

Scouting out the Applegate

BY ERIK JOHNSON

Greetings, neighbors! I'm an Applegate resident, father of three, and adult volunteer with the local Crater Lake Council of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). I wanted to briefly share with you what BSA is about, what we're up to, and what you might be interested in.

The BSA has many youth programs, all of which center around fun and exciting opportunities for youth to experience the outdoors, develop skills and character and leadership, and generally learn to be good citizens. I have kids in Cub Scout Pack 3017, based in Jacksonville, which is a program for youth grades K-5. We camp, hike, promote family bonding, and enjoy other activities such as snow sledding and the traditional pinewood derby.

My oldest son recently matriculated to the "Scouts BSA" Troop 17 (formerly called the "Boy Scout" program), where boys age 11-17 engage in more adventurous activities and hone their leadership skills through a program that utilizes self-governance. In short, the scouts themselves plan and execute their meetings and activities, with adults providing guidance and safety oversight.

Having scouting in our area is a great opportunity for our kids to engage in wholesome and fun activities that get them out of the house and off their tablets and video games. While there are many other quality youth activities, such as sports and various after-school programs, I firmly believe that no other program offers a comparable mix of fun, outdoor experiences, character-building, and family togetherness. As a bonus, scouts regularly try to give back to their communities. During our pack's campout at Jackson Campground a couple of years ago, we helped the camp host by picking up trash across the campsite and then fished some picnic tables out of the river that had been washed into some overhanging blackberry bushes.

While for decades the BSA have admitted girls into some programs, in 2018 they updated their programs for Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA to allow for girls as well. Just this summer, we were contacted by a high school junior from the Applegate who was looking to join so she could learn wilderness survival skills. I was happy to point her to the right troop in the area. Within the next six months, Troop 17, in Jacksonville, will be forming a troop for girls, which will collaborate with our already vibrant troop for boys. So if you're looking for adventure and to be a part of a groundbreaking effort to offer this quality program to girls in the Applegate Valley, now is the time to get involved!

For those who live on the west end of the Applegate, Pack 3029 meets at Redwood Elementary, and Troop 24 meets southwest of Grants Pass. The best place to learn more about us and others is through Facebook or beascout.org. If you'd like to collaborate with us on community service or something else, we'd love to hear from you!

Erik Johnsen

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Members of Troop 17 pause for a photo in the Sky Lakes area south of Crater Lake. Photos: Erik Johnsen.



Scouts gather round the campfire on the McCaleb Ranch by the Illinois River.

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