

ABILITIES DIGEST

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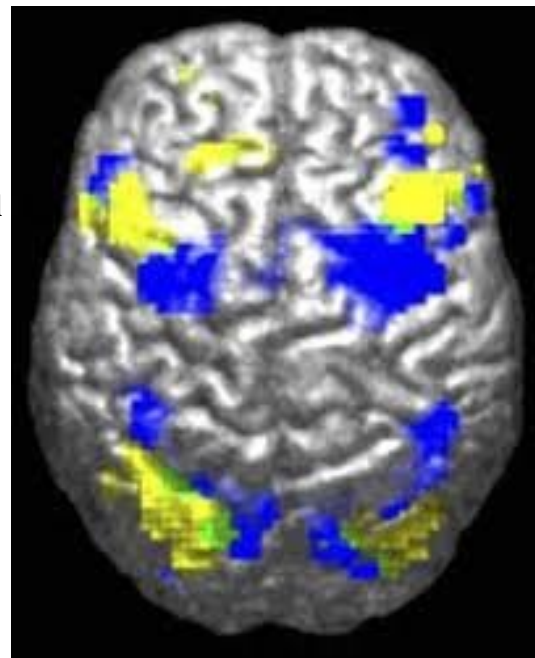
Enhancing Awareness

Serving ADHD Youth —Scouting Provides Structure and Focus

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America—“to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law”—has provided a structure, challenge, and an outdoor physical focus that have helped many boys succeed. For that reason, Scouting has long been a great program for youth who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and for many, their successes have not just been while they are Scouts, but have continued throughout their lives.

Why is Scouting a great program for youth who have ADHD?

First of all, Scouting is a well-thought-out, highly structured program that provides a step-by-step sequence of skills for Scouts to master. It promises fun, friendship, and adventure. Scouting offers frequent positive recognition and develops social skills and leadership skills. Scouting employs a leadership and training model, EDGE—Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable—which, through systematic Explana-



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tion, interactive Demonstration, and Guided practice, Enables Scouts with ADHD to discover and develop their unique strengths and interests.

As a Scout leader, what if my unit does not have any ADHD youth?

In 2007, an American Medical Association (AMA) study showed that the cumulative incidence of definite ADHD based on DSM-IV criteria was 7.4% by age 19 years. Therefore, at some point virtually every Scout unit is likely to experience having a youth who has ADHD. For example, in a survey conducted in the Three Fires Council, headquartered in St. Charles, Illinois, in early 2014, the percentage of Scouts reported by units as having ADHD turned out, not surprisingly, to be 7%! It is important for leaders to be aware of this incidence and strategies they can use that will help facilitate a successful Scouting experience for these youth, their fellow Scouts, and the adult leadership.

As a Scout with ADHD, what if my unit does not have any other ADHD youth?

From any youth's perspective, the choice of Scouting unit will make a difference. The youth and his parents should look at several units in their vicinity and select one that best fits the youth's particular strengths and interests. A unit where the volunteers understand disabilities and are comfortable working with youth who have them is often the best fit for Scouts who have ADHD.

Summer Camp, Disabilities, and Special Needs

Every Scout should go to long-term summer camp. This may take special preparation for Scouts with special needs. Here are some points to consider:

- Leaders should think about each Scout as an individual and how each will react to summer camp, especially new Scouts. Identify roadblocks or elements of camp life that might pose a challenge. All Scouts should have buddies, and buddies should be able to help with each other's special needs.
- Parents should help the Scout plan for summer camp. In some cases, the parents might want to attend camp with the unit.
- Scouts with anxieties about unfamiliar places should become familiar ahead of time. This may be through photos, videos, or even a camp visit.



- Adapt camp routine to fit the Scout's needs, especially when Scouts have mobility problems.
- Plan ahead for campers with wheelchairs. If any unit members use wheel chairs, help identify appropriate trails and trail conditions. Be sure to bring tools to maintain mobility equipment.
- Contact camp staff ahead of time about each camper's special needs or restrictions.
- Identify a "cool zone" in the unit camp site for campers to visit if overwhelmed, overstimulated, or just fed up. The zone should be within view of leaders.

Additional examples appear in the Spring 2015 issue of *Abilities Digest*.

Recognizing Abilities

Jim Africano Receives the 2016 Woods Services Award

The 2016 Woods Services Award goes to James F. Africano of Teaneck, NJ, Northern New Jersey Council, at this year's National Annual Meeting in San Diego.



Woods Services, a private, nonprofit organization serving individuals with disabilities, created the award in 1978. The award is given in memory of Luther Wellington Lord, who served as a residential supervisor for more than 23 years at The Woods Schools. During his years of service he founded and coordinated the BSA program at The Schools, and it was under his supervision that the first national Eagle Scout Award for an individual with disabilities was achieved. One national Woods Services award is granted each year to a BSA volunteer for exceptional service and leadership in the field of Scouting with disabilities.

In Jim's 41 years as an adult volunteer, he has held countless leadership positions. He is currently Assistant Council Commissioner for Special Needs/disAbilities.

Jim is the founder and current Chair of his council's Scouting Special Needs/disAbilities Committee, but his involvement with Scouts with special needs goes back as far as 1970 when he created a Disability Awareness Challenge for his council and ran it for ten years. Not only has he done countless programs for his council (and the Greater New York City area) since then, but to this day, there continues to be disability awareness challenges in the Northern New Jersey Council because of his tireless work. Also at the council level, through Jim's leadership and inspiration, the committee has developed a sophisticated mobile program that has been used as an outreach at many council events.

At the national level, Jim has been extremely involved in the National Jamborees. He has been on the Disabilities Awareness Challenge team in 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2013. He was on the committee to help with the transition of the Disabilities Awareness Challenge to the Summit between 2010 and 2013. His responsibilities have included field events layout and site management, staff scheduling and recognition, helping choose programs and editing multiple newsletters.

His efforts have impacted well over 50,000 Scouts, Scouters and families!

Adapting Advancement

Changes To the Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge



A team of Advisory Panel members for the National Disabilities Awareness Task Force has been updating the requirements and pamphlet content for the Disabilities Awareness merit badge. The work started in the fall of 2015 and the team expects to complete their work by April 2016. From there, the updates will move on to other BSA committees to be enacted. We hope the new requirements will become effective in January 2017.

The revised merit badge requirements will focus more on the invisible disabilities in an effort to bring an even footing with the physical disability topics that have been the historical emphasis of the badge.

Since many of those who earn the badge live with a disability of their own, an option was added to make a presentation about your own disability. Requirement 1 has been refined to include learning some disabilities awareness vocabulary.

The Disabilities Awareness merit badge pamphlet published in 2014 was already an excellent resource. A theme in most of the proposed changes for 2017 is to make disabilities awareness more personal and rela-

A Peek Ahead

Topics Planned for Future Issues:

Enhancing Awareness: American Sign Language Interpreter Strip, useful tips for Scout Parents and Scout Leaders of youth with ADHD, communications relay services for persons with hearing or speech disabilities.

Abilities Training: Activities to simulate partial sensory loss.

Adapting Advancement: The Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge – counseling Scouts with disabilities.

Recognizing Abilities: There may be a new adult service award for Scouting with special needs.

tionship-oriented, and less “hands off” or institutional. The latest revision includes a more nuanced explanation of “Person-First” language to emphasize making friends and respecting an individual’s preference. Invisible Disabilities will now appear near the front of the pamphlet. The communications technology information for speech and hearing disabilities is being updated for the mobile/internet age. A new chapter about accommodations for invisible disabilities is being added as a counterpart to adaptive device information. The Advocacy chapter is getting new sidebar articles on Acceptance, Ableism, and Bullying. A subtle shift in the Advocacy chapter will encourage advocacy on a personal level in the school and community as well as traditional volunteerism within organizations.

It is important that we in the Scouting movement continue to keep pace with the changes in our society to bring people with all kinds of abilities onto an even footing.

Mentoring Eagle Candidates Who Have Special Needs

An Eagle mentor for a Scout with special needs must be prepared for a unique experience. Each Scout is different and his particular needs will differ from others who have similar disabilities. The mentor must accept the Scout for who he is, without getting angry or upset. Be aware this may be a longer process than the typical Scout. Where most Scouts can go from point A to point B in a semi-straight line, a Scout with special needs can get to point B also, but he may go from point A to C to Z to X, before arriving at point B. That’s OK, since it’s not the destination it’s the journey, and the Scout will remember this journey the rest of his life.



Here are some techniques to smooth the often-bumpy path to Eagle:

- **Suggest short segments:** Help the Scout break the process down into smaller parts. This will help not to overwhelm the Scout, thus minimizing anxiety. It will also help with focus. This is very important!
- **Allow the Scout to go at his own pace:** When rushed the Scout can get confused or upset.

About *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America 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 welcome at disabilities.awareness@scouting.org.

- **Have the Scout start project planning early:** This reduces pressure from the age deadline, especially for a Scout that struggles with anxiety. The early start allows him to go at his own pace.
- **Give advice one step at a time:** Have the Scout repeat the step back to you so that you know he understood it.
- **Demonstrate by having the Scout do it too:** If you need to demonstrate a skill he needs to understand, have him do it too. Hands on is the best teaching tool.
- **Assist with time targets for each step:** Help the Scout work on time management skills, but be prepared to allow him to change these to soft deadlines. Scheduling reinforces goal setting skills.
- **Immediate Feedback:** Give feedback on the Scout's progress. When he falls short of a goal, point out the positives of what he has done so far. Help him find options to help him get back on target. Emphasizing the positives helps the Scout build confidence in himself.
- **It's ok to push him to a point:** As a mentor you want to challenge the Scout, but understand and recognize when he has reached his limit. This is not a teachable moment: back off and let the Scout recover. Live to fight another day.
- **Treat him as a Scout, not a disability:** A Scout with disabilities has much to offer, both in challenges and strengths. He just wants to be a Scout. He simply has to approach some of his tasks in a slightly different way.

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, with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

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- **Exploit his strengths and interests:** Every Scout has his personal passions. Help him find a thread of those interests in every merit badge he tackles. This can provide an extra push to overcome other challenges.
- **Help him pick a project that fires his passion:** Passion keeps the Scout motivated, especially when tackling the hard parts. Encourage the Scout to think outside the box, and find a project that inspires his enthusiasm while meeting project guidelines.

A Scout should only be limited by his desire to succeed.

Professional Corner

Make the Commitment to Attend Philmont This Summer!

Editor's Note: This is the final issue overseen by Frank Ramirez, who is retiring after 30 years as a Scouting professional. The National Disabilities Awareness Task Force sincerely appreciates his contributions.



There are several reasons a professional Scouter should talk to his or her staff leader about attending Philmont Training Center's (PTC) Week 10: August 7 – 13th conference "Serving More Scouts with Disabilities in the Local Council." For starters, Philmont is nestled in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Cimarron, NM. The ambience there is refreshing, cool, and energizing. But besides the wonderful Scout fellowship, great tasting food, and friendly staff, there are very few places in the country where deep, reflective thinking and what educators call "teachable moments" can be had like Philmont Scout Ranch.

Why then should your Scout executive invest in you attending at this upcoming course in Scouting's Paradise? Well, because one of the topics is membership growth, and we all know how important this is! Special Needs Scouting offers tremendous opportunities to serve more youth with disabilities by either mainstreaming them into traditional Cub Packs, Scout Troops, or Venturing Crews, or through new unit organizations. As the course title suggests, serving more young people with special needs will be the thrust, and learning about the recent wealth of training and volunteer resources available to you -- the steam engine!

So please, don't delay talking to your staff leader about signing you up to attend our upcoming Philmont conference. Your Council's membership will grow as a result of your participation.



Helpful Links

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

Official Materials Posted on Scouting.org

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: www.scouting.org/disabilitiesawareness.aspx

A variety of materials can be found on this page, including the new Scouting with Disabilities training presentations.

Other Web Resources

Working With Scouts With disAbilities: www.wwswd.org/

Autism Empowerment website: www.AutismEmpowerment.org

Autism and Scouting Website - www.autismempowerment.org/autism-scouting-program/

Children with Special Needs - www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/disability-info/

Kids with Special Needs - kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/friend/special_needs.html

Special Child: For Parents of Children with Disabilities - specialchild.com/index.html

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