Decades Fact Sheet

1940

In 1941, as America prepared for possible war, Scouts distributed 1.6 million posters advertising Defense bonds and stamps and collected 10.5 million tons of scrap aluminum and 50 tons of wastepaper. When war came, their efforts increased. In the hours and days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaiian Scouts set up first-aid stations and emergency kitchens, helped evacuate civilians, served as messengers, and manned 58 air-raid sirens around Honolulu.

Throughout World War II, the BSA responded to 69 government requests for assistance. Scouts collected 210,000 tons of scrap metal, 590,000 tons of wastepaper, and enough milkweed floss to make nearly 2 million life jackets. They distributed millions of government posters, created 184,000 victory gardens, and planted nearly 2 million trees to replace those harvested for the war effort. The Scouts were so effective that the War Department stopped one wastepaper drive when storage facilities were overwhelmed.

1940.1. War drive

When Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during World War II, Scouting went with them. Cub Scout packs and Boy Scout troops flourished in all 10 internment camps, although conditions made some Scout activities—like the 14-mile hike required for the First Class rank—all but impossible.

As the 1940s opened, Irving Berlin created the God Bless America Foundation, donating all royalties from performances of his most famous song to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Today, those royalties benefit a BSA local council in New York.

PHOTOS

1940.2. Book collecting

1940.3. President Truman

1940.4. Scrap metal

1940.5. Planning

1940.6. Camporee

1940.7. Flag-raising

1940.8. Brooklyn Dodgers

1940.9. Gila River Center

1940.10. Disaster cleanup

VIDEO

1940.V1. Enthusiastic Scouts employed their leadership skills to collect wastepaper during the war.

1940.V2. Scouts also assisted with distributing government posters across America.

1940.V3. Sea Scouting was created to foster a Scout's love of the open water.