



Something Extra EP: 099 – Ron Green

Lisa Nichols: I'm excited to have Ron Green on the show today. Ron is a Scout Executive and CEO of the Greater St. Louis Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. Ron, I am delighted to have you on the show today. Thank you so much for making the time.

Ron Green: Well, thank you, Lisa. It's a real honor to be here.

Nichols: I can't even tell you how many people that we have in common that we both love, but we'd never met. It's just a wonderful delight to have you. I know that your story is going to really inspire our listeners. You do something really cool and you've been doing it pretty much your whole career. In fact, since you were eight years old, you are now the CEO of the Greater St. Louis Boy Scouts. Tell us that story.

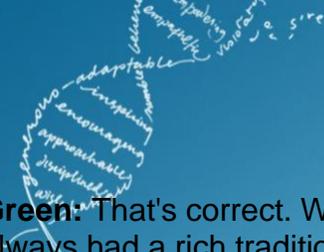
Green: Sure. Well, scouting changed my whole life. I grew up as a little. I always liked to say a little kid from Yonkers, New York on the New York City border. Matter of fact, my first time at scout camp, what I missed most was cement, being on his sidewalk in the city. I grew up, I'd never really gone to camp or been outdoors and I joined scouting and met incredible adult leaders through my life. All of the different programs really made me who I was. I stuck with it through schools, through Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, worked every summer.

I scout camp through high school and college and then went right to work for the Boy Scouts because I wanted every child out there to have the life-changing opportunities that I had. After 40 years, I haven't lost that enthusiasm one bit.

Nichols: We are so glad that you haven't because it is so important, isn't it, to instill those character traits and values and principles into our young people? They grow into adults. I know that we've talked about this and you said the two pillars really of scouting is leadership and service. I want to get more into that, but for our listeners that don't know too much about the Boy Scouts, can you tell us how many different councils are there? I know that St. Louis is actually the second largest council in the nation.

Green: There's 261 councils and we cover every inch of the United States. There's even a council in Europe for Americans overseas that cover Europe and Asia.

Nichols: That's wonderful. I had no idea. I think I've read for the Greater St. Louis Council. You're affecting post about 70,000 children a year. Is that correct?



Green: That's correct. We are one of the largest councils in America. St. Louis has always had a rich tradition of scouting and it actually continues to this day.

Nichols: Tell us some of the people that have been really instrumental. We've talked a little bit about this, but I know one that you had mentioned was Sandy McDonnell. I told you that Greg and I started our careers at McDonnell Douglas. Sandy was the chairman, what an awesome person, but tell us some of the people locally that have been really instrumental in the Greater St. Louis Council.

Green: Going back, Sandy started when his son was a scout and went through scouting with his son and wound up being the national president of the Boy Scouts of America and started character. Plus, based on the values, he learned or saw that scouting instills of character and citizenship, leadership and service. Some other adults, many people don't know, but Dave Steward, the founder of World Wide Technology, first job out of college was working for the Boy Scouts here in St. Louis.

Nichols: I did not know that and I know his story.

Green: Dave was a life scout from Clinton, Missouri, and came to St. Louis and started with the Boy Scouts. Many times, we'll say that he founded World Wide Technology on the values of scouting of being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, courteous, and kind. Dave's been a huge supporter of scouting. He was our board chair. He's been on the national board of the Boy Scouts of America. Another great, great scouting person, Rich McClure was our council president locally. When he was the president of UniGroup, Rich's an Eagle Scout and a Distinguished Eagle scout.

He had so many positive experiences as a youth that he's actually started to endowments for us to help train young people through special training programs in the Boy Scouts. Sam Fox was a huge scouter as scout as a boy, and has stuck with scouting through his life. Jim Turley, the retired chairman of Ernst & Young worldwide, just stepped down as the national president. Before that, he was the president of the Greater St. Louis Area Council. Jim is a third generation. We have an award for Distinguished Service.

His grandfather and his father, both got that highest award as has Jim. Michael Neidorff has been a huge of scout volunteer for us. He started as one of our district chairman and has been involved with the council for many, many years. The list goes on. We just have so many prominent St. Louis people that have been with scouting and I feel guilty leaving some out.

Nichols: To the point earlier where you said leadership and service, I'm thinking all of those have turned into be amazing leaders for St. Louis and beyond, but then I think about each of those



individuals and, Ron, they continue to give. Those early principles and formation years are so important in the lives of children. I'm going to put you on the spot here a little bit because you have been doing this for like 40 years. Tell us what is the scout oath.

Green: On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to help other people at all times to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Nichols: I love that. Go ahead and tell us the scout mission.

Green: Sure. Well, it's very simple. It's to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices throughout their lifetime by instilling in them the values of the scout oath and the scout law. When you look at it, it's really to help every young person become a responsible participating citizen and the leader. When you look at the people we just talked about more than giving and more than their success, one of the things is if you look at their businesses is the way they treat other people. That's, to me, the key to scouting, and the key to leadership is how we treat people.

We can name all the famous people we want that are scouting alumni. Really, who do you want to be? Your neighbor? Who do you want on your team working with you? When you go into a hospital, do you want a doctor that has the values of trustworthy, loyal, the morals, and ethics that we instill? To me, scouting builds the foundation of people that have built this country.

Nichols: I love that. I could not agree with you more. I always say, it's not just the what you do. It's the how you go about doing it. As they're leading their company, it is how they go about doing that, do they do that with integrity? Do they do that with respect for all people? Now, it is not just Boy Scouts. Girls can actually be involved. Tell us about how that all came about.

Green: It's interesting. Three of our five divisions, we have been coed for many, many years and the iconic Cub Scouts and Boy Scout divisions just became coed in the last two years. It really started more demand from the young women whose fathers were scout leaders, whose brothers were in scouting. More so, the siblings because our leaders are about 35 female, our scoutmasters, every position in scouting. More than the leaders watching their siblings in scouting and wanting to do the things that they were doing in the Boy Scouts, it was a groundswell.

The rank of Eagle Scout has always been so prestigious and the ability to be an Eagle Scout was something that we were getting a lot of demand from young women across America that wanted to join.

Nichols: Don't you have the first class of women Eagle Scouts coming up? Is that 2021?



Green: That would be in 2021. To become an Eagle Scout, the fastest-- if you could do it in record time, it's about two years plus and so the first class will come through in 2021. To be an Eagle Scout, they have to work through several different levels. At each level, there's community service. The Eagle Scout Project is an intense community service project that usually involves hundreds of hours and you have to show leadership to other people. It's a phenomenal accomplishment. As I say, at the earliest, it takes two years. The longest, it could take seven years.

Nichols: Wow. Quite an achievement. I know, Ron, in talking to other corporate people that are in talent acquisition in that, that is always something that they look at on resumes. If somebody was an Eagle Scout, you get a sense of what you're getting. I know we've done that as well. You had said something about the service and community service is a huge piece of becoming an Eagle Scout, but the annual food drive that the Boys Scouts are so well known for-- I know I was reading a little bit about that.

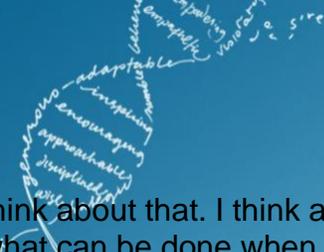
I think there was 227,000 hours of community service last year but then I also, I think, it was close to 2 million items that were donated to local food pantries in that. That is just incredible. Tell us a little bit about that.

Green: Every step of scouting from the time a child joins at six years old, service is built into it, but our scouting for food drives started actually in St. Louis as an Eagle Scout Project and it just grew from one little subdivision to today where we collect annually about 2 million containers of food. When it became popular in St. Louis, the Boy Scouts of America adopted it as a national good turn. For many, many years Scouts across America do food drives in their communities.

It's my favorite day of the year to see our Scouts and families and the generosity of the St. Louis community because it seems like it's embedded people know about it throughout the community, even if they have no tie to scouting. Really, we supply over 500 food pantries and the food lasts for-- they tell me about three months, it's just a tremendous service. To see the young people, I even see people that come from all walks of life and they're just so dedicated to it.

That's another hallmark of scouting is we bring people from all walks of life together, working together, living together. Last summer, this week, I was at the World Jamboree in the United States and Scouts from over 200 countries, living together for 10 days in close quarters and all getting along. I said, what a model for the world to see what our young people can do?

Nichols: Oh my goodness. Their foundation is the same, right? They've been taught the same values and principles. There's a good lesson right there. There's so much that I love about that. My mom had a quote that she used to say a lot of times. She say, "Many hands make light work." I just



think about that. I think about 70,000 Scouts gathering food for 500 food pantries. Look what can be done when we come together for a mission. There's so many things I love about that, but Ron, we're going to take a quick break and then we'll be right back.

[Commercial Break]

Nichols: Welcome back. Ron, I know for the Boys Scouts, part of your strategic plan, you've got three main priorities, career paths, the STEM initiative, which I want to talk a lot about, and then your urban initiative. Let's start with STEM if you don't mind and then we can move into a few of these others.

Green: Sure. The Boy Scouts were always big on science, technology, engineering, and math, even before STEM was a term. As a boy, I never even realized, but a third of our merit badges were in science-related fields. We always had geology, chemistry, conservation of natural resources and so many others. We, in St. Louis, about 10 years ago, decided to make STEM education our top priority, and the Boy Scouts of America have they call it a Nova award and a Supernova. One time, more Scouts from St. Louis had earned those awards than the other 260 councils in the country put together.

We still are by far the leader in STEM programs. As a matter of fact, two women that are heavily involved in scouting and St. Louis became national leaders in that. One was the national chair of STEM for the Boy Scout program. The other has her doctorate in chemistry was a leader in STEM education at the national level and at the World Jamboree. Today, scouting has merit badges like composite materials, nuclear science, robotics, so many modern-day technology, and science-related badges. We do STEM camps.

We have, we call STEM University where we work with several of the major universities in the area and put on STEM workshops right at the college. As a matter of fact, we've had kids that the first time they were ever on a college campus was for STEM University with the Scouts. We had some young Scouts from me East St. Louis and they didn't even know what a college was. I overheard their leader explaining to them what this place they were at was and so it also opens their eyes to a whole new world.

Nichols: I love that. I know part of what you're doing is workforce preparedness of these kids. I just think, wow, we know that those STEM careers are the careers of the future. Preparing them in that way is just phenomenal. I love what you're doing. What about the career paths? What are you doing there, Ron?

Green: Our exploring program has been around for many years and it's actually been coed for probably at least 40 years. We introduce young men and women to careers that they're interested in. Just like there's a Boy Scout troop. We have, it's called an



Explorer Post, where you may have 20 or 30 young men and women and they'll actually meet at a career-oriented place of business. The leaders will be people in the field. As an example of, you mentioned McDonnell Douglas, we have about five Explorer Posts at Boeing and our Scouts learn all the different career opportunities there.

I remember there was a young woman from North County and she learned about electrical engineering and actually decided to go to college for that. Her goal was to go to work for Boeing when she got out, whether it's engineering with Boeing, we have healthcare posts for young people, interested in the different healthcare fields at many of the area, hospitals, law enforcement is one of our big ones. Most local police forces in St. Louis County have Explorer Posts where they're building relationships with the young people in their community and many, many of them will go to work for the police department right from exploring.

As a matter of fact, an interesting story. There's a Lieutenant Darla Gray in the St. Louis police department who's been an Explorer leader for almost 40 years. The St. Louis Metropolitan Police have a very strong program. Edward Jones has a post that introduces young people to the world of business and finance. It's a way of helping prepare young people for life.

Nichols: I could not agree more. Ron, I can't tell you how many young people I talked to and they express, they wish that they could have seen a day in the life of more different professions and so scouting is a perfect way to do that with these explore posts. I know equitable access is really important. It's important to all of us. I know that that's a big initiative for you guys with the urban initiative. Can you tell us just a little snippet on that if you would?

Green: Sure. That's always been a big priority of mine. As I mentioned, growing up in an urban area and I worked for the Boy Scouts in New York City, Trenton, New Jersey, Columbus, Ohio and so one of our goals is to make sure that scouting is inclusive and that every child has the opportunity, regardless of financial ability. We work very closely with the St. Louis Public Schools, Jennings, Riverview, Ferguson-Florissant. We work very closely, and try to extend scouting, and make sure whether it's providing the uniforms, the books, the badges in some areas because there's not an availability of leaders.

We hire scoutmasters and train them. Our goal is that every child has equal access to scouting. That's something we're all committed to.

Nichols: So important. Ron, this is called Something Extra. Can you tell me, maybe, about something extra that you have noticed in a team member, a coach, a board member? Tell me about the something extra in that person.



Green: Well, we've got a terrific team and it's really shown in the last few months with COVID-19. I would single out a couple of our staff members. One is a young woman named, Susie Voss, who is our director of activities and civic service. She is just brings every day the enthusiasm, the belief, the energy. We were looking at the end of last year, two things. One is for our program when the schools were out at the holidays. The other thing is we needed some revenue to have a balanced budget for the year.

Susie dreamed up a program called Winter Wonderland. We have a camp right outside at 270. She decorated it for winter scenery and created a three-day program, and hundreds of families came out, and had the greatest time, always looking for that something extra, not content just to do her job, but to build it and grow it for young people.

Nichols: I love that. Thinking out of the box, creativity, all of those things, right? That's wonderful. Well, what do you believe is the something extra that every leader needs?

Green: I start with empathy. When you think of our great leaders, all of them, it's about the people they work with. I always tell our staff that regardless of how somebody may be performing, every person is a son or a daughter, a mother or a father, a brother or a sister, a parent, and so I think the something extra is empathy and how you treat people. A leader is not on the front lines doing the things that they did to get there every day. You set a direction, you hope you have the right people in place, and you treat them well, and they'll bring that something extra every day for you.

We've seen that, with COVID-19, like every other business or organization, we've had to redo how we deliver our programs, almost everything we do, how we use our facilities. Again, it all comes down to people feeling part of the mission, part of what you do and believing in, not only that but in believing in the character, the ethics of leaders. To me, it's not magic. It's treating people how you would like to be treated and not forgetting when you walked in their shoes.

Nichols: Oh, I could not agree more with that. I think it starts with that, really caring. Ron, I want to give you the opportunity to tell our listeners whatever you would like to talk to them about. I can only surmise what that would be, but I'm not going to put words in your mouth. I'm going to let you tell them how they can get involved.

Green: Well, you heard a little bit about the scouting program, both our values, our priorities. We've done recent studies where we know that scouts are twice as likely to graduate college, twice as

likely to have advanced degrees. They make almost twice as much as non-scouts do. You heard also about the type of people that we raise: service, leadership, caring. There's been studies that young people that participate in sports do better than those



that don't, and those that participate in sports and other non-sport activities do even better.

I would like to just encourage every parent to involve your children in scouting to look at the scouting program. I can tell you that it is the safest place for children. We have the absolute best programs and procedures to keep young people safe, both physically, emotionally. I would encourage everybody out there to look at scouting for their children.

Nichols: Very good. Well, maybe by next year, Ron, we'll have 100,000 kids involved instead of 70, right? I hope that's the case because I think it's a phenomenal, phenomenal organization. Ron, I cannot thank you enough. Thank you so much for making the time today. This has just been really, really fun for me. I appreciate you making the time to be here.

Green: Well, thank you so much. It's been a great honor. We're so proud of what scouting does in the community.

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