

ABILITIES DIGEST

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Summer 2024  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Adapting Activities

A Dream Come True: Zia Trek 630-7A

By James Russell (JR) Watts and Olga Watts, with minor tweaks by AD editors.

A family vacation to ski at Angel Fire Resort in February 2016 took us through the town of Cimarron, NM and the Philmont Scout Ranch. Philmont was blanketed in snow and was a beautiful sight to see. We were able to visit the museum and the Tooth of Time Traders Store because they were open to the public that day. JR was a Cub Scout at the time so we wanted to know when he would be able to participate in a trek at Philmont. We were told he had to be a Boy Scout to participate in treks at Philmont. We looked forward to the day JR could participate in a trek.



In the summer of 2022 (six years later), JR and I participated in the Sneak Peak program offered at Philmont. Austin St. George did a tremendous job leading this informative program and gave us a real glimpse of what an actual Scouting trek would entail. At the time it was the closest thing JR could experience at Philmont that resembled a real trek in the backcountry. The Sneak Peak program let me know what would be required of JR to maybe one day participate and successfully complete a seven day trek, but maybe at a much slower relaxed pace. Knowing JR badly wanted to participate with his troop this summer but couldn't do a two week trek, our assistant Scoutmaster contacted Alyssa Hightower (National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee Program Vice

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Chair) to see if there was a program that better suited JR's needs. She told our ASM that this summer for the first time Philmont Scout Ranch was offering a new program called the Zia Trek for Scouts with special needs. What an opportunity for JR to participate in a seven-day backcountry trek! In addition to trekking, he could earn the coveted Philmont Arrowhead Award, the "We All Made It" Plaque, Duty to God and the Wilderness Pledge Achievement Award.

The Zia trek was a dream come true for JR. It was a perfect fit! It was demanding and challenging, which is what is expected of any Scout who participates in a seven-day trek. It wasn't easy but was by far one of the best experiences of JR's life as a Scout. He had the opportunity to live the patrol method with his peers by practicing team building and leadership skills in the beautiful wilderness of Philmont. The entire Philmont staff was tremendous in helping our Scouts participate in rifle shooting, tomahawk throwing, cope challenge skills, spar pole climbing and rock climbing. It was one of the best social and physical experiences of JR's life. A special thanks goes out to Alyssa Hightower and Chris Werhane (Santa Claus, Philmont Staff and Adaptive Sports Lead) for their dedication and hard work over the years to get the Zia Trek Program off the ground and started. The guidance and support they provided every day to our Scouts helped elevate each Scouts' self-confidence and improve their abilities. Not enough can be said about Libby High, our Philmont Ranger, who was with us for the duration of our trek. Her enthusiasm and cheerful spirit never waned, and we will be forever grateful to her for teaching us Scout skills and providing guidance to everyone. We would like to thank all Philmont Staff who supported the Zia Trek.

Eagle Steps into Action: a SND-Inspired Project

*This article is reproduced courtesy of the Hemophilia Foundation of Michigan (HFM), which published it in the Spring/Summer 2024 issue of **Artery**, their newsletter.*



Have you had a chance lately to visit HFM's office in Ypsilanti? If you've stopped by recently, you may have noticed some exterior improvements, thanks to Mikey Sanger and the Holland/Sanger family. Mikey, a camper and Counselor in Training (CIT) at Camp Bold Eagle, took some great "Eagle Steps" this winter to improve our Butterfly Memorial

Garden and clean up the dog run (friendly pets are always welcome to visit!) for his Eagle Project. After several site visits, discussions, and research, Mikey and his family installed a rain barrel in the Butterfly Memorial Garden, which will help water the plants during the summer season. In addition to removing branches and other debris within the dog run, Mikey and 12 local Scouts who helped with these efforts also planned for some pet-friendly plants to be placed inside that will serve to both beautify the area and to cover small gaps in the fencing.



As HFM staff members return to the office and community members begin stopping by for programs or to chat, these improvements are so appreciated in creating a welcoming environment. We hope that you will come by to visit the next time you are near the office to check out Mikey's handiwork and to enjoy the space. Thank you, Mikey, for your leadership and thoughtfulness in giving back to HFM and the community!

Pilot for Special Needs Prepared Camps

We are happy to announce the councils and national high adventure bases selected to participate in the national pilot program for "Special Needs Prepared Camp" status. This is a significant milestone and we are excited to embark on this journey toward creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all campers in the Scouting program. As camps work towards achieving this camp designation, we invite all council members and staff to familiarize themselves with the guidelines outlined in the NCAP standards, specifically PD-110. Attaining this designation is not just a goal but should be a mandatory requirement that programs are committed to fulfilling.



Andrea Watson, Director of Outdoor Programs and Properties, Boy Scouts of America

With emphasis on the planning process and collaboration between Camp Director, Program Director, and Camp Health Officer or Council Physician, camps will ensure they are well-prepared to serve the diverse needs of special needs Scouts, offering programs that are inclusive. This is a time for adaptation and enhancement as we embark on this journey to ensure camps are a place where every camper feels valued, included, and supported. Camps will be conducting interviews with special needs Scouts, their parents and leaders to better understand their needs and make any necessary adjustments to provide the best possible experience for each individual.

Many thanks go to the members of both the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee and the National Properties Strategic Analysis Committee. Members have diligently worked on the preparation for this ambitious pilot program for the last two years. This national pilot is also supported by the National Outdoor Program and Properties Committee as well as the National Program Development Committee. The co-chairs for the national pilot are Sal Ciampo, Chair of the National Properties Strategic Analysis Committee and Warren Wenner, Immediate Past Chair of the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee.

We commend every Camp and Base that aspires to attain this designation and serve Scouts with special needs and disabilities. If you have any questions regarding the pilot program or require assistance, please feel free to reach out to Warren Wenner at wmwenner@mac.com.

Council and High Adventure Bases included in Special Needs Prepared Camps Pilot Program as of 22 April 2024:

- * **Blue Ridge Council**
- * **Blue Ridge Mountains Council**
- * **Catalina Council #11**
- * **Central MN Council**
- * **Connecticut Rivers Council**
- * **Cradle of Liberty Council**
- * **Crossroads of America Council**
- * **Grand Canyon Council**
- * **Great Smoky Mountain Council**
- * **Greater Tampa Bay Area Council**
- * **Heart of America Council**
- * **Heart of New England Council**
- **Jayhawk Area Council**
- * **Natural State Council**
- * **Northeast Georgia Council**
- * **Northeastern Pennsylvania NEPA Council**
- * **Philmont Scout Ranch**
- * **Sam Houston Area Council**
- * **Florida Sea Base**
- * **Seneca Waterways Council**
- * **Sequoyah Council**
- * **South Texas Council**
- * **Summit Bechtel Reserve**

UPDATE: The first Special Needs Prepared Camp designation has been awarded to Philmont Training Center in Cimarron, New Mexico. This important designation was accomplished over the last few years through a partnership with PTC and the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee. Danny Tucker, PTC's Director, said he and his staff took a good hard look at whether or not the training center was a safe, accessible space. Areas for ADA faculty. Kudos and hats off to Danny Tucker and his staff for a job well done!

Recognizing Abilities

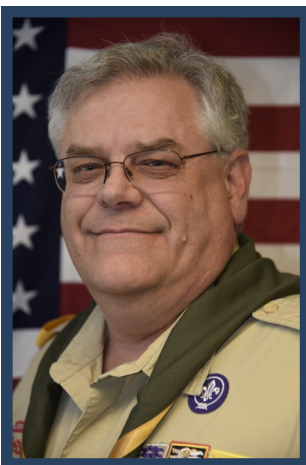
Woods Services Award

Every year Woods Services of Langhorne, PA, sponsors two awards given to BSA volunteer Scouters for exceptional service and leadership in the field of Scouting with disabilities. The nominee should have served Scouts with disabilities in several capacities at the unit, district, council, and/or national levels of the Boy Scouts of America. The nominee for this prestigious award must have served Scouts with disabilities for at least 3 years strictly as a volunteer. This is a BSA award sponsored by the Woods Services Foundation in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, in memory of Luther W. Lord. The recipient receives a special recognition piece from the Woods Foundation and may wear the BSA community service square knot.

The Woods Services nomination form is BSA form #512-258. After being completed, the nomination must be signed by the nominee's Scout Executive, mailed (or emailed) and received by the national BSA office by January 31 for the current year's award. The Woods Services award is normally presented in May at an appropriate recognition event. Because of the limit of two awards per year, each council may only submit one nomination per year.

When completing a nomination form, remember that those evaluating the nominee do not know the Scouter. They evaluate only from what is on the form. Be sure it is complete. You may continue any section on an additional page. A good write up will also include one or two specific examples of exceptional service. Emphasize the number of Scouts with disabilities affected both directly and indirectly through the nominee's leadership at the unit, district, council, and national levels.

Roger Tate: 2024 Woods Services Awardee



Roger B. Tate is a second generation Scout. He was a Cub Scout in Edmond, Oklahoma, then a Webelos in Irving, Texas, and a Boy Scout in Lake Dallas, Texas. Along the way, he attended the 1977 National Jamboree and staffed summer camp at Worth Ranch in 1979. He left with the rank of Life Scout, though he is honored these days when he is mistaken for an Eagle Scout.

The adult journey began in 2004 when his son, who had just been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, became a Tiger. Roger's first experience as a day camp den leader in 2005 opened a new frontier, when 4 out of 13 boys in his den were also on the spectrum. He had no idea how many of these kids were in Scouting nationwide, and how little training material there was available for the adult volunteers that work with them. From then on, Roger had a dual life. **By day** he was busy in Scout units with both of his children as Tiger Den Leader, Pack Committee Chair, Webelos Den Leader, Troop Committee Member, Asst. Troop Committee Chair, Merit Badge Counselor, Venture

Adult Treasurer, Troop Chaplain, and Charter Organization Representative. By night he was a special needs and disabilities advocate, seeking to equip Scouting volunteers to work with autism. Over time, he was asked to join the BSA National Educational Relationships Committee and then the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee.

He's taught disabilities subjects at University of Scouting in both Longhorn and Circle Ten Councils since 2008. He's given presentations at many local roundtables and provided direct support to individual troops that needed help to integrate a special needs Scout. Within the Educational Relationships committee, he's advocated for outreach to special educators to promote Scouting. He led in the creation the Elbert K. Fretwell Outstanding Educator Award to recognize non-Scouters in education who model Scouting values to their children and so build relationships for school access for recruiting Scouts.

Within the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee he took part in writing training curricula and taught at national training conferences. Roger fulfilled the dream he had all those years ago after day camp by writing and editing the Inclusion Toolbox for Special Needs and Disabilities. It is a resource for all Scouters, families, and others that serve this population. This modular "manual" was first published online in 2022 with 260 pages of information and he continues to develop modules for it. Find it at www.ablescouts.org/toolbox.

On the home front, with lots of encouragement and support, Roger's son with ASD earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 2013. His daughter became Venture Crew President and staffed at the 2013 BSA National Jamboree. Both kids went on to staff at Philmont for multiple seasons. None of this would be possible without the love, support and encouragement of Roger's wife Terresa. Terresa served on summer staff at Philmont Training Center as well.

Roger Heslop: 2024 Woods Services Awardee

In 1963 Roger volunteered as an Asst. Scoutmaster to a Troop of Native American boys in the Black Hills Council in Rapid City, South Dakota. One of the troop members was a young man with physical limitations. This started Roger's interest in working with Scouts with disabilities. His interest was renewed from 1970-1972, while working with students at the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind in Tucson, Arizona, and again, four years later, while teaching students with disabilities in the Ogden and Weber school districts in Utah. These experiences led to Roger completing his Special Education Endorsement for the State of Utah where he started teaching in the Davis School District from which he retired 26 years later.

Roger has used both his knowledge and skills to benefit both the education field and hundreds of people in Scouting. During his Special Education teaching career in Davis School District, he worked with hundreds of students. His primary reference for understanding different abilities was the "Scouting Handbook for Youth with Disabilities".

He has created many training materials for teaching about Scouts with special needs and disabilities. As Roger became involved with different levels of the Scouting program, he ended up on the Lake Bonneville/Trapper Trails Council Special Needs Committee. From 1992 to the present (except for a 2-year hiatus), he has represented the Special Needs Scouts and Disability Awareness Program through training programs at the District, Council and National levels within the BSA. For each training opportunity, Roger created fresh materials, including 18 Power Point presentations and/or brochures to teach specific lessons.

Roger also created “Keys for Success” fact sheets as another way to help regular Scout Leaders. Using the list of special needs and disabilities in the “Handbook to Working with Youth with Disabilities,” Roger created a single sheet for each disability explaining how an affected Scout could benefit from the Scouting Program. He recently updated the information to be in compliance with the “Inclusion Toolbox”.

Roger also created a Disability Awareness web page for the Trapper Trails/Crossroads of the West Council web site. This included general information items and links to all the national resources for the Special Needs Scouts including the Inclusion Tool Box, links to Ablescout.org, Abilities Digest, national policies regarding Special Needs, the Guide to Advancement, and forms for registration beyond age of eligibility and alternate rank and merit badge requirements. Everything that a parent or Scout leader needs to know is found on that page including general helps for Autism and ADD/ADHD. At the bottom of the site is an array in which a parent or Scout leader can look up a disability, the characteristics of the disability, and how a Scout with that disability can benefit from Scouting. There are specific helps for the Cub and/or Scout leaders and parents in understanding the benefits of the Scouting Program.

Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is designed for any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

Subscribing by email. Send a message to specialneedschair@scouting.org, with “SUBSCRIBE” in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

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Subscribing online. Visit the web site ablescouts.org. The page's lower left corner displays a small gray rectangle with the word “Follow” and three dots. Click on the word “Follow” and enter your email address. You will receive an email whenever a new *Abilities Digest* appears, plus an email when articles are republished.

At his latest council Commissioner College, Roger created two stand-alone displays with backdrops containing wording and pictures of Special Needs Scouts in action. One display was on the Inclusion Toolbox which included a printed copy of toolbox modules. The backdrop began with tools that all Scout Leaders might use and then moved to the specific modules that deal with specific disabilities. The second display focused on Disability Awareness with the Keys for Success fact sheets letting the Commissioners know that a Scout with disabilities can succeed in Scouting.

It has been a privilege to see him in action working with Scouts, training leaders, and personally using materials that he has created to benefit the youth!

The Torch of Gold Award

The Torch of Gold is a council award given to adult Scouters for dedicated work with/for youth, particularly Scouts, with disabilities. It is not an award that is earned by fulfilling specific requirements. It is recognition for service in multiple areas for many years. The nominee should show a level of dedication and service comparable to a Scouter receiving the Silver Beaver Award, but for service specifically in the area of working with Scouts with disabilities. A Scouter must be recommended to his/her council by another individual. Although there are specific criteria for this award, each council should have its own selection procedure. The nomination uses BSA Form #512-495, which can be found at <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-495.pdf>

The criteria are:

- Each council may recognize one Scouter per year with the Torch of Gold Award.
- The completed nomination form must be submitted to the council Special Needs or Disabilities Awareness committee or its designee, according to council procedures and deadline.
- The nominee shall:
 - Be currently registered with the Boy Scouts of America.
 - Have three or more years of service in any Scouting leadership capacity related to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturers with disabilities, including educating other Scouters about disabilities and working with youth who have disabilities.
 - Have completed all activities related to Scouts with disabilities on a strictly volunteer basis
- The Scout executive must approve the recipient.
- This award shall be given only once to an individual, and is not dependent on, or to be influenced by, other awards.
- Presentation should be made at the council annual recognition dinner, district recognition dinner, or other appropriate Scouting event. Certificate No. 33733 is the appropriate

recognition, along with the award medal (Scout Shop SKU 645077) and award lapel pin (Scout Shop SKU 645078).

After selecting a Scouter for the Torch of Gold award, the council should submit the recipient for the national Woods Services Award described previously.

Enhancing Awareness

Updates to the Inclusion Toolbox

The National Special Needs and Disabilities (SND) Committee has recently updated the introductory Inclusion Toolbox modules (A through G). Three additional modules on particular special needs and disabilities (H, K, and L) will be made available in the next month.

Helpful Links

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/

AbleScouts: *Abilities Digest* articles posted online: ablescouts.org

Links in Articles

Inclusion Toolbox: <https://ablescouts.org/toolbox/>

Philmont Conferences: philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences/

Torch of Gold Nomination Form: <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-495.pdf>

Woods Services Nomination Form: <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf>

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Facebook *No Scout Left Behind*: www.facebook.com/groups/1967878213431320

Email your comments and questions to specialneedschair@scouting.org.