completing adventures, and delivering real program for their Scouts. But unless those activities are recorded in Scoutbook, the district and council have no visibility into them. That work cannot be reflected in how Scouting America reports the reach and impact of Scouting in the community. If your unit is doing the work, record it.

Tonight's breakout topics

- **Cub Scouts:** May 2026 — Annual Program Planning
- **Scouts BSA:** All Things Summer Camp

This month: annual program planning

This month, we used roundtable planning as a working model for the process that Pack Key 3 should run before the fall (likely starting in June). What follows is the framework from that session.

Before your planning meeting

Pull these together before your annual program planning meeting:

- **Last year's program plan and what actually happened.** The plan shows what you intended. The executed schedule shows what your families actually experienced. The difference between the two is worth understanding. Where did things have to change, and why?
- **School calendars.** The James River District packs span four school divisions (Henrico, City of Richmond, Hanover, and Goochland). Check the calendar(s) that apply to your unit.
- **Chartered organization calendar.** Know their facility schedule and major events before you start choosing pack dates. Beyond verifying basic space availability, the events calendar is worth a closer look. A parish Fall Festival, an Easter Egg Hunt, a Brunswick Stew Sale. Those are partnership opportunities most units walk right past.
- **Leader schedules.** Know when your key leaders are unavailable before you lock in dates. Vacations, work travel, the things that take people off the roster for a week. You can't avoid every conflict, but planning for it in June beats unexpectedly finding out the week of the event.
- **Family survey responses.** Use the Family Talent Survey to understand the unique talents in your unit. The responses to this survey can help inform what events and activities your Pack chooses to include in its program year.
- **Family survey responses.** If you send one ahead of time, you show up with actual information about the resources your pack has to execute its program for the coming year. It also tells you what talents and interests are sitting in your unit that you might not know about.

Running the annual planning conversation

A blank calendar is intimidating, but you're not starting from scratch. Your unit ran a program last year. Some of it went well, some of it didn't. All of it is a foundation to build on.

Looking back isn't about criticism. Everyone did their best with what they had. What worked, build on it. What didn't, take a moment to understand why before you decide whether to fix it, drop it, or pivot to something different. All of

those are valid answers. Not every new idea lands, and not every tradition earns its place forever. The program belongs to the Scouts and families in your unit today, not its alumni. Plan it that way.

What worked? What should we repeat?

Leaders at roundtable identified:

- **Serving Scouts with special needs** — well received, but leaders want a more focused session with deeper coverage rather than a broad overview.
- **Potpourri months** — short takes on topics that don't fill a full meeting on their own. Works. Do it again.
- **Pinewood Derby** — good content, wrong month. By the time we covered it, most packs were already mid-build. Needs to move earlier.

What was missing? Gaps in topics or attendance?

At roundtable, the gaps were:

- **Fundraising.** No dedicated session this year. Packs need practical coverage of popcorn and peanut sales, camp cards, and unit money-earning options.
- **Online tools.** Scoutbook, the council registration system, finding and completing required training.
- **Running engaging den meetings.** Not the theory but the practical mechanics of keeping Scouts engaged. How to structure the hour, what to do when Scouts won't settle, how to adapt when the plan isn't working.

What would you like to see?

At roundtable, leaders asked for:

- **Camping sessions** — day camp and summer camp, including what new families need to know before their first overnight.
- **A camping orientation for new families** — possibly combined with the equipment swap so families can see and handle gear in the same session.
- **Inter-unit connections,** Several leaders expressed the usefulness of connecting with other units and leaders to help fill gaps in their unit. How units can share resources and support each other.

The annual program year rhythm

The anchors that belong on the calendar before anything else gets planned:

- **August** — recruiting starts before school does; back-to-school nights
- **August–September** — Join Scouting nights; popcorn and peanut sale
- **October** — Creepy Hollow; unit renewal opens
- **October–November** — unit renewal (formerly recharter)
- **January** — Pinewood Derby for most packs
- **February** — Blue and Gold banquet; Arrow of Light crossover begins
- **February–March** — crossover continues
- **April–May** — Spring Family Camporee at Cub Adventure Camp
- **May** — rank completions, den transitions, summer camp push
- **June–July** — Summertime program.. Day Camp and Cub Adventure Camp resident sessions; plan registration in the spring, and helping families prepare to participate.

Four roundtable dates have recurring attendance risk worth noting:

- **September** — Labor Day weekend
- **November** — Election Day, wellness days depending on division
- **January** — first week back
- **April** — first week after spring break

Worth knowing when you're planning pack events too.

Handouts

- Annual program planning handout — planning calendar with event anchors, school calendar, and topic write-in column
- School calendar summary — four-division table, June 2026 through June 2027

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