

DSA Expansion

As more and more people learn about Dog Scouts of America and want to become involved, we need to address the issue of accessibility for people far and wide. The office of the Certification Program Director ([CPD](#)) has been put in charge of this expansion. Listed below are several ideas to help people in remote areas start Dog Scout Troops. Coming to one of the Michigan summer camps used to be the only way of learning about Dog Scouts and getting certified. We're now getting more and more Scoutmasters trained in outlying areas, but we'd like to see our expansion move even faster, but be able to maintain the same high standards.

Mini Camp. This avenue has been around for a few years, but is not always feasible for people who have a mostly "family dog" group of people in their area. Many people don't want to or can't spend the money to attend a mini-camp (they're not all THAT interested in commitment at THAT level). The fact that we must have a minimum of 20 people attending to break even often makes the Mini Camp option harder to make a reality. The cost for the mini-camp is \$425.00 per person with one dog, which includes 3 days, jam-packed with activities, and the opportunity to be trained and certified as Dog Scouts, and earn at least two to four other badges.

Extended Seminar Weekend, This is new, and it is for people who say that they have a LARGE base of members in their area, for instance, their whole training school or dog club is intensely interested, but they can't all come to camp. For this, we need another 3-day weekend. One or two DSA staff members would come in and give a very abbreviated version of the mini camp, minus the food, the games, the crafts, the campfire singalongs, the swimming, agility, backpacking, and other extra curricular activities. It would be a crash course in The [Dog Scout Way](#) ([responsible dog ownership](#) and the importance of the human/canine bond), positive reinforcement training for all of the elements of the Dog Scout badge, and the shaping elements for the Art of Shaping badge. This package also includes **Leadership and Scoutmaster Training**, for people interested in troop formation. This could take place at a training club or hotel that allows dogs (like any other seminar), and the price would be very reasonable for a three day seminar: \$150.00 per person, which will cover the cost of one instructor/lecturer's travel, honorarium, PLUS the Dog Scout Certification, and the Art of Shaping Certification. A minimum of only 10 participants would be required for this option, and it would train the greatest number of people (to prepare them for troop membership), for the lowest cost.

The schedule for this would include about 5 hours of lecture and hands-on training per day over the three days (Suggestion: Friday, 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Saturday 9:00am to 5:00 pm with a two hour lunch/practice break; and Sunday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with a one-hour lunch break).

DSA Course Add-On. This is another "crash course" in becoming a Dog Scout, as above. It requires a three-day weekend, but it is better suited to clubs or organizations that **already use positive methods of training**. There will be less lecturing and hands-on training (no Art of Shaping merit badge), and the focus will be to observe and test dogs and indoctrinate people into the "Dog Scout Way," without as much beginner and introduction level stuff. This course can be "added on" to any three-day dog show, conference, seminar, weekend agility trial, existing dog camp hosted by any organization, or any other 3-day event. For two-day events, people signing up for the course can come in the night before, and get their first session the evening before the weekend activities. This will involve about 2 hours per day, which can be scheduled at the close of the regularly scheduled activities, or fit into an existing camp's or multi-seminar's schedule. There is no leadership training in this package—just preparing

individuals to become Scouts. A minimum of only 5 dogs is required for this, but it needs to be **held at an event that will already have a certified Scoutmaster in attendance** to conduct the training and certification. Otherwise, travel expenses for a DSA staff member would need to be paid by the hosting organization or individual. This course is a good option as an add-on for any event where a DSA representative or Scoutmaster will already be in attendance. In this circumstance, their travel expenses are already taken care of by the club (in the event of a Judge) or by the individual him or herself (in the event the DSA representative is him or herself an exhibitor or attendee for the weekend). The cost for this “Add-on Crash Course” is only \$60.00 per participant, and since the instructor will already be in attendance, the minimum number of participants can be relatively low, which makes it more like a semi-private session. However, large numbers of people and their dogs may actually want to take part in this very easy way to get their dogs certified as scouts. They surely will have paid more than that to enter three shows, in which they may not even qualify and go home with anything to show for it! With this package, the fee includes the DSA training and certification (with accompanying merit badge, bandana, and laminated I.D. card, as usual). This is the closest we can come to hosting a “walk-in” type of test, but we insist that the smart end of the leash take the very minimum amount of Dog Scout Training to become indoctrinated into the “Dog Scout Way,” even if he or she does not plan to form a troop or become a leader.

You may want to share these options with your group, troop, or dog club, in the event that they could facilitate Dog Scout Training in your area. Particularly the last option, which could easily take place during any pre-existing function with a couple of extra hours free in the day. The club would not be out any money, and they would be helping a worthwhile movement create more responsible dog owners nation-wide. If the club you’re working with wanted to charge a little extra, over the above listed costs, to help defray the cost of a room rental or something, they could increase the rate slightly and offer the package to the target group. However, very minimal space would be needed, and I’m sure the hosting group wouldn’t mind letting you use an empty ring or unused space when not otherwise in use with the regularly scheduled function. Depending on the number of interested parties, this training could take place virtually anywhere. So please pass this information along and share it with other people who might want to take advantage of it.

For more information, contact the DSA Certification Program Director (CPD) by email at: DogScouts@hotmail.com. And be sure to visit our web site www.dogscouts.org.

If you cannot arrange one of the above options for training and certification, but would like to attend the leadership retreat, it takes place on Memorial Day Weekend, in St. Helen, Michigan, and attendance is limited. Any troop leaders attending the leadership retreat must present a topic of interest to the group. Contact Lonnie for retreat reservations: 5068 Nestle Rd, St. Helen MI 48656 or call (989) 389-2000 or email: Lonnie@DogScouts.com

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