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“The role of the unit commissioner is to help every unit be successful. Unit success is defined by the unit achieving Centennial Quality Unit status and demonstrating an improvement in the retention of its members.”

2008—Year of the Volunteer

Saluting Those Involved and Recruiting Those Needed in Delivery of a Quality Scouting Program

The year 2008 has been designated as the “Year of the Volunteer” as a part of the National Strategic Plan. Pillar III specifically identifies our goal in achieving “The number of engaged, accountable volunteers is dramatically increased at all levels of Scouting.”

This includes:

- Recognizing those volunteers who are already involved
- Adding 1 million new volunteers by 2010
- Increasing the number of Centennial Quality councils, districts, and units

Volunteers deserve gratitude and applause for the selfless gifts to Scouting. The time, energy, skills, and talents they generously lend again and again are priceless. Their efforts and dedication help to make our organization better, our com-



munity stronger, and our world brighter. Helen Keller, an American writer and advocate for the deaf and blind, said, “We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others.”

For every letter of the alphabet, there is a joy derived from volunteering, from “A,” answering a need; to “G,” giving back to the community; to “O,” opening

doors to new experiences; to “Z,” zeroing in on what’s important—being part of the solution!

There are several key opportunities annually to say “Thanks!” to volunteers at all levels, such as during (1) the wrap-up of a district event, (2) your annual district banquet, (3) Scouting Anniversary month, (4) your monthly roundtables, or (5)

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your victory celebration of the Friends of Scouting campaign. Another key opportunity is on a daily basis as you meet people and say “Thanks!” for the time and efforts they give to making a difference.

The key factor is to make the action of saying “thank you” a part of your normal plan. It does not have to be an expensive gift, just a note when someone does something noteworthy or a small token of appreciation when they chair an event or serve on a steering committee. The time you take to provide recognition will pay off in multitudes in the future as you involve others in what you need to do to deliver the promise of Scouting.

An integral part of the Centennial Quality Award program is identifying, recruiting, and engaging more volunteers at all levels of Scouting:

- Unit criteria 3 states, “In the spirit of the National Parent Initiative, we will recruit ____ new parents/adults to assist our unit program.”
- District criteria referencing the recruitment and involvement of volunteers are stated as criteria 7, “We will recruit and train an additional ____ unit commissioners...and improve the commissioner-to-unit ratio.” Criteria 8 says, “We will recruit and train ____ additional district committee members and increase the number of members over last year.”
- Council criteria referencing the recruitment and involvement of volunteers are stated as criteria 7, “We will recruit and train an additional ____ number of unit commissioners...and improve the commissioner-to-unit ratio”; and criteria 8, “We will recruit and train ____ additional district committee members and increase the average number of members per district over last year.”

Your council and district should develop plans locally to provide resources to strengthen volunteer involvement at all levels in Scouting. Your success depends upon the efforts and involvement of others. You cannot do it alone. Yes, it does take time to identify, recruit, train, and motivate others to help you do what needs to be done.



There are several key areas to help you with this emphasis—identification and engagement of Scouting alumni, Eagle Scouts, Eagle Scout parents and grandparents, Scout parents, and other key community leaders. There are some efforts to assist with these areas—the Eagle Scout search being done by Harris Connect; and the National Parent Initiative and the www.scoutparents.org Web site, which will include an area for Eagle Scout parents and related family members to connect with and be involved in Scouting.

Recruiting capable, energetic, and enthusiastic adult volunteers has been difficult throughout the history of the Boy Scout movement. This task has become even more difficult by several factors:

- **Mobility.** People no longer remain in one community for most of their lives. Occupational and other choices have created much more population mobility.
- **Activity level.** Both youth and adults lead busier and more structured lives. Unstructured time has become almost non-existent, and many individuals are fully or over-committed.
- **Change in marital practices.** More families operate in a single-parent environment. This environment limits the time parents have available for volunteer activities and makes it harder for individuals to predict their availability on a short- or long-term basis.
- **Change in employment practices.** A significantly larger percentage of adults are employed outside the home. This factor reduces the amount of time available for volunteer activities.
- **Increased opportunities and need for volunteers.** More organizations are increasing their use of volunteers. This includes nonprofits, businesses, and even government (e.g., Adopt a Highway).

As a result of these and other factors, fewer volunteers and volunteer hours are available to give to Scouting and other good causes. For these reasons, you must be more resourceful in identifying how to involve more volunteers in key tasks.

The recent research conducted by the National Council Research Service can provide you with insight into how to view the needs and interests of today’s families. You can obtain a copy of the complete report through the National Distribution Center, titled *Strategic Plan Research: Reaching the Next Multicultural Generation and Reaching Generation X and Millennial Parents*, No. 02-1058.

Volunteering in the BSA is part of the parents’ plans. You need to determine how best to utilize their interests and talents in the program. Parents are motivated to become Scouting volunteers because they like to get involved in activities with their children and want to help their children in the programs they join.

In order to get them involved, you must provide flexible volunteer times, supply them with information about volunteer opportunities and offer a variety of interesting projects for them. Some look for what is in it for them. They want to see a direct return on their investments of time and money.

The **National Parent Initiative** is a unique opportunity to engage more parents with their children in Scouting. The emphasis is on capturing parents’ interest and support in



becoming more involved and committed to the success of their children’s Scouting experience. The concept is basically asking all parents to perform an occasional task to assist the unit’s program. It will enhance youth and adult enthusiasm, recruitment, retention, achievement, and the family FUN of Scouting with a passionate commitment by all who participate.

The initial involvement of every parent with the program will be an extremely important first step in educating and strengthening their positions as parents; heightening their awareness of their support; and deepening their interest in support of their children’s Scouting experience. It will help to focus on the utilization of their talents, and support them becoming future volunteers.

All parents should be involved with their Scout’s unit. Their



involvement will be an extremely important first step in the quality of the experience their Scout receives. Parents have several key responsibilities to help strengthen their Scout’s experience: (1) perform an occasional task to assist the unit’s program, (2) participate directly with their Scout, (3) go to and observe Scout meetings, (4) be part of the unit’s program—both weekly meetings and outings, (5) support the program financially, (6) coach their Scout in advancement and the earning of recognitions, and (7) influence their Scout’s continued participation.

Your role is to help units understand how to engage parents in the program and the importance of involving more parents in their unit’s program. Each unit should be encouraged to appoint at least one **ScoutParents unit coordinator** to help provide support to their parents.

Harris Interactive conducted a Volunteer Outcomes Survey in 2003 that provides some direction for what volunteers say about being involved:

- Ninety percent of Scouting volunteers feel that volunteering for the Boy Scouts has helped them become better citizens.
- Sixty-seven percent of Scouting volunteers feel their environmental awareness has increased because of Scouting.
- Sixty-two percent of Scouting volunteers feel their ethical and/or moral decision-making has increased.
- Eighty-five percent of Scout volunteers feel that they have become a better parent through Scout involvement.
- Ninety-six percent of Scouting volunteers would recommend volunteering for the Boy Scouts of America to other adults.

There are a lot of ways to engage more volunteers in the program. The key to success is to have—and follow—a plan. If you focus on this plan and stay on track, you are more likely to succeed at achieving your goals.

Some key resources are available to assist you in your efforts. They are available in print form through the National Distribution Center. The resources include:

1. *A Handbook for District Operations*, No. 34739. This handbook provides a brief overview of the duties of the district committee and commissioners staff, as well as the job responsibilities for each of the four functions—finance, membership, program, and unit service. It has a sample monthly work plan for each of the district’s operating committees.
2. *Selecting District People*, No. 34512. It is designed to help key district leaders determine the number of people needed to operate an effective district, and then to locate, select, and recruit them.
3. *District Nominating Committee Worksheet*, No. 14-33157. This tool is also available as an online “fill in” form. The task of the nominating committee is to select a slate of competent officers and members at large to serve on the district level each year. This process should be a year-round process to identify additional resources as the need arises to better serve your district.
4. *District Committee Workshop*, No. 34160. This guidebook provides a syllabus to help you with basic training for members of the district committee. It is an all-day session for all current and new members. There is a general session with all members, then individual sessions by committee to discuss the annual needs of the district.
5. *Council and District Plan Book*, No. 33032. This manual helps the council and district officers define functions, responsibilities, and objectives for the year.
6. Staffing the District Committee is an interactive game available online through www.olc.scouting.org. It will help you and your volunteers understand and experience the art of identifying, recruiting, and engaging volunteers on a committee, as well as the importance of it being a year-round recruiting process.

Tips for Earning the District and Unit Centennial Quality Awards

The vision for the Centennial Quality Award program in its second year continues to be “To improve the QUALITY of program in every unit in America!” The commitment portion of the award form should be completed by all units and districts by February 15, 2008.

Your council was sent a supply of the forms for every unit. The forms are in three-part carbonless paper for the unit commitment and achievement form, and in two-part carbonless for the district form. You also can find printable forms on the Web site, where you can complete them online or save, complete and send by e-mail.

There are also resources located at these sites that will help you to interpret the criteria. The sites also include an implementation booklet explaining in more depth the process and details of the program.

To locate the forms and other support materials, go to:

- www.scouting.org, then to the site map under “C,” then the Centennial Quality Award Program tab;
- www.scouting.org/commissioners under the Centennial Quality Award Program tab;
- MyBSA (for professionals only) under Resources, then link to Leadership Support Service, then Centennial Quality Award Program.

The actual data from last year and 2008 commitment portions should be completed now, and the achievement portion completed for units between October 31 and December 31, 2008. The district should be completed at the end of 2008 after the year closes December 31.



A few tips for success when you work with your units in making their commitments for 2008:

- The key to units and districts setting their commitments is “to improve” in each quality program indicator from last year.
- A unit already doing a great job in delivering a quality program may establish a goal of “maintaining their current status” in order to achieve a specific quality program indicator. This is especially true for units at or above the national standards set through the Centennial Quality Commitments chart (previously named the Index of Growth).
- A baseball theme may help you understand the status of your progress. Every team starts the practice season with goals for the season. Every team starts out by planning to be in the World Series. However, as the season continues, the teams are ranked based on the games they have won. Not every team will make the World Series, not even the playoffs. Only two teams go to the final series of games. That does not mean that all other teams have failed. They each look at where they fell short, where they accomplished improvement, and where they need to focus for future seasons. This also is true in Scouting.
- You can use the advancement goals for a Boy Scout as an example in setting goals and achieving them. When Scouts join the program, they will usually set goals they want to accomplish, such as earning the Wolf badge or becoming an Eagle Scout. Sometimes, they set these goals to accomplish them during a short time or a longer period.
It is our job as leaders to work with them to accomplish their goals. Not every Scout will achieve his goals in the allotted time or based on a date he set for achieving his goals. It does not mean that they have failed. The basic thing to keep in mind is that they improve each month or each year. Not every boy that sets his sights to become an Eagle Scout achieves it. This also does not mean that those boys who do not become Eagle Scouts have failed in Scouting. They may have not achieved their goal, but they have achieved improvement in many different areas and have learned a lot along the way.
- You can use the criteria to work with your units in establishing short-term and long-term goals in improving their program. You can look at the areas in which they are already doing great and have them maintain those achievements. Then, you can look at areas they want to improve.
- If a unit is formed during the year or reorganized with new leadership, you can use the award criteria to establish areas to achieve based on the key quality program indicators. Sometimes, it is easier to start new leaders out on the right foot with them knowing and understanding what they need for success rather than changing the habits of previous leaders. A large part of the effort is knowing what key things they need to do to provide a successful program, then implementing it or delivering on expectations.
- In some cases in your district, you may have a unit that becomes too large and split into two units. Establishing the basic criteria for the past year may be difficult since you do not know which part of the unit did what. Don’t dwell on this as much as establishing with them their goals for improvement for this year. You can base their achievement in the future on where they started and what they accomplished.
- If a unit has several Eagle Scouts who are still active, they may not earn a lot of advancement. The award criteria will allow you to use judgment in making a decision on the percentage of youth advancing. Do not hold this against a unit.
- One of the key things to keep in mind related to the Centennial Quality Award program is it is a great opportunity for you to spend some quality time with your units in developing better programs for the youth they serve. If every unit in your district improves in every one of the quality program indicators annually, you will see an extreme improvement of your unit’s programs in the year ahead.



IMPLEMENTING THE CENTENNIAL QUALITY AWARD PROGRAM

Council Commissioner Steve Harris of the Detroit Area Council provides thoughts on how his council is involved in embracing the Centennial Quality Award program in their council:

Comment: People volunteer to work with kids, not do paperwork. They have to deal with goal setting and achievement at work, and Scouting should not be like work.

Response: I can't relate to this sentiment at all. There must be some way to measure the program delivered. The BSA's Mission Statement, aims of Scouting, and eight methods of Scouting demand a quality program. The only way we know if we are delivering the requisite program is to set goals and then, later, reflect on how well we achieved those goals. Goal setting is part of the corporate world for many very good reasons. We should embrace those reasons, not reject them.



Comment: The information is not readily available/takes too much staff time.

Response: I agree it is not readily available, especially to the volunteers. It must come from the professionals or support staff. I believe that most of the work is done the first year. It is readily available in subsequent years by referring to the CQA form from the previous year. There should be less "wear and tear" on the professional staff from now on.

Comment: Takes too much time to chase forms.

Response: From now on, we will only deal with CQA forms once a year. For example, we are now wrapping up '07 and at the same time obtaining '08 commitments. We will not have to "chase" forms again until this time next year. I believe we've successfully transitioned from the former Quality Unit to the current CQA.

Comment: No standard; watered-down award.

Response: I believe the current Quality format gives incentive for all units to achieve a quality program. Yes, the floor has been lowered in some instances, but that does not prevent the high-achieving units from continuing to achieve at a very high level. What the current program allows for is the less successful units to pull themselves up and work toward a better program. They now have a chance at success, whereas they never had a realistic chance of earning Quality Unit Award in the past. They now have reason to try. Steps toward an improved program, even if only baby steps, are better than nothing.

Thought: A thoughtful unit commissioner can help guide a unit to stretch itself toward an improved program, no matter what the starting point.

From a Youth Point of View . . .

By Thomas Joyce,
Southern Region Venturing
President, Plano, Texas



Thomas Joyce

On occasion I get to speak to groups about my Scouting experience or what Scouting means, and at the outset it would seem to be pretty easy. I've gotten to do a lot. But the difficult question is what does it mean, what have I gained?

It could be the travel. I've gotten to see grizzly bears in Wyoming, dolphins in Florida, chiggers in East Texas, Indians in Oklahoma, re-enactors in Kansas, backwoodsmen in North Carolina. I danced at national Order of the Arrow conferences, and have been to the jamboree and lots of camporees. I even met a distant cousin on a trip to Northern Ireland.

Perhaps it is the challenge of high adventure. Of treks to Philmont, mountaineering in Wyoming, whitewater in Georgia, or rock climbing in Colorado. I could probably say it is the chance to lead, as a den chief or patrol leader, or crew president, or the OA section chief or region president.

And surely the challenge of putting on a real pow wow for 1,000 OA'ers in Oklahoma is something. Or just being crew chief on a high adventure.

Maybe it means all the learning. By mastering the skills for Ranger, all the merit badges for Eagle or just earning a Bear's Whittlin' Chip. Learning how to cook, pitch a tent or dance like a Native American.

Service would have to be there. Working in a soup kitchen, collecting food, getting presents at Christmas for Head Start, working with the challenged, collecting clothes for the needy or just working with a Cub Scout. Maybe it compelled me to master first aid and become an EMT.

Teaching is definitely something I've gotten out of Scouting. Both going to NLS and teaching it. Teaching adults in Baloo and outdoor skills or just getting to participate at Powderhorn or be on the faculty at the training center in Philmont. Or learning how to teach at Philmont, a Venturing Leadership Staff Conference or Sea Base.

It's got to be friends. Friends of all colors and backgrounds. People of all ages who I never would have worked with or gotten to know. Two of my best friends in Scouts are on opposite coasts and I'm in the middle. That never would have happened without Scouting.

Yes, Scouting has provided all of these. I know how to navigate with a compass in the woods and how to get around airports. I can cook on a stove or a campfire and I can stay dry and warm in the outdoors, except maybe on the Irish Sea. I have learned how to manage projects, time and people though often with varying success. Though that is important to know, too. And I've learned to face each new challenge with anticipation instead of dread.

Scouting has taught me to "Do My Best," obey the Scout Law, and "help strengthen America." It truly has provided me with a foundation.

So what have I gotten or what does it mean? To me, Scouting has meant opportunity: the opportunity to see, touch, feel, experience, learn, and master so many things that it is often hard to even imagine what it would be like without Scouts. And memories and friends and values I will keep forever.

And I look forward to the next opportunity that it will provide me. My only regret is that all kids don't take advantage of this great opportunity.

Boys' Life®

Commissioners, *Boys' Life*, and Healthy Units

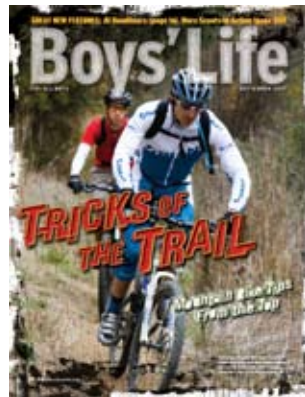
Boys' Life helps commissioners promote healthy units and deliver the ideals to Scouts, their leaders and families. Commissioners know that *Boys' Life* is essential to a well-rounded Scouting program—the good reading, the positive PR in the home, and the Scout-thematic editorial in *Boys' Life* inspire Scouts to stay in Scouting longer, be more active in their unit, attend district and council events, and advance in rank faster and more often than non-subscribers.

Opportunities for the commissioner to promote *Boys' Life* include:

- **Subscribe:** Subscribe to *Boys' Life*. Be familiar with the major articles, especially “Scouts-In-Action” and “Think & Grin.”
- **Unit recharter:** Use the annual recharter to encourage units to become or maintain 100-percent *Boys' Life* units. Help leaders to fully understand the importance of the Unit Budget Plan (use the form No. 28-426 to assist in this effort). Any unit that conducts fund-raisers should be 100-percent *Boys' Life*.

- **Roundtables:** Use “Charts That Talk” to post monthly at your roundtable meetings to show who is currently a 100-percent *Boys' Life* unit. Show a current copy of *Boys' Life* and share at roundtable: “*Boys' Life* is good reading and good Scouting. Every home in the unit should get *Boys' Life*. You never know when a Scout will read an article in *Boys' Life* that will make a difference in his life forever.” Be sure to review the *Boys' Life* “Helper” page in each issue of *Scouting* magazine; it is a direct link to advancement.
- **Unit visitation:** When visiting a unit, always have your current copies of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines. Your personal example will motivate others to read *Boys' Life*.
- **Commissioner meetings:** Keep track of and encourage 100% *Boys' Life* units. Encourage all commissioners to earn the annual *Boys' Life* Commissioner Award.
- **Scout shows:** Set up a *Boys' Life* display. Give non-subscribers a chance to sign up.
- **Centennial Quality Unit Award:** Any unit who is a 100% *Boys' Life* unit will qualify their youth and adult leaders to wear on their uniform sleeves the special 100-percent *Boys' Life* unit Centennial Quality Unit emblem available for purchase at the Scout shop.

Boys' Life helps commissioners fulfill their mission of service to nurture healthy units.



New Regional/ Area Commissioner Positions Approved

At October's meeting of the National Executive Board, positions for regional and area commissioners were approved. These two positions were created to support councils in the areas of membership, unit charter renewal, and training in support of commissioner service. They will assist in supervising the activities of commissioner

service and preside at any area meetings where council commissioners are in attendance. They will support any council or joint-council commissioner training. They will encourage councils to provide immediate orientation for commissioners, frequent basic training, and monthly learning experiences for all commissioners.

They will provide direction for councils to improve their unit-to-commissioner ratios, the conducting and tracking of their monthly unit visits, retention of youth and units, and progress toward achieving Centennial Quality status.

Annual Unit Service Plan Actions for Winter 2007–2008 and Spring 2008

Key actions supported by commissioners in providing a quality program:

Winter Support. Monthly unit visits conducted ensuring all units continue to provide quality programming. Continue to promote training for all volunteers, especially the direct contact leaders to attend Fast Start, Youth Protection, and basic leader training.

November 15, 2007–February 15, 2008—Centennial Quality Award Commitment. Commissioners work with their assigned units to complete the commitment form for the award and turn the signed copy in to their district executive.

January—Unit Health Reviews. As a part of the membership validation procedures, the commissioner and the district executive meet to discuss all units. Each unit is assigned a “unit health” status related to their being a Centennial Quality Unit in the past. They will develop an action plan to assist the unit in earning the Centennial Quality Unit Award for 2008 and determine how the district can support the unit improvements needed.

February—Scouting Anniversary Month Celebrations. Unit visits to support the salute to volunteers as a part of the Year of the Volunteer celebration. Recognition of units that qualified for the Centennial Quality Unit Award for 2007.

Spring Support. Monthly unit visits conducted to help units prepare for their spring roundups, Webelos graduations, and outdoor programming.

Regularly—Working With Units in Achieving Their Goals for Centennial Quality Unit Award. Commissioners work with their assigned units to help them in meeting their objectives established for achievement of the award. Present charters for units that have rechartered. Schedule a charter presentation at the unit’s chartered organization.

April—Unit Leadership Inventory. Conducted by the commissioner and unit committee. Find out who will continue and who will drop. Visit inactive adults. Recruit new adults.

May—Troop Uniform Inspection. Commissioner helps Scoutmaster and lends dignity to a high-morale event. Encourage uniform for summer camp. Develop unit pride.

Membership Validation Procedures Involve Commissioners

The annual Local Council Membership Validation Procedures happen at the beginning of each calendar year. All BSA employees involved with the handling or processing of membership will review the procedures and sign off by stating they will follow each step in the process.

Council Key 3’s and district Key 3’s also sign off by stating they understand the process and plan on executing the steps to ensure every unit is receiving the support needed to qualify as a Centennial Quality Unit.

A major step in the procedures is number 7: **“Conduct semiannual ‘unit health’ reviews (in January and July).”** The process is for the unit-serving executive to meet with their commissioner team to evaluate all units in the district. In January, it should be a part of the goal-setting process.

Units meeting the Centennial Quality Unit requirements last year would receive a grade of “good.” For every unit not projected to be a Centennial Quality unit in 2008, a plan is developed by the unit-serving executive and the commissioner team based on how each unit can be brought to Centennial Quality Unit status. Specific action should be identified monthly and progress reported as a part of the overall growth plan. Priority should be placed on units with “life threatening” problems. These make for action items at monthly commissioner meetings.

Twice a year, unit status should be compared to the last report. “Units not changing in status should be given immediate attention by the unit-serving executive’s staff leader with help from the appropriate assistant district commissioner or district commissioner.” This should help in reducing membership losses and assisting more units to stay healthy. Better programming for more youth during a longer period of time will be provided.

The plan is shared with the council commissioner and the staff leader for each district. These plans should be kept on file by the registrar. Specific action should be identified monthly and progress reported as a part of the monthly commissioner staff meeting and at the regular council commissioners’ cabinet. Priority should be placed on units with life-threatening problems.



Unit Commissioner Box Score

As of November 30, 2007

| Region | Number of Units* This Year | Unit Commissioners Needed | Unit Commissioners Registered | Need to Recruit | Percent of Need Filled Last Year/This Year | Unit/Commissioner Ratio Last Year/This Year |
|-----------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Northeast | 18,700 | 6,233 | 3,869 | 2,364 | 60.7%/62.1% | 4.9/4.8 |
| Southern | 29,277 | 9,758 | 5,858 | 3,900 | 56.9%/60.0% | 5.3/5.0 |
| Central | 25,946 | 8,648 | 6,001 | 2,647 | 67.9%/69.4% | 4.4/4.3 |
| Western | 44,164 | 14,723 | 8,132 | 6,591 | 54.6%/55.2% | 5.5/5.4 |
| National | 118,087 | 39,362 | 23,860 | 15,502 | 59.1%/60.6% | 5.1/4.9 |

* Does not include Explorer posts or Learning for Life groups

2008 Calendar Dates of Interest

May 21–23, 2008

National Annual Meeting, Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Diego, California. Council commissioners are invited to participate and attend the Thursday commissioner elective.

June 8-14, July 20-26, July 27-August 2, and August 3-9, 2008

Commissioner staff, district operations, and Key 3 conferences at Philmont Training Center are offered. Two new courses have been added in 2008: Advanced Unit Commissioner Service and Becoming a Better Executive Board Member. Make your plans to attend. Make it a family vacation; bring a group from your council or district. A full description of each course is available on the commissioners Web site.

For comments or more information:

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