



**25th Annual
National Conference
San Diego, California**

2009 Professional Practices Program

Boy Scouts to the Rescue!

Sarasota County, Florida

Submitted by:

Eileen Everhart

Poll Worker Coordinator Assistant

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections

101 S. Washington Blvd

Sarasota, FL 34237

(941) 861.8641

eeverhart@sarasotavotes.com

www.sarasotavotes.com

Boy Scouts to the Rescue!

With a busy General Election looming and the recent implementation of the optical scan voting system, Sarasota County was challenged with the logistics of how to handle the transfer of additional paper ballots and supplies after the polls were closed. Our clerks had never experienced handling such volume and weight when returning the ballots and supplies to the office on election night.

We knew that the poll workers, after a 14 hour day along with the additional stress of new equipment and procedures, would be tired and overwhelmed. If they didn't leave on election night with a feeling of success, it would affect their feeling of accomplishment and overall morale. We had to do something to end this hectic day on a high note!

To meet these new challenges, the SOE office approached local Boy Scout troops, whose members ranged in age from 12-18, to request their help with supply check-in on election night. Check-in involved the poll workers lifting the heavy ballot bags out of their cars and carrying them inside to the receiving board. The ballot bags and supplies weighed over 40 pounds. The receiving board check-in process was also fairly new for our office. We quickly realized that the time it would take a poll worker to check in could be considerably longer and more awkward than in previous elections.

With the help of the local Boy Scouts, we created a valet system. The clerks pulled their cars to the front door and the scouts, who were dressed in class A uniforms, lifted the ballots bags out of their cars and placed them on wheeled carts. The clerks were accompanied by the scouts inside to the waiting area while some of the scouts' parents pitched in and moved the cars to the parking lot. Bottled water was served and seating was provided for all clerks. When the clerks were called to report into the receiving board, the scouts rolled their carts to the designated check-in station and thanked the clerks for being a service to our community. Their light-hearted, youthful presence helped to create a patriotic atmosphere and sometimes diffused short tempers.

In turn, the scouts were exposed to the election night process and to some great stories about the day. The scouts also satisfied a condition required to obtain the Citizenship Merit Badge. This badge is required before a scout can become an Eagle Scout. It was a mutually rewarding experience for both clerks and scouts and ended election night on a successful note.