Meet the New Scout Executive Juan F. Osorio

Mayflower Council's new Scout Executive, Juan F. Osorio, arrives in Milford, Massachusetts, from the Chattahoochee Council in Columbus, Georgia, where he has served as Scout Executive since 2018. Before assuming this position, Juan held various roles in the Narragansett Council (Providence, RI), where he grew up as a Scout and earned his Eagle Scout Rank. He began his tenure at the Mayflower Council at the beginning of March, succeeding Bryan Feather, who retired in December 2023. Osorio recently sat down with MayflowerBSA.org to provide insights into his personality and hopes for the Mayflower Council and Scouting overall.

This is the first of a two-part Q&A.

John Bishop for MayflowerBSA.org: Juan, please tell us about your beginnings in Scouting.

Juan Osorio, Scout Executive, Mayflower Council: I started Scouting in the first grade. My next-door neighbor was a Cub Scout. Every Saturday, he would attend a Cub Scout meeting across the street at the church. One Saturday, I asked him where he was going; he said, "Come and join me," and I have been in Scouting ever since. I was instantly hooked on the program, and ultimately, I became the second Eagle Scout of Troop 3 Central Falls, Rhode Island, a ScoutReach unit. During my time in the troop, our Scout Executive, Dave Anderson, would take ScoutReach kids hiking at Mount Mercy. When I was 16, I had the opportunity to go with the group and Dave. During that campout, I realized I wanted to do what Dave did and work for the BSA for the rest of my life. I wanted to be a Scout Executive. I wanted to give back to the program that's

given me so much and be devoted to offering Scouting to kids nationwide.

MayflowerBSA.org: Explain “ScoutReach” to people unfamiliar with it.

Juan Osorio: ScoutReach is the BSA’s vehicle to reach inner-city, at-risk youth. The Narragansett Council has a solid ScoutReach program. They went to schools and community centers in areas that had a high poverty rate, where there’s a higher percentage of single-parent families, kids being raised by grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and families that face increased adversity. They offered the Scouting program to those families at a heavily subsidized cost through ScoutReach, allowing them to enjoy Scouting and attend summer camp. When I started my profession with the Boy Scouts of America, I began as a ScoutReach Program Specialist. It was my job to go into these low-income communities and be the Cubmaster and Scoutmaster to multiple different Scout groups so that they could find a quality program locally.

MayflowerBSA.org: Are you born and raised in Rhode Island?

Juan Osorio: No, I was born in Medellin, Colombia. My mother brought my sister and me to this country when I was just three, and my sister was eight. I grew up in Central Falls, Rhode Island, and graduated from Central Falls High School. I lived in Rhode Island until I moved to Georgia to be a Scout Executive there.

MayflowerBSA.org: Now, just by showing up with the name Juan, you’re changing the look of the Mayflower Council. And the Mayflower Council itself has already earmarked diversity as one of the things it needs to improve. What are you bringing to the table, besides yourself, to ensure we reach as many different types of people as possible?

Osorio with a group of Georgia Scout Executives.

Juan Osorio: As a minority, diversity is critical and very near and dear to my heart. I have worked with the National Boy Scouts of America on the Citizenship and Society Merit Badge; I am a co-founder of the L.I.S.T.O.S., the Hispanic Work Resource Group for the BSA; and I was part of the first edition of the employee DEI training with the National Boy Scouts. Again, because I am a minority and have faced adversity as one in this country, I need to make sure that we are equitable across the board, not only in ethnicity but also in gender, sexuality, and age. All of them will be our focus as we move forward to ensure that we are fully inclusive to all our families and youth, allowing them to join and enjoy our great programs, regardless of background.

MayflowerBSA.org: That is in keeping with Baden Powell's original intent. For example, he brought poor and wealthy kids together and did his first experimental Scout camp. He also

helped start the Girl Guides. How do you speak to the traditionalists in Scouting regarding the future?

Juan Osorio: Scouting brought specific values to the United States from the UK, many of which have stayed the same for 114 years. However, the Scouting program differs today from 20 or 30 years ago. The world has changed, we in the BSA have evolved, and we must continue growing to meet today's families' needs. Millennial parents, our target audience, have a different philosophy on life from those of prior generations. And so, we have to meet that market. While Scouting has had an incredible history in our nation, we continue to evolve to stay relevant to today's society while staying true to the values found in the Scout Oath and Law. We're teaching character, and we should be able to teach character to all the kids in the United States of America.

MayflowerBSA.org: Part of that character and roots in the Scout Law makes it possible for the Scouts to adapt to people's schedules and have multiple focuses in the family. What would you say to a child or a child's family who says, "My kid plays baseball and soccer?" How does Scouting fit into that web of wonderful things that children do?

Juan Osorio with Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Ralph Puckett, Distinguished Eagle Scout.

Juan Osorio: For many years, Scouting has faced the challenge

of kids enjoying sports and many other activities along with Scouting. Our unit leaders have been very adaptable to allow those schedules. Scouting is one day a week, for the most part. We do outdoor activities and campouts but are flexible, which is excellent. Our parents can do much more with their child at home through Scoutbook and other interactive means that allow us to extend our program into their households. Technology is a great thing, but technology has caused us to work longer hours as adults. We go home, we're at the dinner table with our family or watching TV, and we might be on our cell phones looking at our emails. That's the challenge that we face in today's day and age. As we digitilize our program more, it gives those families more access to enjoy it. Again, we must continue evolving to stay relevant in our market.

MayflowerBSA.org: To that end, Scouts BSA are kids who are dealing with academics, athletics, art, and music – all those beautiful things that may make a focus solely on an Eagle Scout or an Eagle Scout project difficult.

Juan Osorio: As an Eagle Scout, I have a lot of love and respect for those of us who attain that rank. However, Scouting is much more than that, and too often, as an organization, we focus only on Eagle Scouts. We have to focus on the delivery of our program. Suppose a Scout in our program is interested in the outdoors rather than our advancement. In that case, they should be allowed to continue to be in the program and enjoy it. Advancing, while important, is not the only facet or purpose of our organization. Some Scouts might enjoy merit badges, others the outdoors. Some may enjoy the weekly meetings and not like to go camping. Others might want to make it to Eagle Scout by age 15, and others, like myself, might barely scrape by and hand in their Eagle Scout application the day before they turn 18.

MayflowerBSA.org: As adult leaders, we don't want to turn away anyone interested in Scouting, even if they aren't solely focused on the ultimate goal of the Eagle.

Juan Osorio: Our program is a well-rounded program that welcomes everybody. Suppose that means kids want to enjoy the program without the advancement? In that case, that is perfectly okay. As a former Scoutmaster who has produced 17 Eagle Scouts, outside of those 17 Eagle Scouts, I had hundreds of kids who benefited from our program that, to this day, see me in a grocery store and thank me for providing them with a quality program and values they continue to carry. They're not Eagle Scouts but retain many values that Scouting taught them. It's not a pass or fail; it's not "Eagle Scout" or "no Scout." There are a lot of other opportunities within our program for our Scouts to learn and grow.

MayflowerBSA.org: One of the things I've heard recently, anecdotally, is that being an Eagle Scout no longer helps people on the way to college and employment success. That's probably wrapped into some harsh realities the Boy Scouts of America have faced over the last few years. What do you say to that?

Juan Osorio: Being an Eagle Scout has directly opened doors for me. I went to Rhode Island College and was part of the PEP program. They only accepted about 30 incoming college students. The only reason I got accepted was that I was an Eagle Scout. It helped me in my life and continues to benefit me. As a Scout Executive, I meet and work with many C-suite corporate leaders. Time and time again, they will tell me that if they see a candidate is an Eagle Scout on their application, they will consider them. It's not a shoo-in, but a "Hey, this person has accomplished a lot at a young age; they can be great on my team," giving them more opportunities. There are still a lot of other skills that they must prove. However, Scouting generally teaches the soft skills our youth do not receive because of the other challenges they face. I think employers, now more than ever – especially after COVID – are realizing that. It's the soft skills that they're looking for in some of these new employees coming into the corporate

world.

MayflowerBSA.org: Soft skills? Meaning teamwork, civics, and leadership training?

Juan Osorio: It is as simple as conversing and looking your manager in the eye. Something as simple as knowing how to interact in a team setting. Those are things that we teach. Those are the types of soft skills that colleges and employers are looking for.

Look for Part 2 next week…

Mayflower Council Scout Executive Juan F. Osorio