

The BSA declares itself bankrupt.

Millions of Scouts know better.

By the time I sat down to write these words, most everyone knows that the national council of the Boy Scouts of America has declared bankruptcy. Without the courts to help us make things right for all concerned, we cannot spin free of the vortex of insolvency which is sucking us down the cash drain.

But millions of people, like 100 million people, have been a part of this, the greatest youth movement in the history of the world. Each one of us has fellow campers, sisters or Dads, or uncles or Mothers who saw the great transformation in their Scouts as they camped, fished, hiked, and GREW into fine, fine human beings.

Now we are at a crossroads, and while the national organization and its network of local Councils grapple with the consequences of child sexual abuse allegations by members who none of us know personally and many of whom died years ago, we are all dealing with the carnage of their misdeeds.

The BSA will make this right to victims. Our board and leadership stand universal and steadfast in the commitment to do so.

There are those who might estimate the debt the BSA may owe, but, from this vantage point, and without knowledge of the cases and the financial complexities to come, I am guessing that it will be ponderous. The accountants will have to verify the numbers at some point and the lawyers can advise us, but from early indications, we are in a world of financial hurt.

But guess what?

While we fear that the liabilities may show up as greater than the financial assets in our current financial statements, what is not measurable are the intangible assets that can best be measured in the hearts and memories of these 100 million people who have had their lives blessed and bettered by their association with this great organization.

That's right.

The real assets of the BSA are in MY life, and yours, and in the tens of millions of others of our countrymen who are products of the program. Their families, friends, and they all know that the positive impact of the BSA is immense and incalculable, timeless, deep, and profound.

When I was a boy, dues for being a Boy Scout were 10 cents a week. It turned out that we Scouts all brought our dimes to every meeting. It worked out to \$5.00 a year, because my Scoutmaster gave us a "dues holiday" if we would spend our dime at the Scout trading post during our week at Summer camp. At Christmastime, we were expected to find a red bucket to deposit the dime for that week. I pulled weeds and shined my Dad's shoes to earn my dime and I am quite certain that I got more than my ten cents worth.

My Dad sure thought I did. He saw what it did for me. Scouting was the first time I had met anyone from the other side of the tracks. Yep, a boy went to Summer Camp with us from a family who owned a big electrical contracting firm in town. That boy had a whole different upbringing than I did. But at Camp, we wore the same uniform, ate the same food, carried the same weight in our packs, and sang the same songs at the campfire.

That boy, now a physician five states over, and I have kept in contact for more than 50 years. We plan to attend the 100th anniversary of that Summer Camp, next September. He is an asset in my life that I never recall spending anything to attain. My Mom paid for the food I ate at Camp. I got this guy in my life "for free." The Boy Scouts don't carry the value of that friendship on their balance sheet.

My story is the story of everyone I have ever met in the program of the Boy Scouts of America.

One asset we all have would be those kinds of friendships, and recently, it seems like every one of the friends lavished upon me through Scouting has called to talk about the craziness we are all experiencing as the coronavirus further ravishes the BSA's financial picture!

As our hearts ache over the wrongs that some of our precious youth members have reported Scouting adults having done to them long ago, we have and continue to encourage anyone who feels that they were harmed to come forward. It is a sad procession.

We need to clean up this wreckage, but we also need to move forward in delivering the value and values of this tremendous program to America's youth. As we experience the organizational contortions visited on us by those events of long ago, the men, women, and youth of the BSA are (virtually) locking arms and must draw deeply on what we have gained from the Program to help us get through.

I told you that so many of my Scouting friends have called or written to just talk about these unhappy recent events. The calls tend to follow this simple outline:

1-It is terrible what happened. It never should have.

2-we need to encourage those who feel they were harmed to come forward and seek relief through the courts.

3-glad we are doing MUCH better these days in keeping kids safe. Scouting was safer than SCHOOL in 2019 and schools are safer for children than being at home.

4-We need to be doing our push-ups to be strong and ready when Scouting emerges from bankruptcy to deliver more and better program more safely than ever to more kids than ever.

5-Scouting was GREAT for us, and we know kids today deserve what we had.

6-Then, the rocking chairs come out and we talk about how great it was in the old days.

But it isn't just oldsters who benefitted from Scouting. I have gotten calls and emails from the Scouts from the Troop for which I served as Scoutmaster, as well as from current and recent OA, Venturing, and Sea Scout leaders. YOUNG PEOPLE in their 20s and 30s have told me the great value Scouting has brought their lives.

A few years ago, I wrote an essay that went viral and which was reprinted in Bryan's Blog of Scouting Magazine. It was entitled, "Things I did as a Boy Scout". You can find it at this link:

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2016/10/10/things-i-did-because-i-was-a-boy-scout-an-impressive-list/>

My hope is to take that list one further and share on the next page what some of my Scouting friends have identified as the "Things I got out of the Things I did as a Boy Scout."

I think you get the idea. Every young person and every older person who ever raised their hand in the Scout Sign and pledged to do their best could probably write a list like this.

When I first conceived of this essay about the bankruptcy filed by the BSA, I asked a few of the young men I had mentored as a Scoutmaster or Adviser to let me know what they had gotten from the experience... my request went viral with the many young men and women who had a life experience bettered by the Boy Scouts of America.

It appears from my inbox that I have just over 100 responses that "a few of my guys" rounded up.

And just think, there are a million times that number "out there" whose lives have been bettered by and through the BSA. 100 million people have participated safely and happily in the values-based program of the Boy Scouts of America.

The thoughts flowed from admirals and fishermen, a poet (really), a pastor, and a spelunker. They came from a banker and a forester, a firefighter and a professor, from a Mom head of her household, and a Dad who learned more from his daughter in Scouting than he could have ever imagined. Heartfelt comments came from a sister, who tagged along with her brother's troop, a camp ranger, and people from all of our programs. They wrote from all corners of this great country, and from overseas as well, because they believe in the life-changing magic of the BSA.

So, don't let anyone tell you that the BSA is bankrupt. The coin box may be empty. But with all of these people boiling out to tell us how great their experience has been, we will get through this court action, treat the people who were harmed with class and dignity, and go on to help other people at all times.

These testimonials from real Scouts and Scouters are just a few of the assets the courts will not measure in the bankruptcy proceedings of the Boy Scouts of America. You will not find them recorded in the court filings, in the newspapers, on the TV, or through Social Media. You will find them in the hearts of Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters, and from boys and girls, who know firsthand of the value that Scouting brought to those lucky enough to wear our uniform and to all who love them.

Please join us so 100 million more young people can share their stories with their grandkids.

Ray Capp  
National Chairman  
BSA Alumni Association