

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING

An Illustration. Not too long ago, a small, new troop made up of first year Scouts was given permission to meet on some privately owned land that afforded a variety of neat ways to learn and have fun. Up a hill in the central area there was a covered pavilion with picnic tables and a pit for building a cooking fire. Below, there was an extensive grassy area for troop wide games. On the edge of this field was a forest with a dried out stream bed forming a rough, narrow path to the Intracoastal Waterway. The distance between the field and the shore of the Waterway translated into a good, little hike through the forest—not overly challenging, but not too easy, either. It was arranged for the troop to get together on this land for a few hours on a Saturday, for a short, mid afternoon / early evening outing.

After they arrived, everybody assembled under the pavilion, and the young senior patrol leader revealed what was in store. As each of the following activities unfolded, one by one, *each would combine with the others forming an overall, memorable, outdoor experience.*

Here's how the outing went. First was a hike. Single file, accompanied by two assistant Scoutmasters, the Scouts made their way through the forest along the rugged trail to the Waterway. When they reached the end, they dug up some smooth, grey clay from deposits that were prevalent along the shore. As they dug, they put what they excavated into some plastic garbage bags. When they had a good amount, it was time for a return hike back to the pavilion.

Once back at camp, the bags containing the clay were placed on a picnic table, and each member of the small troop went about gathering some fire wood. A good-sized fire was lit, and while the wood burnt down to hot coals, everyone got a portion of clay. In order to illustrate what each Scout would be modeling, an assistant Scoutmaster fashioned a sample pinch pot. With eager smiles, each young Scout set out forming their own small pot. After ten minutes or so, they placed their pots along the edges of the pit near the fire, which by this time had burnt down considerably and was already yielding a sizable heap of hardwood coals. After another five minutes, each Scout took a turn placing their little pot carefully into the hot coals to start baking.

Eventually, all the pots were nestled deep inside the fire pit, buried in the glowing coals. As the pots started to to bake, the Scouts went down the hill into the field and played Flying Disc Soccer. The Scoutmaster and his assistants stayed under the pavilion and monitored the fire. A half an hour passed and the Scouts returned. The senior patrol leader had instructed

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them to each find a suitable hot dog stick which were acquired from nearby bushes.

A new layer of kindling was placed over the coals. All the while, the pots remained hidden, buried deep in the coals, completely out of sight. Cans of beans were opened. With the tops still attached and bent up to serve as a holder, they were positioned around the fire to get hot. Throughout all this, the Scouts were busy, happily whittling the tips of their sticks so each could serve as a skewer to stick through a hotdog from end to end. Soon the fire started to flame and the troop members proceeded to surround the pit with their hotdogs. As the hotdogs roasted over the flames, some Scouts were assigned to carefully stir the beans. Soon everyone was sitting around the table, eating hotdogs and beans, chatting and telling jokes. Silently, the invisible pots continued to bake.

Eating done, everyone deposited used paper plates, cups, and plastic spoons into a trash bag to be carried out. The fire had pretty much completely died down, and the moment had arrived to uncover the pots. Attention turned to the fire pit as the senior patrol leader, using a pair of tongs, began to fish around the ashes. Each time the tongs touched something hard, a little, ashen pot was gently lifted out and placed on the table, accompanied by voices in hushed tones commenting, “that one’s mine.” Indeed they all were recognizable, each with its own distinct shape and character—each small prize cooling in a row on the picnic table.

A couple of Scouts were assigned to sprinkle water over the ashes in the pit, stirring them until the fire was cold out. The pavilion was policed to assure nothing was left

behind, and belongings were all gathered up including the precious, fire-hardened pots.

—> *This is Comprehensive Programming! The afternoon consisted of a series of experiences, all woven together into an attractive tapestry of well-paced discovery and fun. Scouting is filled with numerous opportunities to present an array of memorable experiences that expose Scouts to new circumstances and broaden their horizons. There are a wealth of camping areas and Scouting destinations, each providing a wide scope of program possibilities. But, in between summer camps, themed campgrounds, and high adventure bases, in order to assure the week-to-week Scouting program is unforgettably fun, any additional expenditure of time and energy devoted to planning and preparation is well worth the extra effort.*

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Sample Gathering Period with an Enhancement. It was dark outside. Scouts were divided into groups of four, given a flashlight, two sheets of paper containing letters a through z, numbers 0 through 9, and the corresponding morse code dots and dashes for each letter and numeral, a pencil, a paper with a series of dots and dashes forming a unique message, and a compass. Each foursome was then directed to split into pairs, one to use the flashlight to send the message, and the other, from a distance away, to receive the message, write it down, and decipher the code.

When the message was thus received and decoded, it revealed a degree bearing along with a number of paces to take. It might read something like: "Follow a bearing of 60 degrees for 20 paces." The pairs would then join together and using the compass, face the bearing and pace off the prescribed distance. When they did this accurately, to their delight they happened upon a bag containing eight pieces of candy.

Just sending and receiving the message would make an effective preopening gathering period. It would be involving, challenging, and along with an entertaining message, could in and of itself be fun. What made this kind of activity an example of comprehensive programming was the extra twist supplied by having the message serve as a directive, which provided an added challenge, and culminated with an unexpected reward. The use of the compass and the action of pacing a distance added an additional layer of impact, and the bag of candy enjoyably served as icing on the cake.

Sample Scout Meeting Activity with Fringe Benefits. A workable activity to reinforce a patrol's ability to set up a dishwashing assembly line can be featured during a troop meeting, especially if the patrol(s) aren't familiar with the procedure, or maybe could just use some practice. For a typical front-country camping trip, the materials for this operation can consist of: a receptacle, like a small trash bag, in which food scraps and goop can be deposited, a goop scraper, a 4-quart pot containing warm water with a little soap, a dish washing brush, two 8-quart pots containing hot water, one for rinsing, and one with a sanitizing agent, hot pot tongs, and a plastic sheet. Also, there really should be something to wash, like plastic desert bowls.

The patrol(s) can simply demonstrate their familiarity with this form of dishwashing, by racing to properly set out the materials, wash the bowls

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and then place each on the plastic sheet to dry. As a competition, this actually could even be fun. But, with the addition of an imaginative routine that assures the bowls will require washing, this mundane activity can be transformed into a uniquely entertaining experience. The following additional materials will be needed: a blindfold and spoon for each patrol member, and some ice cream.

First thing, Scouts buddy up. A bowl containing a scoop of ice cream is given to each pair, along with a blindfold and spoon. Scouts are instructed to lie down on the floor facing one another, to place the bowl of ice cream between themselves, to apply the blindfold, and then to take turns feeding each other using their spoons. This, of course serves as both a comical prelude to setting up the dishwashing assembly line, which no longer is a race, but has become an incidental byproduct of participating in an unexpected and delicious undertaking.

A Second Class Five Mile Hike made a whole lot more Fun. The troop's traditional five mile map and compass hike was mostly along a country road, past large tracts of farmland. The midway point could be gauged at a crossroads with a mom and pop convenience store on one corner where the Scouts will make a pit stop. Further on, a large church signals the 3/4 mark where Scouts take a right turn heading west. Then, turning onto a dirt road leads the hikers to a wooded area which is the five mile mark where they will eventually be driven back to the starting point.

By putting some extra features on the map, making plans that add a little unexpected fun, and having the Scouts bring along something they can heat up for lunch, the hike can be transformed into a really fun outdoor experience.

1. Before the hike, unbeknown to the Scouts, it is arranged with the manager of the convenience store to have an ice chest set out full of bottles of Gatoraid for the Scout hikers. It's further arranged, when the Scouts reach the store, the manager will excitedly greet them while directing them to their cooler with the "free" drinks.
2. Past the convenience store there's a large field surrounded by a chain link fence. It's always at this location, when anyone passes along the road, three large dogs come charging out at the any and all passerby's with a barrage of ferocious barking. This location is marked on the Scouts' maps with the drawing of a dog. This way, when they

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approach the large field, they can see how the map reveals exactly where they are with an entertaining heads up.

3. The wooded area is quite vast and the troop has permission from the property owner to camp there. So, instead of just reaching their destination and then getting carried back to the starting point, the Scouts get to gather tinder and kindling and properly fashion small cooking fires to heat up their lunch. This becomes the highlight of the hike since they love to make fires and they love to eat what they've prepared on an outing.

With a little forethought, planning, and execution, the troop has turned a simple hike into a memorable, outdoor experience.

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