Highlights:

Ubuntu means a person is a person because of other people

We encourage our Scouts to exemplify aspects of Ubuntu such as being a good person and recognizing they are part of a whole

The Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA are community-oriented. We want our Scouts to have the FUN and safety that is inherent in being a part of a supportive community of family and friends. As modern, inclusive Scout Programs, we embrace ideas and concepts from all around the globe. One of those concepts is Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a tradition from the sub-Sahara region of Africa, and the word's origins are in the Bantu languages of Southern Africa.

Ubuntu has several specific meanings, but they all relate to a sense of community and belonging. In our Scout Programs, we offer a community for every family and every child everywhere.

Meanings of Ubuntu

A Person is a Person Because of Other People

The full Zulu phrase "ubuntu ngmuntu abantu" in English means, "a person is a person because of other people." This has several implications. First, isolation is neither positive nor possible. People must interact with each other in order to fulfill their basic needs, but also to fulfill the needs of the mind. People have a difficult time growing or accomplishing things in isolation. We instill this concept in our Scouts. Our Scouts vote on their own activities and make decisions via consensus. Our Scouts also offer

constructive criticism while evaluating Challenge demonstrations, referred to as Did and Do.

A person is a person because of other people can also mean a person was born because of their parents, who were born because of their parents, and so on and so forth. Our Scouts share their genealogical background as far their knowledge of their own family can take them. For example, our Scout could say, “My name is Mary, my parents are Amy and Steve, my mother’s parents are Edith and George, my father’s parents are Sara and Thomas, my grandmother’s parents…, etc.” We understand some of our Scouts do not have family trees they can access, or may not wish to. Our Scouts are welcome to talk about honorary aunts and uncles, mentors, friends, teachers, foster parents, or the families they have acquired, such as good friends and Team Counselors, through the Scout Programs of Adventure Scouts USA.

Being a Good Person

Ubuntu can also mean being a good person. For example, it is a Zulu tradition to offer to help someone walking along the road in need of food and a bed. The traveler does not even have to ask; it is the duty of the person with more to make the offer.

Ubuntu also means being open and giving, and feeling empathy and a desire to help if others are hurt. We instill empathy in our Scouts. By interacting with our Scouts who differ from themselves, they get the opportunity to appreciate the circumstances of others.

Part of a Whole

Ubuntu can also mean recognizing that one is part of a larger whole. It can take on a spiritual quality in which each person realizes they are an essential part of a connected universe. We encourage our Scouts to live spiritual lives. We encourage our Scouts of faith to learn more about their individual faiths, and our Scouts with an ethical or worldview to study those concepts.

Ubuntu is a concept that includes being a giving, functioning member of a whole by appreciating where one has come from and where one is going. Each of our Scouts is a member of our community, as well other communities including families, friendship groups, and neighborhoods. We instill in our Scouts a sense of interdependence, and mutual cooperation for the common good.