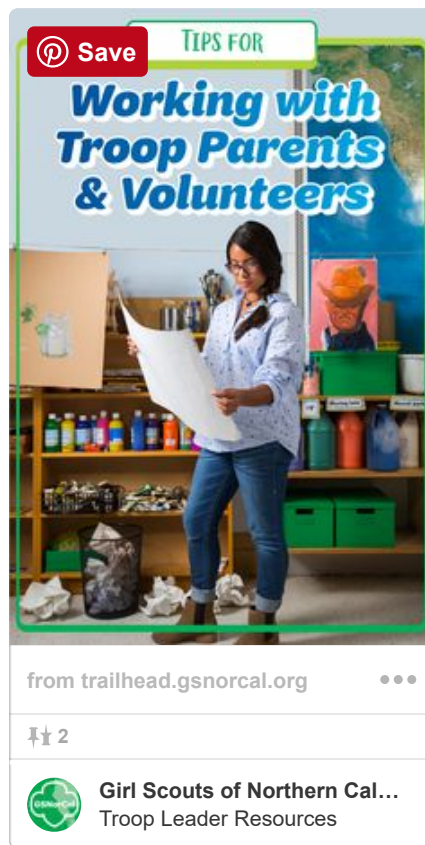


## 4 Tips for Working with Troop Parents and Volunteers

by Marlene Smith | May 18, 2017 | Troop Basics, Working With Parents | 0 comments



Sometimes coordinating a group of 12+ girls may seem like a challenge, but being the leader of a Girl Scout troop isn't a journey you have to take on by yourself! Aside from your trusty friends at GSNorCal, you have a whole team of troop parents within reach, ready to help you create amazing experiences for your girls. Today we're sharing a few quick tips to help you make the most of your troop parents and volunteers.



## Form a Friends & Family Network that works for you and your troop

A Troop Friends & Family Network (or troop committee) is a group of volunteers who will help support your troop throughout the year—and no two troop committees look the same! Draw from the strengths of your girls’ parents, extended family, and friends to fill your committee with roles that are critical to the success of *your* troop. To get you started in developing your all-star roster of volunteers, here a few roles you may not have thought of: first aiders, field trip chaperones, drivers, treasurers, snack coordinators, trip organizers, cookie managers, or sibling babysitter.

## Get to know your troop parents

Sam Smith, Assistant Troop Leader of Troop 30760, suggests polling the parents of your girls to learn more about *their* individual careers, hobbies, skills, unique interests, and talents. Then invite these parents to attend your troop meetings to share their stories or leverage their expertise to help girls earn badges and learn more about their communities. You have a whole host of subject matter experts (from crafty woodworkers to mechanics to gardeners) at your fingertips who are more than happy to share their skills and talents with the girls—it’s just a matter of finding out who they are and what they know!

“One of our troop Dads worked in the trial court system,” Sam explains, “so he helped organize a tour of a local courthouse where our girls met judges in person and learned about the justice

system as part of the [Citizen-themed badges](#). We also had a Mom who loved to sew, so she brought her sewing machine to one of our troop meetings and taught the girls how to make baby burp pads that we donated to a local women's domestic violence shelter."

## Cultivate strong relationships with your troop parents

Some of our best practices for developing great troop parent relationships are:

- Introduce yourself to new parents when welcoming new girls to the troop, either through an in-person meeting at the beginning of the year or a mid-year phone call. This is also a great time to set expectations for parental involvement!
- Invite the parents to special troop events—Investiture ceremonies, end of the year awards ceremonies, family-centric outings, etc.—so that they have the opportunity to spend time with their girl in a way that doesn't involve them leading the event. This is also a great time for parent to meet the other girls and their families and witness Girl Scout bonding in action!
- Establish strong, regular communication tactics – this could be a newsletter, a Facebook group, in-person parent meetings, etc. The more families know about the girls' plans, the more likely they are to offer their help.
- Think about hosting a short adult-only meeting directly after the troop meetings to help keep the parents in the loop. If parents aren't interested in a formal meeting, make yourself available to them after the meetings to chat and answer any questions they might have in an informal way.
- Thank parents for their contributions to the troop and their dedication to their girl's Girl Scout experience! You might even consider dedicating a chunk of time during your annual awards ceremony to honor the troop parents and volunteers.

## Ask for help when you need it!

Though it's important to remember that not *every* girl's parent will be able to donate their time to the troop, open and regular communication is the best way to keep parents and guardians involved. It's important to keep in mind that sometimes parents can't tell when, or if, you need their help, so it's never a bad idea to ask! In fact, a great time to let parents know that you'll need their support is at the beginning of the year when the girls have brainstormed all of the wonderful things they'd like to accomplish over the next year. Identify areas where you'll need parental help, then schedule a kick-off meeting with parents where you can present them with their girls' ideas and let them where you need a little bit of support. This will help parents feel like they're an integral part of the troop's success and is also a great time to explain the troop's financials with your parents, so they're in the know, too.

*Psst*—typically, a personal ask for help will yield better results than a general announcement in an email or newsletter.

All in all, great volunteers (like you!) are the cornerstone of an awesome troop experience. So use your resources wisely: call on your troop parents to help you lead like a rock star *and* give them the opportunity to spend quality time with their girls—what more could a parent ask for!?



Marlene Smith—Marlene is the troop leader with Girl Scout Troop 30760 in Walnut Creek and has been a Girl Scout Volunteer for ten years. She is proud to say that Troop 30760 boasts many Journey awards and some girl members who have been with the troop for 10 years (yahoo!). Marlene was a Girl Scout herself whose greatest claim to fame was earning her “My Camera” badge. Most importantly, Marlene’s favorite

Girl Scout Cookie flavor is Thin Mint.

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