New Young Men General Presidency

A new Young Men general presidency was sustained on April 4, 2015, during the 185th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Stephen W. Owen, President**, was born in March 1958 in Salt Lake City to Gordon and Carolyn Owen. When he was 14 years old, his neighbor, A. Ray Curtis, hired him to cut the grass in his spacious yard and weed his garden every week. "It took me three days to mow that lawn," said a smiling Brother Owen, who was sustained April 4 as the Young Men general president. When young Stephen finally finished the job, his wise employer asked him to join him for a walk through the garden. Brother Curtis spotted a weed or two that had been overlooked. "He told me that I needed to pull every weed," he said. "That was my first job and it helped me understand what it meant to be duty-bound."

Brother Owen would learn lessons that year that went far beyond lawn and garden care. For one, he found that satisfaction is found in doing hard things the right way. He also learned the value of mentors. Brother Curtis expected only the best from Stephen. "It was like he was saying to me, 'I know who you can become, and I want to help you.'"

Every young man in the Church, he added, needs such mentors to help him become the best priesthood holder he can be. "I have a lot of empathy for the youth," he said. "I love them and I know this is a critical time that will set the pattern for the rest of their lives."

Brother Owen served in the Texas San Antonio Mission and was later called as a bishop, stake president, high councilor, Scoutmaster, and ward Young Men president. The Holladay, Utah, native also presided over the California Arcadia Mission (2005—2008) where he served with his wife, Sister Jane Stringham Owen. They were married Dec. 28, 1979, in the Provo Utah Temple. They have five children. He graduated from the University of Utah with a finance degree and is the president of Great Harvest Bread Company in Provo, Utah.

**Douglas D. Holmes, First Counselor**, was born in February 1961 in Salt Lake City to Dee W. and Melba Howell Holmes and grew up in the Cottonwood Heights community of Salt Lake City. He is a resident of Farmington, Utah.

After serving in the Scotland Glasgow Mission from 1980 to 1982, Brother Holmes received a bachelor's degree in family science from Brigham Young University in 1986 and went on to earn an MBA degree from the university’s Marriott School of Management, awarded in 1988.

After graduation, he was a management consultant for three years and then undertook a successful career in the telecommunications industry, becoming executive vice president of strategy and corporate development for MediaOne Group. From 2000 until his calling as a mission president in 2010 and again from 2013, he has been self-employed in investment and real estate development. At the time of his call he was vice chairman of the Academy for Creating Enterprise.

Brother Holmes most recently has been first counselor in the presidency of a young single adult stake. He presided over the Michigan Detroit Mission from 2010-2013 and has served as a bishop, a ward Young Men president, a teachers quorum adviser, and ward mission leader.

He married Erin Sue Toone June 22, 1985, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of six children.

"We've seen the power of the word in our lives, whether it's been the word of the prophets or the word of the scriptures or the whisperings of the Holy Ghost," Brother Holmes said. Reflecting on a statement attributed to the late Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve, he said, "This generation of youth has a greater capacity for obedience than any previous generation. I think that's part of the Lord’s timetable and preparation for the days we live in."
M. Joseph Brough, Second Counselor. During the three years Brother Brough served as president of the Guatemala Guatemala City Central Mission from 2011 to 2014, he lost his father and his father-in-law. Although his wife, Sister Emily Jane Brough, could have returned to the United States for the funerals, the couple decided in both cases that she should stay in Guatemala and continue with their missionary work.

"We knew we were better off staying and working as well as we could," said Brother Brough. "That was exactly what her father and my father would expect of us."

Brother Brough was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, December 1963, to Monte J. and Ada B. Brough. He spent his youth in Farmington, Utah, and Robertson, Wyoming. The family moved to Minnesota when Joseph's father, who would later serve as a member of the Seventy, was called as a mission president. Joseph was a senior in high school when his father completed his service as a mission president.

Instead of returning to high school, Joseph took the high school equivalency exam and went straight to Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. His parents, however, insisted he graduate from seminary with a four-year certificate. It was while attending seminary at Davis High School that he met Emily Jane Brough. They were married on April 25, 1985, in the Salt Lake Temple; they are parents of four children.

Before the couple married, however, Brother Brough served as a missionary in the Guatemala Quetzaltenango Mission. His mission president, Jorge H. Perez, became a "most influential man in my life," he said.

The founder and owner of Rotational Molding of Utah, he earned a bachelor's degree in finance and an MBA from the University of Utah. In the Church he has served as a bishop, ward Young Men president, and high councilor.

New Primary General Presidency Member

Sister Mary R. Durham, Second Counselor. Throughout her married life, Mary Richards Durham has noticed that if she and her husband put the Lord first, everything falls into place as they sometimes struggle to balance the demands of home life, Church callings, career, and other responsibilities.

"It’s a sweet thing. If you trust, the Lord blesses you," she said.

It is a theme she has seen repeated many times: as she was called to serve as the ward Young Women president while her husband served in the stake presidency; later as they served together as her husband presided over the Japan Tokyo Mission from 2000 to 2003; and now as she serves as the second counselor in the Primary general presidency as her husband begins his service as an Area Seventy. "As we are yoked with each other and with the Lord, everything goes easier."

Mary Lucille Richards was born in March 1954 in Portsmouth, Virginia, to L. Stephen Richards Jr. and Annette Richards. While her father pursued his medical degree, the family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, before settling in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Nurtured by the faith and love of her parents and a large extended family, she came to know that the gospel was true.

"It was a happy experience to live the gospel. It wasn’t hard. It was fun," Sister Durham said.

As a young woman, she was impressed with the importance of finding a worthy young man to marry and made it a matter of daily prayer and weekly fasting. After high school she attended BYU on a dance scholarship and met Mark Durham, who was attending the University of Utah. "I immediately recognized his goodness," she said.

The couple married in June 1974 in the Salt Lake Temple. Together they have raised seven children and have 29 grandchildren.

Through the years Sister Durham has also served as a stake Relief Society president, counselor in a ward Relief Society presidency, Primary presidency counselor, gospel doctrine teacher, ward Young Women president, and, most recently on the Primary general board.
Looking Up

By Reyna Aburto, Primary General Board

A group of boys was getting ready to go on a hike in a magnificent mountain setting. One of their leaders explained to them that they would walk for a while on a trail surrounded by tall trees. He told them: “As important as it is to look where you are going to step, please do not walk looking down at your feet the whole time. Make sure you also look up and around you. Look at the trees and at their strong trunks and protecting branches. You may even see a hawk nest or a soaring bald eagle. Most of all, do not forget to look at the blue sky above you and to thank God for all this beauty.”

As leaders, sometimes we are so diligently planning and preparing our next den adventure or pack meeting that we fix our eyes on our feet and where we are going to step next. As this loving leader suggested, we can also look up and around us along the way, and help our boys do the same. By doing so, we will feel more joy in our journey and we will discover wonderful sights that we might miss otherwise. We will also realize the Lord’s tender mercies that surround us as we faithfully do our duty to God in our role as leaders and in other aspects of our life.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf counseled: “Let us not walk the path of discipleship with our eyes on the ground, thinking only of the tasks and obligations before us. Let us not walk unaware of the beauty of the glorious earthly and spiritual landscapes that surround us.” (“Forget Me Not”, Ensign, November 2011).

As we embrace the new simplified and dynamic Cub Scouting program, and plan the adventures according to the needs of the boys in our dens and packs, we can take time to pause and take a deep breath, to counsel together and to get on our knees and pray for revelation. We will then more fully enjoy the privilege we have to associate with the boys and to instill in them a feeling of gratitude and love as they learn and do their duty to God. We will also take better advantage of those precious teaching moments we have to help them get the spiritual strength they will need as they continue on their path back to their eternal home.

By constantly looking up to our Father in Heaven, we will get a more clear picture of the purpose of our calling and receive revelation on how to plan each activity with a purpose in mind. We will know where we are and where He wants us to be. As we ponder our path, He will show us the way and He will bless us with the assurance that we are doing His will and fulfilling our duty to Him.

THIS MONTH’S FEATURED SECTION

We have recently had a lot of questions about camping involving the eleven-year-old Scouts (EYO). We have an EYO blogger and his posts might just be what you are looking for in understanding EYO Scouting. Click here for his blogs: http://www.ldsbsa.org/tag/stans-message/

6.2 Scouting for Eleven-Year-Olds - Paragraphs 5 & 6

Eleven-year-old Scouts may participate in three one-night camps a year, which meets the camping requirements for advancement to First Class rank. As desired, these overnight camp experiences may be held with the ward’s Boy Scout troop. The eleven-year-old Scout leader plans the overnight camps in consultation with the ward Primary presidency, the bishopric adviser to the Primary, and the ward Scouting committee. No other Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for eleven-year-old Scouts.

The bishopric adviser to the Primary or another qualified male adult should be invited to supervise the overnight camping experience when the leader of the eleven-year-old Scouts is a woman. Female leaders do not participate in overnight camping with these boys. Fathers are invited and encouraged to participate in the overnight camping experiences with their sons and with boys whose fathers cannot attend.
Duty to God is a Lifetime Pursuit

By Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Scouting Blogger

I’m saddened whenever I hear adult Scouting leaders who view the Duty to God (DTG) booklet as just another list of requirements to receive yet another award in the Aaronic Priesthood. I’m even more saddened when these leaders view DTG as something that is worked on separately from Scouting.

Scouting in the Church and the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood are inseparably connected. Fulfilling one’s duty to God is one of the commitments a young man makes when he repeats the Scout Oath. Scouting and the Duty to God program in the Church are also inseparably connected. They are not independent programs. There is no need to hold a “DTG night” during the week or to have a special DTG priesthood quorum meeting during the month because fulfilling one’s duty to God is something a boy should be pursuing each day of his life.

Duty to God is not about checking off tasks or completing assignments. It is not about getting a certificate or being recognized for one’s accomplishments. It is about teaching a young boy to learn how to humbly fulfill his priesthood and Scouting responsibilities by being in tune to the Holy Spirit. The DTG booklet is an experiential instruction manual of how a young man should live his life. DTG is a process that teaches a boy to learn about the gospel, act upon the things he learns, and share his testimony with others regarding his spiritual experiences. The process of learning, acting, and sharing is a spiritual practice a young man should pursue throughout his life.

The rewards of fulfilling one’s duty to God can be a daily experience. That is why every young man in the Church is encouraged to read his scriptures daily, pray daily, and do acts of kindness and service daily. The Lord wants your young men to “always have His Spirit to be with them.” He wants them to feel the wonderful blessings that come when one faithfully fulfills his priesthood duties each and every day.

In my weekly messages on the LDS-BSA Relationships Blog, my focus is on helping people understand the why behind every what in Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood. The why is more important than the what because knowing it helps one obtain the motivation necessary to do things the Lord’s way. The Lord wants His young men to learn how to serve Him faithfully—to do their duty to God. He wants them “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [they] may be in, even until death, that [they] may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [they] may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:9).

This is the true purpose of the Duty to God booklet. It is a guidebook to be used regularly to help one attain eternal life. It is a book that should be used not only by the young men in the Lord’s Church, but by every priesthood holder. It is the process by which a person learns to receive personal revelation. Through learning, acting, and sharing, a young man receives “revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that [he] mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61).

How wonderful it would be if every young man in the Church realized the joy that comes from faithfully pursuing one’s duty to God. How blessed that boy would be when his parents and his priesthood and Scouting leaders help him to make learning, acting, and sharing a part of his daily spiritual routine.

Safety Moment - Risk Tolerance and Summer Activities—Know Risk Not No Risk

By Steven A. Hoskins, LDS Church Risk Management

Nat King Cole, an American singer, had a major hit titled “Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer.” Well, those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer are soon upon us. In just a few weeks more than 650,000 boys and leaders of LDS-sponsored Scouting units will head to the out-of-doors for fun and adventure. The question we all have in Risk Management is how many will come back in the same condition as when they left? Adventure has always been a key element of the allure of the Scouting program. All high adventure, indeed all of life, has some element of risk; unfortunately sometimes our risk tolerance exceeds our risk perception.

In 1914 it is purported that Ernest Shackelton, the great Antarctic explorer, posted an advertisement in the newspaper which read:


Continued on page 5
Safety Moment - cont.

Rumor has it that over 5,000 men applied. What prompted these men to face death for the sake of adventure? These men had a willingness to be exposed to—and actually sought out—potential dangers and, by definition, had a high risk tolerance. Do you ever consider that death or serious injury may occur once you embark on an activity, but decide to go anyway? If so, you would be defined as having a high risk tolerance.

In the world of volunteer Scouters, perhaps of even greater concern should be the question of “risk perception.” Risk perception has been defined as “an individual’s awareness of the likelihood of loss or injury” (Deb Ajango, Lessons Learned II, 2005, 289). Or as purportedly noted by Mark Twain, “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.” My guess is that if your permission slip included Shackleton’s language very few mothers would give their consent for their sons to participate in the planned activity. Yet how many times do we take on risks which can result in injury simply because there is an insufficient awareness of the likelihood of that injury?

With that in mind, as you prepare for your summer outings ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have a detailed plan of your activity and an emergency plan if something goes wrong? Has a member of the bishopric approved the activity? Are all leaders familiar with the Guide to Safe Scouting?
2. Does the activity have a Christ-centered purpose?
3. Does the leader of each outing carry paper copies of the current Annual Health and Medical Record for all attendees (boys and adults)? Do you know the physical limitations and pre-existing medical conditions for those participating in the activity?
4. Is an adult assigned to oversee boys taking medications?
5. Are leaders current with their Youth Protection training?
6. Are the participants in appropriate physical condition for the activity, and is the activity appropriate for the age and maturity of the Scouts? (See BSA’s Age-Appropriate Guidelines.)
7. Are the leaders properly trained for the specific activity? Is there a chance you can “get in over your head”?
8. Do you have signed permission slips from parents and do your ecclesiastical leaders know what you are really going to do—in detail? The Activity Consent Form and Approval by Parents or Guardian is an appropriate resource. Do parents know how to reach the leaders and do the leaders know how to reach the parents? A bishopric member? Law enforcement? Emergency responders? Health care facility?
9. Do you have appropriate permits from applicable government agencies?
10. Does someone at home have a copy of your itinerary?
11. Has a Tour and Activity Plan been prepared and submitted on MyScouting.org (21-day lead time)?
12. Do the participants have the right clothing, footwear, and equipment for the outing. Is the equipment in good repair and does everyone know how to use it?
13. Are all drivers licensed and insured? All vehicles MUST be covered by a liability insurance policy. (See BSA’s Insurance Coverage website.)
14. Have drivers taken the BSA’s Risk Zone driver training? (See The Risk Zone: Transporting Scouts Safely.)
15. Do you have a current first aid kit prepared for the type of activity you are having?
16. Have you implemented the “buddy system” for your boys so they are never alone?
17. Is someone trained in first aid?
18. Prior to leaving for the activity and during the activity itself are “Safety Moments” conducted to explain safety information? (See LDS-BSA Relationships Newsletter, August 2014.)

This list is not exhaustive but it is a good starting place to better manage risk perception. Remember “Know Risk Not No Risk”! For more information go to Safe Church Activities (safety.lds.org) and the BSA (Health and Safety).
The Varsity Leader’s Duty to God

By Andy Gibbons, Conference Director for “Leading Varsity Scouting in LDS Teams” at Philmont 2015

"Fulfilling your duty to God is a lifelong experience. Don’t think of this book [Fulfilling My Duty to God For Aaronic Priesthood Holders] as a list of tasks that you must hurry through in order to earn an award. Instead, focus on how the activities you choose can help you develop spiritual attributes and become the kind of priesthood holder Heavenly Father wants you to be” (Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders, 2010, 8).

This idea, placed right at the beginning of the Duty to God guidebook, makes being a holder of the priesthood more than a set of obligations. At the heart of being in the priesthood is the notion that we are constantly becoming.

This idea is great advice for young men, but do adults recognize its application to themselves? If fulfilling one’s duty to God is a lifelong experience, then LDS priesthood and Scouting leaders are still involved in a process of becoming. Becoming is what they should exemplify to the youth. Can we expect youth to follow an example that we are not providing for them?

What are the practical implications for adult leaders? What should we be becoming? The key to this is found in the organization of the Varsity team. The core concept of Varsity Scouting is giving youth the chance to gain leadership experience with advisement and support from an adult who is also a part of the Varsity leadership structure. We call these adults “program advisers”—members of the Varsity team committee—and these leaders are meant to provide the most impactful service in the Varsity youth’s experience.

Being a program adviser means knowing how to mentor youth as they acquire leadership skills; or in other words, not taking over when things aren’t going according to plan. For the adult who knows how to mentor, that is the most teachable moment. Inspired mentoring is the key to success in the Varsity program.

But do most adult leaders come to the program advisor’s assignment knowing how to mentor a teenage youth wisely—with the aid of the Spirit? More likely, new program advisers are shaking in their boots, wondering how soon the ordeal will be over.

So, here is where the idea of having a “duty to God” gains traction in the adult’s life. “Fulfilling your duty to God is a lifelong experience.” Rather than coasting through an easy assignment, a diligent program adviser (and any other Varsity leader, for that matter) should be “anxiously engaged” in developing new skills and insights. This will permit him to build leadership in the young man who can (without realizing it) see a good example of a priesthood holder in the process of lifelong fulfillment. My hope is that we may all understand the power of this principle in the lives of our young men and our adult leaders.

Leading Varsity Scouting In LDS Teams Conference

Come to the Philmont Training Center July 12—18, 2015, for this exciting opportunity. This conference will show how Varsity Scouting programs work, especially within the values and organization of the Church. It will help LDS leaders, as well as, council and district leaders build successful Varsity Scout programs. Attendees will include Coaches, team committee members, and unit commissioners at ward and stake levels. Those of other faiths working at the district and council levels—especially professionals—will also profit from knowing how to establish new Varsity Scout teams within their councils. Here is the link to register: Philmont Training Center

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LDS-BSA Relationship (no “s”)
Venturing—The Finishing School for Older LDS Young Men

By Gordon Lowe, Western Region, Area 2 Venturing Co-Chair

LDS wards and stakes that implement the Venturing program bless older Aaronic Priesthood-age young men in the present and prepare them for opportunities that lie in the future. Over the past four years, a national task force collaborated with youth across the country to implement the new Venturing program. With input from both youth and adults, the task force solicited opinions and listened to suggestions from youth ages 14 to 21 from around the country. The result is the new Venturing program, which became official starting January 2015. The new Venturing program is developed around the ALPS model. ALPS stands for Adventure, Leadership, Personal Growth, and Service. LDS leaders and volunteers contributed to the design, development, and implementation of the new Venturing program.

When used effectively the new Venturing program serves as a “finishing school” for Venturers in the Church. This group of Aaronic Priesthood-age young men typically falls within the priest quorums of our wards. In the April 2015 general conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard repeated the need to raise the bar for missionaries. The ALPS model also helps LDS Venturing crews raise the bar through Adventure, Leadership, Personal Growth, and Service.

Through adventure, Venturers learn leadership, experience personal growth, and practice service. For most young men the word “adventure” conjures up thoughts of challenging experiences that draw a person from his comfort zone. Adventure can include a service project for an elderly widow in the ward or a strenuous ascent to a mountain peak. As a result of his Venturing adventures, one Tacloban, Philippines, missionary faced the challenges of Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013 with confidence, knowing that if he could rappel 500 feet into a canyon near Moab, Utah, he could make it through the challenges and aftermath of that devastating typhoon.

Leadership is learned through Venturing adventures. As we prepare young men to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, make and keep sacred covenants, and live lives of service, we help them acquire leadership skills. Through Venturing experiences, young men learn effective leadership skills that can be applied from the home setting to the corporate board room. Effective leadership is built on a solid foundation of core values and vision. Venturing resources aid Venturers in developing their vision, setting goals, and using time wisely. Through effective leadership training in Venturing, the principles of servant leadership are learned and implemented in the lives of our young men. All of these leadership skills are reinforced through personal study of Preach My Gospel.

Personal growth comes through adventure and leadership experiences. When used effectively, the tools and resources of Venturing, together with Duty to God, Come, Follow Me, and Preach My Gospel, serve to provide growth opportunities which will prepare young men to rise above the bar as Elder Ballard suggested.

In a recent crew activity, Raymond took a few minutes to share his thoughts about the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He shared what he had previously learned and acted upon in his own life experiences (i.e. Learn, Act, and Share). Raymond is preparing to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and to serve a full-time mission. He plans to depart for his mission adventure at the end of the summer, after his crew returns from their weeklong high adventure experience. Raymond will serve as crew staff member of the Kodiak training team. Kodiak is a Venturing leadership course, designed to be implemented during any weeklong crew adventure activity.

Service opportunities are boundless for our Aaronic Priesthood-age young men. Through service, Venturers experience adventure, apply leadership skills, and benefit from personal growth in ways that could not otherwise be experienced. Service allows young men to look beyond themselves through meaningful acts that benefit the needs of an individual, a group of people, or an organization. Habits of service learned in our youth provide a pathway to service opportunities that lead from our homes and communities to the four corners of the world. As our youth reflect on their service activities they will come to realize that they have experienced adventure, leadership, and personal growth along the way.

The new Venturing ALPS model, when implemented in our LDS Venturing crews, truly is a finishing school as we prepare young men with the necessary leadership skills to administer the doctrine of Christ through lifelong service opportunities.
Best Practices—A Working LDS-BSA Relationships Committee

By Anthony Escobar, LDS-BSA Relationships Adviser, Heart of America Council

“I would like to say that where we find the best Aaronic Priesthood work, we find the best Scouting being done. . . . Every principle of Scouting is a principle of the restored gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no question about it.” When Joseph L. Wirthlin said those words in 1951 (while a member of the Presiding Bishopric), they were timeless. (See “Scouting and the Church,” Improvement Era, Feb. 1951, 87.)

We all want our boys to grow up to be good men. That is a laudable philosophy, but how do we translate that into a tangible outcome?

In the Heart of America Council, we made a decision to grow the relationships with our LDS partners. It is our mission. It is a part of our SMART goals. (“Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.” See “Scoutmaster Musings,” Boy Scout Trail website.) And in kind, the leadership from the eight stakes within our council have made the same commitment—to strengthen ties and to work together to grow the Scouting movement.

Scouting within our eight stakes represent seven percent of our council membership and sixteen percent of our units. Whether we think of our Scouting relationship from a philosophical or a practical perspective, we all agree that our partnership is important.

In 2013 our Scout executive Kenn Miller was invited to attend the LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar and general conference in Salt Lake City. He accepted the invitation and was joined by our LDS-BSA Relationships chair. Thereafter, our council has continued to send a different staff member each year. I had the pleasure of attending in 2014, and our Naish Camp director attended in April 2015. With each trek a contingent from the eight stakes were among our conference companions. This was an invaluable experience. It brought to life the full perspective of the Church, its mission, desired outcomes, and how Scouting fits into the organization.

I am still amazed by the stories recounted to me by the instructors at the Missionary Training Center. Envisioning those missionaries as little Cub Scouts who became Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts and later served around the world, is a mighty testimony. And it demonstrates the powerful effect Scouting can bring to bear for our youth members as they grow into men.

Our council’s LDS-BSA Relationships committee has a strong chair, Lenexa Kansas Stake President Bruce Priday. His commitment to the Scouting movement is strong. At every relationships committee meeting, every stake is represented. These are not simply report meetings, these are business meetings with assignments.

The relationships committee has organized two sub-committees, with more to be developed. The Independence Missouri Stake Young Men president chairs a Varsity sub-committee. Their mission is to grow units, organize training, and develop council-wide Varsity events, such as an upcoming triathlon. The second sub-committee is organizing an annual campout and workday at our Theodore Naish Scout Reservation. We are expecting 300 Church members (adults and Scouts) to provide a day of service back to the camp.

Our Investment in Character (Friends of Scouting) campaign has already exceeded the 2014 actual amount received, with a goal of nearly double over last year. The council provided the data, but the relationships committee helped the stakes decide their goals.

Another key component of the success of our relationships committee comes from the strong support and presence by Elder Donald Deshler of the Seventy. His encouragement and guidance has helped us stay the course and to grow our vision of what is possible.

Ultimately, the success of the Heart of America Council’s LDS-BSA Relationships committee has come to fruition because every one involved is committed to make it happen and to provide better service and support to our Church members in the Scouting program.
April LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar

By Roma Bishop, Church Service Missionary

Scouting leaders from across the country enjoyed clear skies and warm weather in Salt Lake City, April 2–4, 2015, when they gathered to attend the LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar and some sessions of the 185th Annual General Conference of the Church. The goal was to better understand the relationship of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Boy Scouts of America. Under the direction of LDS-BSA Relationships Director Mark R. Francis and Administrative Assistant Dawn Harvey, the group came together to understand how this partnership can be strengthened in local councils. Professional representatives from the national office and 14 councils, plus some of their volunteer counterparts, were in attendance.

On the evening of April 2, in the Church Office Building, Larry M. Gibson, first counselor in the Young Men general presidency of the Church, led a training session to familiarize the leaders with the terminology and organization of the Church and BSA. Goals of each organization were discussed, along with methods that can be used to establish the best working relationship. He emphasized that the Church leaders love the youth and are anxious to develop strong and resilient young men who are self-reliant physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, temporally, and spiritually. Scouting helps with each of these goals. The leaders were encouraged to develop and strengthen the LDS Relationships committee in each of their councils. He also emphasized that we want all young men to have the values of Scouting and faith in God. Scouts do not need to be Church members to join an LDS Scouting unit.

On Friday morning some of the participants toured the Missionary Training Center (MTC) adjacent to the campus of Brigham Young University in Provo, UT. This facility, along with 14 other smaller facilities in various parts the world, is home for the first few weeks for some of the Church’s 85,000 currently-serving full-time missionaries. Other participants toured the Boyd K. Packer exhibit at the Monte L. Bean Museum.

The next stop was a visit to Welfare Square to get a glimpse of the Church’s vast welfare system. A tour was given of the Bishops’ Storehouse, where members with needs may fill a food order from their bishop; and of Deseret Industries, where used goods may be purchased at very reasonable prices and is open to all.

The guests next toured the Humanitarian Center, headquarters for organizing immediate relief after disasters that occur all over the world. Most of the staff there are refugees who are taught English and are trained to learn skills that will result in employment for them. The group ate lunch in the cafeteria with the workers.

The guests then visited the FamilySearch Center in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building where Director Mark Francis presented training on program improvement—focusing on LDS-BSA Relationships committees, unit commissioners, and the Scouting Bridge referred to by President Thomas S. Monson. Afterward, they were given some instruction, as well as time to research some of their own ancestral lines. That evening a meal was served at the Lion House with remarks by Brother Larry Gibson. He reflected on why and how the partnership of BSA and the Church works only with desire and understanding on both sides. The first duty in Scouting is duty to God. Guests were presented with personalized copies of the LDS scriptures.

On Saturday morning participants were treated to special seating in the Conference Center for the opening session of general conference. This was followed by a lunch at the nearby Lion House and remarks by David L. Beck (Young Men general president) and his wife, Robyn. Sister Beck spoke of the many tender mercies they had experienced and how they, as had the Jaredites in the Book of Mormon, had been blessed with many tender mercies of the Lord. Speaking just an hour before his release in general conference, Brother Beck recalled fondly his love of Scouting over the last six years. “Scouting introduces us to a brotherhood,” he said. He encouraged us to focus on those things we have in common and to build bridges. He recalled his first experience at Philmont Scout Ranch and reminded everyone, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Saturday afternoon the Scouters were able to attend the second session of general conference, return to the genealogy resources or visitor’s centers on Temple Square, or take personal time to reflect and ponder. In this conference session, the Young Men presidency was released after serving for six years. A new Young Men general presidency was sustained. At dinner that evening Brother Randall Ridd, former second counselor in the Young Men general presidency, gave remarks and thanked them for coming to learn about the Church. He emphasized the strong bond of the two organizations and that it had been made stronger by their participation. Male participants then attended the priesthood session of general conference.

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April LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar—cont.

After the general priesthood meeting, a cookies and ice cream social was held in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in conjunction with the LDS Philmont Reunion. Brad Farmer, assistant Chief Scout Executive, along with Howard Bulloch, National Executive Board member, presented bronze statues to the outgoing YM general presidency—David Beck, Larry Gibson, and Randall Ridd—and Jean Stevens, outgoing first counselor in the Primary general presidency. He thanked them for their exceptional service to Scouting while in their callings. The participants reported that the conference weekend was an extremely positive and enlightening experience.

Scouters represented the following areas:
National Office (Irving, TX) Brad Farmer and Diane, Tom Harrington, Bob Mersereau, Peter Simon and Pat, Roger Morgan and Beth, Mike Surbaugh and Lisa, Dustin Farris
Philmont Scout Ranch (Cimarron, NM) Steve Nelson and Diane
Crossroads of America Council (Indianapolis, IN) Bill Cowley, Patrick Sterret and Lori
Grand Teton Council (Idaho Falls, ID) Ben Call, Clarke Farrer, Ken Bernt, Tom Barry and Aimee
Great Salt Lake Council (Salt Lake City, UT) Thad Bookman and Jennifer,
Greater Wyoming Council (Casper, WY) Tracy Breinholt and Mary, Matt Myers
Heart of America Council (Kansas City, MO) Scott Weaver, Jason Bowne and Michelle, Spencer Kirk and Vivian
Longhorn Council (Hurst, TX) Tom Carver and Dawn
Maui County Council (Lahaina, HI) Robert Nakagawa and Becky
Miami Valley Council (Dayton, OH) and Tecumseh Council (Springfield, OH) Mark Zelnick and Janet
Michigan Crossroads Council (Detroit, MI) Chris Miltimore
Montana Council (Great Falls, MT) John Manz
San Gabriel Valley Council (Pasadena, CA) Jorge Schumperli and Graciela
Sequoia Council (Fresno, CA) Ernest Espinoza
Utah National Parks Council (Orem, UT) Paul Clyde and Jeanette

Assisting with hosting, driving, and instruction were Rick Barnes; Vince Bath; Wayne and Roma Bishop; Larry and Paula Call; Gary and Laura Dollar; Allen and Beckki Endicott; Nettie Francis; Tom and Louann Hunsaker; Mac McIntire; Kimball and Betty Wirig.
Successful Eagle projects come about in many different ways. Some represent needs by a community or school and have been requested by them. Others evolve from a Scout seeing a need and taking it from an idea to a project to reality. Perhaps the best projects are those which take a boy’s experience, combine it with a need, and do something that will be a lasting memory for him, his family, and friends, and for the institution it helped. Such was the case for Kaleb Bronson, a Scout from Ogden, Utah.

Kaleb’s grandfather, Russ Lawrence, was fighting cancer in 2012. As Russ went through chemotherapy, he lost his hair and was always cold. He tried a variety of beanies and hats, but he disliked most of them because they were not comfortable and scratched his head. Kaleb had the idea of knitting one out of the softest yarn he could find. After he made the beanie, it became Russ’s favorite and he wore it all the time. He mentioned that it was soft, did not scratch his head, and helped him keep warm. Kaleb made the beanie in August of 2012 and Russ’s fight against cancer ended on January 25, 2013.

About a year later as Kaleb began thinking of an Eagle Scout project, he knew he wanted to do something that would impact the lives of others. He recalls when the idea came to him on a road trip to California during the spring of 2014. He decided that the idea of making beanies to donate to Huntsman Cancer Institute would not only warm the body, but the soul as well. He put things in motion, had his project approved, and began in September. He set the goal of 100 beanies and the project began very slowly at first as he recruited fellow Scouts, friends, and families. He then had the idea of going to the Relief Society in his ward, the Wilson Third Ward in the Ogden West Stake. He made a presentation to the sisters about his project and explained how the beanie he made helped his grandfather and was the motivation for the project. He passed around a sign-up sheet and, to his surprise, it was returned to him completely filled!

Kaleb found, however, that there was a lot of time involved in organizing the instructional classes on how to make the beanies, passing out the materials, and in retrieving the looms when the beanies were complete. The participation by the sisters in his ward, however, was amazing. All expressed gratitude for what Kaleb had done and some have continued to make beanies for their family and friends undergoing chemotherapy.

Kaleb’s goal of 100 was easily surpassed. December 19, 2014, was a very happy day when Kaleb visited the Huntsman Cancer Institute and donated to them the 180 beanies made for the patients there. We salute Kaleb Bronson for his dedication, creativity, and determination to make the world a better place. Grandpa Russ would be proud of an industrious grandson who is making a difference—one beanie at a time!

Thank you Kaleb for doing such an inspiring Eagle Scout project!!
Sister Beckstead and I were called on a part-time mission assigned to the Walsenburg Colorado Branch, made up of approximately 90 members. I was called to serve in the branch presidency. There are only eight or nine Melchizedek Priesthood holders in the branch.

The first thing the branch president asked us to do was to start a Scout troop. I have been involved in Scouting in various capacities most of my life and have received the Silver Beaver Award. There were only two boys of Scout age in the branch and only one of them was active.

One day, I met the husband of a less-active member and asked him if he would like to help us out with Scouting. He enthusiastically answered, "YES!" We then ran ads in the two newspapers in Walsenburg and LaVeta, which are both within the branch boundaries. We also put up posters in the schools and elsewhere where we thought young people or their parents would see them. We reserved a room at the local library where we could hold an organizational meeting and we solicited help from the Rocky Mountain Council. Not only did the council help, but the assistant Scout executive came to the meeting and brought camping gear, Scouting posters, and informational literature. A local troop out of Pueblo attended the meeting for support and donated ten sleeping bags to our troop.

We had about five boys sign up at the first meeting. The best part was that three of them were the sons of the publishers of the local newspaper. They ran free ads for us and contacted all the people they knew. I put the word out to the Parker Colorado Stake Young Men leaders (my home stake) that we needed gear and would accept all the help we could get. The young men responded and donated many much-needed items for camping.

I then called on a good friend of mine who I knew was sympathetic to Scouting and asked for a monetary donation of at least $1,000 from the charity foundation of his company. He came through, as I knew he would. While talking to a long-time client of hers in New Jersey, Sister Beckstead, a lawyer, told her about our Scout troop. Her client asked how she could help and then sent us a $1000 check. Another non-LDS friend heard about our troop and asked how he could help; he gave us $250 cash out of his pocket.

We took the boys on a winter campout and then several other outings. Pretty soon the boys were bringing friends who wanted to join. All of these were nonmembers. We now have twelve Boy Scouts and two Cub Scouts. The husband of the less-active member is now our Scoutmaster and I was able to baptize him and he later received the priesthood. He, in turn, told the mother of one of the Scouts that her boy should go to church. She asked, "What church?" To which he responded, "Our church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." She and her husband and their son all came to church the next Sunday.

All the boys spent a week at Scout camp this summer and while there we built new benches for the camp, as the original benches had been destroyed in a fire the summer of 2013. The troop got a lot done, worked on their "Trail to First Class," and bonded as a troop. Because the burned areas could not absorb any water, heavy rains created a flash flood throughout the camp. Our Scouts helped rescue others who were caught in the floodwaters. We were impressed by their concern for others.

We reached a milestone and had our first court of honor in November of 2014. We currently have eight active Scouts in the troop—four have advanced to Second Class and four have advanced to First Class. It was gratifying to see a room full of Scouts and their families. We have only one Church member in the troop—the rest are nonmembers. We’re hoping that the Scout troop is changing the perception of our branch in Walsenburg.

We want to express our thanks to so many of you who have supported our efforts to get Troop 295 going. We have received cash donations, as well as donations of camping gear. We couldn’t have reached this milestone without your help!

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