

PLANNING PROGRAMS THAT ROCK

— COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING —

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 were to unfold, one by one, *each would combine with the others forming a memorable, outdoor experience.*

Here's how the outing went. First was a hike. Single file, accompanied by an assistant Scoutmaster, 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 mounds of 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 his little pot carefully into the hot coals to start baking.

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— COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING (continued) —

Eventually, all the pots were nestled deep inside the fire pit, buried in the glowing coals.

As their pots started to to bake, the Scouts went down the hill into the field and played Flying Disc Soccer. The Scoutmaster and his assistant stayed under the pavilion and monitored the fire. A half an hour passed and the Scouts returned. The senior patrol leader had instructed 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.

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— COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING (continued) —

—> *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 rocks, any expenditure of time and energy devoted to planning and preparation is well worth the extra effort.*

Notes: