

# Views: Family Values vs. the Boy Scouts

I'm thinking of a little 8-year-old boy.

Is he trustworthy? He does his best to follow through on what he says he will do.

Is he loyal? Good heavens, yes! He's fiercely loyal to his family and protective of his sister. Is he helpful? Yes. Again, he's only eight, but he'll clean his room without being told most nights.

Is he friendly? Yes.

Courteous? Yes. He remembers to say "please" and "thank you" and "excuse me" on the right occasions. Is he kind? Yes, this little boy is a very kind and gentle person.

Is he obedient? Yes. He'll do as he is asked by his parents more often than not. Cheerful? He's a happy kid, so yes. Thrifty? That's an interesting one. He's had a few dollars in his piggy bank for several months that he has not



Well, the Boy Scouts of America wouldn't want him. He is not being reared in any religious tradition and his mother is bisexual. My partners and I don't even want to risk him joining (yes, he's my son), because we don't want to have him really get into it and love it only to have him kicked out.

As a sister to a former Cub Scout, I genuinely do think that Scouting can have a beneficial effect on young people. It encourages goal-setting, learning life skills and giving back to the community. Certainly getting into the annual father/son bakeoff spurred my brother on to learn to cook well - a good skill for any adult. There are thousands of youngsters just like my brother, or my son, who either would benefit from scouting or have benefited from Scouting.

But. There are plenty who have been Scouts, benefited, and have started giving back who are getting the back of the collective hand of the Boy Scouts of America.

We thought we were making progress. This past May, Philadelphia's Cradle of Liberty Council of the Scouts had voted to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. That progress was very short-lived, ending when the national Scouting office issued a memo forbidding local councils to deviate from national membership policies. The Philadelphia group had originally decided to end discrimination to retain United Way funding for its Learning for Life program sponsored through the Scouts, but immediately rescinded.

Caught in this crossfire was a young man named Greg Lattera. After the Philly Council resolution, he came out as both gay and a non-theist. A week later, the Council caved in to the national organization, and Lattera was

fired from his job as a counselor at a camp where he had worked for three years, winning awards for excellent performance. He was also kicked out of the Boy Scouts of America. (They did refund his ten dollar registration fee).

According to Mark Noel, Director of the New England Coalition of Inclusive Scouting, Lattera has appealed this decision. He is working with Stacy Sobel, Esq., the executive director of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights in Philadelphia to have his job re-instated. While the state of Pennsylvania does not have laws against job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the city of Philadelphia, where the local council has its headquarters, does.

The discriminatory policies are affecting generations of loyal volunteers to the Boy Scouts of America. Pete Thomas, an Eagle Scout and son of a Scouter (adult scout leader), had this comment about his own family's involvement in the Boy Scouts: "Father resigned as Assistant District Commissioner over the BSA kicking out the Unitarian Universalists' Religion in Life emblem [for highlighting the difference of opinion between the UUA and the BSA over discrimination]."

"I was [also] outraged ... my father is one of the best Scouters I know. He resigned over their treatment of our denomination, and I wrote the council a letter supporting him and denouncing the BSA policy and treatment of gay people and Unitarian Universalists. He was my scout master ... he's straight, and I hadn't come to recognize my bisexuality, but the UU church has had a long history of solidarity with the GLBT movement ... I thought it important as a matter of principle to tell them they were making a mistake and losing valuable volunteers and chartering organizations as a result."

They're certainly losing the hands, hearts, brains and talents of my family. While we all want our son to belong to groups that foster many of the virtues claimed to be part of Scout Law, we don't want him to learn the bigotry that would come with it. ▼

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**There are plenty who have been Scouts, benefited, and have started giving back who are now getting the back of the collective hand of the Boy Scouts of America.**

rushed out to spend, so I'd have to say that he is.

Is he brave? That's a definite yes. Bravery and facing things is important to him and he will face things he is afraid of. Clean? Yeah, he likes his showers, so I'd say so! Reverent? Yes, he respects people's traditions and belief insofar as he understands them.

He also loves building and making things, is goal-oriented and very determined to grow up to be an independent adult. Sounds like great material for a Boy Scout, doesn't he?

**Marriage**  
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excited that marriage is the goal the Canadians sought rather than a "you can sit in the back seat" law such as civil unions. As gay, bisexual and les-

bian citizens, we deserve full equality, not "separate but equal." Civil unions are a legal step in the right direction, but their acceptance risks complacency and settling for less. We deserve more. In a free society, people of all sexual orientations should have the right to marry, with all rights and responsibilities and the full recognition of the fed-

eral government. ▼

David M. Price is the author of *Finding a Lover for Life: A Gay Man's Guide to Finding a Lasting Relationship*. He and his partner Mike live in western Massachusetts and plan to retire to land they own in Vermont.

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