Captain Curtin Still Uses Scouting in the Navy

Submarine Base Commander Started as a Scout…

The Mayflower Council's professional Scouters recently attended the three-day 2024 New England Councils Planning Conference.

Beyond the cross-council camaraderie displayed by the numerous BSA pros at the Mystic Marriot in Groton, Conn., the highlight for many team members attending the event was the appearance of Captain Kenneth Curtin, the commanding officer of the nearby Naval Submarine Base New London.

"You have to take care of the people by *taking care* of the people," said Curtin. "To be a commander, my job is to be an enabler; I need to enable you to do *your* job, right? I need to enable my team to do *their* job.

"They want to get out there and make a difference in the world," explained the sub base commander. "They want to do something to better themselves, to better the world, in some small way. And so my job is to keep that fire lit, to do everything I can so they can do their job.

"Your people have to know that you care about them, that you respect and appreciate them," he said.

With over 38 years of Navy experience leading people and solving problems, Captain Curtin clearly employs a deep understanding of leadership, risk management, human behavior, and infrastructure in his daily duties.

Beyond the professional accolades and knowledge – perhaps most importantly to the gathered crowd – as a young man in Brooklyn, New York, Curtin was a Boy Scout.

Moreover, he still employs the Scouting lessons he learned as a boy in his Navy career.

“You’ve got to ***do it***,” said Curtin, of setting goals, working hard, and achieving during his keynote talk on Day 1.

“I started learning that in the Boy Scouts,” he said. “No one’s going to give ***anything*** to you, right?

“And there’s nothing worth [anything] that anyone will hand you.”

“Just never give up,” he added, summarizing his philosophy.

Meanwhile, the long-time Nave officer doubled down on one of the Scout Laws: “A Scout is trustworthy…”

“In 38 years, I’ve screwed up my fair share,” explained Curtin. “Yet, I’m still here because of integrity.

“When I sign my name on something, it means something, right? And even if I have to tell on myself and say, ‘Hey, I didn’t get this right.’

“The most important thing is your integrity,” continued Curtin. “That’s the only thing you’ve got.

“You lose that. Then, you start behind the eight ball when it comes to business or life. It’s so hard to regain that.

“And some people, you’ll never regain,” he said.

Of course, Curtin pointed back to his old Scoutmaster, Walter Better.

“Oh my God, I learned so much from this guy… and I still tell stories about the camping trips with him,” said the captain. “He wouldn’t take [any foolishness] from you.

“But I learned so much from that man,” he added, wearing a broad smile as he hit upon another Scout Law: “A Scout is

cheerful…”

“I still laugh about it,” said Curtin.