Philmont's 2025 season a success

Philmont's Camping Department reports that the summer of 2025 season was a good one with no fires or floods to deal with for a change. "We had a great season this summer with 17,424 participants coming through our trek and camping programs. This included 16,717 participants in our 7, 9, and 12-day treks, 302 in cavalcades, 383 in individual programs, and 22 in our Philmont Staff Association trek," explained Phillip Ferrier, Senior Associate Director of Camping.

"We're gearing up for a busy fall season on the ranch with a variety of programs, conferences, and special events including the fly-fishing invitational, National Outdoor Conference, and our Autumn Adventure programs," he continued.

Scouting America's youth want to challenge themselves with high adventure opportunities. While Northern Tier, The Summit, and Sea Base provide experiences that are out of the ordinary for most Scouts, Philmont remains the one place where crews of Scouts have to pull together in a wilderness environment with no guides or staff for most of their journey. Adult Advisors are there to provide guidance only and are often only as experienced as the youth when it comes to trekking the mountains.

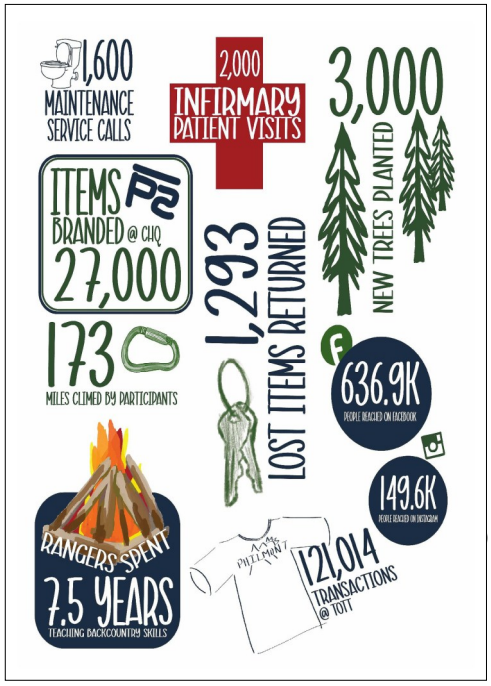
Now is the time for crews contemplating a 2027 trek to start planning their next moves. Registration for the 2027 season begins on October 1 at 9 AM mountain time and extends to October 16 for crews wanting to guarantee their desired date. After October 16, Philmont expects slots to still be available, but they will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Itinerary selection — when crews choose their routes and activities — does not take place until the spring of 2027.

With the current demand for treks, Philmont can fairly well assure every crew will get its desired itinerary or something very close to it.

Preparation for treks begins as soon as a crew decides to go on one. That means that adult advisors need to take a serious look at whether they meet the height and weight requirements. All crew members need to plan their preparation hikes and backpacking trips in order to be well prepared for the rigors of the backcountry.

Recap *(continued on page 2)*

Registration for 2027 treks opens October 1



These fun facts make great talking points when chatting about Philmont to potential attendees. You can find these in the August PhilNews on the Philmont site. *(Philmont graphics)*

In praise of darkness

By Matt Bolden, Philmont MPS Staff

Out in the high country of northern New Mexico, where the Sangre de Cristo Mountains cradle the horizon and the wind tells stories older than memory, darkness still reigns. Its vast kingdom towering high above the artificial blanket of softened urban twilight that hovers above city skylines. It is not the murky orange haze cast by distant parking lots, but a pure, velvety blackness that reveals the heavens in their ancient glory. Here, above Philmont Scout Ranch, stars burn like ice against obsidian, and the Milky Way spills across the sky in a shimmering torrent. For thousands of Scouts who trek these trails each summer, this darkness is not something that requires vigilance and a headlamp, it's something to remember.

It's no accident that the darkness is preserved here. Philmont is surrounded by International Dark Sky locations, a growing initiative dedicated to protecting the world's remaining pockets of natural night. The program recognizes parks, communities, and reserves that work to limit artificial light and raise awareness about its environmental and cultural impacts. At Philmont, intentional practices like shielding lights and educating staff and participants make the darkness a priority, not a byproduct.

Light from towns and roads can greatly decrease the amount of night sky that people can see. Utilities Manager Paul Behrendsen notes, "Artificial light takes away from the overall amount of natural light that comes out of the sky. We try to make things a little dimmer. I want other people to have the chance to see a starry sky out here."

Behrendsen also explains that Philmont has been, "swapping [light] fixtures so that they shine straight down instead of over a broad area that drowns out starlight."

Night Sky *(Continued on page 3)*

2025 Successes

Recap *(Continued from page 1)*

Although Scouts may be put off by the cost of a trek, the reality is that they have a year and a half to do fundraising. This works out to about $100 a month to put aside from Troop fundraising efforts, their own employment, gifts from relatives and other initiatives.

Scholarships are also available from Philmont itself, and local councils may also have funds available to assist them. However, a Scout must first apply before they can be considered for assistance.

The first thing is to get crews to sign up for a trek. That means applying once registration opens on October 1.

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Philmont Ambassador Newsletter

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Praising Darkness

Night Sky ***(Continued from page 2)***

These efforts aren't merely cosmetic. Darkness isn't just an aesthetic choice; it's an ecological and educational one. Nocturnal wildlife relies on natural darkness to thrive, and humans benefit from an unfiltered view of the cosmos. When Scouts spend even a few nights under a sky like Philmont's, they often come away with more than just fond memories. They leave with a new sense of scale, a glimpse into the vast, slow machinery of the universe.

That's precisely why astronomy plays such a vital role in the Philmont experience. At camps like Ring Place, staff lead evening star talks and telescope sessions, guiding Scouts through constellations with the same mix of myth and science that has anchored human storytelling for millennia.

Benjamin Jinkins, Camp Director of Ring Place, notes that whenever he walks outside alone, "It really sinks in just how vast the universe is. We like to end our program with an overview of how all matter was formed through fusion in the stars and so we're all kind of made of the same stuff and that kind of connects us in a way that's pretty deep if you think about it. Being connected in this way makes me think about how important it is to be courteous, kind, clean, obedient, et cetera. In the end, a lot of what really matters is how we treat each other and how we treat the earth."

For many Scouts, this is the first time the sky has ever seemed alive. They begin to recognize Orion's belt, trace the arc of the Big Dipper and other constellations or spot Saturn's rings through a telescope. With each discovery, the sky grows a little closer for these scouts.

And so, each night, as the sun slips behind the western ridges and the last alpine glow fades from the Tooth of Time, the stage is set again; not just for another beautiful sky, but for a moment of transformation. Beneath the stars, something changes in people. Their breathing slows. Conversations grow softer. Eyes widen. The universe, once a distant abstraction, becomes deeply personal. Because in that darkness, you remember what it means to wonder.

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Is your display looking a little tired and worn? It's time to freshen it up so it looks its best to showcase Philmont. *(Tom Baltutis photo)*

Fall is time to freshen your display

Going into the Fall, many Scout units are busy filling in their annual calendar. Troops hold SPL elections around the time they are at summer camp. This lets the new Patrol Leaders Council put into place their vision on how the year ahead will go.

Ambassadors should also be planning their own annual calendar. District roundtables and council events have been scheduled, so you can start picking when and where you want to make a presentation or set up a display.

This is an excellent time to take a critical look at your Philmont display. Is it beginning to look a little worn and tattered? Are the photos curling around the edges? Those bends and dents may be acceptable on well broken-in backpacking equipment, but your display should present the best of Philmont. This is the time to replace faded and worn photos and signs with new ones to spruce things up.

Do your photos show both young women as well as young men at Philmont? Many crews are now comprised only of young women or are co-ed. Your Philmont display should reflect current trek participation.

You should also look to make sure that you have the latest information. Your display should include recent changes like:

- Unit Adventure Camp
- Seven-, nine- and twelve-day Trek options.
- The new Stay and Play option for crews to arrive early or stay after their trek.
- Single-day passes for the Family Adventure Camp
- Overnight stays at PTC for visitors passing through
- Trek Match system for Scouts and Crews.
- PTC's Bed in a Box
- Hut-to-Hut glamping

You should also be including these topics in your presentations to potential crews and PTC attendees.

P2

Do you stop to smell the trees?

While hiking at Philmont, you may not come across roses, but do you stop and smell the trees?

Ponderosa pines sometimes produce a distinctive aroma, especially on warm, sunny days. The aroma has been compared to vanilla, butterscotch, cinnamon, coconut, and baking cookies.

The smell is produced by chemical compounds in the tree sap known as terpenes. These compounds are responsible for attracting and repelling various forms of wildlife around plants. Those who have smelled it wish the essence could be bottled and saved. However, the smell seems to come and go.

Next time you are hiking the backcountry, stop and take a deep whiff.

P2

Trail notes from the GM

Philmont getting ready for 2026 celebrations

By Andrea Watson, General Manager

There's no better way to celebrate the 250th birthday of the USA than by waving the flag from the top of Mt. Baldy. *(Philmont Photo)*

Philmont Scout Ranch is already preparing for a monumental 2026 and you're invited to be part of it! Next summer, we'll join the nation in celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States of America. Throughout the season, crews and families will have the chance to participate in special commemorative programs that highlight our country's founding and the role of Scouting in shaping tomorrow's leaders. A special edition Arrowhead patch and themed activities will mark this milestone summer, making 2026 a unique chapter in Philmont history.

Program evolutions in the backcountry

Philmont is always looking for ways to improve the experience while honoring the traditions that make this place special. In 2026, crews will see continued refinements to our backcountry programming, shaped by staff insight, participant feedback, and the evolving needs of the Scouting community.

One of the more notable potential updates is at Clarks Fork. While the camp will continue to celebrate its Western heritage, we're beginning a thoughtful transition away from traditional "dude" horse rides at Clark's Fork. This shift supports our goals around sustainable programming and horsemanship education while preserving the cowboy spirit that has long made Clarks Fork a highlight for many. As part of this evolution, we're also exploring the addition of a cowboy action shooting range, which would offer a dynamic and engaging new activity that fits naturally within the camp's Western-themed experience. At the same time, we're expanding Cavalcade opportunities across the Ranch, giving more crews the chance to experience Philmont on horseback through this unforgettable backcountry adventure. The additional capacity will help move more crews off the waiting list, meeting the growing demand for this highly sought-after experience.

We're also excited to reopen the Rayado and Kit Carson area full-time, welcoming crews back into this historic and scenic part of the Ranch. It's another step forward in Philmont's recovery and growth. Looking beyond just one season, Philmont will continue work on its long-range Master Plan. This effort is helping guide improvements across programs, infrastructure, staffing, and conservation to ensure the Ranch remains strong for the next generation of Scouts.

New construction and historic restoration

Philmont's facilities continue to grow and evolve. By summer 2026, a new cabin at Beaubien will be completed, adding capacity and flexibility to one of our most iconic camps. At the same time, restoration work on the Villa Philmonte will continue, preserving the home of Waite and Genevieve Phillips and honoring the legacy that started it all.

Philmont is also investing in essential infrastructure to support safety, sustainability, and long-term operations. Projects include upgrades to water catchments, corrals, and roofs, improvements to backcountry roads, and the long-anticipated completion of a new road to Sawmill. These improvements not only enhance the overall experience for participants and staff, but they help ensure reliable access and long-term operational resilience across the property.

Conservation that matters

Philmont's commitment to land stewardship is at the heart of everything we do. In 2026, our conservation department and participants will continue critical work across the Ranch, including restorative thinning to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health, creek restoration projects that help slow runoff and recharge the water table, and replanting efforts in the Ute Park Fire burn scar to bring life back to affected areas. This ongoing conservation work reinforces Philmont's mission to deliver adventure while caring for the land that makes it all possible.

A summer to remember

Whether it'll be your first time on the trail or your fourth summer working at the Ranch, 2026 promises to be a year of celebration, progress, and purpose. Be part of it by hiking, riding, volunteering, or serving as a member of the Philmont team. We can't wait to have you HOmE!

P2

PTC's 75th continues to be huge success

"This past summer was a HUGE success with nearly a 25% increase in attendance over the summer of 2024," beamed Amy Hutcherson, PTC Director. "Those that attended our 75th Anniversary Home on the Range week had a fantastic time. It was great to celebrate with the Cimarron Maverick Rodeo and whole community of Cimarron."

Though the air is getting cooler, summer is not over yet at PTC. September features the Scouting America Safety Summit, and the National Outdoor Conference. In October, noted photographer Moose Peterson again leads the Scouting New Mexico photography course.

During the summer, families enjoyed stepping into the wild west during PTC's Home on the Range themed Family Adventure Camp. This special week was packed with unique programs, exciting events, and a build it-yourself itinerary offering a one-of a-kind adventures not available during a regular summer season.

One of the standout moments of the week was the Cimarron Maverick Rodeo — the longest-running open rodeo in the West — celebrating its 101st anniversary this summer. Families watched thrilling rodeo events cheered on daring cowboys and cowgirls and soaked in a piece of western history.

Matilda Barr, who is on Philmont Staff, participated in the barrel racing event. She was riding a Philmont horse and thrilled at how great it was to participate. "It was fun and cool to use a Philmont horse and represent Philmont. Participants rode on this same horse just two days later, so it's cool that they can say they rode a horse that was in the rodeo," said Barr.

Another notable Philmont cowgirl was Maria Segura who rode in the open bull riding. She went for a wild ride lasting five seconds. When asked about the ride she said "It was a good ride, but I wish I would've done better and stayed on for all eight seconds." Even though she wasn't completely happy with her ride, it was above average for the day. It's rare to see women ride bulls in any rodeo.

In addition to the rodeo, families participated in various activities, from western BBQ night, hiking the Tooth of Time, horseback rides, and a Cimarron ghost tour. During the ghost tour, 25 people walked around Cimarron and were told ghost stories about the rich history in this area.

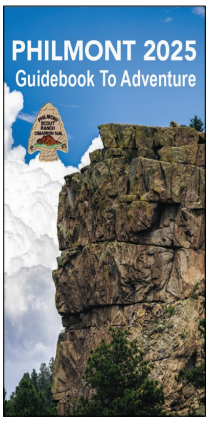
This was the first time Philmont Training Center held *Home on The Range Week*, and with a mix of scheduled events, every family crafted their perfect western getaway. *Home on the Range Week* at Family Adventure Camp was the perfect escape to the wild west.

Next year PTC's goal is to continue to grow and offer more opportunities to attend Philmont. Staff are still working on marketing strategies for Summer 2026 promotions. Look for more to come as next year's PTC registration opens on November 1st.

(Adapted from PhilNews Home on the Range Week *by Lelani Deines.)*

P2

Crew size requirements based on safety, campsites, youth protection



Editors note: Leaders frequently call Philmont asking questions about Treks. Most of these are answered in the Guidebook to Adventure *and Advisors Guidebook. This series covers important topics from the guides so that Ambassadors can be familiar with them.*

Crew Size

The **maximum** and **minimum** crew sizes (minimum of 8 and maximum 12 campers for treks and minimum of 10 and maximum of 15 for Cavalcades) are strictly enforced. Crews with fewer than the minimum for their activity type will not be permitted on the trail. Crews with more than the maximum must determine how to reduce their numbers to the maximum for their activity type.

These crew sizes are the best sizes for Philmont crews. This is due to Youth Protection and safety reasons – if a crew member is injured, a team of 4 will be sent to obtain assistance. This team must meet Youth Protection rules as do the crew members remaining with the injured person. Philmont's itineraries have been developed with these numbers in mind and campsites are designed to comfortably accommodate a maximum of 12 campers (campsites used for Cavalcades can accommodate larger crews).

Council contingents and other large groups should organize their crews according to hiking and camping abilities. Each crew can then choose an itinerary that corresponds to the abilities of its participants and travel at an appropriate pace.

Philmont reserves the right to combine smaller crews within contingents or multi-crew groups to maximize staff resources. Should something happen to one of the Advisors, other adult Advisors need to be prepared to move to another crew within the contingent or multi-crew group. This may involve being moved to a different itinerary if necessary. If a crew goes below the minimum size while on the trail and it is not possible for Philmont to absorb that crew in another crew, the crew that is smaller than the minimum size may have to come off the trail and be sent home.

Because of the minimum number of adult Advisors required and/or the minimum crew size, it is imperative that adult leaders stay on the trail with their crew in the event their child is transported to the Infirmary. If the child's injury/illness is severe, we understand that a parent should be with their child. In that event we will make every effort to ensure the remainder of the crew can stay on the trail with adequate adult leadership or crew size. This may require combining the crew with another crew (and changing to their itinerary) or other options. Be aware that this is not always possible, and the crew may have to come off the trail and depart Philmont.

P2

Hailstorm wrecks havoc at Base Camp, PTC

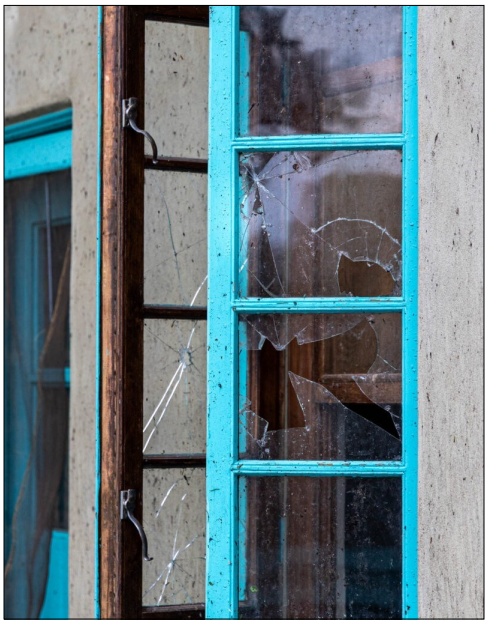
By Kate Warrick, Philmont Staff

A devastating hailstorm struck Philmont Scout Ranch's base camp on Sunday, August 10, causing significant damage. Fortunately, no one was injured, and all programs continued as scheduled without disruption.

Cleanup and repairs are already underway. Staff are working hard to secure buildings, inspect tents, remove debris, and prepare for the repairs and restoration work ahead. The historic Villa Philmonte, which had just been carefully preserved throughout the summer, suffered extensive damage. The hailstones battered its roof, shattered windows, and broke several cherished and historic stained-glass panels. Many of the Villa's historic trees and gardens were also severely damaged, and some unstable trees will require careful removal. As a result, tours of the Villa are suspended until repairs and restoration are complete.

While insurance will cover many of the repairs, there are still significant costs to fully repair and ensure the long -term preservation of the Villa Philmonte. Constructed by Waite Phillips in the 1920's and gifted to Scouting America in 1941, the Villa is a cornerstone of Philmont's history and a lasting testament to Phillips' generosity and vision.

P2



An unprecedented hailstorm caused significant damage to the recently restored Villa Philmonte by smashing windows, breaking roof tiles, and severely harming many tress. *(Kate Warwick photos)*

You can help restore Villa Philmonte and preserve its legacy by donating to the Villa Philmonte Restoration Fund. Give today at donations.scouting.org/#/council/NCFD/appeal/8757 to safeguard this irreplaceable part of Scouting's heritage.

This crew got to do some extra climbing during their Stay and Play experience. *(Philmont photo(*

Crews like *Stay and Play* option

The first year of the new Stay and Play option for crews was a great success with 408 participants, The participants got to stay in the relative luxury (after being in the backcountry) of Philmont Training Center for just $20 per person for lodging and $10 for meals. For an additional $75/day, they got an Adventure Pass that allowed them to take advantage of PTC's recreational facilities.

The Stay and Play advantages are many:

- **Arrive Early:** Beat the altitude blues by coming 2+ days before your trek. Acclimate with ease and enjoy a taste of Northern New Mexico before hitting the trail.
- **Stay Late:** After your trek, kick back and reward your crew with well-earned relaxation, fun, and exploration.
- **Rest in Comfort:** Stay at the Philmont Training Center (PTC) in larger canvas tents with electricity and real beds.
- **Enjoy Private Showers:** PTC offers individual-entry shower rooms for a little privacy before or after your high-adventure.
- **Choose Your Adventure:** Fill your days with local attractions, cultural highlights, and self-guided or group activities tailored to your crew's pace.

P2

PTC presents Trailblazer Award to significant contributors

As part of its 75th anniversary celebration, Philmont Training Center unveiled the inaugural class for its "Trailblazer Award," honoring those who have made a lasting impact at PTC. These contributors gave of their time, talents and treasure to help make PTC the world-class facility it is today.

Criteria for those named included:

- Positive impact upon the PTC program, facilities, and/or its participants.
- Significance of impact by numbers, dollars, time, or other measurements.
- Duration and/or variety of contributions or positions.
- Creativity or uniqueness of their contributions or impact.

PTC recognizes, thanks, and congratulates the inaugural class. Read about them on the PTC website at www.philmontscoutranch.org/ptc/75th-anniversary-of-the-philmont-training-center/

Founders:
Waite and Genevieve Phillips
Elliott "Chope" and Virginia Phillips*
Arthur A. Schuck

Scouting Professionals:
Mark Anderson*
Ray Bryan
Chuck Buenger
Clyde Clark
Don Fifield
Mark Griffin*
William L. Lawrence
Earle Peterson
Dick Potter
Waldo "Tex" Shaver
Marlin Sieg
Bill Spice*
Andrea Watson
Roy Williams

Members of Philmont Staff:
Dave Anderson
Kay Anderson
Joey Fernandez*
Jim Fish
Janet Griffin
Valera Henson
Nancy Klein
Tom Krouskop
Bob Longoria
Lula Mae Love
Dr. Dan Miller
LuAnn Mills
Ron Mills
Rachel Ricklefs
Mark Sager
George Segelken

Volunteers and Faculty
Rick Bragga
Walter M. "Buster" Brown III
Jack Callaway
Martha Ree Collins
Donna Cunningham
Larry Cunningham
Charles Dahlquist
Robert Dealaman
Jack Furst
Lawry Hunsaker
Russ Hunsaker
Dennis Kampa*
Dr. Harry G. McGavran
Ellie Morrison
Ed Pease*
Mary Ann Price*
Randy Price*
Julie Phillips Puckett
Bob Sirhal
Scott Sorrels
Gayle Stanton
Chuck Walneck
Judy Walneck
Sue Weierman
Dan Zaccara

An asterisk (*) denotes those who are also PSA Silver Sage Award recipients.

P2

Under the guidance of expert anglers, participants in the Casting for Recovery program discover the joys of fly-fishing while finding new ways to cope with their condition. *(CfR photo)*

Casting for Recovery brings healing power of fishing to Philmont

Philmont is open to more events than just Treks and Scout conferences. Non-Scouting groups can use many of the facilities for their own outing events, seminars and retreats.

One such group is Casting for Recovery (CfR) which provides healing outdoor retreats for women with breast cancer at no cost to the participants. Using fly fishing as a common activity, CfR helps women receive emotional, physical and social support throughout their cancer journey. The retreats are open to women with breast cancer of all ages in all stages of treatment and recovery. CfR offers retreats in every state. For over 25 years, women from all walks of life have benefitted from CfR's inspiring program model.

Philmont has hosted CfR sessions for several years. With its many opportunities for fishing in lakes and streams along with housing and amenities, Philmont is a perfect setting for CfR retreats. Twenty women participated this summer, some who have never fly-fished before.

"I don't think anything will ever bring about the enormous healing I came home with from this weekend—spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically— on all levels. Every activity and discussion, each person and the very location led to not only the joy of fly fishing, but to my healing despite this incurable disease!" said one participant.

Continued another new angler, "I cannot adequately express my gratitude for being selected for this opportunity or the depth of richness I experienced from this retreat. Not only am I taking up fly fishing now, but I met and broke bread with legends in fly fishing, aviation, and many other fields of life and survival. I am absolutely grateful beyond words for this experience! By far the single most meaningful and engaging opportunity I have experienced as a survivor, but also one of the top experiences I have had in the entirety of my life"

For more information, check out Casting for Recovery's web site at www.castingforrecovery.org.

If you know of a group that could use the outdoor experiences offered by Philmont along with its great conference facilities, contact PTC director Amy Hutcherson to get information on how PTC can help.

P2

SUPERVISION
ASSESSMENT
FITNESS AND SKILLS
EQUIPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

National Safety Conference September 14-16

The Safe Scouting Summit brings together national safety leaders, camp professionals, and risk management experts for three days of focused learning and collaboration. You'll be able to:

- Deepen your understanding of program safety frameworks
- Explore proven best practices in youth and adult risk management
- Engage directly with Scouting's top health and safety officers
- Collaborate with peers to design safer Scouting experiences

Whether you oversee a Council Service Territory (CST) or council-wide safety initiative or manage health protocols at a local camp, you will leave prepared with new strategies, tools, and professional connections.

Bore information is at www.scouting.org/outdoor-