

It's All About Mission

Scouting's Two New Programs:

SCOUTSabout & extreme ADVENTURE

by Ross Francis and Ian Mitchell

YOU'VE HEARD A LITTLE bit concerning our new SCOUTSabout and Extreme Adventure programs. Would you like more details?

These programs seek to achieve Scouting's Mission with children and youths who are *not* affiliated with Scouting currently. They seek to do this by connecting with them in new, creative and flexible ways.

The Basics

SCOUTSabout is a structured, theme-based, after school, play program that is based largely on Beaver and Cub JUMPSTART packages. Extreme Adventure is an exciting, short-term program based largely on the Venturer Amory Adventure Award concept. Naturally, given the name, it stresses high adventure.

TYPICAL SCOUTSabout THEMES

Depending on the age of the child involved, some typical SCOUTSabout themes include:

- Dinosaurs
- Knights of Olde
- Food
- Outer space
- Pirates
- Transportation



SCOUTSabout is aimed at children aged 5 to 10. It allows Scouts Canada to contribute to their development (i.e. achieve our Mission) in the same ways as Scouting's Beaver and Cub programs. Why did we introduce it? It came about for two main reasons. First, some families needed a very flexible time frame for their children to participate in guided youth activities; an after school program lasting for three-month terms fits their needs perfectly. Second, many people seek a less formal program (i.e. without uniforms and ceremonies).

Extreme Adventure focuses on teens aged 14 to 17. As with the SCOUTSabout program, it allows the organization to contribute to the development of youth, and thereby achieve our Mission. The short-term, or single adventure format fulfills a need identified by some youth to "graze," or try out many different activities. The absence of some of the more traditional Scouting elements, (e.g. ceremonies, uniforms, etc.) can be very attractive to many youth.

Dedicated to Scouting Values

Both new program options remain completely dedicated to the values of Scouting. SCOUTSabout and Extreme Adventure provide opportunities to develop group leadership skills and self-esteem; they allow youths to participate in environmental and citizenship activities that are sometimes masked by fun, challenging programs. (This also happens in regular, core Scouting programs.)

Although the new programs are short-term (typically three months long), they still provide sufficient time to contribute to youth development. And they may whet youthful appetites for a second term/adventure, or even a second look at Scouting's core programs.

Proven Track Record

Tests have shown that both programs are attractive and successful for today's youth. In fact, SCOUTSabout and Extreme Adventure have really caught on in some areas, especially as more and more groups get

Photos: Ross Francis

started. Surveys and feedback indicate that these new programs are allowing us to expand our market areas to include youths and parents typically not attracted to Scouting's core programs.

Looking for proof? Here it is... A SCOUTSabout survey of youths and parents who participated in programs in southern Ontario told us the following:

- F SCOUTSabout meets the needs of some of today's families, particularly its after school programs with its short-term focus.
- F SCOUTSabout provides children with opportunities to participate in activities that will build their self-esteem.
- F The children liked the various activities, particularly the outdoors and theme-based ones, as well as the informal attire.
- F The best things youths experienced about being part of the program were: social involvement, fun, teamwork and cooperation, discipline/responsibility, and feeling better about themselves.
- F Two-thirds of parents indicated that their child would eventually move onto one of Scouts Canada's core programs. A real bonus!

Racing for Adventure

One "Adventure Race" conducted as an Extreme Adventure involved participants trekking, biking, canoeing and rappelling their way through a difficult, physically demanding course. Fourteen teams of four youths

entered this race, which took place after everyone had taken part in two weekends of training; much of this focused on team-building, as well as developing skills in map and compass work, rappelling, canoeing, cycling, and other outdoor activities.

Response to the adventure was nothing less than fantastic. The comments of parents and participants (found below) sums up the enthusiasm generated by the activity:

"I will never forget this experience, not because of the physical challenge, but because of the mental and emotional challenge. Going in, I had no idea it would change me as a person or perhaps change my view on life. I just thought it was something that sounded like fun. I have definitely learned much from this experience, and because of it have become a stronger person." – *Marysia (Participant)*

"This adventure provided these kids with the freedom to prove to themselves (and their parents!) that they could make it through difficult and challenging circumstances on their own – a major character building, "life lesson," in my books." – *Nancy (Parent of participant)*

What's Next?

Now that we have a number of SCOUTSabout and Extreme Adventure programs up and running (with many more in the works), we'll be looking for more volunteers who can help promote and support these new program options.

TYPICAL EXTREME ADVENTURES

Here are some of the Extreme Adventures teens are enjoying:

- > Hiking expeditions**
- > Cycling tours**
- > Extended water-based trips, including canoeing** and kayaking
- > Inter-provincial and international travel**
- > Rappelling, spelunking and adventure racing
- > Horseback riding
- > Dog sledding
- > Snowshoeing trek**

All Extreme Adventures include:

- > Careful advance planning
- > Learning outdoor skills needed to safely carry out the adventure
- > Evaluating and learning from the activity.

** Sample outlines are available for these adventures from your council office.

So now you know something about SCOUTSabout and Extreme Adventure. We're all part of the greatest youth development family on Earth – Scouting. X

