Dear Parent / Guardian, and Scoutmaster,

The Scoutmaster Bucky Program is offering online merit badge opportunities. These offerings are being monitored closely by the Northern Star Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and among other provisions will adhere strictly to the rules found in the Guide to Safe Scouting and Youth Protection programs.

This is a pilot program, and while we have put much thought and effort into the content, process, rules, and means in which these online offerings are made available, we will evolve and change as we go live and learn what works and what doesn't. At the core, we are not changing anything about the merit badge, we are however delivering this opportunity in a pioneering yet familiar way to many of our youth; electronically. It must be noted that we have taken great efforts to ensure the highest of integrity in this program and, as such, Scouts will have strict rules to follow and expectations to adhere to in order to gain sign off on any single or multitude of requirements.

The Scoutmaster Bucky Online Merit Badge Opportunities are not meant to make the earning of a merit badge any easier or more difficult, but rather offer a modern means for boys to have the opportunity to earn a merit badge. Utilizing today's technology we are bringing the Scouting program closer to home and at a familiar level of technology many Scouts already are familiar with and their future endeavors will most likely incur. Registration costs will cover materials, electronic media application subscription, and other costs incurred presenting these opportunities.

In addition to Scoutmaster Bucky, TechMaster Kirch (the Scoutmaster Bucky Tech Guy) will be assisting with the management of all classes. TechMaster Kirch will be available to assist with any technical issues prior to and during the class. Participants will receive technical instructions shortly after registration via email.

General Rules and Expectations:

These are online classes so Scouts must have a high speed internet connection with internet access and a web browser. Use of a PC, MAC, or Laptop is the only means to which is currently being supported (no mobile devices or tablets please). If using a Laptop without a constant power source, please make sure that the batteries are fully charged prior to the class.

Scouts will be required to verbally communicate via telephone (long distance phone number) or via VOIP (voice over internet protocol) thru the use of their PC/MAC/Laptop microphone and speakers. While participants may be muted to control feedback during the class, TechMaster Kirch will be monitoring active participation at all times.

Additionally participants must have a web cam and will be expected to be present on web cam during the duration of the class. TechMaster Kirch will be monitoring all webcams throughout the class to insure compliance. Scouts will be instructed prior to the class by TechMaster Kirch the means in which they will be able to ask questions and interact during the class. Often times this may vary based on the manner in which the Counselor chooses to manage the class.

As stated, all participants will be expected to be visible on web cam at all times during the class. All webcam connections will be recorded as a part of the class archive. These recordings are to insure the highest level of integrity and safety for both our youth as well as adult Scouters and guests. These recordings will be maintained by the Scoutmaster Bucky Online staff and made accessible in full only through request and authorization by Scoutmaster Bucky, BSA National, or Northern Star Council Executives or their assigned representative(s) for official review. All requests for review must be submitted and authorized by these entities. A Photography / Video / Media release will be required for all participants in order to partake in the class. Scoutmaster Bucky Online program reserves the right to use photos or clips from the classes for promotional and/or reuse in other merit badge and Scouting presentations.

Online classes pose challenges and participants' communication skills will be tested. Utilizing many forms of communication, Scouts will need to "be prepared". Reading, writing (typing), and speaking will all be aspects utilized to complete these classes. It is highly recommended that Scouts utilize an electronic method to record their pre-requisites work so they can easily access their formulated answers for use during the class via any of these communication methods. (writing/typing will be a lot more timely and easy with the copy and paste command)

The Scout Oath and Scout Law is the expected behavior of all participants, adult leaders and staff, and guests. However, some additional points of general Netiquette rules should be kept in mind as well.

1. **Be on Time**

As long as there are meetings, there will be people joining them late. While it's possible to discreetly sneak into a live class a little tardy, there is no such chance in an online virtual classroom. When new members join the online class, the software announces their presence. This announcement can be a jarring interruption, and many find this interruption to be obnoxious, if not rude. While tardiness will occasionally be unavoidable, be aware of this web meeting feature and try to make sure you are set up and logged in for your web conference on time.

2. **"Be Prepared"**

Not only should you make sure you have reviewed the pre-requisites and prepared for the class, but you will also want to check your settings and equipment for the class. Each web conferencing application will be unique in what they expose to participants online, and it can be all too easy to transmit information that you had no intention of sharing. Most people use their computer for personal use or even share use with other family members. Make sure before you start a web conference that you've checked your settings and know what the program will be sharing. Nobody wants inappropriate or private information to be shared with others. Ideally close out of all applications that you will not need to be using during the duration of the class.

Remember to check Your Camera and Microphone. One disadvantage of holding meetings on the web is the potential for unwanted background noise and awkwardly framed video images. Test your camera's field of view and your microphone's output to make sure there are no audible or visual distractions that might interfere with your presentation before you begin. Most conferencing systems show you a small window that monitors what your camera sees. Check it regularly, and keep your head centered in the frame as much as possible. TechMaster Kirch will be

available prior to the class to offer assistance with any challenges but please don't wait until the class start time to check your settings.

Currently we will be utilizing **Cisco webex** Web Conferencing (www.webex.com) for all classes.

3. Choose a proper location and setting

Find a secluded area or room with a door preferably. Hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door to let others know you are busy, so they do not barge in on you and your web class. You may want to let those you know will be around ahead of time since this may raise more curiosity than its intended message.

Avoid distractions. Shut off your social media, video games, homework, hobbies and focus on the class. While you may think it is easy to multi task it will likely be evident to the counselor and others that you are not fully participating. Remember a Scout is trustworthy and if suspected of multi-tasking you may be asked to leave the online class.

If using a phone, utilize a land line if possible. Cell phones and cordless landline phones can often broadcast a lot of background noise. If you use a cell phone or cordless phone, utilize the mute feature (unless you are speaking) so others will not hear the additional noise. If you need to leave the class for whatever reason do not utilize the hold feature on your phone. This is just good practice since some phones may have hold music or background noise that can distract the rest of the class. Use your mute button instead of hold when needed.

4. Dress Scout Friendly

Since you are at home it might seem all right to show up to the online class in your pajamas or sports clothes, but it's not. Scouts are expected to be in their official Scout uniform (often referred to as the Class A uniform). This is not optional and is viewed as a manner of respect to our Scouting program. This is to help create uniformity and a sense of comradery since there will be Scouts from all over the United States in the class.

5. Be Friendly, Positive and Self- Reflective

Be ready to introduce yourself. You will likely be participating with others that do not know you, nor you them, to create a sense of comfort and friendliness, everyone will be introducing themselves to the others during the class.

Remember, when people do not know you, judgment of you as a person can be inaccurate if you are not careful in how you express yourself. The old saying, think before you speak is important here. Think before you write. One word of advice is, do not respond when you feel angry or excited.   **Wait**.   Write it down somewhere and come back to it. When you do, you may find that you no longer feel the same way as you did when you wrote it, because you have had time to reflect about the situation. Last, if you still feel the need to be heard, then edit before you post or speak in terms that are easily embraced. This is also true when you feel a critique is necessary; say it in a positive tone. Review what you have written or are going to say to be sure it is positive.

6. Use Proper Language and Titles

Do not use profanity or even slang words in an online environment, even if they are words you consider, "not so bad". Do not refer to your counselor or other adults by his or her first name, unless it is acceptable with him or her to do so (only if they give you permission). Address all adults with the proper salutation of Mister, Miss'ess, or Miss. Of course proper titles such as Doctor, Professor, etc. should be utilized when known and appropriate.

Also, when typing, do not use caps lock or type in all capital letters, it will insinuate yelling. That could hurt someone's feelings and possibly give him (or her) the wrong impression of you and the message you are trying to relay.

7. Use Effective Communication

Say what you mean to say. This takes practice and thought. Try to speak and write clearly at all times. Review, define, and restate your words when necessary. Correct a misunderstanding right away. Chances are, if one person felt a certain way about what you said, another may have as well. Likewise, be mindful of chosen words and joking. Let's say for example, I write, "get out!" This slang term can be interpreted in several ways, either positively or negatively, especially when only presented in writing.

Additionally, keep characters like smiley faces and instant message abbreviations to an absolute minimum if not completely absent. Save those for personal conversations. This is good practice as many people may find these as childish or too casual in certain environments. Practice your professional online and communication persona.

Finally, the two most powerful words (also known as the magic words) demonstrating appreciation and respect are "please" and "thank you". Practice using these and soon they will become natural and offer many unforeseen rewards.

8. Ask for Clarification

If you are unsure of what was said, or the counselor's directive, or have any other uncertainty, then ask again. Do not sit in silence either misunderstanding or feeling offended. Do not interrupt though; wait until there is a break in the conversation, or until the open interaction occurs. Your responsiveness and maturity will be recognized and appreciated. A simple way to do this is to say (or write), "I did not understand...", which will always keep the onus for the misunderstanding on yourself.

If you have any questions, you can contact Scoutmaster Bucky (Brian Reiners) via email at ScoutmasterBucky@yahoo.com or call 612-483-0665. We are excited to see you at an upcoming Scoutmaster Bucky Online opportunity.

Many thanks
Yours in Scouting

Scoutmaster Bucky
and the Scoutmaster Bucky Online Team