

# ABILITIES DIGEST

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BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

## Abilities Training Opportunities

January 11–17, 2015

### Florida Sea Base: Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators

The National Disabilities Awareness Committee will be teaching classes on Scouts with special needs during the Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators (CEAA) scheduled to take place January 11–17, 2015 at the Florida Sea Base. This is a great opportunity to learn more about advancement and how it supports Scouts with disabilities.

CEAA is a great learning experience for council and district advancement committee volunteers and staffs. Participants will have an opportunity through teamwork to review and discuss existing materials and recommend essential advancement resources related to Scouts with disabilities for future consideration. Valuable interaction with national-level volunteers and staff often leads to the development of new literature and training resources used throughout the country. All are welcomed to attend so make your reservation now by registering on-line at: [www.scouting.org/filestore/training/pdf/FSB\\_Conference\\_Flyer.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/training/pdf/FSB_Conference_Flyer.pdf).

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**July 12–16, 2015**

## **Philmont Training Center: Disabilities Awareness–Building Council and District Resources**

Northern New Mexico will play host to the “Disabilities Awareness–Building Council and District Resources” conference scheduled to take place July 12–16, 2015 at the Philmont Training Center. While the focus will be on strengthening council and district disabilities awareness committees, there’s always some good take-aways for unit leaders too.

NDAC members will show participants how well-organized committees can efficiently support their volunteers through training opportunities, program resources, and best practices for growing membership. Participants will gain valuable insight into solutions for handling challenges involved in working with Scouts with disabilities, and better ways to support and educate Scouts, parents, leaders, and council staffs in delivering a quality Scouting experience. All are welcomed to attend so be thinking about making your reservation early. Registration information is available on-line at:

[www.bsaseabase.org/philmont/ptc/~link.aspx?id=672D4240651344BD8B270DDC5D8E9C31&z=z](http://www.bsaseabase.org/philmont/ptc/~link.aspx?id=672D4240651344BD8B270DDC5D8E9C31&z=z).

**Summer, 2015**

## **Northern Tier Welcomes Scouts with Disabilities**

The Northern Tier High Adventure Base welcomes groups with one or more Scouts with special needs. This brings a true high adventure wilderness opportunity to all youth. Operating since 1923, Northern Tier’s three wilderness canoe bases enable Scouts to explore millions of acres of pristine lakes, meandering rivers, dense forests, and wetlands in Northern Minnesota, Northwest Ontario, and Northeast Manitoba. In the winter, Northern Tier is home to the OKPIK (meaning “Snow Owl” in Inuit language) Cold-Weather Camping program, the BSA’s premier winter high adventure program.

The Charles L. Sommers Base, located in Ely, MN, is equipped with special mobility devices for canoeing. Each voyage can be adapted to participants’ physical and medical restrictions through careful planning between staff and unit leaders. Crews navigating a typical canoe trek may travel between a series of wilderness camp sites and spend 6-10 nights at Northern Tier. An adaptable canoe trek may be experienced at a single wilderness site or through a series of day trips at the canoe base.

Northern Tier also offers a full range of winter camping opportunities adaptable to meet Scouts’ needs. Activities include: dog sledding, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, shelter building, and more. A typical winter camping experience is from two–five days and, depending on Scouts’ abilities, they can sleep each night in heated cabins or in snow shelters on the frozen lakes. For more information about Northern Tier and arranging an adaptive adventure, a helpful staff member is ready to assist by calling: 218-365-4811 or writing to [info@ntier.org](mailto:info@ntier.org).

## New Educational Presentation for Serving Scouts with Special Needs

Including *Scouts with Disabilities*, a PowerPoint educational presentation with speaker's notes, provides leaders and parents with the knowledge needed to work with Scouts who have disabilities. The intent once volunteers view this 60 minute session, is to encourage leaders to seek more information regarding specific disabilities of Scouts in their units. Topics covered in the session include: documenting a disability, registration beyond the age of eligibility, alternative requirements for advancement, the individual Scout achievement plan, scenarios in working with Scouts with disabilities, and resources. Presentation will be accessible in late November by visiting: [http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/GuideforMeritBadgeCounselors/Resources/advancement\\_presentations.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/GuideforMeritBadgeCounselors/Resources/advancement_presentations.aspx).

## Council Abilities

### Addressing Your Questions and Concerns

The email address: [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org) does more than manage *Abilities Digest* subscriptions. Council, district, and unit leaders can use it to get their questions answered and find out about resources available to support Scouts with disabilities. Every unit is different, and every Scout with special needs has a uniqueness all his own. If a problem arises, parents and adult leaders can usually handle it themselves; however, knowledgeable Scouters may offer additional solutions and valuable perspectives.

The Program Resources Task Force of the National Disabilities Awareness Committee seeks to show volunteers how other Scout leaders resolve challenges they are experiencing in their own units. As leaders forward their inquiries to: [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org), task force volunteers will review their questions and based on adaptability in other situations, will establish a set of frequently asked questions with answers supported by BSA policies and procedures.

Below are two inquiries task force volunteers have encountered in their own councils. In most cases, they provide additional information about particular challenges to make the solution more applicable.

**Question:** Our troop consists entirely of Scouts with special needs. We would like to include a game in our troop meeting using balloons with toys or tickets inside. Scouts then pop the balloons using darts. Can this be done safely?

**Answer:** This activity works best with groups that follow directions. Verifying none of the Scouts in the unit

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### About *Abilities Digest*

*Abilities Digest* is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America's National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its intent is to help expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers to improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to including and serving the special needs population. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute four issues of *Abilities Digest* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcomed at [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org).

have latex allergies can be accomplished by simply talking to the parents or, if possible, care assistants. Following proper procedures for setting up the dart range safely to minimize injuries is also an important consideration. Consult the *Guide to Safe Scouting* for more safety related topics.

**Question:** How do unit leaders handle advancement for Scouts with ADHD who are disruptive during meetings?

**Answer:** During the board of review, the unit leader should ask the Scout about his performance and behavior in terms of the Scout Law. Asking him how his behavior is helpful or courteous causes the Scout to reflect on his actions. Get him to think about what being a Boy Scout means and about leadership. Most Scouts with ADHD function reasonably well when not overly tired or hungry, and engaged in a structured environment. Leaders should plan activities well in advance by providing an atmosphere that keeps Scouts focused.

The task force looks forward in assisting parents and volunteers who work with and give Scouts with special needs an opportunity to experience Scouting.

## Enhancing Awareness

### Communicating in Person-First Language Matters

Person-first language is just like it sounds—placing the noun before the adjective when describing a person. For example, “a Scout with red hair” is preferable over “a red haired Scout” because the Scout is the one who’s important, not his hair. Implementing this form of communicating is most effective in working with persons with disabilities.

Disabilities should not define nor separate individuals from other people. Here’s another example: a friend using a wheelchair to get around due to a neck injury suffered years ago. The first impression upon meeting her is she’s on a wheelchair. Calling her by her name instead of referring to her as “that lady in the wheelchair,” not only identifies her as an individual but also reinforces person-first language use. Isn’t this how one should address all people—by their names, not how they look or act? People-first language should be the norm in Scouting.

As Scouters, it’s our role to show leadership not only in what we do, but also in what we say. If we hear someone saying, “there goes that disabled or handicapped youth,” we need to politely explain person first language is how we communicate in Scouting. In doing so, we model the behavior we want others to follow. Person-first language should be used in all written and oral communications especially when addressing Scouts with disabilities.

### Supporting Scouts with Disabilities Through Social Media

According to a January 2014 Pew Research Internet Project, 74 percent of adults in the U.S. today interact with others through social networking. Facebook was identified as the most popular Web site of choice followed by Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Instagram. The study also suggested the younger the age group the more likely they are to social network almost exclusively on their mobile devices. Information becoming more accessible at a faster rate compared to the past five years was another interesting finding.

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Scouting volunteers at every level of the organization have already embarked on the path of using social media, and the National Disabilities Awareness Committee is no exception. The Social Media Task Force will be launching Facebook and Twitter accounts, providing support through a positive networking platform of awareness, advocacy, and acceptance. Program and training resources, inspirational stories, and best methods for serving Scouts with disabilities will be shared through this approach. Look for articles in forthcoming issues of *Abilities Digest*.

## Recognizing Abilities

### Torch of Gold Award

The Torch of Gold is a council award honoring Scouters for their dedicated service to Scouts with disabilities. Councils are afforded some flexibility in recognizing volunteers in a variety of areas. Since a BSA nomination form isn't currently available, councils must establish their own criteria for nominating and selecting honorees. The following suggests guidelines councils should follow when establishing procedures:

- List of BSA positions and years of service in each unit, district, or council position
- Number of Scouts with disabilities the nominee impacted in a positive way
- Positions and years of service dedicated to youth with disabilities in other organizations
- A brief statement explaining why the individual deserves the Torch of Gold award
- Volunteer service should be equivalent in impact as that required for the Silver Beaver award

The Torch of Gold award may be presented publicly at an appropriate Scouting event such as the annual district dinner, council awards ceremony, or council special needs recognition event.

### Woods Services Award

The Woods Services award is a national recognition bestowed upon one Scouter annually for devoting exceptional service and leadership to Scouts with disabilities for at least three years. The Woods Services Foundation in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, sponsors the award established by its founder, Luther W. Lord, in his will.

The Woods Services BSA nomination form, No. 512-258, can be accessed at: [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf). Completed forms must be signed by the Scout executive and mailed to the Design and Development Department at the National Council by December 31 for consideration. Awards are presented in May. Councils are permitted to nominate one volunteer per year.

Writers should be aware the review panel may not know each candidate personally and their evaluation and selection of honorees is based entirely on the information provided in the form. In an effort to provide guidance, writers should carefully read and follow all instructions, making sure each section is completely filled-out. Lastly, a good write-up should include one or two specific examples of exceptional service, emphasizing the number of Scouts the volunteer impacted in a positive way.

## A Peek Ahead

Here is a glimpse of what we are working on for the next issue of *Abilities Digest*. Actual content may vary based on a number of considerations, especially to accommodate “late-breaking news” of immediate importance to our subscribers.

### Topics Planned for Next Issue:

**Enhancing Awareness:** Social Networking for Scouts with Disabilities

**Council Abilities:** Your Questions Answered

**Adapting Advancement:** Using Responsible Flexibility to Serve Scouts with Special Needs

## Adapting Advancement

### Merit Badges and Scouts with Disabilities

In order to earn merit badges, Scouts must successfully complete all requirements as stated, no more, no less. Though this rule applies to Scouts with disabilities, some, because of the severity of their medical condition, are permitted to earn alternative badges in lieu of those required for the Eagle Scout rank. Topic 10.2.2.3 “Alternative Merit Badges for Eagle Scout Rank” in the *Guide to Advancement* outlines the process.

Scouts with special needs must first earn as many of the Eagle-required badges they’re capable of earning before applying for any alternatives. With help from his parent or guardian and unit leader, the Scout’s careful review of the requirements prior to starting work on an Eagle-required badge will help him determine if the badge is attainable. If this isn’t possible, he should apply for approval to earn an alternative badge once he has completed all the other required ones. Planning ahead is the key.

If the Scout qualifies, his parent or guardian and leader may proceed helping him apply for alternative merit badges early on so the Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730, can be completed and submitted on time. It should also be noted the alternative merit badge chosen must provide a similar challenging experience as the required badge. Scouts do not have to be registered beyond the age of eligibility but their disability must be of a permanent physical or mental condition, or one expected to last more than two years, or beyond age 18.

See “Registering Qualified Members Beyond Age of Eligibility,” topic 10.1.0.0 in the *Guide to Advancement*. The Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges is accessible at: [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf).

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## **Advancement Planning Resources Now On-Line**

In our summer issue of Abilities Digest, we brought attention to the Individual Scout Advancement Plan, No. 512-936, as a valuable tool volunteers can use to help Scouts with special needs achieve their advancement goals. The ISAP form accessible at [www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc) has been updated, allowing parents and unit leaders to provide as much information as possible to assist Scouts who qualify for alternative requirements and modifications for advancement.

In addition to this resource, a new Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility, No. 512-935, has been developed to guide parents and volunteers on the essential steps and documentation needed to process a youth who qualifies for the special registration code. If approved, the member is granted unlimited time to participate in the Scouting program. The form can be accessed at:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc).

## **Helpful Links**

Here are links to current materials to aid volunteers and Scouts with disabilities:

### **Official Materials Posted on Scouting.org**

Advancement for Members with Special Needs:

[www.scouting.org/scoutsource/guidetoadvancement/specialneeds.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/guidetoadvancement/specialneeds.aspx)

Application for Alternative Eagle Scout Rank Merit Badges, No. 512-730:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-730.pdf)

Guide to Working With Scouts with Special Needs and Disabilities, No. 510-071:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-071.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/510-071.pdf)

Individual Scout Achievement Plan form:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-936.doc)

Request for Registration Beyond the Age of Eligibility form:

[www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/doc/512-935.doc)

Scouts with Special Needs information: [www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/specialneeds.aspx)

Woods Service Award BSA Nomination Form, No. 512-258: [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf)

## Web Sites

Working With Scouts With disAbilities: [www.wswd.org/](http://www.wswd.org/)

Autism Empowerment: Autism and Scouting:

[www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/](http://www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/)

Three Fires Council resources for Scouting with Special Needs:

[www.threefirescouncil.org/index.php/programs-mainmenu-73/special-needs-mainmenu-96](http://www.threefirescouncil.org/index.php/programs-mainmenu-73/special-needs-mainmenu-96)

### Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest*

*Abilities Digest* is designed for council and district disabilities awareness committees, related staff advisors, and any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

**Subscribing.** Send a message to [disabilities.awareness@scouting.org](mailto:disabilities.awareness@scouting.org), with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

**Unsubscribing.** To decline future issues please reply and enter "REMOVE" in the subject line. We will remove the subscription within the next two weeks.

**Receiving Multiple Copies.** If you receive *Abilities Digest* at more than one email address, choose the one to be removed and reply with "REMOVE" in the subject line. Include a message requesting that we remove only that email address.

**Duplicate Copies.** If you receive more than one copy of *Abilities Digest* at the same email address, please reply to all but one of them with "DUPLICATE" in the subject line.

**Address Change.** If you want *Abilities Digest* sent to a different address, reply and enter "ADDRESS CHANGE" in the subject line. In the message, enter your council name and the email address you prefer.