

# PHILMONT AMBASSADOR UPDATE

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SERVING BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

January 2024

## New Trek Match System Fills, Finds Openings

For the first time, Philmont is helping to match Crews that have openings for additional members with Scouts and Leaders looking to go on a Trek. The new Trek Match System makes it easy to do.

Crews looking for additional members have two opportunities to use the system. The first is when they are completing the form for a reservation. The advisor fills in a space indicating the number currently in the crew. Next to this space is a new button asking "Looking for more participants?". By clicking the button, they are taken to a new screen that asks them about the additional crew members they are looking for. These can be male or female and youth or adult.

The screen also asks if they are willing to accept crew from only within their council or cast a wider net by accepting people from outside their council. While it is easier to coordinate training sessions and practice hikes with those nearby, there are many other considerations that might make it worthwhile to get together with scouts from other councils. Philmont has long had good experiences with putting together Scouts from around the country on Individual Treks and Crews.

Advisors can add additional notes for potential crew such as describing their unit or type of trek they are hoping to go on to make for a better match.

Once a reservation is made, the advisor can go back and edit their crew search parameters by indicating a change in openings or type of crew they are looking for in the Reservation Confirmation Screen.

For a person looking to go on a Crew, they can find the Trek Match System on the Philmont Web Site by going to the



Letting more Scouts experience Philmont is a goal of the Trek Match System. A video explaining how the new feature works is available [here](#). (Philmont Photo)

## PTC Has Full Slate of Conferences

By Danny Tucker, PTC Director

Did you know that the Training Center has nine fully equipped classrooms? For the first time in many years, 100% of our classrooms are booked for the summer season.

With over 50+ conferences scheduled, there is something for every Scouter to enjoy.

A large number of these conferences are due to the return of specialized weeks hosted by National BSA Committees. Dedicated weeks include Commissioner Service, Membership Development, Religious Relationships and Scouting U/Training. Weeks like these allow Scouters to network with other Scouters from across the country, interact with national volunteers, and receive the latest and greatest tools and resources to help strengthen Scouting in



their local councils.

In addition to these specialized weeks, PTC is also hosting a number of conferences that will help Scouters improve skills, gain valuable knowledge from subject matter experts, and build lifelong friendships. There is something for everyone this summer at PTC. Check out the 2024 schedule here [www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences](http://www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/ptc-conferences).

Philmont is grateful for the work our Ambassadors have done these past few years to help grow interest in the training center. This excitement has helped national committees renew their efforts in hosting conferences once again. Thank you, Ambassador team, for helping to keep this magic alive!

2024 is looking to be an exciting year, and we hope you will do all you can to help fill these opportunities to strengthen and grow Scouting. Your work to promote these conferences is very much appreciated.

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*Match* (Continued on page 2)

# Ambassadors Get Inside Look at Philmont

For Ambassadors, foremost among PTC offerings are the Philmont Ambassador Seminars. Three 'levels' of seminars provide a gamut of information and experiences including basic information about the many programs the Ranch offers, insights into motivating Scouts to attend, and hands-on backcountry fun with the opportunity to give back to Philmont through service projects.

All three Ambassador experiences are offered the same week, June 23 to 29.

The Ambassador 1 course led by Bob Krehely and Don Winn features sessions on Philmont's history and programs. Tours of PTC and Camping Headquarters provide informative behind-the-scenes interactions with staff to let you in on the secrets of how Philmont works. You'll get an intimate tour of the Villa Philmonte and learn more about how the family made the ranch their summer home.

Scott McAllister and Barry Bray will be leading the Ambassador 2 sessions. They will go further into depth on Philmont programs and include tours of Conservation Headquarters and Baldy Town along with Cattle Headquarters. Participants will get to hone their displays and presentation skills as well.

Insights from Philmont upper management will bring you up to speed on how Philmont is adapting to changes in the Scout programs. Ambassador Newsletter Editor Tom Baltutis will share his experience on promoting Philmont to many audiences using a variety of unique techniques and displays garnered from over 10 years as an Ambassador.

Enhancing the agenda are visits to the Opening and Closing Campfires for Trek Crews and a special reception at Philmont's beautiful Casa de Corazon estate.

Those who choose the Ambassador Experience (formerly the Ambassador 3 conference) will get first-hand taste of what it is like to go on a Trek, from checking in at Camping Headquarters, equipment shakedown, and a night in the backcountry. They'll be helping with a conservation project as well as performing a service project around Base Camp. This is a great way to experience all that Philmont has to offer.

Most of all, Ambassadors get to share



Ambassadors get to visit places few get to see on the Ranch, like the inner workings of Cattle Headquarters where the tack for all the horse programs is stored and maintained. (Philmont Photo)

their experiences with others in the course. This makes attending the seminars doubly valuable for those learning from others as well as sharing experiences and stories.

The Training Center's Kids and Kin program provides a great vacation for families as well. Some Ambassadors have brought their grandchildren so that they too can experience the fun and games of Western Night, backcountry hikes, campfires, climbing, shooting and more.

Everyone gets to enjoy the Ranch and surrounding area during their free day on

Wednesday. Hiking the Tooth of Time and day hikes to the backcountry as well as museum trips are available that day.

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**Click [here](#)  
to sign up for  
PTC Conferences  
and Seminars**

## Match System Links Crews and Participants

### *Match* (Continued from page 1)

Treks Tab, then clicking on the "12-Day, 9-Day, and 7-Day" button on the left of the Treks screen. At the bottom of this screen is a button for the "Trek Match System".

Clicking on the button takes them to a screen asking basic information like name, age, council, and trek experience along with the type of trek they are looking for. This can be a traditional or short trek as well as a cavalcade, or autumn or winter adventure. To see the participant link, click [here](#).

Once their information is in the system, the crew advisors and individuals will get weekly emails notifying them of potential candidates and slots.

There is a video on the Philmont web

site [here](#) that explains the system. Of course, Philmont's Individual Opportunities still provides programs for solo Scouts (including those up to age 20 on some offerings) to have a Trek experience.

Philmont reports that the system has already been successful at matching many openings with Scouts for 2024 and 2025 Treks.

The Trek Match System is a great opportunity for Scouts and Scouters to get to Philmont to participate in a life-changing Trek. Having a larger crew makes sharing the load of crew equipment that much easier. It also provides more opportunities to make life-long friendships forged in the Philmont backcountry.

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# A First-Year Ranger in a Different Phase of Life

By **Thak Phillips and Colette Pippin**,  
Philmont Staff

Laura Spillane does not fit the image of your average Ranger. Out of 185 Rangers, she's the only one with a year to retirement, a husband, and two kids with her at Philmont this past summer.

Spillane has been involved in Scouting for most of her life. She and her husband, Kevin, put their four boys into Scouting when they were old enough to be Cub Scouts. Spillane was involved as an Assistant Scoutmaster for a decade and as the lead advisor of their troop's Philmont trek in 2021.

She had been to Philmont before, however. In 2017, her troop, #671, from Nokesville, Virginia took her on her first Philmont trek. She went with her husband Kevin and her son Raymond. That first trek had a huge impact on her and her family.

"When we came in '17, I remember our ranger was a petite young college student woman. I remember just watching her and thinking 'That's the job I want.' And I said to her, 'I want to be a Ranger. How young do you have to be to be a Ranger?' She said, 'I don't think there's any upper limit. Just apply.' It took six years, but I finally did it," Spillane said.

Their son, John, did not come with them on this trek, so they planned another visit for 2020, which got moved to 2021 due to COVID-19. Raymond applied to be a Ranger for the summer of 2021 and was able to be the Ranger for their 2021 trek.

Raymond and Laura were not the only two who could not stay away from Philmont. John did a Trail Crew trek right before Spillane's troop completed theirs in 2021. He called them from Philmont to say he wasn't coming home. "This is it. I found my thing," he told them. Kevin, who was a few months away from retiring at the time, told her, "You know, I don't want to work again, but if I were ever going to work again, the Cantina Manager at Ponil is the job for me." They had bumped into the then-Cantina Manager at Ponil a few times during their adventure.

Raymond, John and Kevin were all on staff in the summer of 2021 and Spillane was staying at home in Virginia. She listened to calls from her family detailing fun Philmont stories, and decided she could



Laura Spillane helps set up a tent's rain fly at Sioux trail camp. (Photo by Victoria Case)

not stay home one more summer. Despite tearing her ACL in a ski accident during the winter last year, Laura was determined to be a ranger.

Laura never skipped a day of physical therapy and spent a lot of time reading up on all the ranger materials she could.

"Once she had decided that she was going to be ready for the next season, we knew there wasn't going to be anything keeping her back...When she gets something in mind, it's going to happen," said Kevin.

When she got the job offer in February of 2023 to be a Ranger, she sat down with her boss in the Department of Homeland Security and told her she was going to Philmont. It was non-negotiable. Her boss said she could take leave and come back to work after the summer. Her job as a first-year Ranger was set in stone. Arriving in late May, she set off for a training trek with her training crew.

"It's been a real joy to find that, yeah, I can hike with rangers and keep up. And maybe, you know, walk them into the ground," said Laura. During training trek, Laura was often leading the pack with her fellow Rangers. While the age gap is there, and you "can't pretend it's not," she has found everyone to be welcoming and inclusive.

She explained what drew her to being

a Ranger, specifically: "Frontline – basically directly working with scouts all over the Ranch. You know, guiding the scouts through the first few days, helping them get set up for success on the trail...Helping the advisors learn their stand-back role. [The Ranger position was] the thing that most appealed to me and the thing for which I feel like I'm well-qualified. I've spent a lot of time doing Ranger-like things, and watching the kids grow and learn and become more confident. And all that kind of thing jazzes me."

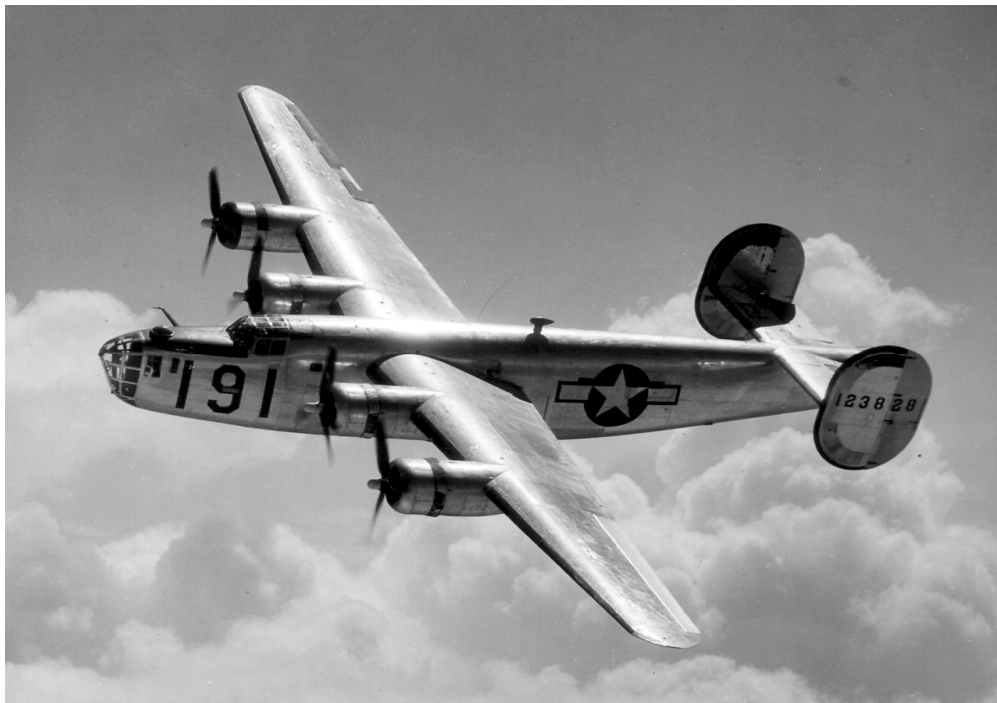
Spillane expressed that she values getting to work with youth and the freedom to go all over the ranch the most. Philmont has given her and her family confidence and singular experiences.

"I think a good word picture is they come back from Philmont – they're just walking taller. You come home, you're more confident. You've got skills that others don't have. You've done really hard stuff and gotten through it. You've worked as a group. You just have had an experience that is unusual. And that gives you an edge on your peers. I'm really excited to be part of helping that to happen for as many youth as I can."

"I feel like it's given us all really happy experiences and a lot of individual personal

**Ranger** (Continued on page 6)





The four-engine B-24 Liberator, with its distinctive twin rear fin, was the world's most-produced bomber. (U.S. Air Force Photo.)



A memorial plaque on the mountain recalls the names of those who died in the crash.

## Focus on the Backcountry

# Trail Peak Preserves Remains of WWII Tragedy

Seven Army Air Corps flyers died on April 22, 1942, when their B-24 bomber crashed into Trail Peak, 10,242 feet high at Philmont. The crew had flown the four-engine plane on a training flight from Albuquerque to Kansas City on the morning of that fateful day and was returning that night to the point of origin, Kirkland Field. Once back into New Mexico airspace, they ran into horrendous weather, and one of the four engines failed.

Over Las Vegas, NM, the bomber was steered back to the north, looking for a route around the massive storm system. It would not be found. All seven crewmembers died immediately upon impact on the southwest side of Trail Peak.

William G. Cass, a Philmont staff veteran and the author of *The Last Flight of Liberator 41-1133*, makes a compelling case in his book that the craft was caught in a downburst, where cold air rushes downward at a rate of several thousand feet per second.

Also of note, Chope Phillips, then twenty-four years old and using his inestimable knowledge of the Philmont Terrain, guided the rescue party to the crash site, found by air after ten days of searching.

One of the 41-1133 pilots, Lt. Roland Jefferies was an Eagle Scout and was introduced to aviation through Scouting in his hometown of Kansas City.

For several reasons, the crash stands out as unique from among the 490 state-side military plane crashes during World War II. With a steady stream of trekking Scouts each summer, the wreckage is one of the most visited aviation crash sites in

the world.

Trail Peak is northwest of Fowler Mesa. Crews passing through Beaubien, Crater Lake, Miners Park or Lower Bonito may be able to hike the trail to it.

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Adapted from "A Million Miracles: 75 Years at Philmont Scout Ranch" by David Mullings.



Pieces of the B-24 Liberator bomber remain on Trail Peak for Scouts to examine. This is the type of plane used by Doolittle's Raiders in their attack on Tokyo in the war.





Staff at Clarks Fork have fun getting into the Western Theme. (Philmont Photo)

## Hiring for Summer Is In Full Swing

Philmont hires more than 1,000 seasonal staff to operate and support programs in outdoor skills, backcountry adventure, family adventure, living history, training, food service, maintenance, retail operations, guest services, museums, ranching and horse/livestock, and administration.

Length of employment varies with job assignment, but the majority of summer positions run from May 23rd to August 12th. Preference is given to applicants who can fulfill a commitment for the full season.

Salary is based on the positions responsibility with consideration given to the individual's experience. Starting base salary is \$1,350 per month plus room and board. Base Camp Food Service and Housekeeping employees receive higher pay and more free time.

Hiring for the summer season occurs on a rolling basis with the bulk of interviews taking place from September through April. There is no application deadline, but applications are typically reviewed by hiring managers in the order they are received and routed based on the position choices entered. All first year applicants should choose at least one base camp position.

Applications are done on line at [Philmont Camping Gateway \(registerphilmont.org\)](https://philmontcampinggateway.registerphilmont.org)

### Who's Who at Philmont

## Clinton Pedigo—IT Manager

**Duties at Philmont:** My title is IT Manager. That is just a title, if you will. I get to work in many different aspects of technology here at Philmont. I climbed through thirty-four different attics in 2023 to expand the Wi-Fi to twenty-three new buildings in basecamp. I have also helped obtain new Philmont desk chairs, tables, desks, and shelves. I get to do all this and keep the technology running here at Philmont!

**How did you come to work at Philmont?:** When I was a scout and had my first trek in 1990, I knew I wanted to come back. I just didn't know how or when. Fast forward to 2009 - my son and I returned to PTC for a week of leader training. I then knew I wanted to work here, but I just didn't know how. In February 2021, I found the IT Manager position posted, and I applied.

**Number of years at Philmont:** I have been a full-time employee at PSR for two years and five months.

**Prior positions at Philmont:** None.

**Prior Scouting positions outside Philmont:** I was a Cubmaster for thirteen years, Scoutmaster for four years, District Commissioner for three years, Unit commissioner for six years, and a merit badge counselor for fifteen years and counting.

**Most memorable experience at Philmont:** In 2013 my son and I were on a twelve-day trek, and we summited Mount Baldy together. He was in much better shape than I was and was just hustling up the side of the mountain. Then he stopped and waited for me to climb the crest together.

**Most humorous experience at Philmont:** I always have had the opinion, "If you can't have fun, you will never go anywhere in life." So, I have brought that to work here at Philmont. The Business Operations team is a great group of colleagues. We can joke and have fun but still get our jobs done. That being said, we have filled offices with balloons when our boss has been on vacation or changed the colors of an individual's lights in their office to brighten their day. And when it was my time to be paid back, I found over one hundred fifty little yellow ducks in my office. I actually found two last week, six months after they put



them in my office.

Another humorous moment was realizing that when I crawled through the attics and crawl space here on the ranch, I have gone in places at Philmont that many have not or never will.

**What do you like most about working at Philmont?:** I get to work in Scouting Heaven. I never knew what HOmE was until I started working here. My position may not be a front-line position for scouts and leaders to see but I get to help them with their Trek in ways they may never know is needed. Even the IT Department Changes Lives. I just do it one bit at a time.

**What's your favorite off-duty activity?:** I enjoy scuba diving. I have done many dives but one that was fun and had lots of laughs was an actual dive here at Philmont. This past spring the buoy that marked the drain in Webster Reservoir broke loose and needed to be replaced. They asked me to dive down to the bottom and tie a new marker to the drain. There was zero visibility in the reservoir. Diving in water that is blacker than midnight was a challenge and fun once it was over. So, I started the Philmont Dive Team!

# Laura Spillane Meets Challenges of Being First-Year Ranger

**Ranger** (Continued from page 3)

growth. And I feel like it's been sort of a rallying point, a central point bringing us all together kind of thing. I don't really think anybody comes out here that doesn't get some challenge."

She recalled a difficult experience she had hiking up Wilson Mesa from Rich Cabins, which is about 2.5 miles straight uphill, on one of her treks and how she pushed through it.

"There was a moment when I was just like, up against a wall. I just felt like I had absolutely hit my limit. I hiked a mountain that just killed me. From Rich Cabins to Wilson Mesa. It had been a really rough emotional ride the day before. And I packed my pack wrong and it was pushing on my back raw...and by the time I got to the top, I just sat down apart from the crew, took off my shoes and socks and cried. But that was what I needed to do and half an hour later, all good, you know? Drank my little liter of water and got over

it, which is what you do here. You push past or you get to that wall, you acknowledge that wall, you get through that wall."

This summer, her husband Kevin works as the Cantina Manager at Ponil, and her sons, Raymond and John, work as a Ranger

relationship with advisors, and she feels she gains instant credibility that young Rangers usually have to work to build.

Despite some of the challenges of the teaching style at Philmont and age gaps, Spillane is doing well, according to her crews and family.



The Spillane Family at the Ponil Cantina. (Photo courtesy of Laura Spillane)

## Philmont Ambassador Newsletter

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Trainer and north country Work Crew Foreman, respectively.

"The kids that come out here and they go through the Philmont experience, they grow and they learn and they realize how strong they are. They don't always get to do that with their families. Doing that with your family, it builds your family together," said John.

Spillane aims to provide an experience like this to her crews so they can "walk taller." She has been getting used to the Philmont hands-off approach of teaching - allowing crews to find their own way and make mistakes. As a mother, the hands-off approach is not a leadership style she's used to: "It is not my natural space. I'm accustomed to being a person in charge... It's leading from behind, which, if a scout troop is done right, that is the way leaders are leading."

Her relationship to crew members is a little different. Most rangers are near-friends with Scouts at Philmont due to the small age gap and can connect with Scouts easily. However, Spillane has a peer rela-

"She knows her job. She's a good teacher. She's very fit. She's definitely doing more than keeping up with these guys. She's really kind.. I think she's a great Ranger," said Shon McGontmery, lead advisor of one of her crews, 713-D-01.

"She's kicking butt, man," said John. "She's doing great. Every person I've heard of, like, Rangers in her [training crew], or the people that have just seen her, it's like, 'Your mom's the greatest ranger ever,' like, she knows absolutely what she's doing."

With a lot of her family out at Philmont, she looks forward to getting to see them when she can. "I'm hopeful that we'll find some window when we can all have a couple of nights to just go out there somewhere. You know, even a day hike as a family," Spillane said.

She is planning on doing much more than a day hike with family in the near future. She plans on returning as a ranger again after hiking the Appalachian Trail with her husband next year.