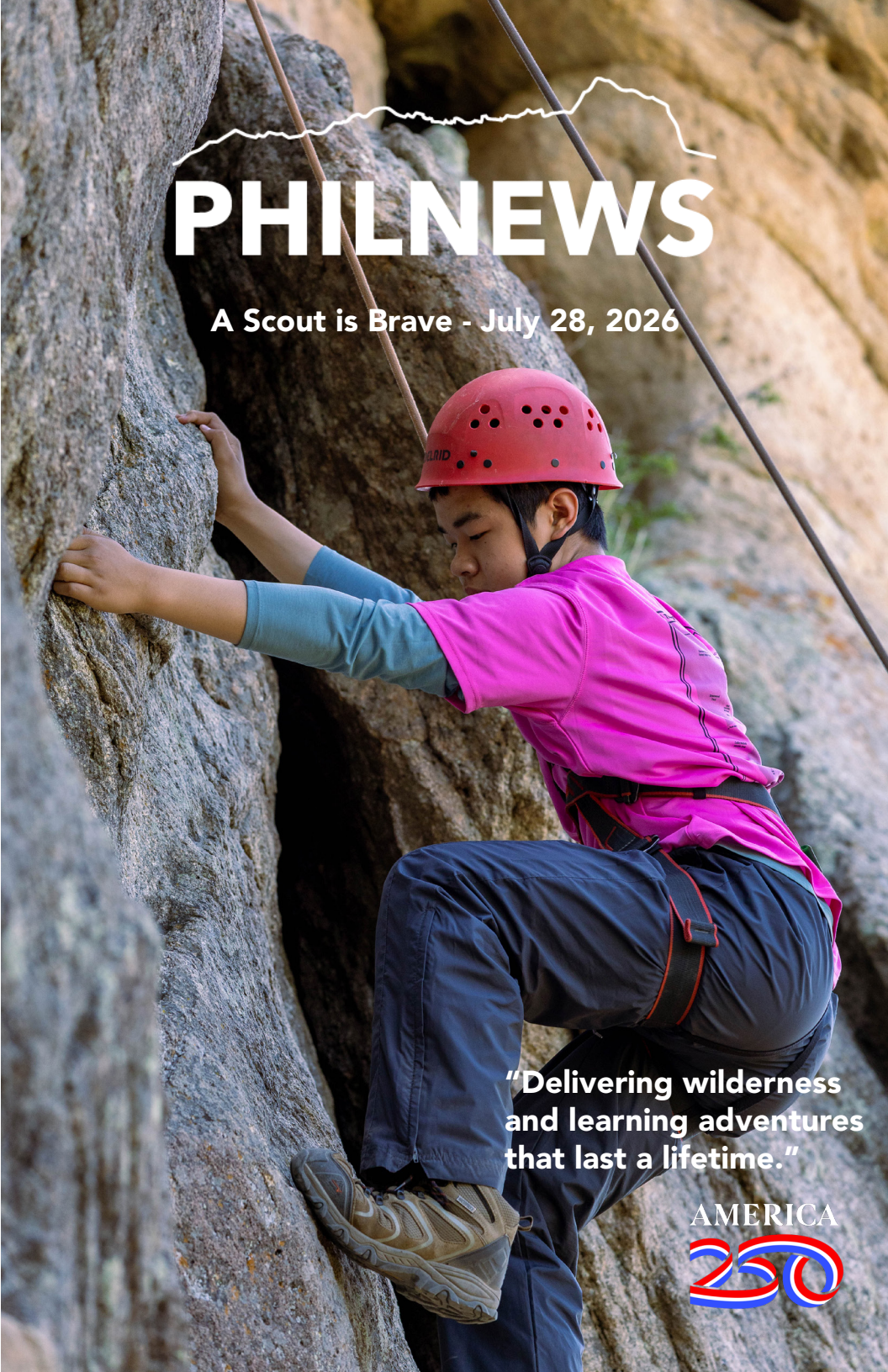


A young person is shown from the side, climbing a large, textured rock face. They are wearing a red helmet with ventilation holes, a bright pink short-sleeved shirt over a light blue long-sleeved shirt, dark blue pants, and brown hiking shoes. They are using their hands and feet to grip the rock. Two ropes are visible, extending from the top of the frame down towards the climber. The background is a blurred view of more rock and some greenery.

PHILNEWS

A Scout is Brave - July 28, 2026

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The Tooth of Time Traders — Having Your Back on the Trail

By Heidi Wakefield

In 2016, my brother started his 716-IX trek with my dad and their crew of five. After a several days on trail, carrying the extra weight of a fellow Scout's pack, his shoes began to give out, causing blisters he could not ignore. After telling a staff camp, the Tooth of Time Traders was notified, the next day, three pairs of boots intersected him on the trail. He was able to choose the one that fits best, and wear them for the remainder of the trek. Without it, he could have easily been pulled off the trail, however he was able to see through his twelve-day trek.

Things happen on the trail. Items

are lost, gear is damaged, and quick replacements are needed. Most commonly dealing with rain gear, boots, and stoves, they also provide small splints and common trail items. Without the efforts of the TOTTT, some Scouts would not be able to complete their trek, needing adequate shoes, fixed tents, and other essentials.

Originally, the Tooth of Time Traders was nothing more than a small store front.

"It started really minor," said full-time system manager of the store, e-commerce manager, and overseer of the satellite operations in the backcountry, Ashley Olson. "It was





Photo by Brendan Cox

more of what you would see when you go into a Scout shop... Patches and Knives.”

“Shelley fought for the very first full-time position,” said Olson. “And then it started to grow.”

Now it is a fully stocked outfitters, able to supply Scouts with gear in the backcountry as well as all over the U.S. Since newly digitized and operating online, the mobile program “has freed up 80% of the busy work that used to be with this position, which allows us to actually support the stores so much more,” said Backcountry Operations Coordinator Ethan Crook.

The process to get a crew gear on

trek is now simple and efficient. The participant first contacts the nearest staff camp. Then, the back of house receives a radio call, giving the trek number, the Scout in need, and the item in question. From there, the warehouse directs the campers either to the closest trading post with the available supplies, or puts in an order to be shipped to the backcountry.

With information from logistics, the Admin Gateway gives the TOT access to the crew’s itinerary, ensuring the Backcountry warehouse can deliver the package efficiently. After the order is processed, they print a label with all the info, the Scout’s name, expedition number, places staying, and item. Making it easy for the Backcountry

Tooth of Time Traders

Warehouse to ship it on time. They put the item in a poly bag, put the label, and ship it out on the soonest available transport.

“Basically, an IOU, that’s what the trail charges stand for,” said Olson. The Scout gets a slip in the bag with the trail charge, and an email gets sent to Philmontscoutranchtrailcharge@scouting.org, which goes in their checkout package at the end of their trek.

They can rent usually \$300 Lowa boots for \$50, for the rest of their trek, and when they get back they can use that \$50 as credit to purchase a new set of boots if they like them.

Over the last several years, Director of Business Operations Shelley O’Neill, with a vision to get gear outreach

from trusted brands, helped develop and sustain a program suitable for Philmont’s equipment needs.

“She worked a lot in the earlier years with outdoor gear brands,” said Olson. Helping staff become “gear experts at the TOTT, not just selling the gear, but really knowing”

Vendors such as Cascade, who look over Thermarest, MSR, and PackTowl come during the beginning of the season training to teach staff about the equipment. Representatives from Osprey even come to teach pack fitting.

“It’s really cool to get [staff] comfortable, at least to a point where they can help a customer,” said Olson. Not just showing customers



Tooth of Time Traders

to products but advising them on the best option.

With around fifty people hired seasonally, Traders' staff are dispersed between the different cantinas, trading posts, and the main store on base.

"You're going into the backcountry, but not alone. We are there to help out, but it's not making it any less difficult. It's still a rewarding process, we're just helping out along the way so that everyone has the ability... to be able to experience Philmont," said Crook.

Ultimately, the goal of the TOTT is to provide participants with the best possible experience at Philmont. Sometimes that means a small push from new gear that helps them stay on trail, a souvenir to remember their trek, or even a cold root beer in the

backcountry when they don't think they can make it any further in the heat. Whatever it may be, the TOTT works hard to ensure the participants are equipped and ready to take on Philmont!



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Backcountry Recipes

Fantasy Fudge

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3 Cups of Sugar
3/4 Cup Butter
2/3 Cup Evaporated Milk
2 Cups semi-sweet Chocolate Chips
7oz Jar Marshmallow Cream
1 Cup Chopped Nuts
1tsp Vanilla Extract

Instructions:

Combine sugar, butter, and evaporated milk in heavy 3 quart saucepan; bring to rolling boil, stirring constantly.

Continue boiling for 5 minutes over medium heat or until candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees, stirring constantly to prevent scorching.

Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate chips until melted. Add marshmallow cream, nuts, and extract; beat until well blended.

Pour into pan. Let cool at room temp. Cut squares.

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Helping Others Climb Their Everest — Chris Werhane Wins Distinguished Staff Alumni Award

By John Youngdale

Photo by Becker Griffin

On July 2, the Philmont Staff Association awarded Chris Werhane the Distinguished Staff Alumni Award, an award for former staff who have achieved “distinguished or exceptional personal success.” Werhane received the award for his work in the adaptive needs field, helping countless people with disabilities experience the outdoors. At Philmont, Werhane helped start the Zia program, an adaptive trek for children with special needs.

Growing up, Werhane helped his mother run Special Olympics events in Illinois, and starting in 1982, Werhane spent nine summers in Philmont’s backcountry. Putting his love of the outdoors and adaptive sports experience together, Werhane went on to be an adaptive ski instructor. There, he worked closely with the VA to help teach disabled veterans to ski.

Working with veterans has always been a passion of Werhane’s, as he now works running veterans’ programs for Adaptive Adventures in Colorado. He also spent 18 years as an assistant fire chief in El Dorado.

“It’s hard for me to look at it as anything, but I was just serving my community and doing something that needed to be done,” Werhane said.

With decades of experience in the adaptive needs field, Werhane reflected on what has made his work fulfilling.

“I might not have ever been to Everest... but I’ve been the person that has gotten people to climb what their Everest is,” Werhane said. “That’s what it’s always been for me.”

Werhane affirmed that the mission of his work has always been to give

Helping Others Climb Their Everest

disabled individuals a greater level of self-sufficiency.

“When that person is out on their own and doing things and they don’t need you anymore... that’s not a failure, that’s a success,” Werhane said. “They’re living life without you, and that’s the goal.

Werhane accepted the award with humility and gratitude, saying the awards were never the goal.

“The unbelievable recognition from your peers that you’ve made a difference is overwhelming... it means the



Photo by Logan Allbrink

world,” Werhane said. “I shy away from some of that recognition, but enough people have told me I deserve it.”



The Backcountry:

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Zia Trek: Adaptive Needs

By Urvi Thakker

“Where there are challenges for one Scout, there’s a strength from another Scout.”

After the success of the first inaugural Zia Adaptive Trek in 2024, Philmont has continued the program for the last two years. Scouts with special needs, along with their parents or caregivers, go on a seven-day trek in the backcountry. This experience is personalized to meet the Scouts’ abilities and is supported by trained staff. On June 27th, after coming back to basecamp after their week-long hike, participants, caregivers, and staff on Crew 620-ZT shared a few thoughts on their experience on the Zia trek.

“It’s a great opportunity for Scouts with

different needs and different abilities to trek in the backcountry,” Dick Carter, the Crew Advisor, said. “It’s just a fantastic opportunity to watch the [Scouts] do things that maybe they didn’t think they could do and excel. They often exceed the expectations that the adults set for them.”

“It’s life changing,” said Eugene Chow, Nikolaos’ father, about the Adaptive Needs Trek. Nikolaos soon chimed in by spelling out on a letter board: “Coming to Philmont was awesome!” “I think each person has infinite capability, and it’s really rare to find a place like this where we’re dedicated to realizing that potential within each other, and where we recognize how the other people learn and grow and take joy and pride in that as well,” Robert Ferro, the co-crew leader of the trek, said. “[The trek] also gave a lot of people the opportunity to realize the potential in a way that they otherwise wouldn’t have.”





Photo by Elena Sherry

“I just think that we feel really like backpacking is a huge part of the Scouting experience, and normally that would not be accessible to us,” Jacob Gluckman, an accompanying father on the trek, said. “The fact that [Philmont] put so many resources into the Zia track to allow parents and their Scouts to do this is just really wonderful.”

“It is really cool seeing all types of different kids, all types of different strengths, different needs, to be able to work together as a crew, see them being able to build one another up, be able to work together and accomplish things that other crews are able to do,” Jenni Ferro, second-time Zia trek parent, said. “I think a lot of times people think that they can’t go on a trek... People will look at it and be like, oh, my child can’t do it because they have other challenges. Well, we have Scouts here who have specific

a communication needs, and some of them have intellectual needs and challenges, and they are completely able to do it... They all just work together because even the most bright, brilliant scout has their challenges. We all work together. Where there are challenges for one scout, there’s a strength from another scout, and that’s the beauty of this trek.”

Whether it is for a Scout or their parent, the Zia Adaptive Trek impacted the stories of various people who got to make memories and form a community in the backcountry. “You end up feeling like a family at the end,” Jenni said.” We closed out at the PTC for a hot dinner and we ended up squeezing everyone into one table because we weren’t ready for the trek to end.” Philmont is proud to be a Special Needs Prepared Camp and awaits its forthcoming Zia Adaptive Treks for years to come.



Full-Time Staff Highlight: Casey Myers

By Urvi Thakker

Casey Myers is the Natural Resource Manager at Philmont. But, what does that even mean? It means managing everything from writing grants to receive funding for various conservation projects to on-groundwork in the backcountry to manage and conserve all of Philmont's 140,000 acres. "No two days are the same," Myers said.

"If we do our job right, people don't notice it," Myers said. "My world deals with things like stream restoration, rangeland monitoring and improvement, prescribed fire, the forestry world, habitat management, managing our Sportsman Adventure program."

"It is a very unique situation where I get to work as a private land natural resource manager, but I get to work with multiple government agencies," Myers, who also serves as a board member for the Simro and Watershed

Alliance and assists in partnership with the Colfax County Soil and Water Conservation District, said.

Myers, who got to know about Philmont through his wife, Reyna, who currently works in Admin, was originally hired as the wildlife biologist at Philmont, which developed into his current role as Natural Resource Manager over time.

"I really like the fact that I get to work with so many different agencies. I get to form really, really awesome relationships with people at various levels all across state and government entities," Myers said. "The fact that I can say that I have a hand in helping not only benefit our land, but our [KW1.1] public lands that we border, and I have projects that I've directly worked on there, I think that's pretty cool."

Memories Over Miles: 50 Years of the Rayado Program

By Andrea Watson, General Manager

Earlier this summer, during the closing banquet for the first Rayado session, I heard one participant describe the experience with a simple phrase: “Memories over miles.”

It is a fitting way to describe Rayado, especially as Philmont celebrates the program’s 50th anniversary this summer. For five decades, participants have traveled many miles across the backcountry, but the lasting impact of Rayado has never been measured by distance alone.

Rayado is difficult to fully explain to someone who has not experienced it. Participants arrive without knowing exactly where they will go, what they will do, or what each day will bring. They join a crew of people they may have never met and step onto the trail ready to take on whatever comes next.

One of the guiding principles of Rayado is “Expect the Unexpected.” It is more than a slogan. It is part of what makes the program so meaningful.

Not knowing every detail requires participants to be flexible. It asks them to trust their crew, their Rangers, and themselves. Plans may change. The weather may not cooperate. The next trail may be steeper than expected. A difficult day may become the most

memorable day of the trek. That uncertainty is also where much of the growth happens.

Rayado teaches participants that they do not always need to know exactly what is ahead to keep moving forward. They learn to adapt, lead, follow, and support the people around them. They discover they are often capable of more than they believed when they arrived. And like most things we learn here at Philmont, those lessons do not end when the trek does.

The program’s roots go back to 1968, when Philmont created the Kit Carson Men program to offer young people a more intensive experience and help develop future Rangers and Philmont staff. The name later changed to Rayado, and the program continued to evolve, but its purpose has remained remarkably consistent: to challenge participants to move beyond their own expectations and prepare them to lead and serve others.

As alumni return to Philmont for the reunion this month, they will bring with them memories of more than itineraries, camps, and peaks. They will remember their crews, difficult climbs, unexpected moments, and conversations under the New Mexico sky. They will remember being tired,

Photo by Isaiah Mitchell

50 Years of the Rayado Program

laughing together, and reaching places they were not sure they could reach.

They will remember how the experience made them feel and how it helped shape the people they became.

Rayado has continued because generations of staff, Rangers, alumni, supporters, and participants believed in what the program could do. Many participants later returned to serve on Philmont staff, helping shape the experience for those who followed. In fact, that has already happened several times this summer, with multiple 2026 Rayado participants staying on to serve on staff after their session concluded.

That Rayado participant captured it well. The miles are an important part of the experience, but like many Philmont experiences, the memories and lessons are what participants carry forward. As we celebrate the program's first 50 years, we also look ahead to the next 50 and to the generations of young people Rayado will continue to challenge, inspire, and prepare to lead.



A flyer for the Philmont Staff Association (PSA) Seasonal Membership. The top half has a tan background with the text "Welcome HOmE" in purple. Below this is a purple banner with "JOIN THE PSA" and "\$20 SEASONAL MEMBERSHIP" in white. The bottom half features a collage of photos showing staff and participants in various settings, including a man on a horse, two women in scout uniforms, and a group of people. The PSA logo, featuring a mountain and sun, is in the center. Text at the bottom right says "Visit us next to the National Scouting Museum".

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Photo by Sarah Peplow

Phil-Lingo

By John Youngdale

At Philmont, there are many acronyms, abbreviations, and other phrases that can be confusing to the untrained ear. PhilNews staff has prepared this column to prevent any reader, whether a participant or staff, from being overwhelmed by the ludicrous number of colloquial expressions Philmont has to offer.

Like any community, Philmont has developed its own unique dialect of acronyms, abbreviations, and phrases that can confuse the untrained listener. With this, any misuse of the ranch's many colloquial expressions may result in intense ridicule from peers. This column is intended to help you, the reader, navigate Philmont's esoteric echo chamber of terminology. In this issue we will be covering frequently

abbreviated backcountry locations.

I-Dubs: Indian Writings, often an early visit for north country treks, this staff camp features petroglyphs and archeological activities.

P.J.: Phillips Junction, the main logistic hub of the south country. P.J. is a commissary stop for many treks, where Scouts can pick up trail meals and other snacks.

Lovers': A popular trailhead, a geologic feature, and a campsite, all carry the name Lovers Leap, but when someone says the name 'lovers,' they are most likely referring to Lovers Leap Trailhead.



Photo by Sarah Peplow



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Cut the Act: Advisors Coffee

By Heidi Wakefield

Coffee, tea, and cookies. Advisors gather on the porch. Often, lifelong Scouts, parents of Scouts, Scout leaders, and advisors talk, tell stories about their treks so far, and enjoy the company of Backcountry staff. On trek, the one thing all crews undoubtedly have in common is that they are at Philmont. Treks, animals, red roofs and “what day is it for you on trek,” there are stories shared, and coffee sipped as the sun sets on another beautiful day in the backcountry, no matter how grueling the day’s activities were. That is an important part of Philmont: slowing down. Enjoying the weather, enjoying the slow, quiet rustle of the trees and the sounds of hummingbirds.



Photo by Elena Scherry

Advisor’s coffee is a moment for advisors and guardians to step away from the Scouts for a minute and talk to other adults, but really, it is about the connection shared at a place so far away from the bustle of real life.

“Advisors get to talk to advisors,” one advisor said at Pueblano. It is “a chance to hear from different people.”

Name: Aren Cambre

Where are you from?

Dallas, Texas

Why did you choose Philmont?

“Something I did when I was 19... I wanted to come with my older kid, but couldn’t work out. My younger kid was ready for it.”

How is your trek going?

“No fights yet,” Cambre said jokingly. “Very much in the learning phase.

The ranger is still trying to teach everyone how to do everything, and because there are two different group, we are still watching them as they bond... things are improving.”

What advice would you give to Scouts?

“You can do it. By that I mean don’t let the idea of going to Philmont scare you. Most youth who are in reasonable shape and know their equipment are going to do fine. It’s much more approachable than you think it is.”

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