

ABILITIES DIGEST

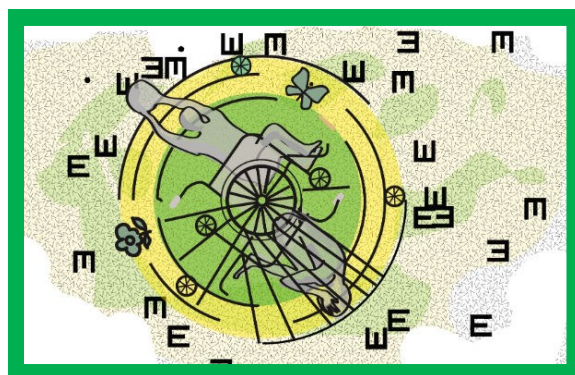
Prepared. For Life.® Vol. 9, No. 3

Fall 2022  BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Adapting Activities

Promoting inclusion with disability simulations

It's a no-brainer, right? The best way to teach kids about disability awareness is to give them an experience that simulates a disability. Since Scouting is an experience-based program, that is our first instinct. But just dropping a blindfold or earmuffs or crutches on a kid is getting the EDGE method (explain – demonstrate – guide – enable) backwards. Roger Tate, the editor for the *Inclusion Toolbox for Special Needs and Disabilities* shares that, "The disability advocacy organizations I worked with, were worried that simulations make living with a disability seem harder than it is and people with disabilities look less capable than they are."



If we want to build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) so-

ciety, we want our kids to come away after a simulation with a feeling that people with disabilities can do a lot more than it looks like and that they are not that different from anyone else. We don't want to evoke pity.

We want Scouts to be Helpful without babying people. For that to happen, the leader of the simulation activity needs to explain and guide.

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The secret sauces for a disability simulation are the introduction discussion beforehand and the reflection discussion afterward. The details of how to do this need to take into account the ages of the Scouts participating. A Tiger Cub will understand the experience differently than a high-school age Scout or Venturer and have different take-aways. Just like many of our core Scout skills, we want to keep exposing Scouts over and over, at each level of Scouting, with increasing levels of challenge.

The Framingham Special Education Parent Advisory Council (f-sepac.org) has an excellent summary entitled *Disability Awareness Fair Ideas* (<http://f-sepac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Disability-Fair-ideas.pdf>). They recommend some core concepts to introduce before a simulation:

1. The simulation will seem harder for you than for the person with the disability because it's your first taste of this and you haven't had a chance to adapt and learn.
2. Even though you will learn, you won't have learned everything about it. It's similar to how being a person of another race or gender is different from imagining what it is like.
3. People with disabilities don't just adapt their actions, they adapt their attitudes and emotions so that the disability is just one aspect of who they are and the whole person is something so much greater.

The point of reflection is to internalize the knowledge from the experience so it makes more of an impact. With



a good introduction discussion, most Scouts will figure out what you wish to teach them from the experience. Having them put the ideas, sensations and feelings into their own words will help them hold on to the knowledge for later. A few will need some coaxing to express themselves, and a few may need a gentle nudge to shift from ableist attitudes to more inclusive and respectful attitudes.

Using reflection questions with disability simulations

If you are going to use a disability simulation with Scouts to promote understanding and inclusion, the most important part comes after the actual experience. Reflection discussions connect the experiences of the simulation to the Scout's own life.

The depth of the reflection changes as a child grows. For our youngest Cubs in Kindergarten through 2nd grade, it is hard to do the abstract thinking it takes to connect an experience to a general outlook towards people. Children this age naturally care about the people they know and see all the time like family members and schoolmates, so reflections need to talk about people they know. An advantage of this age is that children are

open about asking questions themselves. Sandy Payne of Connecticut Rivers Council suggests asking them about their older relatives to make connections to physical limitations that come with aging. At this age, appropriate questions would be:

- How did you learn by doing this (simulation)?
- What is a nice thing you could do for someone like this?

Older Cubs and Webelos from 3rd to 5th grade are still pretty unfiltered, but that leaves them open to learning. You can ask more thoughtful questions, like:

- How did you feel while you were doing this (simulation)?
- When you were doing the challenge task, did you want to be helped or to do it by yourself?
- Is there something about you that makes it harder to do certain things than most people?



Scouts from 6th to 8th grades are at an age where they become more self-conscious and more hesitant about asking questions or asking for help. Questions more appropriate for this age are:

- How did people treat you when they thought you were disabled?
- Did people who intended to help you do what you needed them to do or not?
- If you had more time, what tricks would you have tried to make things easier for you?
- How do you show respect to people with disabilities?

Managing Subscriptions to *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is designed for any leader who would offer a Scouting program to youth who have special needs. Any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

Subscribing by email. Send a message to specialneedschair@scouting.org, with “SUBSCRIBE” in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.

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At high school age, youth talk freely with each other but keep more of their thoughts to themselves. Candidly, at this age there may be better ways to build awareness and inclusion than a simulation activity. It is a bit harder to get the ball rolling for a reflection discussion but you can ask fairly deep questions, like:



- When you need help from others, what are the best ways to get the kind of help you need?
- When you are leading a team, how can you take advantage of the strengths a person with a disability has?
- If you could change things at your school to make things better for people with disabilities, what would you do?
- How do you adjust for your own limitations in ability? How is that different from what you would do with a disability?
- Have you ever been amazed at something a person with a disability has done? Why?

Awareness Events

2023 Jamboree: SND Challenge

The following are observations by Rick Smith, the Abilities Digest editor and 2023 Woods Services Award recipient.



I've served as a volunteer at every Jamboree hosted at the Summit, generally in service of Scouts with special needs and disabilities. At the two National Jamborees, I staffed the Disabilities Awareness Challenge (DAC), which has been re-named, the Special Needs and Disabilities Challenge (SNDC), for the 2023 National Jamboree. The SNDC offers a unique opportunity to serve, to enjoy the Jamboree, and to meet others in the Scouting SND community.

The Jamboree takes place next July at the Summit Bechtel Reserve. Service team members may sign up for the full Jamboree, from Sunday, July 16, through Saturday, July 29. Alternatively, team members may sign up for a half session 7/16-22 or 7/23-29.

If Jamboree service interests you, start planning now!

There are three parts to SNDC service. First is the serious, educational part: help Scouts learn basic facts about special needs and disabilities.

Second is that essential part of Scouting, the fun part: give Scouts a challenging, interactive taste of a disability experience. Popular events in the previous Jamborees have included wheelchair basketball, the crutch obstacle course, mirror drawing, the cane maze, and blind sports (e.g. baseball, shooting, trust run).

The third part is reflection: we stimulate the Scouts to make connections between the disability experience and their own families and communities. Reflection should promote an improved understanding and respect for people with special needs and disabilities. Members of the SNDC service team promote reflection by role playing and asking questions. Everyone on the team learns more about reflection every time they participate.



The SNDC service team is part of the Program Group under Frontier Quest; position #6138. Register now at <https://jamboree.scouting.org/jamboree-service-team/>.

2023 Jamboree: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Support



The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Support Staff is a new service team that will be responsible for helping to ensure that the Jamboree is an inclusive and accessible event. The team will host community spaces for various identity groups (e.g. women, Scouts of color, LGBTQ+ Scouts and allies, etc.) and provide ad hoc consultation and support to contingents and staff to meet inclusion and accessibility needs. The DEI

support staff will be expected to participate in pre-Jamboree trainings.

These positions are part of the Chief of Staff group. To apply, use one of the following position numbers:

- #9505 - Diversity Equity and Inclusion Support Staff

- #9506 - Diversity Equity and Inclusion Young Adult Ambassadors

Register now at <https://jamboree.scouting.org/jamboree-service-team/>.

Enhancing Awareness

New Toolbox Modules

The Inclusion Toolbox contains two new modules:

- [J: Understanding Anxiety, Depression, and Other Mental Health Concerns](#)
- [BB-5: Handicrafts and STEM Hand Work](#)

The primary purpose of Module J is to help you recognize when a Scout may be struggling, how you can support the Scout, and when these struggles are a cause for concern.

Module BB-5 helps Handicraft and STEM instructors at Scout camps adapt their activities to support Scouts with limited physical dexterity.



Adapting Events

Jamboree Experiences with Disability Simulation

The Disabilities Awareness Challenge (DAC) has been a regular feature at National Scout Jamborees since 1977. The area offers a variety of simulated experiences and is a popular venue at Jamboree. What is not so obvious are the efforts that are made to make sure Scouts are learning things even when they don't realize they are learning. Tony Mei, the former chair of the BSA Special Needs and Disabilities Committee, has been at the center of this part of Jamboree. For the World Scout Jamboree in 2019, disability simulation experiences were scattered out and embedded with other program venues. Ann Bruner-Welch, Disabilities Awareness Coordinator of Redwood Empire Council led the "Tent of Possibilities" at the WSJ. Here are some of their insights:

Tony: *The DAC is like a small fair inside the bigger fair of the Jamboree. A lot of what we show is adaptive sports, but we also present hidden disabilities. While we are explaining "the rules" for the activity we put living with disabilities into context and encourage the Scouts to think in terms of what people with disabilities can do and not what they can't do.*

Ann: *It makes a big difference when the simulated disability can be experienced for longer than a few minutes. At the World Jamboree, I would outfit one Scout with a simulated disability and prepare the buddy Scout to be an assistant. I had a lot of options for them. For example, if one Scout was blindfolded, the other got a crash course in blind guiding. Then I sent them off to experience a nearby program area and then report back. As they were turning in the equipment, we discussed what they experienced and used the Critical Lens approach to connect their experience to the bigger world around them.*

Tony: *Another feature of the DAC is displaying and demonstrating adaptive equipment. There is a lot of technology out there to help people with disabilities do what they want to do. Some of it is pretty simple and some of it is amazing tech. One of the coolest things is to show them how many adaptive features are already built into their smart phones.*

Ann: *For me the most fulfilling part of staffing the Tent of Possibilities was talking to the Scouts and getting them to reflect on their experiences. It was great to have the Scouts take their “disability” out into the world around them rather than performing a challenge task at a booth. That way they learned to improvise.*

Tony: *We are still looking for staff for the SNDC at the 2023 National Jamboree.*

If you want more information about how you can be part of the team, visit <https://jamboree.scouting.org/jamboree-service-team/> and look up position #6138.

You can look beyond your unit, district, and council for a counselor.

Adaptations at NOAC 2023

Ethan Syster posted a report on the National Order of the Arrow web site describing this year’s National Order of the Arrow Conference (NOAC): <https://oa-bsa.org/article/noac-2022-recap>. The following excerpt from his report describes NOAC’s diversity and inclusion activities this year.

New this year was the Admonition Team’s presence at NOAC. The Admonition Team, whose mission is supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and wellbeing, supported multiple programs at the Conference, including affinity spaces for Scouts of Color, Women in Scouting, ArrowPride, and Scouts with Disabilities. Additionally, the Admonition Team held training and lunch-and-learns to help lodge leaders better understand how to support



welcome members from different backgrounds. All Admonition Team programs were exceptionally well attended and many national leaders of both the OA and the BSA stopped by to support these efforts as part of the organization's wider goals of ensuring Scouting and the OA are available to everyone.

Elanor Philips and her team staffed the Scouts with Disabilities space. Here are her observations:

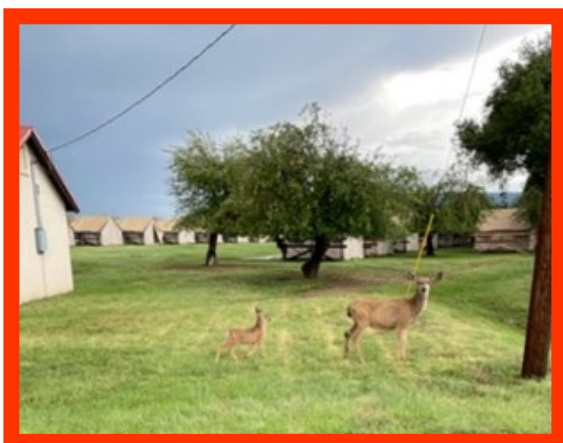
Lots of OA participants came by our room for fellowship and to showcase where they were from. Some came to learn about Special Needs Scouting while others used our room to have a quiet and calm place to be.

This area provided a calm supportive sensory culture where everyone felt a sense of belonging. The area was designed to include different zones, such as an active zone, a calming zone, and an interactive zone so different needs could be addressed. The Scouts with Disabilities space was an area for Scouts and Scouters who were in need of some down time and/or regrouping time when experiencing sensory overload and after deescalating they could rejoin and enjoy the NOAC activities. There were trained volunteers available to answer questions and share information.

The photograph shows a special tent set up in the Scouts with Disabilities room. Our troop sets up an extra tent like this on campouts to provide a safe room. When a Scouts needs to deescalate they can go in the tent and no one will bother them. The tent contains sensory items to help the Scout deescalate and get back to themselves.



Report on the 2022 Zia Experience



Abilities Digest writer Janet Kelly took part in the Zia Experience last summer. Here is what she saw.

Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico is nestled in the Sangre de Christo Mountain Range near the town of Cimarron, about an hour east of Taos. It is beautiful there, to say the least. The air is cool and clean. The deer are in abundance grazing the grass outside the Villa while their little fawns scamper and bound in

joy of living the Philmont life. The people are friendly and kind. The ice cream at the local creamery is divine and the parking lot wasn't too bad this year.

"Are you ready?" came a mom's voice from the tent sites near the camp office. "Don't forget your water bottle!" Glancing around, you could see "the guys" from Troop 263 lining up to trudge over to the flag area so they could wait for the bus to take them to the Dino Trek. They were pretty pumped. Hiking at Philmont! This is what they came for!



The Zia Experience Family Adventure Camp is an opportunity for those with disabilities to experience Scouting with the support from a dedicated Philmont Training Center staff (PTC) and volunteer faculty from the National Special Needs and Disabilities Committee (NSNDC). During the weeklong adventure, daily activities are planned and executed depending on the needs of the people attending.

This year the Dino Trek was added to the agenda. It is a mildly rough trail, not strenuous, but full of rock rubble and a gradual ascent. The endpoint is the Tyrannosaurus rex fossilized footprint. To add a little zest to the hike, one of the Philmont staff donned a T-Rex inflatable costume and made an appearance from behind some boulders. Definitely jazzed our excursion up a notch! Then it started to rain. At first it was gentle and spotty and



then it was just raining. Steadily. Along the trail, the way became muddy and very watery. Everyone had ponchos on. Some had umbrellas. The parents slogged along with the sons. Some of us were slip sliding away. One fell, bounced back up, and continued. The coolest thing was when I heard them all singing in the rain! Just bellowing out a tune and laughter floating in the air while we trudged back to the bus pick up area. The best thing about the whole experience was when someone commented that they had just hiked like a Boy Scout...in the rain! He was joyous! A smile from ear to ear!

The kicker is this hike was only a total of two miles. We were in country where Scouts trek for miles and miles up and down mountainsides in the rain, hail, snow, and heat. Miles. Seven and ten and twelve day hike miles...totals of 90+ miles in many cases. I'm sure some would roll their eyes at this troop's accomplishment, but when you consider who was doing the hiking, it WAS an accomplishment! And IN THE RAIN!!! Amazing!

They were thrilled and that was only the second day at camp.

horseback riding involved volunteers to be on either side of a rider and his horse if the rider was unable to control the horse. There were several staff who are very competent riders. They led us on a trail near

the horse corrals, past a pioneer wagon, and into the grassy fields. Each horse had a name its rider was asked to remember. Tim was up on Jelly. He was designated to tag along at the end. When Tim asked why, he was told that Jelly tries to kick all the other horses. "That's bad," stated Tim rather matter-of-factly. I was then and there definitely on the alert for any shenanigans Jelly was thinking up. Very fortunately PTC staff Heather was walking next to me and was ready and able to intervene if necessary. Horses definitely have personalities and senses of humor!

Rappelling was another matter. Brian and his crew of tremendously patient and skilled staff helped all of the guys get into their gear and led them to the rappelling towers. NSND volunteer Chris Werhane had all of his adaptive equipment ready to go when the climbing got tough and intervention was needed. The guys were shown how to rappel up and how to get down. After that, parents stood by to help and encourage. Some of the guys like Danny and Kendrick, made it to the top and rang the bell. Some guys barely got past the first few footholds before they slid back down. Everyone tried though. Everyone. Quentin, belted into a sling, participated in lifting himself up in the air with ropes and pulleys. Simple machines that made the experience so moving, everyone was shouting for him to pull and push. Quentin made it about 10 feet in the air before he was gently let back down to the ground. Lots of hugging and back slapping after that feat.



Shooting sports was another exciting activity that everyone participated in. Jim and his team of PTC range officers were phenomenal in support and explanation. There was .22 caliber rifle shooting, 12 gauge shot gun shooting, and tomahawk throwing. There were Adaptive Conference participants helping each Zia participant. There was much concentration and encouragement on all firing ranges. Some guys did great. Some never hit the target. It didn't really matter. It was the experience of learning about firearms, remembering range rules and holding and loading a rifle that was thrilling to many who had never touched a gun. Ever. Tomahawks were quite a challenge. When someone experienced flips his/her wrist and nails the target, it looks easy. However, try it out and see what a challenge it really is! Our guys did and stepped up to the plate in form and fun.

The guys also visited Kit Carson’s ranch at Rayado. They learned about making nail hooks and actually got to forge some with hammers and tongs. Goats and chickens abounded. Some cheeky chickens ended up balancing on the heads of a couple of the troop’s more courageous souls. Shouts of laughter were heard echoing in and around the courtyard.

The beautiful Scout Museum held some artifacts that all the Scouts could relate to, including many of the merit badges, eagle required merit badges, handbooks, tents, and uniforms of old. The story of the lone wolf, Lobo, was one of their favorite spots in the museum.



The nights were filled with social activities. Everyone had a lot of fun. There was ice cream, cobbler, roping “calves,” dancing and singing and then falling asleep with a happy, tired feeling from a day well lived.

Each day at PTC, the NSND volunteer faculty and the Adaptive Conference course participants were there to help the guys in Troop 263 enjoy their week at Philmont. By the end of the week everyone was tired, but happy. We ALL had a mountaintop experience... ALL of us.

Come join us next year for the Zia Experience at Philmont Scout Ranch 2023. Check out the schedule of courses as it becomes available this winter on the [Philmont Training Center web site](#). Be there!

Recognizing Abilities

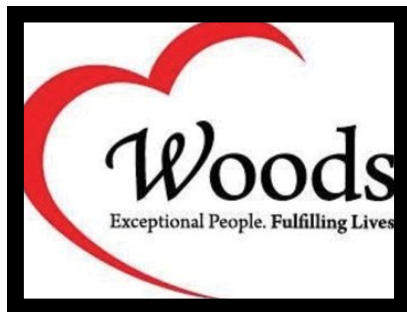
Nominate council Scouters for the Woods Services Award.



Every Scouting council may present one Torch of Gold Award every year to recognize a Scouter who has performed significant service in Scouting with special needs and disabilities. Here is the nomination form: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-945.pdf>.

Nationally, the BSA presents the Woods Services Award to recognize Scouters for particularly outstanding service for Scouts with special needs and disabilities. Up to two Scouters may be recognized nationwide every year.

Every council that presents a Torch of Gold should take that nomination form and nominate that winner for the national Woods Services Award. Each council may submit one nomination per year. Here is the Woods Services nomination form: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf>.



For example, a council might collect Torch of Gold nominations early in the calendar year, and present it during the year.

Before the end of the year, the council transcribes the Torch of Gold winner's nomination information onto the Woods Services nomination form. Send the form to SpecialNeedsChair@scouting.org.

Woods Services nominations must arrive by January 31.

Helpful Links

Scouting with Disabilities landing page: scouting.org/resources/disabilities-awareness/

AbleScouts: *Abilities Digest* articles posted online: ablescouts.org

Links in Articles

2023 Jamboree Service Team: jamboree.scouting.org/jamboree-service-team/

NOAC Recap: oa-bsa.org/article/noac-2022-recap

Philmont Training Center: philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences/

Torch of Gold Award: filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-945.pdf

Woods Services Award: scouting.org/filestore/pdf/512-258.pdf

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About *Abilities Digest*

Abilities Digest is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Disabilities Awareness Committee. Its mission is to expand membership through helping parents and Scouting volunteers to improve their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to including and serving the special needs population. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute four issues of *Abilities Digest* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at disabilities.awareness@scouting.org.