

## Madison scout group fulfills dream of rugged wilderness trek in New Mexico



### Scouts

A group of eight Scouts from Madison-based Venture Crew 77 and four adult leaders met the challenge of Scouting's ultimate "High Adventure" in July by trekking through the mountainous Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Visiting the summit of Pikes Peak, elevation 14,110 feet, in Colorado en route to Philmont, in front, from left, are Pranay Malla, Thomas Edwards, David Kass, Edward Tirpack, Dan Collins, Glenn Collins, Jack Collins and John Kennedy, and behind them, from left, are Kathy Meyer, Dan Lai, Caitlin Edwards and Celeste Post.

Main St. Venture Crew 77 meets twice monthly; conducts a number of annual community service projects, ranging from blood drives to electronics recycling to replanting degraded wooded areas of Madison – and members don backpacks to head out for four major outings each year.

The Venture Crew Scouts who fulfilled their dream of a "High Adventure" at Philmont this summer included Celeste Post and Kathy Meyer of Madison; Pranay Malla and David Kass of Chatham; Dan Collins, Jack Collins and Dan Lai, all of Livingston, and Eddie Tirpack of Sparta Township, accompanied by adults John Kennedy and Caitlin Edwards of Madison, Glenn Collins of Livingston, and Thomas Edwards of Doylestown, Pa.

The Scouts completed a 61-mile hike on Philmont's "Trek 11," known as a "shooting trek" because it features the chance to shoot with black powder and 30-06 caliber rifles, and 12-gauge shotguns.

**Posted: Friday, September 6, 2013 3:00 am**

MADISON - Free from the demands of school, summertime can be a season when young people grab a chance to fulfill a dream.

For many Boy Scouts, that summer dream can mean a "High Adventure," a Scout's paradise of shooting, rock climbing, hiking, whitewater rafting and more amid natural splendor.

For an intrepid group of Scouts from the Madison-based Venture Crew, that dream came true from July 12 through July 28 at the Philmont Scout Ranch, the Boy Scouts of America's premier "High Adventure" base near Cimarron, N.M., covering more than 214 square miles of rugged New Mexico wilderness, with a mountainous terrain that ranges from 6,500 to 12,441 feet.

### Community Service

Organized within the Patriots' Path Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Venture Crew 77 is a Scouting unit for older boys and girls, sponsored by Madison Lodge 1465 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks at 192

Along with shooting, the trek included such Philmont staples as rock climbing, emergency rescue drills, horseback riding, branding cattle, and a “mini-bear wrangling” experience, along with “geocaching,” an outdoor activity in which a Global Positioning System (GPS), mobile device and other navigational techniques come into play in a “hide-and-seek” challenge to find hidden containers, called “caches.”

“Each activity enabled me to grow as a person, and to experience things I wouldn’t have been able to outside of Philmont,” said Madison’s Celeste Post.

“After training for so long, it was a great payoff to be able to shoot and hike through such a beautiful landscape.”

### **‘Motley Crew’**

Venture Crew 77 was a “motley crew” for a Philmont trek in a number of respects, Kathy Meyer noted:

- For one thing, although Venture Crew members spent more than a year of fund-raising and training, the Philmont “High Adventure” marked the first time all the members worked together as a team;
- In fact, the “Watchu Weekend” that begins a Scout trip to Philmont was the first time the full Venture Crew 77 group’s members all gathered together. Preceding the 10 days in the wilderness at Philmont, a “Watchu Weekend” includes a two-day tour of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, with a ride on a cog railway to the summit of Pikes Peak in the Pike National Forest, which rises to an elevation of 14,110 feet above the city of Colorado Springs, plus nine miles of whitewater rafting on the Arkansas River;
- The Venture Crew 77 group included two girls;
- The age range of the Venture Crew trekkers was 14 through 18. Traditionally, a Boy Scouting “High Adventure” in the Philmont Scout Ranch is open to boys 6 through 18 – and to boys only.

Despite its nonconformity, during more than a week at Philmont the Venture Crew team “grew together as a group through fun and hard work,” Meyer said.

### **‘Wanted To Give Up’**

“Each day was pretty hard,” Meyer allowed. “I remember one of the last days when we hiked 10 miles, with a large drop in elevation. At one point I just wanted to give up.

“But all my Crew mates were there, motivating me to keep going,” Meyer said. “Even though we had barely known each other before Philmont, by then I knew that they would be there to help me through anything.”

The Patriots' Path Council runs a specially-tailored program for Scouts who want to take a Philmont "High Adventure." The program requires more than a year of training, and leads to the "Watchu Weekend," when Scouts break down all of their gear and hike as a unit in conditions that portend what they'll encounter in Philmont - including real Philmont food staples such as Sun Butter and Stinger Bars. Scouts also are given the chance to spend two days in Colorado, having fun while adjusting to the high altitude. Blue Sky Adventures operates the sightseeing tour of Pikes Peak, and allows Scouts to let loose with whitewater rafting. An "all-you-can-eat last supper" is also provided before and after Philmont, compensating for any weight Scouts lose during their outdoor adventure at Philmont.

"Overall, Philmont is a great experience for all Scouts," Meyer summed up.

*For information about Venture Crew 77, email [eagle70@optonline.net](mailto:eagle70@optonline.net) or call (973) 377-0373.*