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A Life of Service Remembering Scoutmaster, Jim Potjunas

In August, on the way to Canada, we lost an important person in our lives. Jim Potjunas was an integral part to the lives of many over his 42 years with Troop 101, 37 of which were as the Scoutmaster.

To tell the story of Jim Potjunas, we focused on one of Jim's favorite sayings, "Never let the Truth get in the way of what really happened." To that end, I reached out to several that knew Jim to learn what really happened.

Jim grew up in the Warren area with two brothers, Jay and Tom. Around 1968, at the age of 11, Jim would attend his first scout meeting with Troop 11. His brother Tom recalls him coming home with a gleam in his eyes. This would spark a lifelong excitement and passion for Scouting, which would remain with him for many decades.

As a member of Troop 11, Jim would hold several leadership positions including den chief, Patrol Leader, Quartermaster, and Senior Patrol Leader. During his tenure in 11, he would be elected into the Order of the Arrow, Scouting's National Honor Society in August of 1971. More on that later.

While serving his term as SPL, in October of 1973, Jim would earn Scouting's highest rank, that of Eagle Scout. His service project was building up a nature trail in one of the city's parks.

With his Eagle Scout in hand, Jim continued to stay involved in Scouting, even as he graduated from Harding High School in 1975, and went on to earn Bachelor of Science in both Accounting and Mathematics from Youngstown State University.

Around the same time Jim was finishing up High School, Troop 11 fell on hard times. Three of the Scouts in the Troop went to convince William Brown to come back. Instead Mr. Brown decided to start a new Troop, 101. Mr. Brown was like a father to Jim, so when 101 was ready, Jim transferred over to the newly formed Troop, and when he turned 18 signed on as an Assistant Scoutmaster.

A few years later 1979, Jim would travel to the Philmont Scout Ranch as an Adult Leader. Philmont is the Boy Scouts of America's premiere High Adventure base in New Mexico. There he and 11 others from the Warren area would backpack more than 100 miles.

As an Assistant Scoutmaster, Jim would serve in many areas of Scouting. Including

Alumni Board of Directors

Tim Ross President

Ken LaPolla Scoutmaster

Kris Kuszmaul Committee Chair

Stacey Hoover Director at Large

Alan Copp Director at Large

Alumni Committee

Ed Byers Newsletter

Matt McCracken Webmaster

Building Committee

Paul Kuszmaul Builder

Judi LaPolla Fund Raising Chair

A Life of Service

Remembering Scoutmaster - Jim Potjunas



District Roundtable Commissioner, Council Vice-Chairmen of the National Eagle Scout Association, OA Advisor, Chickagami Camp Staff, District Program Committee, Camporee Vice-Chairman, Council Chairman. He also served on various program committees as a chairperson or advisor.

But his years as Assistant Scoutmaster were about to come to a close. Troop 101 was in need of a new Scoutmaster, and as they were gathered to vote on who would become the third Scoutmaster. Jim was all set to back one of the other adults in the room, when said adult stood up, and nominated Jim instead. As all things fall into place, Jim would become Scoutmaster on June 17, 1980.

Now as Scoutmaster of Troop 101, Jim would struggle to learn the duties and responsibilities of his new position, and while doing so, he continued to serve in many other areas outside of Troop 101. In 1981, he would participate as a Leader in the National Jamboree, and later served as Scoutmaster for the 1985 Jamboree. He served on all the OA Fellowship and training activities he could, and even got to meet the Governor for BSA Day in 1982.

In 1984, on a Trip to Algonquin Provincial Park in Canada, Jim would leave his sleeping bag at a put-in, leading to what has been described as "merciless ragging" for the rest of the week as he and another Assistant Scoutmaster had to paddle back along a long lake to retrieve it. I'm pretty sure he never left his sleeping bag again.

Also around this time, Jim would start working for a Refractory company in Windham, Ohio. This would form into a career he would maintain for the next 32

years and would include a move to the Pittsburgh Corporate offices where he worked as a manager in Information Technology.

Now, in 1993, Jim would start a new chapter in his Scouting Adventure. Camp Chickagami always held a special place in Jim's heart. To this point he had spent many summers both as a Scout, and Adult leader nurturing his appreciation for nature and the Scouting program. It was there he would share his knowledge of skills and leadership with many young scouts, and in 1992, standing in the pines, Jim would be introduced by mutual friend Jim LaPolla to Sandy Potjunas. It would take only a few moments conversation for both to realize they had a mutual passion for scouting, and begin their adventures together.

Through the many miles of canoe trips, hiking trails, and dutch-oven experiments, they laughed, they leaned, and sometimes cried while having fun.

In August of 1993, Jim and Sandy would marry on the only available summer weekend between camping trips. They even put off their honeymoon since there were no open dates on the calendar. They did look forward to the Troop's upcoming trip to Toronto, though.

On a cold wet November weekend, they would stop for dinner under a picnic shelter overlooking Niagara Falls. There, Ray Koncki warmed up pasta and meatballs left over from the Troop Spaghetti Dinner. Sandy remembers Jim looking at her and saying "Isn't this great honey, I brought you to Niagara Falls for our honeymoon. We have the Great Chef 'Romano', (meaning Ray) preparing dinner, and have 40 of our closest friends' (meaning most of the Troop).

Seeing the humor in Jim's efforts, Ray threw a towel





over his arm to impersonate an Italian waiter as he brought over two plates of slightly over-cooked pasta. Sandy can still remember the burnt smell from the old Coleman stove, wafting through the air. Together they smiled and laughed in a priceless moment as the Troop gathered round, and Ray attempted to sing with an Italian Accent.

Jim would also be awarded the Silver Beaver Award in 1993. This Council-level distinguished service award is awarded to registered Scouters who have made an impact on the lives of youth through service given to the council. This would be one of the highest honors Jim would receive as an Adult Volunteer.

In the summer of 1994 the Troop would backpack the North Country Trail. Sandy recalls the morning they left Warren. Jim put the key in the ignition of our Big Blue van and the sky opened as though one function was tied to the other. It poured for the next four days. You may wonder what the odds of that happening where... so would Sandy.

As She would learn over the years, the odds of rain on a campout with Troop 101 were better than average – far better than average. About 101 Percent.

It was now Sandy got to experience some of Jim's "Lighter sides to imperfect situations". As they lay in the tent, about three nights into the downpour, listening to the water run through the gravel beneath them, Sandy would tell Jim how she wasn't having a good time. Jim remarked with one of his snarky retorts, worthy of both a laugh and a punch in the shoulder. I'm told he got both.

While we won't go into detail about other events this trip, it is fun to recall tents too close to flooded creeks, and Scouts that learned why you eat breakfast... Fun fact, it prevents passing out on the trail.

Watching Scouts and Adults experience the value of all Jim had to teach gave Sandy an appreciation for his many gifts, and his passion and tenacity towards sharing it. He often reinforced the lessons with a story, and nobody told a story better than Jim.

There would be many great trips over the years. Trips biking along the C&O Canal, Canoeing and hiking the wilds of Algonquin Park Canada, Whitewater rafting on the Youghagheny river, and many more. Jim's stories and Sandy's memories of these trips include listening to the wolves and loons, reinforcing friendships with Canadian friends, and of course, watching the Scouts have fun in Scouting.

It never failed that Jim seemed to attract Scouting. Weather it was meeting an Alumni while out shopping, eating dinner, or biking. It seemed like there was always someone that remembered Jim, or that he remembered.

Since Jim and Sandy never had their honeymoon, there was a time where Sandy qualified for a cruise through her company. They flew to Puerto Rico and were going to board a 4-day cruise to the Virgin Islands. Well, it could have been longer, but Jim couldn't miss the Monday meeting. Sandy decided to take small victories, this would be a time without Scouts. Yet

somehow on the first day, there seemed to be motion outside... more than would be expected by those on vacation. Sure enough, The Northeastern Regional conference was taking place. There were Scouts everywhere!

Over the years the Summer Camp changed from Chickagami to Seven Ranges, then Finally in 2000, to Camp Manatoc. His

anticipation for these weeks in July made him smile the most.

On one of the first years at Manatoc, Sandy was joining Jim for dinner in the dining hall. As they were walking back to camp to say goodbye, one of the first-year campers walked along the trail with them, joining the conversation. Sandy and Jim hugged, kissed and



said goodbye, then Jim continued along the trail with this young scout, while Sandy walked towards her car. Something made her stop and turn, it was then she realized she had married a grown man with the heart of a 12-year-old boy. Jim and the young scout were both skipping back into camp.

From Sandy's perspective, and I agree, that is what made Jim so special. He never forgot what it was like to be that little kid, and he stayed involved with the program so that every one of them felt like there was a place for them. A Place where they could shine and grow into the best person they could be.

He never gave up on anyone – ever! He applied the scout law to everything he did and he always found a way to reach out to a scout whether he was 12 or 32. It didn't matter if it was a Troop 101 scout, a kid from a different troop, a Girl Scout, or any person that asked. Jim's door was always open.

In March of 2006, Jim would be awarded the Trumbull County Community Star for his involvement in Scouting, and to the community. While some would consider his years of service a labor, he would never consider them

one. Every moment he gave to scouting was one he chose to spend there.

While involved in Scouting, Jim has traveled thousands of miles, and touched the lives of thousands of young men and their families. He has rarely missed a camping trip in 42 years with the Troop, totaling over 460 events.

He got to camp with his best friend, Sandy, on many trips, and share precious moments both in Scouting, and out. He had a perpetual optimism in the scouting program, the kids, and the potential to exceed expectations.

In recent years, Jim took steps to ensure the program would continue for years to come, and with the help of the Alumni and Scouting families, A dream he and Sandy shared for more than 20 years would become reality. With the help of Alumni and friends, the Jim Potjunas Troop 101 Scout Center was constructed and opened its doors earlier this year.

In Jim's words, this building will help serve the community. With it, we can expand the program to work with 150 youth.

His life, was a life of service. May our lives, like his, be lives of service, and let us all strive to be as good a scout, as he was.

Matt McCracken
Eagle Scout #93 – Troop 101



Share your Stories

Over the years, there have been many memories and stories shared in the Troop 101 family.

Our goal is to have these memories and stories available for generations to come. We've set up a section of the Troop Website that will become a living memorial to Jim Potjunas.

Through the stories we will relive our favorite memories of times in Troop 101, with our friends and neighbors.

<http://MrP.Troop101.net>



Building a Legacy

The Jim Potjunas Troop 101 Scout Center

Earlier this year, in May, we dedicated our new Scouting Center. It was named in Honor of Jim Potjunas, and will now stand in memory of him as well.

Jim worked tirelessly towards getting this building for years, and in 2015 Blessed Sacrament agreed to allow the troop and its alumni association to build a troop building on the far corner of the church property. Through the generosity of Troop 101 Alumni, the Troop raised \$225,000 to build the 2,500-square-foot building.

The building has it all: Two floors of storage space. A bay that can hold the Troop trailers for loading or repair. A cable-and-pulley system for hanging wet tents to dry. A meeting room with videoconferencing capabilities. And the new The Troop 101 Eagle Scout wall, where framed portraits inspire future generations.

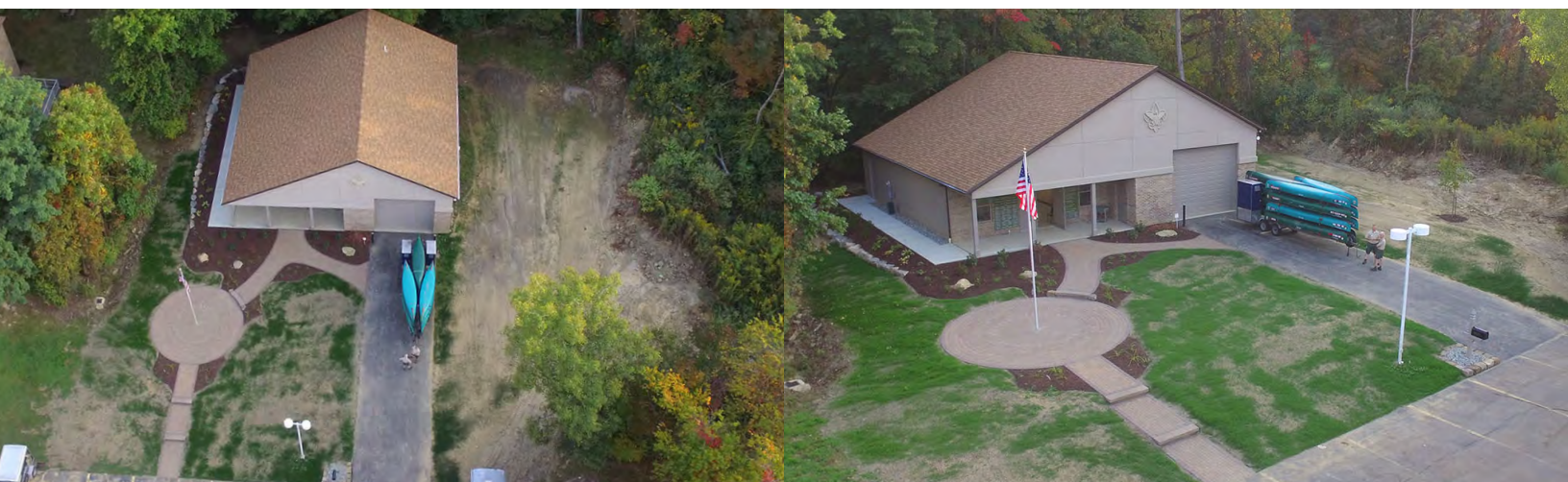
Now we take the challenge to keep working towards Jim's dream of helping 150 youth in Scouting. There are more projects planned including a pavilion, small bridge, benches, and more.

The building was even featured on Brian's Blog, the editor of Scouting Magazine. Check out the article here:

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2017/09/15/troops-incredible-storage-building-honors-an-even-more-incredible-scoutmaster/>



If you want to learn more about upcoming projects, and how you can help, send an email to Scoutmaster@Troop101.net



Paving the Way – With Your Help!

The Troop 101 Alumni Association will be ordering a second round of brick pavers in October, and I know many have expressed an interest in being a permanent part of the Jim Potjunas Troop 101 Scout Center.

Anyone still wishing to purchase a personalized paving stone can do so for \$100 by completing the following form on the Troop Website: <http://troop101.net/Uploads/Troop%20Uploads/General/Troop%20Room/Paver%20Brick%20Order%20Form.pdf>

Forms are due October 17, 2017



Troop 101 Winter Term Begins

In late September, our summer term came to an end, and our SPL, NIKO, passed the torch of leadership on to our winter SPL, Abhishek. Elected from his peers, Abhishek plans on working with his PLC to make an awesome program over the next six months.

Ken LaPolla has taken on the duties of Scoutmaster, and is working with The PLC. Niko has been helping train him for his new position, and has been a great help to Ken.

PLC training was held at the Scout Center last Saturday. New Patrol Leaders joined those returning to go over their responsibilities and goals during Abhishek's term. Quartermasters worked on organizing and cleaning the equipment room. This will be an ongoing project as we figure out how we plan on organizing our equipment.

With some Patrol flags older than 2 years, this term is starting off with brand new ones. The Demo this week was Patrol flags, so hopefully we'll have new flags to show off by the next issue.

As a Troop, we're preparing for a backpacking trip in October to Morrison Run. After the trip, we also have our Annual Halloween party. This year will be the first at the new building, and the Owls are already working on the haunted trail... It could be a terrifying one if half the rumors are true.

In November we'll take our last camping trip in 2017 at Seven Ranges. Webelos will be invited to check out our program, so it's sure to be fun. We'll wrap up 2017 in December with our Annual Christmas Party and Angel Tree Service project.

Salvation Army - Angel Tree Service Project

The Troop has had a Christmas party since its founding back in 1975. Like most troops we included a gift exchange. By the mid 1990's we were looking at ways to reach out to the community rather than swap another generation of flashlights and mess kits among ourselves. One year we bought gifts for a nursing home. But that didn't seem like we were doing enough. We wanted to give our kids an opportunity to participate in a personal way that would have an impact on both our Scouts and the other youth they were helping.

In 1999 we partnered with the Salvation Army. They would put up their Angel Trees or Giving Trees in the mall for people to come and purchase a gift for a less fortunate child. What we found out was there were many families that were left out of this. They would sign up too late or they had children older than 12 who did not qualify. That year, this became our Christmas Service project. Instead of buying for each other, we started helping those who needed it most.



We have adopted 4-6 families, and anywhere from 10-14 kids a year since starting this project. We don't have our families yet, but will be posting them on the website closer to Thanksgiving. If you aren't going to be in the area or can't get out to shop, you can still be a part of this worthwhile troop tradition by making a cash donation in any dollar amount. There are always more kids that need our help so any little bit helps toward a toy.

Support Troop 101 - It's Popcorn Time!



Troop 101 is selling Popcorn, and we are ready to take your order! If you live local, please email scoutmaster@troop101.net, and a scout will contact you with a catalog of gourmet popcorn flavors.

If you live out of town, or would like to customize a 2 gallon or 3 gallon tin, order online at www.prpopcornstore.com. At checkout, enter Seller ID: **44457**. If you would like to credit a specific scout, forward your order confirmation to scoutmaster@troop101.net with the scout's name.

Thank you for supporting Troop 101!

<http://Troopphoto.Troop101.net>

The Troop 101 gallery now contains over **84,000** photos and videos from 1975 to the present.



UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

• October

October 14 - 15 - Backpacking Morrison Run

October 30 - Halloween Party

• November

November 10 - 12 - Seven Ranges

• December

December 10 - Troop Christmas Party

FOR MORE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES BE SURE TO CHECK
OUT THE Troop CALENDAR AT
<http://Troop101.net/?Page=Calendar>



**"IT'S THE SPIRIT WITHIN, NOT
THE VENEER WITHOUT, THAT
MAKES A MAN."**

- Lord Baden-Powell

What the Troop has been up to since our last issue



July 15, 2017

Summer Camp

The Troop returns from our annual Summer Camp at Camp Manatoc! Lots of advancement and fun was had, even with all the rain early in the week. Our Investigative young scouts even solved the Camp mystery theme, and helped find the stolen Moose.



August 5, 2017

High Adventure Canada Canoe Trip

A Crew of 8 enjoyed the waters and trails of Algonquin for a week of canoeing. 4 Youth, 4 Adults. It was one of the better trips with good weather, and good times.



September 17, 2017

Oakwood Service Project

The Troop returns from Mosquito Lake! It was our first time camping there, and it's so close to home. The morning program involved the kidnapping of our SPL, and a series of clues and challenges to find him, resulting in an all out water balloon fight. The evening was filled with canoeing, swimming, frisbee golf, and a Pizza Contest. The weather even smiled down on us.