A Quality Scouting Program

By Mark Pendleton, Young Men general board member

As a parent, I could never overestimate the importance of having quality Aaronic Priesthood experiences and a vibrant, well-run Scouting program. Why? Because I had two sons who were at a critical stage in life and maturity, needing and deserving every positive opportunity for growth during those formative years of personal development. Knowing that these years would go by quickly, it was extremely important to me as a parent that those who were working with my sons were dedicated, admirable women and strong, exemplary priesthood men, well trained in their responsibilities and supported by an effective Scout committee and parents.

President Thomas S. Monson recognized the importance of Scouting when he stated: “If ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is the present generation” (Ensign, Nov. 1991).

The Church strongly supports Scouting as it continues to “help young men put into practice the gospel principles they learn on Sunday” (Handbook 2, 8.13.4). For further details on how you can "combine the practical with the theoretical" see Joseph Keeler’s 1906 edition of The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government. Developing a quality Scouting program can and should help accomplish this.

I’m grateful that it is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America “to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law” (BSA Mission Statement). Likewise, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints values these same principles, desiring that its young men utilize Scouting as one of the means to develop themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

The aims (i.e. objectives) of Scouting are character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness. These aims are reached through specific methods. Some of the methods of Scouting are the ideals (Scout Oath, Scout Law, Scout motto, and Scout slogan), patrol method, outdoors, advancement, association with adults, personal growth, leadership development, and uniform. Each of these methods has a specific purpose, and each unitedly builds on the others to accomplish the aims of Scouting. Proper training will help a leader stay focused on the larger objectives of the BSA and the goals of the Church Scouting program. It is imperative that we have well trained leaders who understand the role that Scouting plays in helping our young men to remain strong priesthood men—converted men—who will be better prepared to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, make temple covenants, serve honorable full-time missions, and give long-term service to God and their fellowmen. (See D&C 107:99.)

At the April 2016 LDS-BSA Relationships seminar Michael Surbaugh, the Chief Scout Executive for the Boy Scouts of America, stated that the two most important keys to a successful Scouting experience for young people are: first, to select the right person for each responsibility; and second, to have properly trained leadership. Leadership training provides adult leaders with fundamental information about the aims and methods of Scouting, as well as specifics about their particular roles in Scouting. I concur, and I would add a very important third item to his list. That would be to have involved and supportive parents or mentors for each young man. No program can reach its full potential without this additional reinforcement to the young man’s Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting experiences. Continued on pg. 2
The New Primary General Presidency

Article from Church News - Deseret News

The First Presidency announced a new Primary general presidency during the Saturday afternoon session of the 186th Annual General Conference on April 2.

Sister Joy D. Jones will serve as the new Primary general president with Sister Jean B. Bingham and Sister Bonnie H. Cordon as her counselors.

Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary general president

Joy Diane Harmon Jones was born July 20, 1954 in The Dalles, Oregon, to Aldo Harmon and Eleanor Ellsworth Harmon. Her father, an electrician, was her hero. “I felt like my dad could do anything,” she said. “My mom was an amazing woman,” Sister Jones said, describing how she made everything from the food they ate to the clothes they wore, from scratch. “To me, she was a saint and I wanted to grow up to be like her.” A childhood memory Sister Jones cherishes is listening to the words of a mission president, Robert L. Backman, now an emeritus General Authority Seventy, as he spoke in a district conference in Oregon. “I felt something very powerful when he was talking,” she said. “I felt something really different than I had felt before. ... I am so grateful for that because I received a witness from the Spirit that the things he was saying were true.”

Even though they both grew up in Oregon, Sister Jones first met Robert Bruce Jones at BYU. They were married on August 14, 1974, in the Manti Utah Temple. They have five children and 17 grandchildren.

Soon after, she earned an Associate of Science degree in Family Living. They moved to Portland Oregon, then to Santa Rosa, California, where Brother Jones practiced as a chiropractic physician. Brother and Sister Jones felt impressed to move to Draper, Utah, 22 years ago. Sister Jones said that the greatest blessing of moving to Utah was having a temple so near. “The Jordan River Temple became my sacred space. ... I have a testimony of the power of the temple and the peace and direction that it has brought me in my life.”

Sister Jones has served as a ward Relief Society and Primary president, and counselors in ward and stake Relief Society, Young Women and Primary presidencies. She has served most recently on the Primary General Board. She now serves as the Primary general president. Continued on pg. 3
Sister Jean B. Bingham, Primary general presidency—first counselor

For almost six years Sister Jean Barrus Bingham has loved serving in her calling on the Primary general board. She has visited the homes of members and attended Primaries around the country, witnessing the strong faith of Latter-day Saints—especially the Primary children—around the world.

Sister Bingham, who was recently sustained as the first counselor in the Primary general presidency, has spent much of her life teaching, nurturing and loving children. Whether it has been with her younger siblings growing up, her own two daughters, her foster daughters, grandchildren, visitors to her home or those she has met as a member of the Primary general board, she has been an advocate and source of strength for many.

"Every child has wonderful potential, and if we see them through Heavenly Father's eyes, we can help them become all that He has designed them to be," she said.

Born on June 10, 1952, in Provo, Utah, to Edith Joy Clark and Robert Rowland Barrus, Sister Bingham is the third of nine children. At just three months old, her family moved to Indiana to continue her father's schooling. In the first six years of her life, Sister Bingham moved with her family as they lived in four states.

After graduating high school in New Jersey, Sister Bingham moved to Provo, Utah, to attend Brigham Young University. In her second year there, she met her future husband, Bruce Bryan Bingham, a farm boy from Illinois who was baptized as a teenager with his parents. They were married on Dec. 22, 1972, in the Provo Utah Temple.

Her lifetime of Church service has included time as a ward Primary president, Young Women president, served twice as a counselor in a Relief Society presidency, stake Young Women president, temple worker and early morning seminary teacher.

"The pattern I have seen in her life, over our 43 years of marriage, is a consistent adherence to the promptings of the Spirit," Brother Bingham said of his wife. "She has, over and over, done what the Lord wanted her to do."

Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, Primary general presidency—second counselor

Throughout her childhood in southeast Idaho, Bonnie Hillam Cordon learned many important life lessons. Working, playing and living on a farm taught her self-reliance, hard work and "not to be afraid to try things," said the new second counselor in the Primary general presidency.

The most important lesson, however, came from her parents, Harold and Carol Rasmussen Hillam, who taught her that with the help of the Lord, she could do anything. "There are no limits," her father would say.

Sister Cordon relied on that knowledge as a newly called missionary in Lisbon struggling to learn Portuguese. "I was on my knees a lot asking for a miracle. But, because of my father, I had learned that I could do hard things."

After much prayer and work and patience, she slowly became fluent in Portuguese, which ended up being a blessing many years later when she and her husband were called to serve in Curitiba, Brazil.

"It's interesting how the Lord prepares us and builds us, a little at a time. It always makes more sense when we look in the rearview mirror. We just have to have faith."

Bonnie Hillam was born on March 11, 1964, in Idaho Falls, Idaho. After her mission she studied education at Brigham Young University. While there she became good friends with Derek Lane Cordon. Their friendship blossomed into romance and the two were married on April 25, 1986, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have four children — three boys and one girl - and three grandsons.

Through the years they have served in many Church callings. She served with her husband as he presided over the Brazil Curitiba Mission from 2010 to 2013, and she has served as a stake Young Women president, nursery leader, seminary teacher and in ward Young Women, Relief Society and Primary organizations.

In her new assignment, Sister Cordon said she hopes to teach one essential truth to the Primary children of the Church: "Heavenly Father loves them."
LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar Held in Conjunction With General Conference

by Nettie H. Francis

Over 60 Scouting professionals and volunteers—from 13 councils across the nation—gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah, during April for the semi-annual LDS-BSA Relationships Seminar. Held each April and October, 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 invitees include council Key-3s and LDS-BSA Relationships committee members. Participants tour key Church facilities, hear from Church and Scouting leaders, and attend two sessions of the Church's general conference.

“The purpose of the seminar is to give 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,” explained 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, second 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.

“It was the perfect springboard for a fantastic weekend,” recalled Rebecca Cook, a stake Primary president from Kansas. “Brother Brough had a commanding presence about him that was calming and kind, but bold and unapologetic as he proclaimed the truths of the gospel.”

Attendees also had the chance to mingle that evening with key Scouting leaders including Tico Perez, national commissioner, and Charles Dahlquist, incoming national commissioner.

The first stop on Friday morning was a tour at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. Attendees of non-LDS faiths met with MTC President Dean Burgess 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.

“It was impressive to see the bright, energetic young people at the MTC,” commented Mark Griffin, Scout executive of the Great Salt Lake Council.

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The group then traveled to Welfare Square and the Humanitarian Center in Salt Lake City for more tours and explanations of the outreach work done by the Church. 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.

Meals included visits and remarks from Young Men General President Stephen W. Owen, Young Men first counselor Douglas D. Holmes, and Erin Sanderson, a member of the Primary general board.

Two special presentations were made during the Friday evening meal. One to Mac McIntire who has written 75 Mac's Messages: blogs addressing Scouting in the Church for the LDS-BSA website. “Mac’s words and insights have influenced and touched thousands of LDS Scouters,” commented Mark Francis.

A leather bound copy of Century of Honor: 100 Years of Scouting in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was presented to Mike Surbaugh, Chief Scout Executive, and his wife, Lisa.

On Saturday the group attended the morning session of general conference in the Conference Center and the brethren attended the evening general priesthood meeting.

”The training in the seminar really gave me ideas to better our LDS-BSA Relationships committee,” commented David Moala, LDS-BSA Relationships chair from the San Francisco Bay Area Council. “It was well worth attending this event.”

“Participating in the seminar was a great venue to build relationships and strengthen service to our LDS Scouting program,” added Kent Downing, Pikes Peak Council Scout executive.

Chief Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh has attended the seminar three times 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!”
Safety Moment—Aquatic Safety

Contributed by LDS Risk Management Division

May is National Water Safety Month—“What? A whole month dedicated just to aquatic safety? Are you kidding me?” Those were my first thoughts until I started looking at the statistics.

“Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States. . . . About one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 and younger.” (“Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]. The CDC goes on to state that for every child who drowns another five receive emergency room care for nonfatal submersion injuries, which can result in severe brain damage or other long-term injuries (memory problems, learning disabilities, and, at the extreme, a permanent vegetative state).

As I evaluated Church and BSA statistics I found that drowning has been one of the top five fatalities over the last several years. So why doesn't the BSA simply avoid swimming altogether? That's an easy answer: Swimming and other water activities account for more than two-thirds of outdoor activities; swimming is the second leading recreational pastime. We have come a long way since the first municipal swimming pool was built in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1887. Now swimming pools are everywhere—hotels, homes, schools, and almost all municipalities. If we add swimming and boating in oceans, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, water activities can be conducted almost anywhere. Because swimming is a popular and enjoyable way to get exercise and recreation, and knowing how to swim can save lives, it has become one of the most popular Scouting activities.

So how do we make swimming safer?

- First, become educated about safe swimming, boating, and other aquatic activities by carefully reviewing the BSA’s most up-to-date version of Aquatics Safety in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Two other resources for water safety information are the American Red Cross and Safety.lds.org.

- Second, before every swimming or aquatic activity conduct a Safety Moment by reviewing the appropriate BSA aquatic safety policies and discussing the dangers inherent in your specific activity.

- Third, as with everything else, “get trained.” Take the appropriate online training: Safe Swim Defense, Safety Afloat, and Weather Hazards are all offered at my.scouting.org > Home > My Dashboard > Training Center > Other. Note this BSA policy: “Confirmation of training is required on tour and activity plans for trips that involve swimming.” Keep in mind that the certificates for these courses expire after two years and the course must be repeated.

Here are some other safety thoughts:

- A Tour and Activity Plan must be submitted “when conducting any of the following activities outside of council or district events [i.e. required for any outing or activity involving swimming or boating that is not sponsored by a district or council]: Aquatics activities (swimming, boating, floating, scuba, etc.)” The website lists where to access the Tour and Activity Plan (as a fillable or paper form).

- Learn to Swim!—Learning to swim is the best defense against drowning (Note the BSA’s requirements to be considered a “swimmer”: jump feet first into water over the head, level off, begin swimming, swim for 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

Continued on pg. 7
Know and obey the BSA’s eight Safe Swim Defense key safety points:

1. Qualified Supervision
2. Personal Health Review (each participant must have a BSA Annual Health and Medical Record).
3. Safe Area
4. Response Personnel (Lifeguards)
5. Lookout
6. Ability Groups (see the BSA’s definition of a swimmer indicated above)
7. Buddy System
8. Discipline

Swim near a lifeguard. United States Lifeguard Association statistics over a ten year period indicate that the chance of drowning at a beach without lifeguard protection is almost five times greater than at a beach with a lifeguard. For swimming pools those comparisons are even greater.

“Reach, Throw, Row, Go with support.” (BSA’s guidelines for water rescues).

When in a boat, all non-swimmers should wear a properly fitted Coast Guard personal flotation (PFD) device. Water wings, swim rings, and inflatable toys are not personal flotation devices.

No extended breath holding.

Obey posted signs and flags.

Learn rip current safety. Swim parallel to the beach and don’t fight a rip current.

Never swim during a thunderstorm. (Take Weather Hazards at my.scouting.org.)

Cryptosporidium, giardia, shigella, norovirus, and E. coli are all on the rise, especially in swimming pools. These are nasty bugs and care should be taken to avoid contact, especially from swallowing the water.

No unsupervised long swims.

Watch for hypothermia; cold water (even on warm days) can quickly chill the body core.

For larger groups have an emergency action plan.

Never, Never, Never swim alone!—This includes adults.

Water activities prohibited by the BSA: cliff jumping, parasailing, and kite surfing.

While this list may seem long and definitely a potential fun killer, upon closer examination most rules make eminent good sense. A safety moment tailored to the event will drive the safety concerns home to both the adult leaders and the youth participants. President Hinckley, although speaking to mission presidents, could just as well have been speaking to all youth leaders—particularly Scout leaders—when he said:

“Please, observe and teach habits of safety and well-being . . . safeguard those in your charge. As surely as this is the Lord’s work, so the adversary will do all that he can to injure and destroy. Brethren, you are the guardians of those sent to work under your direction. You must be aware of the hazards they face. You must do all you can, and you must observe these same practices yourselves to reduce injury” (Mission Presidents’ Seminar, June 27, 1997).

The aquatics program in your pack, troop, team, or crew needs to have dedicated and caring leaders who are trained in every aspect of their Scouting callings. President Hinckley reminded us of the important stewardship we have in protecting the youth we serve. The aquatics activities you and your Scouts participate in will help you experience exciting adventures, create lifelong memories, and afford many opportunities for the youth and leaders alike to grow and serve. Keep the guidelines of safety in your thoughts, in your actions, and in your prayers, so you and your boys will have a rewarding and happy quality experience in Scouting.
Stan’s EYO Scouting Blog #4: My EYO Experience

By Stan Stolpe, LDS-BSA Relationships EYO Blog (Published April 2015)

Sharing our Scouting experiences is one way we strengthen each other, so I thought I’d share one of my eleven-year-old (EYO) Scout experiences with you. Hopefully it will give you some ideas as you deliver on the promise of Scouting.

After the bishop extended this calling to me, I recall carefully and prayerfully pondering how best to put together an EYO Scout program that would ignite the boys with a life-long love of Scouting. I was moved to re-read the *LDS Scouting Handbook* (the one with the olive green cover). As I read, I was impressed with this guidance:

_Eleven-year-old boys meet separately from the Aaronic Priesthood–age Scouts because they are not yet part of a quorum. They preferably meet in the daytime, but if evening meetings are necessary, the boys should not be away from their homes late at night and must be carefully supervised until they return home._ (Boldface added for emphasis).

I knew meeting in the daytime would be a challenge, but decided to follow the counsel as written. I settled on the EYO Scouts meeting every other week at my house starting at 5:30 pm for 2 hours. I buried a cut-in-half 55-gallon drum in my back yard, we erected a dining fly, and we built a corral with a pioneering gateway and flag pole. With cut-in-half logs as seats around the campfire pit, it was a cozy campsite.

Once a month I met with the patrol leader and assistant patrol leader, and we planned in detail our two monthly patrol meetings and our one outing. Because we would be meeting at 5:30 for patrol meetings and missing dinner at home, I challenged the EYO patrol to cook quality dinners and desserts using Dutch ovens at our patrol meetings and outings. The Scouts would arrive at 5:30, start a camp fire and start the coals for the cooking fire as a pre-activity. Knowing that they could start a fire upon arrival always stimulated their excitement. We would then hold an opening ceremony raising the flag on the flag pole that was part of the corral.

They would then prepare dinner—and oh, what dinners they would prepare! I like great cooking so the recipes I would give them to prepare were things like jambalaya, rock-Cornish hens in a mustard-lemon sauce with peas and rice, Oregon Trail beef stew . . . you get the picture. After the first great meals, they were hooked on Dutch oven cooking and good eating.

While our meals cooked, we would turn our attention to the interpatrol activity working on other Scouting skills. The corral doubled as a hitching post and they built an ax yard for learning woods tools. Of course we would play Scout games, light the lanterns as the evening closed in, and then set the table to enjoy our Dutch oven meal. At the end of the evening, about 7:30 pm, we would close with prayer around the dying campfire—full of wood smoke, our tummies delighted, and comradery high. Parents would round the corner and chat for a while, then depart with their Scouts.

The result of this experience is that eight of nine boys made Eagle Scout. Within their year as EYO Scouts, each gained a love for Scouting and the outdoors rapidly mastering their First Class Scout skills. I was especially pleased that one was baptized and shared his testimony with his brother who also joined the Church. Both have attended BYU and both have served missions.

It was not easy to leave work early on those Wednesday afternoons. I was often torn but trusted that if I chose the right in serving the boys, that all would be wonderfully blessed. It always worked out well for me professionally, and it worked out well for the boys.

My hope in sharing this experience with you is that you will trust in taking your plan to the Lord and trust in the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I hope you will challenge yourself and lengthen your stride to build rich experiences that will last a lifetime with the youth in your charge and prepare them to be enthusiastic Scouts of the Aaronic Priesthood.

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Stan Stolpe has served in multiple Scouting positions at the unit, district, council, regional, and national levels in several different councils and overseas. His current positions include district roundtable commissioner, district Cub Scout training chairman, and assistant Scoutmaster for a new Scout troop. He resides in Alexandria, Virginia, serving in the Mount Vernon Virginia Stake. The views and opinions expressed in this message are solely those of the author.
The Inseparable Connection of LDS Scouting and the Priesthood

By Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Relationships Scout Blog

For seventy-five weeks my messages on the LDS-BSA Relationships blog were crafted to try to convince adult Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting leaders of the value of providing a quality Scouting experience for the young men of the Church. I particularly had hoped these leaders would see the imperative connection of using Scouting experiences as a significant means to achieve the eight purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood.

To me, Scouting is the perfect vehicle to give boys spiritual, conversion-promoting experiences that bring them closer to Jesus Christ so they will want to live His teachings. Scouting offers a laboratory for boys to magnify their priesthood duties, especially in providing meaningful service to others. The Scout motto, “Be Prepared”, is a constant reminder that young men need to prepare themselves to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, make temple covenants, serve an honorable full-time mission, and become a worthy husband and father. The educational experiences of earning merit badges and rank advancements teach boys to study hard, persevere, and achieve worthwhile goals, such as the goal of obtaining as much education as possible. And the twelve values espoused in the Scout Law are those a young man should emulate as he interacts with others, especially women, girls, and children.

Yet, far too frequently I still hear reports of local Church leaders who say, “We don’t do Scouting; we do priesthood things instead.” I also hear about leaders who purposely separate their Scouting activities from their priesthood activities, confining priesthood to Sunday and Scouting to one night per week and an occasional campout. Somehow they have not yet gained an appreciation—or testimony—of the inseparable value of Scouting and the priesthood. They apparently have not learned that LDS Scouting is all about priesthood. In reality there is no Scouting program in the Church; there is only an Aaronic Priesthood program that uses Scouting experiences as its “activity arm.”

I hope that adult Aaronic Priesthood leaders are helping the young men in their quorums to have quality priesthood experiences. I also hope they are equally concerned about helping the young men to have quality Scouting experiences that consciously tie every Scouting activity, outing, principle, and practice to priesthood purposes. I hope adult leaders are inspiring their boys to feel as eager to be ordained to a priesthood office as they are to obtain a Scouting rank, or vice versa. I hope they teach their boys that they should feel as proud wearing their Scout uniform as they do their missionary white shirt, or vice versa. I hope the boys are eagerly involved in planning and leading their Scouting activities, as this is great preparation for planning their days, weeks, and months in the mission field. I hope the boys want to do the hard things in Scouting, knowing they will be required to do hard things as future Melchizedek Priesthood holders, missionaries, college students, husbands, and fathers.

When I was four-years-old, my grandmother crocheted for me a pair of slippers. When she gave them to me I was in a bad mood and I rejected her gift, throwing the slippers down on the floor as I stormed off. That was almost sixty years ago and I still feel horrible for rejecting such a precious gift from my loving grandmother. I believe Scouting is a precious gift from a loving Father in Heaven to his precious young men. My hope is that every adult Young Men leader in the Church would be in the proper mood (Spirit) to receive this Scouting gift and implement it fully. I hope none would reject Scouting and “storm off” to do the Lord’s priesthood program some other way.

Scouting has been accepted by modern-day prophets because they see how it can contribute to nurturing strong young men of character who exemplify Christlike qualities as they fulfill their Aaronic Priesthood duties. I pray that we will help our boys to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32) by providing quality priesthood and Scouting experiences that are inseparably connected, as they should be. I know that the quality of our boys—future priesthood leaders in the Church—is determined by the quality of our leadership and the faithful fulfillment of our stewardship over them. May the Lord bless us in our efforts!
Varsity Blog #1 - Learn the Varsity Method for LDS Teams—Live the Philmont Dream

by Bry Davis, Great Salt Lake Council

“Dad, can we come back here next year? This was the best family vacation ever!” The Philmont Training Center doesn’t claim to be a Disney vacation, but Varsity Scouters and their families discover that even more fun, learning, adventure, and “together time” can happen at the Philmont Training Center (referred to as PTC). And when you add Varsity Orange to the week, the fun and excitement just get better. Such were the feelings after the first Varsity Scouting for LDS Leaders Conference held in 2015. Springboarding off last year’s success, the 2016 Varsity Scouting Conference, titled “Leading Varsity Scouting in LDS Teams,” promises to be an even better family vacation, mountain-top training experience, and PTC high adventure for Varsity Scout leaders and their families.

Philmont Training Center is located in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northern New Mexico. Scouters and their families gather each summer to experience the magic of Philmont. Waite Phillips donated his ranch property to the BSA in 1938, with the dream that Scouts would come from all over the world to experience the adventures of the outdoors. He truly believed that the only things you really keep are the things you give away. His dream has been fulfilled again and again since 1938. There are over 140,000 acres with trails, outback camps, a working ranch, family camp cities, and wonderful training facilities. The whole family can experience horseback riding, archery, hiking, making crafts, sitting around campfires, and even touring the Waite and Genevieve Phillips Villa Philmont.

During Varsity Conference week, July 31 through August 6 (Philmont Week 9), Varsity Scouters begin their adventure with an introduction to Varsity Scouting specifically for LDS teams. How Varsity Scouting works hand in glove with the Aaronic Priesthood, strengthening teachers quorums, is a main focus of the instruction. The model team is formed with adult leaders being assigned to squads. The squad method is one of the foundations of Varsity Scouting. Each member of the squad is important and the duties, stewardship, and leadership are learned and practiced. During the day the team members gather in classroom settings and out of doors to learn how the Varsity program works. Varsity Scouting is designed to give every Scout opportunities to improve Scouting skills, to practice Scouting values using the Varsity aims and methods, and to operate the team program through the five fields of emphasis. Using the squad method makes the learning fun and exciting. In the evenings families gather back together to relax, share their experiences, and enjoy the tent city cracker barrels.

Both the PTC staff and the Varsity Conference week staff are ready to help you enjoy the best vacation ever. Please mark the week of July 31 through August 6, 2016, on your calendar. Visit the Philmont Scout Ranch Conferences 2016 website to register. Go to Week 9 and click on “Leading Varsity Scouting in LDS Teams.” Contact Steve Baugh stevencbaugh@gmail.com for more information.

Click here for the current version of the handbook
Welcome to LDS Venturing Blog #1

by David A. Wilson, LDS Liaison to the Western Region Venturing Committee

Welcome to the first “blog” (article, musings, thoughts, opinions, or whatever you want to call it) regarding the relationship between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Venturing program of the BSA (with a strong emphasis on the Western Region). I’m a bit excited, scared, unsure, overjoyed, and whole lot of emotions in-between as I begin this assignment. This is a new venture for me as I am NOT a blogger in any way, shape, or form. However, at this time there is a need to reach out to those involved in Venturing and build some bridges, communicate ideas, share information and best practices, and (hopefully) gain inspiration for LDS Venturing leaders.

The purpose of this blog is to provide a venue that can be used by all in some small way to work on strengthening the Venturing program within the Church, as well as help LDS Venturing leaders with some creative ideas and tools to enhance their program. The emphasis (i.e. focus) will be on those living in the Western Region. Why the emphasis on the Western Region? Simply because LDS wards sponsor over 85% of the Scouting units in the Western Region. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Scouting’s biggest customer in that region and their interests, concerns, and desires should be given some attention. But that doesn’t mean that the information shared within this blog is only for the Western Region. Not at all! The more people who share information, the better for all of us. I firmly believe in “R&D” (Rip-off & Duplicate). If something down the road that was shared either by me or others might work for you—go for it! Use it, adjust it to fit your needs, put it on hold for now, or forget about it. It’s all up to you.

Let me give you some background on this assignment, and what I hope to see happen as we all move forward. This blog is being written as part of a newly developed Western Region Scouting assignment—“LDS Liaison to the Western Region Venturing Committee.” Critical background information contained in the job description for this assignment is as follows:

First and foremost it must be stated that this position is NOT an ecclesiastical position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the liaison has no authority to speak for the Church unless specifically authorized by the Church leadership on a case-by-case basis. It is a Scouting position which has been created with the intent of building stronger communication paths, strengthening relationships, and “building bridges” between the Church and the Venturing program within the Western Region of the Boy Scouts of America.

This liaison works to achieve mutual understanding and a unity of effort by coupling the Venturing program with the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood in order to build strong young men in all areas of their lives. The liaison is positioned to provide technical or subject-matter expertise on all aspects of the Venturing program as it relates to and interacts with the Church’s Young Men program and purposes within the Western Region.

Venturing is an activity that, when coupled with the Church’s purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood, will bless the lives of the young men, their families, their respective quorums, and the community. The bottom line is to emphasize that the young men (ages 16 through 17) in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are strongly encouraged to DO Venturing, continue on in their personal Duty to God, and to fulfill the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood.

There you have it. This is not "My Blog" but "Our Blog." Nor is this the venue for rants or gripes. It’s going to be structured in such a manner as to build all of us up and to be able to move forward in a positive manner for the ultimate benefit of those we serve—the Venturers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

With all that being said, let’s put our shoulders to the wheel and move forward.
Nationwide Service Project: “Finding the Fallen”

Help preserve all of the veteran memorials and headstones throughout the United States

What Is the “Finding the Fallen” Project?

The men and women of the past sacrificed to make America great, and many gave their lives for their country. This summer Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers have the unique opportunity not only to “help other people at all times” but to help other people FROM all times. Saturday, July 30, 2016, has been designated as the day for “Finding the Fallen.” We invite you and your troop, team, or crew to do a good turn by doing your part on this important day.

The Boy Scouts of America, in conjunction with the United States Armed Forces and BillionGraves, will be honoring the sacrifice of the brave men and women who have given their lives in defense of our freedom. You can help honor their sacrifice by ensuring that they are never forgotten. By joining in the project, you and your Scouting unit will serve these heroes by photographing and logging the GPS locations of the headstones and markers in our national cemeteries and uploading them to the BillionGraves.com website.

After the photographs are uploaded, you, along with many other volunteers, will have the opportunity to transcribe the records. Once completed these records will be accessible to the public via BillionGraves.com and other genealogical sites for free. The free BillionGraves GPS app will guide anyone to these gravesites allowing those who have fallen to be found. The general public will be able to add photos, obituaries, histories and other tributes to the various records as they wish, thus ensuring our veterans are never forgotten.

This is a great way to complete requirement #7 for the Citizenship in the Community merit badge or requirement #2 for the Citizenship in the Nation merit badge. Many Scouts have used this as their Eagle Scout project. BillionGraves provides great resources to ensure a positive leadership experience for the Eagle Scout candidate.

How Do You Get Started?

Decide today to help honor these brave men and women on Saturday, July 30, 2016. BillionGraves will have all of the information you need to help you plan your participation in the “Finding the Fallen Project.” You can find out more by clicking here: https://billiongraves.com/finding-the-fallen or watch this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7irwgRKuEbw

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