Growing Scouting through Reactivation - Focusing on Scouting’s Principles and Ideals

By Stephen H. Hess, Young Men general board member

Growing Scouting in a local unit starts with believing in and focusing on the purpose and ideals of Scouting and gospel principles. For the Scouting program and the Young Men program to grow they both must be based on sound and true principles. To believe in something is to have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something, in this case Scouting’s purpose and ideals. A leader’s belief in Scouting ideals leads to his encouraging activities that plant in the hearts of our young men the desire to live these principles. Living these principles helps the young men come to understand that the principles are true.

The purpose and ideals of Scouting, as reflected in the Scout Oath, Law, motto, and slogan align well with true gospel principles and Christlike attributes. To do your best, to do your duty to God and your country, to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to be physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight, to be prepared, and to do a good turn daily are Christlike ideals. Scouting purposes taught and lived, although no substitute for the gospel of Jesus Christ, can be a good partnership in having an effective program that will help a young man to live and exemplify Christlike behavior.

If we focus on the purpose and ideals of Scouting we will build strong young men of honor. Young men are strengthened as they live these principles. If a Scout troop was to stray from these purposes and ideals, it would lose the benefits that these transformative principles might have had in the lives of the young men in that troop.

Focusing our Scouting activities and lessons on Scouting’s purpose both identifies good activities and eliminates from consideration less important activities. For example, the movie projector in a theater could represent the purpose of Scouting and the cone of light that extends from the projector to the screen can be likened to all the appropriate activities that fulfill that purpose. The cone of light may fill one fourth of the room. The other three-quarters of dark space in the room represent activities that do not fulfill that purpose. The activities in the cone of light are appropriate and beneficial to the growth of young men, but because our time with the young men is limited and we want the most positive impact we can have, the activities in the dark space should be avoided.

Our leaders have taught that Scouting and Aaronic Priesthood activities should have either a priesthood purpose or a Scouting purpose or both. Handbook 2:Administering the Church (13.1) states: “In addition to providing fun and entertainment, activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, and foster unity and personal growth.” Activities, whether they be service, sports, camping, arts, music, dance, or many others, should help young men become prepared, service-minded young men who live the purpose and ideals of Scouting.

Activities Can Be Fun and Still Have Purpose

Many years ago while I was serving as a bishop we had a Scout leader in our ward who was a professional river guide. There were some young men who had lost interest in Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood. We decided to put together a fun Scouting activity taking our young men down the river in rafts. The young men were excited about going down the river together. We invited all the young men, including those who were not coming to our activities and didn't regularly attend church. All except those who had other obligations, such as work, came to the activity.

But in addition to this being a fun activity we wanted much more out of it. Remembering the counsel from the Brethren we decided to add a spiritual purpose to the activity. The idea came that we should use the river as a metaphor for the experiences of life. We decided to call the activity the “River of Life” and one of our members made T-shirts with that theme printed on them. Each day we ran the river, and then at night we gathered around a campfire and talked about the characteristics of the river that mirror life's experiences.

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Rivers, like life, take turns that have to be navigated by making wise choices in order to reach our destination. Our river guide explained that we should avoid whirlpools along the edges of the river because they would stop our progress. Anyone who has ridden a river and has become stuck in a large whirlpool knows how difficult it is to escape the relentless pull of the swirling water. He explained that we could avoid this if we were vigilant about steering our rafts down the middle of the river. Then the current would carry us to our destination. Staying in the middle of the river is like staying on the straight and narrow path. You get to your destination faster and are able to avoid the whirlpools of sin that stop your progress. Avoiding the whirlpools saves you the difficulties and extreme effort it takes to extract yourself from them. Some whirlpools were so strong we needed help from someone else to escape their strong grip. In like manner, we often need help from others in order to break free from problems in our lives. Many more river metaphors were talked about and are remembered to this day by our young men.

During that activity we served each other. We did good turns for each other. We prayed together. We prepared for river safety with instruction and life jackets. We drew close to one another and gained a unity and love for one another. When we returned home from the weekend several of our young men spoke about their experience and how it relates to life. Many of those young men became Eagle Scouts and went on missions. Most of the less-active young men became active.

We had similar experiences as we tried to consistently apply Scouting and gospel principles to each subsequent activity. As a result Scouting and gospel principles were taught, understood, and lived by more young men.

Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," (John 7:17). Alma said, "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him" (Alma 12:9).

As our young men feel the joy that comes from understanding the gospel, as taught in lessons and activities, they will want to apply what they learn. They will be more likely to give steady, consistent, and earnest effort to living the principles they’ve been taught. As they live these principles, the young men will come to know they are true. Heavenly Father will continue to grant them more knowledge as they live what they learn. Acting on what they learn will build enduring understanding and greater faith, knowledge, and testimony in our young men.

Keeping our Scouting and priesthood activities focused on gospel and Scouting purposes and principles will help our young men grow into great men of honor and godliness. They will become men of Christ.

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**Annual Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting**

The Training Center at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico, provides a unique environment for the training of thousands of Scouting volunteer leaders. The Priesthood Leadership Conference convenes under the direction of the Young Men general presidency and the General Scouting Committee of the Church. The faculty, selected from the Young Men and Primary General presidencies and boards, provide training in the program and administration of Scouting as a supporting activity of the Aaronic Priesthood and Primary. The first session will be held June 25—July 1 and the second from July 2—9, 2016.

The conference is for interested members of stake and district presidencies and their families. Full conference information and a fillable pdf application can be found on our website www.ldsbsa.org. Applications are now being accepted by email to this address: ldsbsa@scouting.org.
How Will They Know Unless We Teach Them So?

By Ginny Smith, Primary general board member

In July members of the Primary general presidency and board had the opportunity to serve as part of the training faculty at the Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting at Philmont. What a remarkable, life-changing experience! The moment you turn onto the tree-lined road winding towards the Scout Ranch and Tent City you are swept away by the spirit of Philmont—the love, laughter, and learning—all centered on how leaders can provide boys and young men a quality Scouting experience, while reinforcing the priesthood purposes and gospel principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

People often ask how Primary ties into the Scouting program. The Primary, an auxiliary to the priesthood, serves over one million children worldwide. The children range in age from 18 months through 11 years old. Scouting is the activity arm of the Primary for boys ages 8 through 11. They attend Primary on Sundays and Scouts on weekdays. From these early ages we teach the children that each is a child of God and that He loves and cares about them. We believe that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ,” (The Family Proclamation by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, Sept. 23, 1995). Therefore, we teach the children to follow Christ’s example, beginning with simple things like learning how to pray, to share, and to be kind. As they get older we teach the children how to listen to promptings of the Holy Ghost, to allow Him to guide and direct them in choosing right from wrong and to protect them from getting into dangerous situations.

We believe that if children are taught correct gospel principles when they are young, these same principles and values will guide them throughout their lives. The lyrics to a favorite Primary song, How Will They Know?, describe how important it is for us, as adults, to accept the responsibility we have to teach the children these principles, such as God’s love for us, blessings we receive, repentance and forgiveness, and how the Holy Ghost can help us. Scouting leaders are among the many adults who children look up to and depend upon to teach them these important principles. Primary General President Rosemary M. Wixom has remarked that Scouting leaders within our Church have a sacred responsibility in helping boys learn Scouting principles that also help them live the gospel.

When a boy turns eight, he joins the Cub Scout program as a member of the ward’s pack. When he turns eleven, he joins the patrol for eleven-year-old Scouts in the ward’s Boy Scout troop. Scouting activities are tools to help young boys put into practice what they learn in their homes and in Primary. Scouting leaders use these tools to teach the Scouts in a fun learning environment.

Both Primary and the Scouting program help boys prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. Sister Wixom stated that Scouting contributes to a boy’s preparedness to hold the priesthood of God. Some of these priesthood-related Scouting activities include gaining leadership skills, performing service, and earning the Cub Scout Religious Square Knot. Part of the spirit of Philmont is “laughter and learning.” Likewise, Scouting leaders help the boys learn while having fun. Many of these learning activities, such as cooking, use of tools, first aid training, and communication skills, will help them as they prepare for missions and later when they become husbands and fathers.

The Scouting program has also been used as a bridge to strengthen boys and families, to rescue less-active members of our Church, and to reach out to boys not of our faith living among us in our communities. We can add much to the lives of these less-active or non-LDS boys if we simply invite them to attend Cub Scout or Boy Scout meetings and activities. We should make them and their families feel welcome and encourage them to advance in rank along with our own LDS Scouts.

To all young boys everywhere we say, “Come join us at our Cub Scout den, pack, and troop meetings. Come learn with us, and we will learn from you. Come experience love, laughter, and learning!” One of the best things that happens in Scouting is when a young boy learns life-long lessons, as told in the following story:

Cub Scout Christmas

(As shared with Nettie Francis by Sarah Allred and Ginny Smith)

“Tanner, you have a Scout meeting this afternoon,” his mom reminded him. “I just don’t feel like going anymore, Mom,” Tanner muttered as he flopped into a chair. "But I thought you liked going to Cub Scouts," his mom said, as she handed him an after-school snack. “I did, but now that I am in the Webelos den I am the only boy who’s ten years old, so my friends all go to a different meeting. Besides, Brother Bevan said that they might just start sending me back to the Bear den where the younger boys are since there is no one else my age. It’s just not going to be as fun as it used to be,” Tanner sighed, as he put his head down on the kitchen table. His mom gave him a hug. “I know it might not seem as fun,” she said, “but Brother Bevan seems like a great leader. Why don’t you give it another try?” “And, before you leave for Scouts, we need to have a short family meeting,” his mom told him as she called downstairs for the other children to gather in the kitchen.

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When they were all sitting around the table Tanner’s mom smiled and said, “Dad and I have an idea. Christmas is just a month away and we thought we could try a ‘homemade Christmas’ this year.” “What does ‘homemade Christmas’ mean?” asked Tanner’s younger sister, Laynie. “Homemade means that instead of going to the store to buy presents, we make gifts for each other.” “Make gifts?” Tanner’s little sister, Ellie, excitedly exclaimed. “Yes,” explained his mom. “Gifts don’t have to cost a lot of money. In fact, when we spend time making gifts for each other, a little piece of our heart goes into the gift.” “I don’t know what I would even do,” said Tanner, shrugging his shoulders. “Well,” said his mom, “we’ll definitely have to brainstorm. Let’s make a list of some of the supplies we already have here at home, and start thinking about how to make this a fun Christmas.”

“I have to leave for Scouts now,” said Tanner. He grabbed his coat and ran out the door into the cool November afternoon. A few minutes later he arrived at his Scout meeting. “It’s great to see you here today for Scouts,” said Brother Bevan as he greeted Tanner at the door. “Since you’re the only ten-year-old Cub Scout right now, I thought we could look through the Webelos book and you could choose which activity pin you want to work on,” he smiled. Sister Bevan brought a treat out from the kitchen, and together Brother Bevan and Tanner flipped through the pages of the Webelos handbook. “We could work on an art project, a sports project, a bike project . . .” said Brother Bevan as he read through some of the choices, but Tanner wasn’t listening. He was thinking about the homemade Christmas idea that his mom had suggested.

Brother Bevan set down the book. “Tanner, what’s wrong?” he kindly asked as he saw the thoughtful look on Tanner’s face. “Well, my mom just told us we’re going to have a homemade Christmas this year. That means that instead of buying gifts at the store, we have to make them for each other. I don’t have any idea what I could do.” Brother Bevan was quiet for a few moments as he listened to Tanner. Then he put an arm around Tanner’s shoulders. “Tanner, a homemade Christmas may be different than what your family has done in the past, but I have an idea.” He opened the Webelos book again and turned through the pages until he found a picture of woodworking tools. “What if we worked together on some homemade gifts for your family and passed off your Craftsman activity badge at the same time?”

Tanner sat up straighter on the couch. “What would we make?” he asked. Together he and Brother Bevan looked through the book. “Here’s the pattern for a recipe box. Would your mom like that?” “I think so,” said Tanner. “What about painting wooden beads for some jewelry for your sisters?” Tanner was excited now. He eagerly looked at the pictures. The wood projects didn’t seem too hard to make and he would be earning an activity badge (pin) at the same time.

“Let’s go out to my garage and check my tools,” said Brother Bevan. “But in order to finish all your gifts by Christmas, we might have to hold Webelos meetings more than once a week.” “That’s OK,” smiled Tanner. “I guess being the only Webelos isn’t going to be as bad as I thought.” During the next few weeks Tanner started going to Brother Bevan’s house not just once during the week, but on a couple of Saturdays, too.

Tanner’s mom noticed that he hadn’t mentioned Scouts for a while and said, “Tanner, I was wondering if you wanted me to see if you could join the younger boys in the Bear den until some of them are old enough to join you in Webelos?” “No thanks, Mom. I really like having Brother Bevan all to myself,” said Tanner. “We talk about all sorts of things and Sister Bevan and sometimes his kids are there to help with projects, too. I really like being in their home.”

By Christmas Eve Tanner was finished with his Webelos projects. He made a recipe box for his mom, a tie rack for his dad, some painted wooden bracelets for his sisters, Laynie and Ellie, and a wooden car for his little brother, Spencer. Tanner’s homemade Christmas turned out to be his best Christmas ever!

Through just one Scouting experience and one dedicated Scout leader, a young boy learned a new skill, felt his future looked much brighter, gained self-confidence in doing hard things, and came to understand that it doesn’t always take money to bring happiness to others.

The impact of a faithful, diligent, and caring Den Leader can resonate through many generations!

“Scouting contributes to a boy’s preparation to hold the priesthood of God. Scout leaders have a sacred responsibility. They help boys learn Scouting principles that also help them to live the gospel.”

Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary General President 2010
A Century of Honor, p. 99
Mac’s Message #17: Invite Every Scouting-age Boy to Join Your Scouting Unit

By Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Relationships Scout Blog

This is a condensed version of the original message. The Scouting program is a blessing that should be available to all of the boys within your ward or stake boundaries, whether they are members of the Church or not.

David L. Beck, former Young Men general president, said Scouting in the Church “is a bridge that has fueled real growth as thousands of individuals and families have joined the Church or become active again.” (“A Century of Scouting in the Church,” Ensign, October 2013). I wish to add my personal testimony to his statement.

I witnessed the power of a well-run LDS Scouting unit to attract boys who otherwise may not have been interested in the Church or participation in any of its programs.

When I was called as the Scoutmaster of an inner-city ward in Las Vegas, Nevada, I determined to run the Scouting program as it is designed by the Boy Scouts of America. The few active boys in the troop had wonderful experiences in character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness. They learned to live by the Scout Oath and Law. They were formed into a boy-led patrol, wore their Boy Scout uniform proudly, attended regular monthly outdoor activities, and advanced in Scouting rank.

Because Scouting was a quality experience, the boys naturally reached out to the less-active and inactive boys in the ward to get them to participate. They also invited their non-member friends to join in Scouting activities. Slowly the troop began to grow. One patrol turned into three. Six members of the troop turned into 24. Twelve of the 24 were not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many of these Scouts came from single-parent, minority families who never would have been exposed to the values of Scouting had there not been a quality LDS Boy Scout unit in their neighborhood.

We are told “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). Scouting is a wonderful program that should be available to all boys because every boy is worth going after. If you run your Scouting program properly, it can be an attractive beacon of light to every boy within the boundaries of your ward or stake. Watch this video to see how one Scoutmaster reached out to the boys within his community. I highly suggest you engage your boys, particularly your senior patrol leader and patrol leaders, in visiting every boy within your stewardship area. Invite every young man within your boundaries to participate in your Scouting unit. Show them how much fun boys can have when they fellowship together in the Scouting program.

I believe the values of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Boy Scouts of America are divinely linked to develop strong young men of character, capable of filling leadership positions in the Church and in society. I encourage you to reach out to all Scouting-age boys within your little corner of the Lord’s vineyard. Lives will be touched and hearts softened when you do. Through Scouting you can create conditions and provide experiences that bring young men to Christ. I testify “how great will be your joy” when you do. (D&C 18:16).

1.0 Introduction

This handbook outlines guidelines and policies relating to Scouting programs in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Bishoprics and Young Men, Primary, and Scouting leaders should be familiar with this information as they administer Scouting programs in the ward. Details about each Scouting program are available from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and are not included in this handbook. Differences between Church policy and BSA policy are noted in this handbook as needed. Unless otherwise noted, the term Scouting includes Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing.

1.1 Purpose of Scouting in the Aaronic Priesthood and Primary

Scouting can help young men and boys enhance close relationships with their families and the Church while developing strong and desirable traits of character, citizenship, and physical and mental fitness. Under priesthood leadership, Scouting should complement the efforts of Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Primary classes in building testimonies in young men and boys. Scouting under Church sponsorship should become an extension of the home, Primary classes, and Aaronic Priesthood quorums. Scouting functions as part of the Church’s activity program for boys and young men. Scouting activities should be planned to fulfill gospel-centered purposes.

Click here for the newest version of the handbook
It is interesting that the first word in the Doctrine and Covenants is “Hearken.” To hearken means “to listen and obey.” How many times have you heard the same topic or theme repeated several times during general conference? Why do you think that is so? There are two reasons: 1) We may not have heard or understood the very important message, or 2) We failed to respond when taught previously. The same concept applies to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Youth Protection training. The training must be taken every two years and the reminders about the training need to be given regularly. Statistics reveal we have some “listening and obeying” to do. We have made great progress, but we need to do more.

To better understand the urgency of Youth Protection training, let’s first discuss the reason for alarm. Research on child abuse has been done extensively, with results varying greatly as to statistics obtained and recorded from different sources.

- “Every year more than 3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States involving more than 6 million children (a report can include multiple children),” (Child Abuse Statistics & Facts, Childhelp®).
- “The United States has one of the worst records among industrialized nations . . . losing [i.e. death] on average between four and seven children every day to child abuse and neglect” (Child Abuse Statistics & Facts, Childhelp®).

The reports indicate sobering statistics, but what has that got to do with your taking 25 minutes to become a Youth Protection-trained leader? The answer is simple: The Boy Scouts of America requires that adults in Scouting must take Youth Protection training because this training is designed to help you recognize the signs of abuse. This knowledge may save a boy from abuse and could save you as a leader from possible liability.

Here is what the BSA’s website has to say about Youth Protection training:

“Required Training: Youth Protection training is required for all BSA registered volunteers. Youth Protection training must be taken every two years. If a volunteer’s Youth Protection training record is not current at the time of recharter, the volunteer will not be reregistered.”

The Church is also quite specific in what it expects of its leaders regarding Youth Protection training. The May 2015 edition of Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States (commonly called “the green Scouting Handbook”) emphasizes the importance of Youth Protection training (italics added for emphasis):

“8.2 Registration of Youth and Adults: Each adult leader must complete a BSA adult application. All adult Scouting leaders must be properly registered and complete Youth Protection Training before beginning their service.” [Note that the BSA Adult Application states that Youth Protection training must be completed within 30 days of submitting the application. However, the Church has a more strict policy: the Youth Protection training certificate must accompany the Adult Application when it is submitted to the council.]

“8.5 Calling Adult Scouting Leaders: Worthy adults, whether members of the Church or not, may be called to serve as Scouting leaders. A current membership record of each member called to serve in Scouting should be in the local unit. All adult Scouting leaders must be properly registered and must complete Youth Protection training before beginning their service.”

“8.6 Youth Protection Program: The BSA requires all Scouting leaders to take Youth Protection training, which is available online or through the BSA local district or council.”

Youth Protection training communicates values and can help leaders to recognize potential abuse at an early stage. The Savior taught us about our responsibility in protecting the youth when He said, “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). By knowing the signs to look for, you will be prepared to assist the Savior in preventing the offense of His “little ones” and you will protect yourself. That knowledge comes through proper and repetitive training.

We must “hearken” to the principles and policies taught in the BSA’s Youth Protection program. Statistics will not reveal the good that comes from listening and obeying this simple training, but we know for certain it is making a difference. You make a difference. You have been called to bless and protect this rising generation.

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So where do we go from here? First, take the online Youth Protection training required for your calling (standard Youth Protection for leaders of boys ages 8 through 15 and/or Venturing Youth Protection for leaders of boys ages 16 and 17). To take online Youth Protection training on the BSA website, go to my.scouting.org and create an account. Then click on Home, then on My Dashboard, then My Youth Protection Training. The training course takes about half an hour and must be repeated every two years.

As important as this first step is, youth protection involves much more than just taking an online training course. Consider presenting a “Youth Protection Safety Moment” during one of your unit committee meetings, at which time you can discuss and identify potential situations which could allow abuse to occur. Although some might find this an uncomfortable discussion, the effort, if managed correctly, may help the leaders to prevent or identify abuse. Preventing the abuse of even one child is worth it.

- Consider and apply youth protection principles in all activities.
- Know and watch for signs of abuse.
- One form of abuse is bullying or hazing. Put a stop to such behavior immediately.
- Listen and be aware of what the boys in your Scouting group are doing and talking about. For additional information see “Stop It Now! Preventing sexual abuse among children and youth.”
- Review the Internet safety program utilized by the BSA at NetSmartz® Workshop and the BSA’s Cyber Chip website. Every year each Scout must satisfy the grade-appropriate Cyber Chip requirements for his Scouting program. All Cyber Chips will expire annually.
- Set an example of healthy safe interaction with others. Do not be afraid to set limits on what could become harmful behaviors.
- Finally, pray about the boys in your group. You are entitled to receive revelation and guidance for them. The Lord knows what is going on, and He will share that knowledge with you. Together we can make a difference in the life of a boy.

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**Growing Scouting in LDS Units**

Do you need help to grow your pack, troop, team, or crew? We have some great resources to help you with that! We have an instruction guide that can get you started when you are unsure about how to grow your unit.

- **Facilitators Guide**

Looking for just a bit more inspiration? Watch these videos from a few places around the country on our YouTube channel. Just click on the title:
LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar Held in Salt Lake City

By Nettie H. Francis, LDS-BSA Relationships Volunteer

Over 50 Scouting professionals and volunteers—from 18 councils across the nation—gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah, during October for the semi-annual LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar. Held each October and April, the three-day event coincides with the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The LDS-BSA Relationships office hosts the seminar and invites include council Key 3s and LDS-BSA Relationships chairmen. Participants tour key Church facilities, hear from Church and Scouting leaders, and attend two sessions of the Church’s general conference on Temple Square.

“The purpose of the seminar is to give key Scouters a vision of why and how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints uses Scouting. We want Church members and those of other faiths alike to understand how Scouting fulfills the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood and strengthens young men,” explains Mark Francis, LDS-BSA Relationships director.

The opening event was a Thursday evening training session at the Church Office Building with Brother M. Joseph Brough, first counselor in the Young Men general presidency. Brother Brough’s comments “set the tone for the weekend and were a nice introduction to the position and structure of the Church,” commented Jared Kerr, Denver Area Council.

The first stop on Friday morning was a tour at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. Attendees met with MTC President Dean Burgess and his wife, Annette, and learned more about the specific training young missionaries receive before going out into the world. President Burgess thanked the visitors for what they do in Scouting that specifically prepares young men to serve missions for the Church.

“The most impressive part of the MTC tour was seeing the maturity of the 18-year-old missionaries,” commented Andy Price, deputy Scout executive, Circle Ten Council (Dallas, Texas).

The group then traveled to the Bishop’s Central Storehouse in Salt Lake City where they had a training session on LDS-BSA relationships from Mark Francis, toured the storehouse, and enjoyed lunch. The afternoon was spent at the Family History Library. Participants also had time during the weekend to visit additional venues on Temple Square and watch Meet the Mormons.

Monica Webb of the Pikes Peak Council commented, “I highly enjoyed visiting the MTC, the Bishop’s Storehouse, and the Church Museum. Not only was the exploration of these places beneficial, but essential to a better understanding of the Church itself.”

Meals included visits and remarks from Young Men General President Stephen W. Owen, first counselor Douglas D. Holmes, and Primary general board member Ginny W. Smith.

Kent Downing, Scout executive from the Pikes Peak Council, commented, “It was a great benefit to hear directly from the top Church leaders who gave a unique perspective on how Scouting and the LDS Church can grow their partnership.”

On Saturday, seminar attendees viewed the morning session of general conference (live in the Conference Center). The brethren attended the general priesthood meeting later that evening.

“Everything was beneficial, culminating with the priesthood session. I would encourage council Key 3s to attend this event together with their council’s LDS-BSA relationships chairman,” recommended John Manz, Western Region Area 2 commissioner.

Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh has attended the seminar twice with his wife, Lisa. He commented, “The LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar offers a unique opportunity to gain a richer understanding of the work done by the Church in outreach to communities around the world.”

“The seminar provides Scouting professionals and volunteers one of the most inspirational experiences you will ever have in Scouting—not to be missed!”

Mike Surbaugh, Chief Scout Executive
October 2015
Growing Scouting – The Importance of Inviting

By Trent Zirker, a member of his ward’s Teachers quorum in the Highlands Ranch Colorado Stake

Two years ago our deacons quorum undertook a great transformation. At the time, we had three less-active members in the quorum. One of those less-active members was Cole, who was not baptized. His mom was baptized but left the Church at age 14 and his dad was never baptized.

Our deacons quorum’s amazing transformation started out when Cole was invited to attend Cub Scouts a few years earlier. He thought it sounded like fun so he came with one of his friends. As we advanced another year into Cub Scouts, Cole continued to come.

Pretty soon, Cole began coming to church. In the next few years he turned twelve and attended deacons quorum meetings, where I was serving as president. In one certain presidency meeting, we talked about all of the less-active members and how we could help them. Cole soon became the topic and we decided that he probably wanted to be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost and then receive the Aaronic Priesthood, but maybe he just did not know how. We made a plan. I would teach the next deacons quorum lesson with another quorum member about baptism.

In the next quorum meeting, the other brother and I taught the lesson about baptism and the Holy Ghost. Nearing the end of the lesson, my companion that I was teaching with put his attention to Cole and said," Cole, would you like to be baptized?” Cole responded, "Yes, I would actually love to be baptized.” I then added, ”Cole, would you like to receive the priesthood so that you can pass the sacrament with us once you are baptized?” To this he eagerly replied,” Yes! I have always wanted to pass the bread and the water with you guys.” My companion and I, along with the rest of the quorum, smiled at this.

Cole began taking the missionary discussions with his mom, dad, and younger brother. Soon after, Cole and his brother Dustin were baptized on the same day. Cole then received the priesthood. Later his dad was baptized and received the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. His whole family attends church every week and they are very active. Cole now serves as the deacons quorum president in his ward.

After having invited many friends to Church activities, I’ve found three great ways to help make the people you invite to Church activities more willing to come and more likely to be baptized and enjoy the same blessings of the gospel that we do now.

First, make sure that they have a friend to be with them at all activities they come to or are invited to. This may mean members making friends with them, or simply just seeing if they know anyone else from school or another club. This friend could—and should—be you.

In the Preach My Gospel handbook (page 168) it says, "[missionary work] involves listening to the Spirit to recognize opportunities for small, simple acts of kindness that you can offer to God’s children." This means being kind to those around you and listening to the Spirit to find more ways to be kind to others. This will help the nonmembers to feel more welcome and happy around Latter-day Saints. It will also help them make friends faster.

Second, when inviting friends make sure they know all of the details. When I was inviting multiple people to last year’s fall festival, I invited 30 or so friends to come. On the night of the festival no one showed up and I realized it was because I forgot to write on the invitation where the party was located. Make absolutely sure that this does not happen to you by remembering to put all of the details down and taking your time to be thoughtful of those who you are inviting.

And third, if your friend does say ”no,” don’t feel disappointed or discouraged. Usually they might say no because they may feel uncomfortable in a new environment. Sometimes they are just too busy. But don’t let that stop you; keep inviting them to Mutual, Church, Scout campouts, and other activities. Never give up on a person.

I know that when we follow these principles of the gospel and we serve our fellowman, then the lives of those around us will be blessed and our own lives will be blessed as well.