

SUMMERTIME SCOUTING

by Mike Bingley



Photos: Scouts Connect Archives

SPRINGTIME

has always been my favorite season. The birds start coming back, the snow begins melting and you can start to enjoy the outdoors with your friends. Things start to smell like they're growing and blooming and everyone seems to have a little bit of spring in their step (sorry about that pun, I couldn't resist). It's also when a lot of people start saying things like, "well, we're shutting things down in our pack in a few weeks, all the kids are playing baseball (or soccer, or going to the cottage or whatever) this summer".

I'd like to tell you, as a former child master of getting hit in the forehead by baseballs, tripping over soccer balls and always getting picked last for any team - not every kid plays sports in the summer. Did you know that Scouting could be a year round activity if we let it? I'd like to suggest a few easy ways that you can help your troop, pack, colony, company

or crew do things throughout the summer months.

Get outdoors

It always amazes me that in the summer months there are lots of kids who are cooped up indoors watching television. I remember my dad telling me to get outside and go play in our yard when I was a kid and I'm sure he

can remember my grandfather telling him the same thing. Spending time on a Saturday morning with a group of kids in the sunshine or a summer evening while it's still warm can be one of the most enjoyable things a parent can do. You know what? The kids like it too.

When I was a Scout, once it got to June we would have our opening,



KEEP IT GOING ALL SUMMER LONG



IF Scouting were a business, would it make good business sense to close the shop just at the time when your customers wanted to do business? Scouting groups who wrap up in mid-June, and take a hiatus until mid-September, may be making this same bad business decision. Gaining and maintaining the "market share" of youth's time requires a year round commitment.

Our customers, Scouting youth, are usually very busy people throughout the year, with commitments to school and school based extracurricular activities, sports teams, jobs, etc. When summer arrives most youth have ample time for activities, and an opportunity for Scouting. Unfortunately, after burning through a fall, winter and spring Scouting year, we as leaders need the "break" at this time to reacquaint ourselves with our own families and relax and enjoy the summer.

We have observed with our own Scout troop and Venturer companies that summer Scouting is profitable in maintaining a good rate of returning members in the fall.

We do not maintain the "full burn" schedule as we do in the other seasons, but provide enough opportunities so that Scouts continue to feel connected to Scouting. Our early summer camp is scheduled at the end of June, after school has closed, and we schedule another for mid-August, so that everyone is still excited when Scouting registration is announced the following week. We also provide the opportunity for a summer fund-raiser weekend.

These few events seem to be enough to allow Scouting youth to feel connected during the summer months. We feel it is important to manage our schedules in this manner so it appears to have no break, maintaining contact with Scouting youth, and without putting too much pressure on leaders and group committees. To ensure a good turnout, these events must be announced several weeks prior to summer so that families can schedule their time.

We have found that summer family schedules are fairly flexible if enough lead time is given.

- Garth Holder, St. Michaels Scouts, Moncton, NB

NG: KEEPING IT HOT!

talk about summer camp for about ten minutes and then go outside and play some baseball. That was the only time in my entire life when I've played a sport and felt like I was actually part of a team (I'm not exactly a whiz when it comes to hand-eye coordination). It might not have been "traditional" Scouting, but we played modified Scout rules on occasion and it sure helped in our team building, not to mention what it did for my self-esteem when I heard a group of my peers cheering me on.

Don't do as much

We've all heard the expression, "it's only an hour a week". While you're trying not to snicker, I'd like to suggest that your summer Scouting program should be only three hours a month! That's right – one activity a month is probably enough to keep your kids interested in coming back next fall. You know what? It's going to be fun for you too! So get together for a family barbeque and fun games night in July, have a rain gutter rally in August, have a picnic with your Beavers and tell stories, go fishing with the Cubs, take your Scouts orienteering with the local orienteering club (many have weekly events), go rock climbing! A good friend of mine always tells me that there is no sky in her world because the sky is the limit and there are no limits in her world. That rule (within reason) applies here. Have fun and guaranteed the kids will too!

SUMMER SCOUTING? WHY NOT!

Many groups take full advantage of the summer weather to continue their Scouting programs. This is a perfect way to keep your youth interested, and encourage them to join in September. Consider making them family events or bring-a-friend events.

Here are some ideas:

- ☞ Attend a professional baseball or football game.
- ☞ Have a family picnic and hike at a local conservation area.
- ☞ Organize a family bike hike.
- ☞ Have a swim day at a local beach.

For the more adventurous:

- ☞ Plan a weekend or week-long standing camp or canoe trip.
- ☞ Attend a jamboree.
- ☞ Carry out an Amory Award challenge adventure.

In addition, your youth may have an opportunity to attend your local residential Scout camp, or take part in an Extreme Adventure program. For a list of Scouts Canada's residential summer camps and Extreme Adventures, check out our web site at www.scouts.ca or the list on page 30 of this issue.

– David Wray, Voyageur Council, ON

Go camping

Kids join Scouting to go camping and I'm willing to bet that most adults do too! Let's face it - summer camping is a lot of fun and it doesn't have to be difficult – many councils around the country offer fun-filled, inexpensive, pre-planned camps for most age groups in Scouting. Programs like Haliburton Scout Reserve, Camp Opemikon, Impeesa Extreme and the Outdoor Rendezvous keep kids in Scouting (and they're easy and fun to organize and take part in). At the very least, why not take your Scouts on a weekend canoe trip; your Beavers to a sleepover with their parents; your Cubs on a year-end ramble or your Venturers on a rock climbing trip. You'll have a lot of fun and the smiles they'll have at the end of the weekend will show you that they'll come back next year.

Summer is a fantastic time to be outdoors having fun with a group of young people. It's easier to get parents to help out in the summer for a few hours for that very reason. I've never met anyone in Scouting, young or old, who doesn't like going outside in the fresh air and enjoying it. This summer, why not join them? \

– Mike Bingley will be working on his tan while supporting Scouts, Venturers and Rovers at Impeesa Extreme this summer.

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