

Boy Scout troop becomes popcorn kings

Group sets record with more than \$25,000 in sales

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Being a super salesman is simple.

"Just be nice," said Dylan Gulli, a fourth-grader at Sauder Elementary.

It worked for Dylan and the rest of Cub Scout Pack 921. The group broke records in selling more than \$25,000 worth of popcorn this year, with Dylan's \$2,260 leading the pack.

"I'm not sure how many boxes that is," he said, "but it's a lot of popcorn."

Runners-up Paul and Robert Clifford took a team approach to their sales of \$1,260 each. Half of a set of quadruplets that includes sisters Heidi and Ruth, the Clifford brothers had their routine down pat. First, Robert cautioned, remember that "a lot of people's doorbells are broken, so you have to knock." The brother's can still launch into their popcorn pitch, pinging and ponging back and forth between them as they convince potential customers of the merits of Trails' End popcorn.

Introduce yourself, then get right to the point, the top-selling trio advised: Ask "Do you like popcorn?" If the answer is yes, "We have a bunch of different kinds," Dylan points out to customers.

If someone by chance says no, well, "You could always

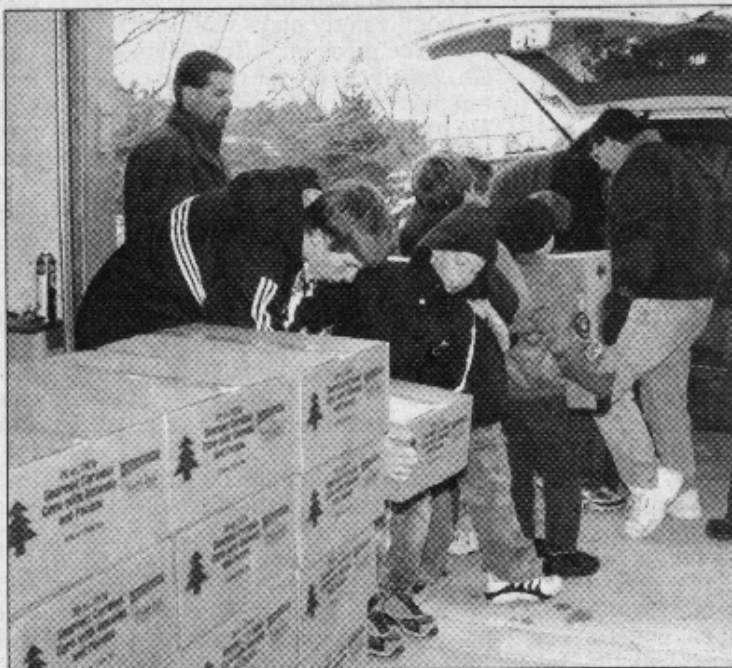


PHOTO BY LISA BERARDUCCI/FOR THE INDEPENDENT

Members of Boy Scout troop No. 921 loads a van with some of the popcorn the troop sold. The troop set a sales record of more than \$25,000 worth of popcorn.

give it as a gift," he politely reminds them.

Butter light, Unbelievable Butter and Caramel Corn are this year's customer favorites in the Trails' End line. At \$50, the five-way chocolate lovers tin is a tough sell, the boys said, although the Clifford brothers did sell a few three-way tins at \$40 a pop.

"Once we had a \$70 order," Paul said.

The 71 Scouts of Pack 921 sold 95 percent more than last year, according to "Popcorn Kernel" Rev. Steven Clifford. The pack has added some new boys to its ranks, he said, "but no one expected this much growth."

"The boys took up the challenge," he said.

Other Packs in the Buckeye Council district didn't see such dramatic increases, Clifford said, attributing 921's success to a combination of factors, including support and encouragement, focused goals and added incentives. Dylan, for instance, sold his way to an MP3 player/watch while the Clifford brothers racked up intricate Lego sets and other prizes.

"I was hoping to get to \$2,500 but didn't quite get there," Dylan said. "Next year my goal's going to be \$3,000. Hopefully."

Clifford made sure the Scouts, especially the 30 new members, had how-to-sell handouts and selling scripts. He kept everyone

Keep it poppin'

Other top popcorn sellers of Pack 921, which is headed by Cubmaster Richard Dinko and sponsored by St. Jacob's Lutheran Church, include:

Jonathan Beels, \$925; Colin Williams, \$770; Clayton Conaway, \$750; Christian Specht, \$700; Chris Smith, \$590; Alex Belardo, \$550; Nathan Webb, \$550; Joseph Woodburn, \$550; Josh Pappas, \$510; and Jacob Gardner, \$505.

apprised by regular e-mail. He also made sure the pack hit the streets during the first two Saturdays of the sales drive.

"Our slogan is 'Keep it Simple, Keep it Fun,'" he said. "When they're going door to door, after about 10 houses, they find it starts to be fun. They meet new people."

"Our dad says (selling popcorn) helps prepare you for life," Paul said.

That means, the popcorn-selling princes said, you're going to encounter rejection, even the occasional mean person.

"If they say no and close the door, they're finished with me," Dylan said. "You just go on to the next one."

No matter what, Robert pointed out, "always say thank you and you're welcome."

Expect the off night, Dylan advised.

"One time I only had \$10," he said. "I'd just say to myself, someday I'm gonna sell a lot. I'd say, don't get discouraged. Just keep on trying."