The "Blizzard Run" Cardboard Klondike & Winter Rescue Challenge

An indoor or outdoor action challenge where visiting kids and Scouts team up to engineer a cardboard dog sled, gear up for an "Arctic rescue mission," and race through a winter obstacle course. It feels like high-energy winter chaos, but secretly showcases outdoor survival skills, teamwork, and Scout ingenuity. This also can cover Merit advancement for the Scouts in the Unit.

Why It Works for Recruiting

- **Visiting kids get hands-on in the first 5 minutes:** No boring presentations, speeches, or sitting in rows of chairs.
- **Built-in Buddy System:** Every visiting friend is paired with a current Scout as their co-pilot.
- **Shows parents real capability:** Parents watch their kids tie actual knots, build something functional from scratch, and light an edible campfire without a screen in sight.

The 60-Minute Event Flow

1. The Build Phase: Cardboard Sled Engineering (20 mins)

- **The Mission:** Each patrol/den pair (1 current Scout + 1 visiting friend) gets one large cardboard appliance box, a roll of duct tape, utility scissors, and a 6-foot length of paracord.
- **The Task:** Cut, tape, and rig a steerable toboggan or dog-sled harness. Scouts teach their visiting buddies a quick bowline or two half-hitches to lash the pull-rope securely to the sled.
- **Holiday Twist:** Add holiday stickers, chalk markers, or a stuffed reindeer/yeti as their official team mascot.

2. The Skill Stations: Packing for Survival (15 mins)

Before racing, teams run through 3 quick pit-stops to "earn" rescue gear to load onto their sled:

- **Station A: Spark the Frostbite Fire:** Kids use a ferrocerium rod (flint & steel) to throw sparks into a cotton ball dabbed with petroleum jelly. (Safe indoors on metal

baking sheets, or outdoors on concrete).

- **Station B: Knot the Cargo:** Tie a quick square knot to lash a sleeping bag and "rations" (hot cocoa packs) onto the sled deck.

- **Station C: Compass Dash:** Use a baseplate compass to take a single bearing across the room to spot the "lost climber" (a hidden plush elf or ornament).

3. The Main Event: The Blizzard Run Obstacle Course (15 mins)

Clear the center of the gym, fellowship hall, or church lawn. (Cardboard glides effortlessly across gym floors, tile, or damp grass).

- **The Course (suggestions here, but get creative with what you have!):**
    - **The Crevasse:** Slalom through a row of traffic cones wrapped in tinsel or faux evergreen branches. Here's your chance to get creative with your resources at hand!
    - **The Ice Bridge:** Pull the sled across a flattened tarp while avoiding "snowball" dodgeballs tossed gently by the adult leaders.
    - **The Polar Bear Crawl:** The co-pilot jumps off, crawls under a low rope net (tarps staked down or other bridge moment), grabs the target, and dives back on the sled. Also get creative with the course!

- **The Finish Line:** Across the line into the glowing lantern zone.

4. The Campfire Wind-Down: Gourmet Cocoa & S'mores Lab (10 mins)

While the points are tallied, leaders invite parents and kids to a DIY trail cocoa station:

- Thermoses of hot water/milk, mini marshmallows, crushed candy canes, cinnamon sticks, and Dutch oven baked holiday cookies.

- **The Casual Pitch:** While kids are buzzing about their sled build, the Scoutmaster/Cubmaster talks with parents one-on-one: *"This is just an hour on a Tuesday. Imagine what they do on a full weekend in the woods."*

Low-Cost Supply List:

- **Cardboard Boxes:** Scavenge 10–15 appliance/bicycle boxes from a local hardware or bike shop for free.

- **Duct Tape:** 4–6 rolls of heavy-duty or colored duct tape.

- **Paracord / Manila Rope:** Cut into 6-to-8-foot pull lines.

- **Baking Sheets & Ferro Rods - (Scouts BSA):** 2–3 fire-starting kits with cotton balls..

  Fire Lay Challenge Supply - (Cub Scouts): Pretzel sticks, candy corn, mini mellows, coconut shavings etc. Anything that can be built into a mini fire and is fun!

- **Traffic Cones & Tarps or String for the Course:** Tarps, handful of cones or other course markers Standard Scout essential camping gear that scouts have to know and pack

- **Hot Cocoa & Candy Canes:** Inexpensive but festive snack supplies for the fun!

Pack vs. Troop Adjustments

- **For Cub Scout Packs:** Make it a sled pull with a stuffed animal cargo, focusing on fun decorating, simple overhand knots, and a straight-line cardboard drag race or easier course. Don't use real fire, use Fire Lay Challenge with fun "campfire" foods.

- **For Scouts BSA Troops:** Raise the stakes. Youth must build a sled capable of carrying an actual human teammate across the gym, using proper lashings (spar-and-rope or heavy-duty cardboard scoring), followed by a timed relay with blindfolded compass navigation. Have fun creating "towns" or "stations" that they have to reach and accomplish each challenge at.

Shopping List:

📋 THE BLIZZARD RUN: Master Supply List

Scavenge for Free (Start Here)

- **10–15 Large Cardboard Boxes:** Call a local appliance store (fridge/washer boxes) or a bike shop. *Get these a week in advance.*
- **5-10 Stuffed Animals / Mascots:** Ask your unit families to bring a few old holiday plushies (elves, reindeer, yetis) to use as "lost hikers" or sled cargo.

Raid the Unit Trailer (Stuff You Already Have)

- **50+ ft Paracord or Manila Rope:** Cut into 6-to-8-foot lengths for sled pull-lines.
- **Baseplate Compasses:** 2 to 3 for the navigation station (or team number dependant)
- **Traffic Cones:** 6 to 8 for the slalom course.
- **Tarps:** 2 to 3 (one for the "Ice Bridge," one to stake low for the "Polar Bear Crawl").
- **Ferrocerium Rods(Troops) (Flint & Steel):** 2 to 3 for the fire pitstop. OR bowls of Fire Lay Challenge food snacks (Packs)
- **Gear Pack or Sleeping Bag:** To use as heavy cargo for the knot-tying pitstop.
- **2-4 Metal Baking Sheets:** For safe, indoor fire-sparking or Fire Lay Challenge
- **Thermoses / Airpots:** For holding hot water or hot milk for the cocoa bar.

Hardware & Craft Store (The Build Phase)

- **Duct Tape:** 4 to 6 rolls of heavy-duty tape (grab fun holiday colors or neon if possible).

- **Utility Knives / Box Cutters:** 2 to 3 (For **ADULT USE ONLY** to help kids cut thick cardboard).

- **Heavy-Duty Scissors:** 3 to 4 pairs for the youth to use safely.

- **Chalk Markers / Sharpies:** 2 to 3 packs for sled decorating.

- **Holiday Stickers, pine cones, ribbon:** 1 or 2 packs of each for sled customizing.
- Glue gun with Adult supervision for the brave!

Grocery Store (The Cocoa Bar & Fire Station)

- **Cotton Balls:** 1 bag (for the fire-starting station).

- **Petroleum Jelly (Vaseline):** 1 small jar (rub on cotton balls for easy, safe sparking).

- **Hot Cocoa Mix:** Enough for your current Scouts + anticipated guests (and parents!).

- **Mini Marshmallows, pretzels, coconut shaving, candy corn:** 1 to 2 bags.

- **Candy Canes:** 1 box (crush some up for cocoa toppings, keep others whole).

- **Holiday Cookies:** 2 to 3 packs (or bake them in a Dutch Oven during the event if you want to show off).

- **Paper Cups & Napkins:** Don't forget these!

Admin & Welcoming (Don't Forget These!)

- **Blank Name Tags & Sharpies:** *Crucial* so Scouts can use their guest's first name immediately.

- **Unit Info Flyers:** A 1-page handout with your next 3 meeting dates/campouts and the Scoutmaster/Cubmaster's contact info.

- **QR Code Sign-Up:** Printed large and taped to the wall so parents can register on their phones while drinking cocoa.
- Full info Sign in sheet upon greeting!

The 3-Week Unit Promotional Timeline

Event Promotion comes down to personal connection and repeated touchpoints. Here is the week-by-week game plan for your Unit Membership Chair and leadership team.

Once you've planned, prepped and scheduled your event, it's now time to promote it.

Week 3 Out: Lay the Groundwork & Prep the Scouts

- **Add Event to your Website Calendar & BeAscout Profile.**
- **Create your Invite content and Digital flyers for your sharing outlets (i.e - Email Newsletters, social channels, website, BeAScout profile, printed materials etc)**
- **Print "Buddy Passes" For your Scouts to hand out and Invite to their circles:** Don't rely on verbal invites. Hand every current Scout 2 to 3 physical, pocket-sized invite cards at the troop/pack meeting.

- **Submit School & Community Flyers:**

    - Contact your local school district office or check policies to distribute printed and digital flyers.

    - Hang flyers at the chartered organization (church, rotary, community hall, health center, kid clubs, dentist office), local library, youth sports facilities, and indoor climbing gyms.

- **Coordinate with Your Chartered Org:** Ask to put a 2-sentence blurb in the Sunday church bulletin or weekly community newsletter for the two weeks leading up to the night.

Week 2 Out: Digital & Grassroots Neighborhood Buzz

- **Post in Local Neighborhood Groups (Nextdoor & Local Facebook Groups):**

- Encourage **parents to** post from their personal account as well. Personal recommendations get 5x more engagement.

- *Sample Nextdoor Post:*

  "Looking for a fun, screen-free activity for your kids next week? Pack [Number] is hosting a free 'Blizzard Run' Cardboard Sled Challenge at [Location] on [Date] at [Time]. Kids get to engineer cardboard sleds, spark real campfires with flint & steel, and run a winter obstacle course (plus a full hot cocoa bar for kids and parents). Completely free, no obligation—just an awesome night of hands-on adventure. Drop a comment or message me if you'd like details!"

- **Mobilize the Parent Group Chat:**

  - Send a draft text message to all current unit families in your Band, GroupMe, or WhatsApp group:

    "Hey families! Our Blizzard Run Open House is coming up on [Date]. Please forward this text or invite 1 or 2 friends from your kid's class or sports team. It's totally free and super high-energy!"

Week 1 Out: The Direct Push & Final Follow-Ups

- **Scout "Challenge" Check-In:** At the weekly meeting, ask Scouts: *"Who is your co-pilot for the Blizzard Run?"*Create friendly patrol competition around who has a guest lined up.

- **Post on Social Media & Create Facebook Event Page or other RSVP form:**

  - Create a public Facebook event via your Unit page titled: *Free Winter STEM & Adventure Night: The Blizzard Run*.

  - Tag Cascade Pacific Council so the council account can co-host or reshare.

  - Have every registered family RSVP "Going" and hit "Invite Friends."

- **Email Reminder to Past Drops & Inquiries:**

  - Send a quick, warm email to families who visited in the fall, attended a day camp, or expressed interest earlier in the year but never completed

registration.

48 Hours Out: Final Countdown & Venue Visibility

- **Event Signage or Yard Signs at the Venue:** Be found. Place 2 to 3 lawn signs or a sandwich board outside the church/school/location entrance 48 hours prior with: *“Free Kids Winter Adventure Night Here Thursday @ 6:30 PM — Open to All!”*

- **Send the "What to Wear" Text:** Send a quick note to guests reminding them to dress for active indoor/outdoor play (sneakers, comfortable clothes).

- **Prep the Greeter Table:** Assign two charismatic, smiling adults whose **sole job** that night is standing at the door, making eye contact, shaking hands, and greeting every new parent by name.

Plug-and-Play Promotional Copy

1. Text Message for Parents to Send to Friends:

"Hey [Name]! Our Scout group is doing a really fun cardboard sled challenge and winter rescue race next [Day] at [Time] at [Location]. Free cocoa bar, lots of hands-on gear, and completely free. [Child's Name] is bringing a sled and would love if [Friend's Name] wanted to team up with them! Let me know if you want to come by!"

2. Instagram / Facebook Caption Example:

“Dirt, sparks, cardboard engineering, and hot cocoa. 🛠️❄️

*If you're looking for an excuse to get your kid off screens and into real-world hands-on fun, come out to our **Blizzard Run Open House** on [Date] at [Time] at [Location].*

Guests will team up with our Scouts to build cardboard sleds, practice fire-sparking and outdoor skills, and race through an obstacle course. Free and open to all youth [grades K-5 / ages 11-17].

Link in bio / DM us for details! #ScoutingAmerica #AdventureAhead #PacificNorthwestKids”

SCOUT UNIT ACTIVITY NIGHT PLAYBOOK

Cascade Pacific Council | Scouting America

PLAN IT. PROMOTE IT. EXPERIENCE IT. INVITE THEM BACK!

Featured Activity: **The Blizzard Run — Cardboard Klondike & Winter Rescue Challenge!**

1. Choose your activity

3 WEEKS BEFORE

Pick ONE exciting, hands-on activity that current Scouts and visiting friends can experience together.

Our Activity Night

Activity name: The Blizzard Run: Cardboard Sled & Winter Rescue

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Unit contact: _____

The goal: Make the activity so much fun that kids want to bring a friend and families want to return.

2. Prepare your supplies and volunteers

2–3 WEEKS BEFORE

Preparation checklist

☐ Collect cardboard boxes, duct tape, rope, markers and decorations

☐ Gather compasses, cones, tarps and Scout camping gear

☐ Prepare an age-appropriate Scout skills challenge

☐ Arrange cocoa, snacks, cups and napkins

☐ Assign greeters, activity leaders and setup/cleanup volunteers

☐ Prepare name tags, sign-in sheet, unit flyers and a QR code

Safety: Adults handle box cutters and other sharp tools. Use edible pretend campfires for Cub Scouts. Any real fire-starting activity must follow current Scouting America safety rules and venue requirements. For sled races, pull supplies or stuffed animals rather than people.

3. Promote your activity and invite friends

START 3 WEEKS BEFORE

When	What to do
3 weeks out	Create a flyer. Update your unit website and calendar. Give every Scout 2–3 buddy invitations.
2 weeks out	Share with school and community contacts, neighborhood groups, parents and local social media.
1 week out	Post again. Personally invite interested families. Ask every Scout to bring a friend.
48 hours out	Send reminders, confirm volunteers, and put up clear welcome signs.

Ready-to-use invitation

❄️ YOU'RE INVITED TO THE BLIZZARD RUN!

Join us for a FREE Scout Adventure Night! Build a cardboard sled, tackle a winter rescue obstacle course, learn cool outdoor skills, and enjoy hot cocoa!

🗓️ [Date & Time]

📍 [Location]

👋 Bring a friend! New families welcome.

Come discover what Scouting is all about!

[Unit Name / Contact / RSVP]

4. Run your 60-minute activity night

EVENT DAY

20 MIN — Build It! — Cardboard Sled Challenge

Pair each guest with a Scout buddy. Teams build and decorate a cardboard rescue sled using boxes, tape and rope. Practice a simple knot.

15 MIN — Learn It! — Scout Skills Stations

Three quick challenges: fire-lay or approved fire-starting demonstration, knot-tying and compass navigation. Earn rescue gear for the sled.

15 MIN — Race It! — Blizzard Rescue Course

Navigate cones, cross the pretend ice bridge and rescue a lost stuffed-animal hiker. Cheer on every team!

10 MIN — Celebrate It! — Cocoa & What's Next

Serve hot cocoa and treats. Introduce families to your unit, share upcoming adventures and personally invite them back.

Adjust for your Scouts

Cub Scout Packs: Stuffed-animal cargo, simple knots, edible campfire building and an easy sled course.

Scouts BSA Troops: More advanced sled engineering, lashings, navigation and team rescue challenges appropriate to participants' skills.

5. Welcome every family and invite them back

Make sure every guest leaves knowing three things: they were welcome, their child had fun, and exactly how to return.

☐ Greet each family and introduce their Scout buddy

☐ Collect parent contact information with permission

☐ Share the next meeting date, time and location

☐ Provide a unit contact card or sign-up QR code

☐ Send a thank-you and personal invitation within 48 hours

The CPC Unit Activity Night Formula

PLAN → PROMOTE → EXPERIENCE → INVITE BACK

Don't just tell families what Scouting is. Let them experience it!

One activity. One invitation. One memorable experience. One reason to come back.

This same playbook can be reused year-round for a fishing night, Pinewood Derby, outdoor skills challenge, hiking adventure, holiday activity or Scout open house. Just swap the featured activity and keep the five-step process.