

# Hit the Trail!

Chester County Council High Adventure Committee  
Newsletter #3—November



## Featured Program of the Month— Challenge Events

**Head of Dean**—North Country

**Urraca Camp**—South Country

Philmont puts a premium on teamwork and cooperation. These two camps use “team building” games to mentally and physically challenge every crew member. You and your crew brainstorm solutions, talk through how to allow your team to succeed and then you do it. Success builds confidence among the members of the crew and help you through the stages of team development.

Your crew will do three to five of the 12-15 challenges available while you are at the camp. Spider Web, All Aboard, The Wall and many others will give your crew a fun time while you are there.



## The Four Essentials

Every Scout and adult needs a good pack, a warm, light weight sleeping bag, well fit and broken in hiking boots and good rain gear. The Sangre De Cristo Mountains, where Philmont is located, has extreme weather. You will experience temperatures from at freezing up to ninety-five degrees plus. Thunderstorms and hail are common. You are likely to experience them during your trek. It gets cold at night when you camp at 10,000 feet and above.

Philmont is a poor place to find out your gear is wrong. Get your pack in the next month or two and test it out on your training hikes. Adjust it, repair it or replace it if it isn't satisfactory during your training.

You need a sleeping bag that is good down to freezing and will compress down to 8-10 inch diameter, 12-20 inch high sack. It shouldn't weigh more than two to five pounds.

Do not rush out now and buy your hiking boots if you are still growing. Wait until February or March to buy the pair you will use at the ranch.

Buy a good quality rain coat and pants. Ponchos are not useful in the heavy rainstorms at Philmont. They are good for pack covers but not as you only rain protection.



The Miranda meadow with Baldy Mountain in the background

# Hiking is a Team Sport

By Dave Setzer, Patriots Path Council, BSA

Watching crews hike at Philmont is a wonderful educational experience. Here comes a crew spread out all over the mountain. Two or three Scouts a half mile up the trail. Two advisors far back down the trail. And everyone else is somewhere in between. The end of the crew has no contact with the front or even the mid point. The crew members are expressing various degrees of unhappiness.

Then we have a crew hiking smartly. Each member spaced at about five or six paces. Everyone is in contact, but not so close that they only see the boots in front of them. Everyone is chanting and singing together. All are having a great time and enjoying the spectacular scenery and each others' fellowship.

Which crew will you be? Well, if you would like to be the second, here are a few points that will help make it happen.

- 1. Hiking is a team sport:** Everyone must be trained to know that *Hiking is a team sport*. Everyone must be trained to be committed to the success of the entire crew. Everyone must be trained to ask at all times, "What can I do to make this hike a success for my crew mates?" And everyone must be trained to know that the conduct of the hike is the responsibility of the Crew Chief. If the crew develops this hiking mentality, the crew, Crew Chief, and advisors will reap many surprising benefits along the trail. But this does not just happen. It requires training.
- 2. The slowest hiker is always first:** It is amazing how much more territory a crew can cover if the slowest hiker is first. It prevents the crew from breaking up and causing the fast to wait for the slow. Then when the slow catch up, they need a rest. Yet the fast want to get going again. It turns into a vicious debilitating cycle that causes crew attitudes to go sour. *The slowest is first* is a vital principle in the military for moving men across terrain – it might be counter-intuitive, but it absolutely is true.
- 3. The slowest hiker is not always the same person:** Everyone is subject to problems along the trail that may slow them down from time to time. The slowest person in the morning might be quick in the afternoon. The slowest uphill may be fairly quick downhill. Look for gaps to develop in the hiking file. *The person on the tail end of the developing gap is the slowest*. That hiker goes to the front immediately after a gap opens in front of them.
- 4. The advisors never lead the crew and usually hike in the rear:** If an advisor is very slow, that advisor may move forward. Maybe even up to second or third. *But an advisor never leads the crew*. Also, it is advisable to keep at least one advisor at the dead last position. This is the best position for keeping an eye out for safety. And a good spot for finding and picking up dropped essentials.
- 5. The Crew Chief and the navigator usually hike close to the front:** This helps keep the crew on target and the Chief in control. Now and then the Chief may want to observe the crew from near the rear. Also, all members of the crew should be trained to keep an eye out for the navigational checkpoints. *The navigator is accountable for the days hiking plan, but every member of the crew is responsible for picking up the important landmarks*. If landmarks are missed, the all members of the crew are responsible, not just the navigator.
- 6. Always hike single file:** Walk softly on the land. Stay on the trail's narrow pathway. When crews meet, the one climbing uphill has the right of way. If passing crews can't pass, the downhill crew should get off the trail. When meeting a crew on horseback, the un-mounted crew gets off the trail, usually to the down hill side, to avoid spooking the horses.
- 7. Maintain a ten-foot spacing:** The spacing between crewmembers is very important. *Everyone should be separated by about four or five paces (about 10 feet)*. This gives each hiker a good view of the environment, which is much better than "boot and backpack" watching. In addition, a ten-foot spacing helps assure the Crew Chief always has contact with ALL crew members.
- 8. The Rule of Four:** In case of emergency, the *Rule of Four* applies. That is, if it is decided to send a team for help, the team must be composed of four members including an adult. Best case is to have a CPR/First Aid person and adult with each party. Note that the Rule of Four always applies - for example, when going for water at a source removed from your trail camp.
- 9. Mastering the breaks is an absolute:** *There are three types of breaks - two minutes to catch your breath, five minutes to replenish your energy, and twenty minutes if the crew can't get going in five*. Heavy breathing is the clue when oxygen is the problem. Usually this kicks in at high altitudes. When out of oxygen, a short two-minute break lets you catch your breath and get going. If the crew is tired and needs an energy break, take five. If the crew can't get going in five minutes you must continue the break for another fifteen, a total of twenty minutes. Acid builds up in the muscles after five minutes or so. You need additional down time to avoid complications resulting from the acid build up. So think OXYGEN - 2 minutes, ENERGY - 5 minutes, ACID BUILDUP - 20 minutes.
- 10. Religiously time your breaks:** All crew members stick together during breaks (except of course those using "the facilities," which are well off the trail and away from the others.) The Crew Chief should designate a Break Master who times the breaks with a watch. Timing prevents two minutes from turning into a half hour, which is a real moral killer.
- 11. Caterpillar hiking:** *When going up difficult hills use the "caterpillar" method of hiking*. It is an outstanding way to keep the crew moving and at the same time everyone gets a short break. The caterpillar method of hiking will be covered during the May Shakedown at Horseshoe.
- 12. "I need a break":** *Anyone in the crew can call for a two, five, or "caterpillar" break whenever they need it*. They simply call out "I need two!" or "I need the caterpillar". The Crew Chief decides if a five-minute break should be extended to twenty. Of course, the Chief does this in consultation with the crew members, usually an "I'm not" answer to the question "Is anyone not ready?" at the end of a five-minute break.
- 13. Do not hike on roads:** *Never hike on a road when a footpath or hiking trail is available*. Hiking on roads is dangerous, often longer, often much more difficult, always hotter, and never as much fun. Resist the urge of the Scouts to take to the road.