Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell drew heavily on his military training to inform his views about how to train and motivate young men. He had been in war with young men barely older than Scouting age, and had found that through training they could become resilient and inspired men. To those who would train such youth, he said, "Success in training the boy depends largely on the [leader's] own personal example," ("Pearls of Wisdom—Quotes from Baden-Powell").

For two weeks in June and July 2016, over 300 priesthood leaders converged on Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico. Many brought their families, as if in response to the general's call to set an example of lifelong learning while striving to become better leaders.

Classes and workshops at this expanded Priesthood Leadership Conference were taught by the general presidencies of the Primary and Young Men, Young Men general board members, and professional Scouters. The conference activities were designed to invite creative and inspired responses to issues and opportunities confronting the modern Scouter or Church leader.

The purposes and mechanisms of Scouting were explored in detail to help align Scouting and priesthood initiatives around the building of faith and spiritual identity. Many stories emerged. A bishop from Colorado told of worrying about a particular priest. He had an impression to have a load of rocks delivered to his house. He hired the boy to help him wheelbarrow the pile to the other side of his yard. He then 'changed his mind' and they moved them to a third location providing many more hours of time to work and talk. Some years later, when the boy returned from his LDS mission, he said that what had turned his life from his early patterns was "a pile of rocks."

The encampment at Philmont was an opportunity for leaders to fully engage in a secluded, uninterrupted setting to contemplate the importance of their individual stewardships. They learned to follow President David O. McKay's admonition: "There is no greater responsibility in the world than the training of a human soul."

Aside from formal instruction, Philmont training also invited leaders to do some of the things that Scouts do to build righteous routines and holy habits. Many engaged in hiking, rafting, singing, skits, handicrafts, and sports, all in the majestic southwestern setting of the Philmont Ranch.

Young Men General President Stephen W. Owen and his wife Jane seemed to agree with General Baden-Powell's advice that "We do not want to make Scout training too soft" ("Pearls of Wisdom—Quotes from Baden-Powell"). They led two excursions of leaders to the summit of the "Tooth of Time," an historic mountain peak landmark. The first week sojourn included the Primary general presidency and a drenching summer downpour in the middle of the six-mile assault, with the always-hoped-for result of closer relationships of trust garnered through shared adventure. Continued on pg. 2
Seeds of Leadership
by Joy D. Jones, Primary General President

I have learned so much in recent months as I’ve attended the National BSA meetings, the Thomas S. Monson Leadership Excellence Complex Groundbreaking at Summit Bechtel Reserve, and Philmont Scout Ranch for the two weeks of the LDS Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting. I have been deeply inspired as I’ve listened to great leaders repeatedly declare the vital role and significance of early leadership opportunities they experienced in their lives.

As we view our Cub Scouts, Webelos Scouts, and eleven-year-old Scouts, do we envision them as future leaders? Do we recognize their potential? Are we planting seeds in these young boys to help them seek, embrace, and enjoy leadership opportunities?

Scouting has given us clarification of what these “seeds of leadership” might be. They include keeping your word, being fair, setting an example, praising each other for a job well done, asking for help, teamwork, using each other’s strengths, not trying to do it all alone, being reliable, keeping each other informed, encouraging others to participate, being responsible, caring for each other, helping to plan meetings and activities, supporting and assisting leaders, etc.

President Thomas S. Monson said, “The need for strong, capable leadership is critical today, both in Scouting and in the world generally.” He reminds us of the “need to provide solid foundations upon which our youth can build their lives and serve God, country, and their fellowmen” (June 15, 2016, groundbreaking ceremony at the Summit).

Ask yourself, “What can I do in our next meeting or activity to help the boys have a leadership experience?” Leadership opportunities early in life prepare boys for leadership throughout their entire lives--as Scouts, as priesthood holders, as missionaries, as husbands, and as fathers. I encourage you to teach and model good leadership skills when you are working with the boys. They will learn from your good example and act accordingly when they are given opportunities to lead others. These opportunities are their seeds of leadership.
I just got back from the first and second week of a Sunday-friendly Wood Badge course where I served as the senior patrol leader. Wood Badge has a magic all its own that inspires adults to lengthen their stride and achieve excellence in Scouting. It is the local council’s “top of the ladder” in training.

Participating in Wood Badge made me think how important training is in delivering on the promise of Scouting. When we deliver the promise of Scouting, we help each young man to learn how to make moral and ethical decisions, to practice leadership skills, and to gain self-confidence.

I have always found training with Scouters to be fun, and it has always made a difference in the delivery of the program to the boys. How a boy feels about the Church has a great deal to do with what he experiences in Church settings. As the eleven-year-old (EYO) Scout leader, you have an impact on how the boy sees and feels about the Church in the program you deliver and how you respect and treat him has an impact on how he sees and feels about the Church. To that boy, you represent the Church, and you represent Scouting. Being a trained leader allows you to be perceived as someone who meets the same high standards that are required of the boy when he says, “On my honor, I’ll do my best . . . .” When we raise our hand to the square with them we are making the commitment to do our best for them. The more we know, the more we improve our skills, the better program we will have for the boys.

The Boy Scouts of America has made it easier for the EYO Scout leader to get the required training they need. At My.Scouting.org and through E-Learning, you can take Youth Protection Training, Fast Start Training Boy Scouts, and supplemental training such as Hazardous Weather, Safe Swim Defense, and Safety Afloat.

Other training that is essential to your position is Scoutmaster Position-Specific Training (for Scoutmasters and assistant Scoutmasters) and Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills (IOLS). At leader position-specific training you will learn practical ways to instill the eight methods of Scouting into your EYO Scout meetings.

At IOLS, you will receive a hands-on program that gives adult leaders the practical outdoor skills they need to lead Scouts in the out-of-doors. Imagine having firsthand knowledge of: setting up a campsite, pitching a tent, hiking, outdoor cooking—all the skills necessary to see the outdoor program of the Boy Scouts of America come to life.

Most of all, you will learn how to train your Scouts. EYO Scout leaders do not just present program, they teach and develop leadership in the Scouts of the EYO Scout patrol. We need to teach Scouts to communicate effectively, how to be an effective teacher, how to control the group, how to plan, how to represent the group, and sharing leadership through techniques such as telling, persuading, delegating, consulting, and joining.

The 2012 BSA’s Guide to Leader Training (511-028) puts it this way:

A trained leader is knowledgeable and more confident in the role being performed. Trained leaders exhibit a knowledge and confidence that is picked up by people around them. Trained leaders impact the quality of programs, leader tenure, youth tenure, and a whole lot more. A trained leader is better prepared to make the Scouting program all it can be!

As we prepare youth to become priesthood holders and work and serve in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they feel connected to the Church because of the experience we deliver. We deliver powerful programs when we have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do so. Strengthen your programs by attending as many BSA training courses as you can.
Mac’s Message #7: Become a Trained Scout Leader

By Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Relationships Scout Blog Published October 2014

One would never jump into the pilot seat of a cargo plane and try to fly it without first reading the manuals and getting fully trained in piloting skills. Yet many Young Men leaders jump into their Scouting position with no intention of getting properly trained when they’ve been given stewardship for the most precious cargo of all—the Lord’s young men.

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the [Young Men] office in which he is appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand.” (D&C 107: 99-100).

I hope you will read the above scripture over and over and heed its counsel. These two verses are the final admonition in section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants—one of the priesthood sections that every priesthood holder, particularly Young Men leaders, are counseled to study.

I plead with you to take your Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting callings seriously. When you accepted the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods you took an oath and made a covenant to magnify your calling. The best way I know to magnify your Scouting calling is to become fully trained in your leadership position.

In the LDS Scouting Handbook it says, “Young Men and Primary leaders who are called to Scouting responsibilities should receive training in Scouting principles, policies, and procedures as used by the Church. Trained Scout leaders who understand and live the gospel, understand priesthood governance, and understand the Scouting program are better able to serve young men and boys involved in Scouting activities.” (Scouting Handbook for Church Units in the United States, 2.0). Scout leaders are considered trained when they complete Youth Protection, leader-specific training, and Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills. These courses represent the minimum training you should attend if you wish to learn your duty and magnify your calling.

This BSA link will help you determine which training you should complete for your specific calling.

In my opinion the best training you can attend to learn how to pilot your Scouting unit successfully is Wood Badge for the 21st Century. Wood Badge is the premier leadership training in Scouting. This powerful training causes the light bulb to go on for many Young Men leaders. I know your young men will be better served if you attend Wood Badge soon after you are called to your Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting calling.

I dream of the day when bishops will call new Young Men leaders properly, insisting they get fully trained within the first few months of being set apart. It would be wonderful if our Scout councils and districts were inundated with requests for more training from LDS Scouting leaders.

Take a Moment to Reflect

- Have you learned your duty as an Aaronic Priesthood and Scout leader? Are you truly magnifying your calling?
- What will you start doing, stop doing, or do better as a result of your reflection?
- Have you been fully trained in your Scouting position?
- Have you attended Wood Badge training? If not, when will you commit to go to Wood Badge?
- Do you attend monthly roundtable meetings and participate fully in the experience?

Turn Your Reflection into Action

- What will you start doing, stop doing, or do better as a result of your reflection?

“Training is essential to understanding Scouting and feeling confident that we can implement the program. Training motivates us to succeed because as we develop a degree of mastery, we gain confidence that we really can be successful Scout leaders.” (David L. Beck, Young Men general president, “Capturing the Vision of Scouting,” Ensign, June 2012)
Have you ever wondered how to keep a Varsity (or Boy Scouting or Venturing) program running smoothly for long periods of time—years, maybe decades? When I say "running smoothly," I of course mean a program that consistently builds character and leadership within the young men, preparing them for a life of meaningful service. If your experience is like mine, you may have witnessed several programs that go through spurts of success, mingled with periods of ineffectiveness. Those periods of success are likely spurred by a dynamic adult leader, but alas, that person either moves out of the ward or is called to another position within the Church. Now what? How do we ensure sustainability and continuity within the Boy Scouting, Varsity, and Venturing programs, even in the face of this inevitable change? Within the Church we strive to maintain long-tenured adult Scouting leaders—this is the ideal, yet in many situations it is difficult to put into practice. Even with change there are ways to ensure continuity for our young men in the form of a highly effective program.

The key is training. Not just training of the Varsity Coach (or Scoutmaster or Venturing Advisor), but of all those individuals who work with the Aaronic Priesthood quorums. There are nine to twelve adult men who should be completely trained, including Wood Badge training, within each ward: three bishopric members, three YM presidency members, and three to six YM advisers. The committee chair(s), male or female, should also be trained. With this kind of trained depth within a ward’s leadership, the ability to sustain long-term success in our Scouting units will be strengthened.

The Lord thinks "generationally." His eyes are not just upon the current generation, but upon those future generations as well. His timing and timetables transcend our finite comprehension, but we can and should use His approach as an example. Within our assignments as Scouting leaders for Aaronic Priesthood-age youth, are we focusing only on young men ages twelve to eighteen? Or are we doing things with an eye toward the upcoming youth: Sunbeams, Valiants, and CTRs? I promise that as we open our vision, the way we do things will change. Our purpose and actions deepen, and our ability to impact lives for good increases, now and in the future.

Let me give you an example of a training experience that can provide this type of "vision." It is the Philmont course "Leading Varsity Scouting in LDS Teams." Last summer I attended this course. It was a special week for my family. This week-long course, taught by many Varsity Scouting "pioneers," provided the opportunity for me to learn and grow, not only as a Scouter, but also as a husband and father. This course, along with Wood Badge, widened my vision of how Scouting prepares our young leaders and supports priesthood quorums. I learned with greater clarity how I could be a more effective mentor. It inspired me to be a builder of boys, not just the ones currently in the team, but also the ones who would arrive in the coming years. And this is not all. It was FUN! My family frequently asks when we are going back—it was a special time for them, and a wonderful family memory.

I would encourage each of us, within our sphere of influence, to bolster the vision of our Young Men leaders, by ensuring not just training depth, but also breadth in the form of many trained leaders. By so doing, we ensure an effective program now and a greater measure of continuity in the future.

6.0 Scouting in Primary. In Primary, the Faith in God program should be coordinated with Scouting to lay a foundation that prepares a boy to keep his baptismal covenants, better serve his family, and receive the priesthood. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that activities accomplish gospel-centered purposes.

Scouting supports boys and their families by giving boys an additional opportunity to put into practice the gospel principles they learn at home and in Primary. Parental involvement is a key to success in this program. Scouting also provides boys with leadership opportunities and helps them develop habits and attitudes of good citizenship.

Scouting activities and meetings for Primary age boys are preferably held weekly in the daytime. Meetings may be held at the meetinghouse, in a home, or in an outdoor setting and should open and close with prayer.

6.1 Cub Scouting for Boys Ages 8 to 10. When properly carried out, Cub Scouting is a fun, home-centered activity program. No Scout sponsored overnight camping should be planned for boys under age 11. Details for Cub Scout programs are published by the BSA and are available through BSA local council offices.
LDS Venturing Blog #3—Learn, Act, Share

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

I want to keep this blog entry simple and easy. But with that being said, I hope that each of you associated with the Venturing program will look at the myriad of ways you can incorporate these three words seamlessly into your program: **Learn, Act, Share.**

Be creative, innovative, and daring! Think about the manner the Savior taught during His earthly ministry. Think about the “new” curriculum format the Church is using with our youth (“Teaching the Gospel In The Savior’s Way (A Guide to Come. Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth” [2012]). Now—go for the brass ring! Stretch out, and using your best judgements and decisions, do something! I don’t have all the answers, but I have a few ideas that you can use as seeds to help you. As time progresses and I review the various responses, comments, and ideas from you, I’ll work them into future blogs as a way to share with everyone. It’s that R&D (Rip-off & Duplicate) I mentioned in an earlier blog.

The Lord has commanded, “Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99).

**Learn:**

We are always learning things. Much of this learning is accomplished through “experiential-venturing”. Cool, huh. Adapting a well-known scriptural phrase: we “Go and Do,” and then report back on what we did. In the Church, our Venturing youth have the opportunity to learn correct principles through the “new” teaching process mentioned above, called “Come, Follow Me,” or teaching in the Savior’s way. We have been asked to teach as the Savior taught. For more details on this process, I encourage you to visit these websites: A Guide to Come, Follow Me, and Teaching in the Savior’s Way.

Each of us learns things in different ways. Some do best through the reading of books, others learn by watching, and others like to work in a group setting. In Venturing, we strive to use a lot of venues to learn and teach. We learn to put our duty to God into our daily lives and make it more than just a Sunday event. One Scout leader stated, “Many of our young men don’t have the opportunity to connect with others. They don’t have strong family ties, they may not make friends easily, or don’t fit in well at school. Scouting provides an atmosphere where these youth can fit in with their peers. Our leaders try to do a variety of activities that interest all of the youth. These leaders teach through example.”

In order to learn, we need to know what we teach. This means we need to get trained! Yes, I know that this takes time and effort, but I want to ask each of you, “Aren’t the lives of these young men worth this time and effort?” We attend various training meetings in the Church in order to perform our assignments to the best of our abilities. Well, we should bite the bullet and do the same with Venturing! Let me share what the BSA is currently working on to help make one part of this training easier for all. At this point in time Venturing is working to refine (i.e. simplify) the Venturing Advisor Position-Specific Training. Yes, this is the truth. It’s not finished yet, but it will soon be available for all to take this training in a user-friendly and short-time-period format. I don’t know when this will roll out, but it is coming. Stay tuned!

Now for a couple of simple questions for us to ponder and reflect upon:

- How do you learn?
- How do your Venturers learn?

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**Act:**

Now it’s time to move your feet! Scripturally, this is Nephi’s statement: “I will go and do” ([1 Nephi 3:7](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/nt/1-ne/3.7)). Venturing has been designed to be **action oriented**. This is not a lecture type of program; this a **doing** program for these older youth. The BSA has stated it better than I could: “Venturing is an adventure with a purpose. It fosters positive attitudes toward service while helping young adults to develop camaraderie and leadership skills—and most of all to have FUN! It’s all about doing **something.**” We want our Venturers to develop leadership skills through action. Venturers learn to lead through adventures and service projects. They develop self-reliance as their skills in doing something are refined and sharpened. They are **doing** Venturing. It’s not something static; it is action!

This portion of LDS Venturing is where you get to take these principles learned in Church, home, school, or wherever, and put these principles into action. Service projects, campouts, STEM events, youth conferences, and “doing hard things” are just a few ways we act. Venturing provides us with the opportunity to do the tough things in life, gain confidence, and prepare for the future. The Church has helped make this a bit easier for all youth through the development of its web-based **Youth Activities page**. This is a resource that has already been developed to benefit the youth of the Church. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. It’s all there for you. How will you act? Click on the “Browse Ideas” button under “Plan with a Purpose” for ideas. It’s just that simple.

Now for a couple of simple questions for us to ponder and reflect upon:

- What do the Venturers want to do?
- How are you going to “Do Venturing”?

**Share:**

Since its inception Venturing has been all about learning new things, experiencing them, and then helping to teach others what you have learned. The Venturer gets the opportunity to “give back.” This is more than just going out and doing a single service project; it’s designed to be an integral part of the Venturer’s life. We see the personal growth and development of the Venturing youth when they get to share the excitement of Venturing with others. In a spiritual sense, this is also a time for reflection and the sharing of testimonies. Being around a campfire and staring up at the stars can provide an excellent opportunity for the sharing of testimonies, both verbally and through the spirit, as well as sharing the inner feelings about the day’s experiences. Sharing is a time for all to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Now for a couple of simple questions for us to ponder and reflect upon:

- How do you as a Venturing leader of youth “share” Venturing?
- **Venturing is Priesthood in Action**—How are you sharing this with other youth and adults?

As a final “help” for all, I encourage you to re-read “**Help the Young Men,**” found in **Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders.**
Safety Moment—Outdoor Hazards: Objective And Subjective

Contributed by LDS Risk Management Division

Education for outdoor dangers can be learned in multiple ways; probably the least effective is from personal experience. The problem with learning by *experience* is that the test comes before the lesson. Unfortunately, at times that kind of education can be deadly. Learning from others’ experiences, otherwise known as “training,” presents a much safer alternative.

To understand the hazards of the outdoors it is first necessary to understand what is meant by *hazards*. There are two types of outdoor hazards to anticipate when planning high adventure activities. The first is the *objective* hazard, which includes risks that are usually apparent or obvious (sometimes called *inherent risks*). Objective hazards can happen to anyone and are unaffected by one’s personal abilities. They would exist whether you were there or not. Examples include lightning, cliffs, fast moving water, and snow in winter (at least in non-temperate zones).

*Subjective* hazards, on the other hand, are more difficult to identify and are hard to quantify. They are typically human-caused occurrences and can usually be controlled or at least minimized. The focus of this article will be on subjective hazards. Many of the basic principles discussed below come from a wonderful book by Dave Anderson, *Outdoor Hazards—Avoiding Trouble in the Backcountry* (*Backpacker Magazine Series*, Falcon Guides, 2012).

The first subjective hazard refers to the concept of preparation, more commonly referred to as planning, or the lack thereof, actually. For example, “no planning” is what happens on Wednesday when the decision to go camping is for Friday. Planning is critical to hazard reduction; there will be more specific guidance on proper planning in future articles. However, for our purpose there are two parts of planning. The first part is planning for the activity itself, including discussions about where we are going, what the actual activity is, who the drivers are, what food we need, and what equipment is necessary. Unfortunately the second aspect of planning is far too often overlooked—are we properly prepared for the activity?

Lack of proper preparation is the first, and often the most critical, link in the causal chain that can lead to serious injuries or even death in an activity. Proper preparation is especially crucial in the backcountry, where rescue might be delayed or even impossible. In the context of this article, lack of preparation can be simply stated as “getting in over your head.” Examples include doing something where there is a lack of the requisite technical skills, improper equipment or not understanding how to use the equipment, failing to understand the weather, inadequate or improper food and water, little or no shelter, improper clothing or footwear (remember those nasty blisters from the new boots?), or even something as simple as the overweight pack (remember that Scout who thought the six pack of Mountain Dew was a necessity on the 50 miler?). The Church has produced an informative video titled *Safety Through Planning and Relying on the Spirit* (*accessible at the Church’s Safety and Health website*, where you will find a great deal of additional information about safety issues).

Being properly prepared for the activity means asking your Scouts and yourself many questions.

- Do my boys and I have the requisite skills to actually do the activity?
- Do we have the right equipment and, more importantly, do we know how to use it?
- Do we have too much or too little equipment and is the equipment in good condition?
- Do we have proper navigation skills? It’s amazing how easy it is to get lost, even a quarter mile from camp.
- Are we (both adults and youth) in proper physical condition for the activity (see the Safety and Health website)? A 50 miler requires a much different level of conditioning than a video game contest.
- Am I aware of any pre-existing medical conditions for anyone in my group? Have the individuals with medical issues properly managed those pre-existing medical conditions?
- Have the participants taken the time to acclimate themselves to be ready for extreme temperatures or changes in altitude?
- Am I aware of the fears or phobias of my leaders or youth?
- Who is the expedition (yes, think of it that way) leader? Who makes the decisions? Is this a democracy or a dictatorship?
- Have we submitted a *Tour and Activity Plan* (required if the outing includes aquatics, shooting, climbing, etc.)?

These are just some of the important subjective questions which should go into a proper activity plan.

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I remember the first time (and only time) I drove a car in Manhattan; hey, I had driven in California! I thought I was well prepared—I barely survived the experience! A whole new skill set was required, a skill set I did not have; and I was fortunate to have come out of it intact. Dave Anderson describes those headed to the outdoors as falling into one of five categories: "novice, beginner, proficient, expert, and master" (Outdoor Hazards, 8). Mr. Anderson goes on to define each category, beginning with the novice.

- The novice does not know what he does not know.
- In contrast, beginners at least recognize they lack the proper skills and knowledge to engage in the activity.
- Someone who is proficient, on the other hand, possesses the necessary skills, but the application of those skills must be consciously applied ("I have to think about it; does the rope go over or under?").
- The expert possesses skills which are so well developed that they become automatic.
- The master maintains his automatic competence by reflecting back on his skills in order to make improvements.

One other thing that makes the novices and beginners so vulnerable to accidents is they often lack a basic understanding of the safety principles necessary to complete the activity safely. Most of our youth and many of our adult leaders fall into these first two categories.

The chain of causation for accidents also includes not having the right equipment or knowing how to use it; sometimes having too much equipment can be just as bad as not having enough. Having the most up to date GPS is worthless unless you are competent in its use; otherwise it is just dead weight.

We in Church Risk Management have witnessed far too many situations where boys and leaders became lost, in many instances due to lack of proper navigation skills. Learn how to read a map and compass, and yes, you can use your GPS! But if you don’t bring these tools with you, even if you think the trail is well marked, the risk of getting lost grows exponentially. Never, never get separated from your group and especially from your buddy!

Church Risk Management has made a delightful video (Get in Shape) that unfortunately may strike too close to home for many of us. One of the leading causes of death in the Boy Scouts is from heart attack; and no, 14-year-olds do not pose a significant risk in this regard, but the adults reading this article are more likely to be the culprits. Get in shape for the activity in which you are about to engage, and if you don’t feel up to it, get someone to take your place. There is no shame in that.

Do you know your own pre-existing medical conditions? When was the last time you had a complete physical? What limitations did the doctor impose? Back and knee weaknesses are common, often the result of previous injuries, such as that crushing tackle on senior day in high school that never completely healed. Do you know of any pre-existing medical conditions of your boys? Do you know what medications they are taking and how those medications should be administered? By knowing your own pre-existing medical conditions and those of your boys, you can properly plan your outdoor activities to minimize aggravation of those conditions and ensure everyone has a great time.

A related area that is often overlooked in activity planning is phobias or fears. You may not want to plan a swimming activity for one of your boys who is afraid of water; or at least it would help to know that in advance, so proper attention can be given. Protecting the living and not redeeming the dead is the charge to Church Risk Management!

Clear communication is vital, prior to and during the activity. Does your bishop know your plans? Do the parents know in detail what you are doing with their sons? Mom might be alright allowing her son to go on a hike to the local canyon, but perhaps a side trip to the lake or to go shooting could be another matter. I continue to be amazed at the number of times when something goes wrong that Mom and Dad, and even sometimes the bishop, did not know that a particular activity was part of the plan.

One aspect of effective communication is leadership. The larger the group, the less experienced the group, or the younger the group, the greater the need for proper communication, including knowing who makes the final decision. At times improper communication could lead to disaster. All it takes is two people to have a misunderstanding. There should be a designated leader, hopefully someone who is experienced. When I river raft with a group of my good running buddies, our decision making is more collaborative. But when dealing with Scouts, I need to be more directive. In Scouting, we need to communicate effectively at all levels.

You can help avoid getting in over your head if you know what you are going to do—in detail. You need to know what equipment is needed, how much to bring, and how to use it. If you are not an “expert” in the activity, consider getting an expert to come along as the expedition leader. (Youth Protection training for this person is a prerequisite, and being registered as an adult Scouter is desirable). Make sure everyone is as prepared as possible for the activity, physically and emotionally. Get in shape, not just generally but for your specific activity. Know your limits and stay within them. Learn basic navigation skills. Communicate with others. While clearly this is not a complete list, it is a great place to start and will help reduce the threat of injury while helping to make your activity a success.
Stake Leaders and Families attend the Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting

by Nettie H. Francis, LDS-BSA Volunteer

On a Saturday afternoon in July, carloads of travel-weary but excited families drive up a tree-lined road at the Philmont Training Center in northern New Mexico. Members of the Young Men and Primary general presidencies greet the vehicles of parents and children as they arrive at the Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting, a week-long training experience for stake presidencies and their families.

“When the families come, the Spirit comes with them,” commented Sister Joy D. Jones, recently-sustained Primary general president, who attended both sessions of the conference this year with her counselors.

The conference occurs under the direction of the Young Men and Primary general presidencies with support from the LDS-BSA Relationships director. This year marks the 53rd anniversary of the event. During the two sessions, 391 priesthood leaders from 121 stakes and 58 BSA councils participated, with their attending family members totaling over 1267 people.

The conference is hosted by the Boy Scouts of America at their premier training facility near Philmont Scout Ranch. Each summer nearly 30,000 Scouts hike the wilderness backcountry of the 140,000-acre ranch. The stunning landscape, blue skies, and grand mountains create a beautiful environment for attendees at the adjacent training center.

“The Priesthood Leadership Conference on Scouting is the ideal example of the Church and the Boy Scouts working together to strengthen young men,” observed Mark Francis, LDS-BSA Relationships director.

During their week at Philmont, families live in “tent city,” eat meals together in the dining hall, participate in activities, and make friends from across the nation. Bringing good families together creates an extraordinary environment.

“It’s remarkable to see how kind, helpful, loving and cooperative the families are with each other,” explained Sister Jean B. Bingham, 1st counselor in the Primary general presidency. “It’s really like a city of Zion.”

Families arrive on Saturday afternoon and spend Sunday attending and participating in church meetings in the “Philmont Ward,” efficiently organized with callings filled by participants. They then have ample time on Sunday afternoon to be with family members and rest on the Sabbath Day. Classes for the brethren begin early Monday morning after a camp flag ceremony. Children go off with their age-group leaders to ride horses, do crafts, hike, play games, tour museums, and participate in other activities; while mothers are free to also enjoy camp activities or just read a book and relish a quiet moment.

“The priesthood leaders come to Philmont thinking they will be taught to serve better in their callings, but they leave wanting to serve better in their homes,” observed Sister Jones. “They have time here to look into their children’s eyes and see things more clearly. That’s been sweet to watch.”

Fulfilling My Duty to God, Strengthening Deacons Quorums Using Scouting, Primary and Scouting for 8- to 11-Year-Old Boys, and other Aaronic Priesthood topics are the subjects of formal class sessions. This year, new “Interact to Edify” sessions were introduced to provide a less formal setting in which to discuss topics. Continued on pg. 11
“Questions come in during the week relating to the priesthood, to Scouting, to Cub Scouting,” shared Brother Stephen W. Owen, Young Men general president. “We answer those as a presidency, but then allow others who have experience to lend their strength and counsel together to truly build each other. D&C 88:122 explains that ‘All may be edified of all.’ The feedback we’ve received from participants in these new sessions has been very positive.”

Morning flag ceremonies involve Boy Scouts, 11-year-old Scouts, and Cub Scouts, and evening family activities include campfire programs, a huge family home evening, family banner parade, Primary parade, and a western buffalo barbecue.

During the week, Brother Owen shared the story of Nephi following the Lord’s command to build a ship. He compared the Scouting program to part of that ship—a tool to help carry Lehi’s family to the Promised Land.

“The tools of seminary, Come Follow Me, Scouting, Duty to God and other wholesome activities are parts of the ship that carries young men to that Promised Land,” explained Brother M. Joseph Brough, 2nd counselor in the Young Men general presidency. “Much of the week was focused on the mentoring relationships that foster youth developing personal religious behavior. The conference helps great leaders gain even further insight in how to assist their young men in reaching the Promised Land.”

“Putting the Aaronic Priesthood principles and the tool of Scouting together makes what we’re doing effective,” shared Sister Bingham. “If you know just the why or just the tool then it doesn’t work. You have to have the tool and the vision.”

Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, 2nd counselor in the Primary general presidency explained, “Scouting is the tool we use in shaping boys through activities. The more we understand how to use a tool the better we can use it effectively. Sometimes we don’t know how to use eleven-year-old Scouting and it’s just a burden. But if priesthood brethren learn how to use it, then the tool becomes effective.”

One visual the Primary leaders gave participants was the “Philmont Olympic Oval.” The brethren went around the room and practiced passing off a baton to each other. “They have to make sure the second person is holding the baton tightly before they hand off,” explained Sister Cordon. “We talk about transition and share insights as a young boy goes through Scouting and Primary as an 8-year-old to an 11-year-old to a deacon. How can stake leaders make sure no boy is lost?”

Sister Jones added, “In Primary through Scouting we’re seeking to support boys in keeping their baptismal covenants and prepare for the Aaronic Priesthood and ultimately we see them as righteous husbands and fathers. We hope that when the priesthood leaders walk away they see that whole vision.”

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“The hearts of the brethren participating here are being softened and changed,” observed Brother Douglas D. Holmes, 1st counselor in the Young Men general presidency. “I see resolve in their lives to do better in their own families. To not focus on programs but to focus on the purpose and outcomes of those programs. As the gospel works from the inside out, changed men have power to change others.”

Stake leaders shared a variety of feelings as the conference ended.

“I felt an overwhelming understanding of Heavenly Father’s love for his sons.”

“In everything remember to direct the young men to the Savior.”

“The focus needs to be on the relationships. Help the young men feel the love of the Savior through us.”

“Allow youth to make decisions, even if they are 12 years old.”

“The prophet of the Lord loves Scouting, and so must we.”

“Duty to God has got to be a center point of our program to prepare young men to serve and complete their missions.”

“Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood help us to reach homes. As priesthood leaders we can do so much to love and mentor these boys.”

During her closing remarks Sister Jones shared, “Internalize the things the Spirit has taught you this week. Discuss these with your wives and act together. You have great power as couples to do great things in the church and in your homes.”

She added, “Leave tomorrow with ‘Philmont Eyes.’ See things a little brighter, a little more clearly, and with a little more appreciation. Walk in the glorious covenant path with your children and your grandchildren.”

“We are the shepherds,” concluded Brother Owen. “We know who the Good Shepherd is and we invite all to come unto Him. Now it’s time to go back and bless young men and other leaders. Some of us are in wonderful families with a father and a mother, but some over whom we have stewardship do not have a father in the home. We need to reach out. Let’s go out and reach all.”

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