

MAY – ACTIVE SUMMERTIME EXPLORER POST

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GARFIELD: Welcome to the May ExploringCast. I'm Garfield Murden, Senior Boy Scouting Specialist along with Senior Exploring Program Specialist, Kristen Falatko.

KRISTEN: Hey, Garfield. Okay, listeners, you may be thinking that it's time for your post meetings and activities to start winding down for the summer, but where does it say that Exploring has to stop for the summer? Does it say that anywhere, Garfield?

GARFIELD: I don't think it does, so let's figure out why we should have our Explorers active in the summer and how to go about getting them active.

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GARFIELD: And joining us in looking for ways to keep our posts active this summer is Lieutenant Al Blendermann. Al has been heavily involved in both the traditional Boy Scouting program and the Exploring program. He is currently a lieutenant with the Harris County Sheriff's Office in Houston, Texas. Back In 2011, the Sheriff's Office started their Explorer post and since then hundreds of young men and women in the Houston area have joined the field of law enforcement. Welcome to ExploringCast, Al.

AL: Thank you. Glad to be here.

GARFIELD: Now, Lieutenant, usually a post program year is the same as a traditional school year, fall through spring, so why keep it through the summer? What are the benefits?

AL: We believe it's a great program that it needs to go all the way, all 12 months of the year, just like the traditional side does. During the summertime is a great time and brings big benefits in attendance, and retention and availability to have other programs while they're not in school such as we have a Summer Academy for Explorers, they can attend summer camps and, like is coming up in this summer, the National Jamboree. But they also can take field trips during the weekdays and go to different areas of law enforcement where they probably couldn't during the school year. So it's helps us a lot on all those subjects but mainly retention, because a lot of times when you stop your program around May, you start back up in September or later August, you might end up losing a few.

KRISTEN: Lieutenant, are there any benefits to the advisors to staying active in the summertime?

AL: Yes. I would think so. We do have volunteer advisors that are sometimes civilians or parents and the availability for them during the summer - they have a little bit more vacation time they could take, so that has been a good benefit on that end of it.

KRISTEN: Now, Lieutenant, how often should the post meet? Should it be every weekend, once a week, maybe monthly during the summertime?

AL: We don't change our attendance. We normally meet once a week and I know other posts sometimes will meet twice a month. We feel for retention and the things that we do here down in the Harris County area, that if it's anything less than that, sometimes you can lose the attention span of the youth. So we meet weekly year round.

GARFIELD: What are some of the activities that a post can do?

AL: We have a lot of community and service projects that we help out in the community. They constantly train in their post meetings and then they go to competitions sometimes about five to eight times a year, and they compete with other agencies, statewide and national for the skills that they've learned in their meetings. And they can attend the field trips; something a little bit outside their norm. And that can range from different things from visiting our jail system or a prison system, or we can also do different things like, down here in Texas we have Six Flags or Fiesta Texas and it's a little deal where we kind of give them a break. Because our biggest push is just like the traditional Scouting side. You have to keep the youth interested and active, and if you just lecture them or just it's always law enforcement on our end of it, constantly, you've got to do different things to keep them interested and keep it fun. They can learn but it needs to be fun also, and so we definitely try to keep them active in that regard.

GARFIELD: So it sounds like you do other activities other than the norm. Since your post focus is specifically on law enforcement, you do things beyond law enforcement, treating them like teenagers.

AL: Yes, and I'd like to add that from the traditional side we're teaching and working with young men and women, okay, and sometimes they've not been exposed to the traditional side, so we try to do a campout or we try to, go into first aid, or we try to teach them to tie a knot – some of the principles that we believe every young man and woman should know besides a career-based trek. And so we try to expose them to be good citizens and expose them to different areas of life.

KRISTEN: Teaching life skills, I love it.

GARFIELD: So they can even do community service projects. Wow.

AL: They do a lot of that.

KRISTEN: Now, for some of these activities, are there any permits or permissions that are needed?

AL: Most of the times there is not unless you're going out of town or on an overnight event through the BSA part. But as far as with the Sheriff's Office here, if they have to go to any area that requires permission within the law enforcement agency they're kind of covered under our cloak as far as being sponsored by the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

KRISTEN: Okay.

GARFIELD: Lieutenant, how can we get others involved? Who can we recruit to volunteer?

AL: Everybody can recruit. We try to do during the beginning of the school year go into the schools and some of our advisors go in. Some of the parents that help us go in. And we also have a website and Facebook and we try to get out on social media all the activities with pictures to attract youth that are currently interested. BSA partners really help us a lot with the council as far as targeting those that have interest in with some of the career surveys they've done.

KRISTEN: Lieutenant, is there any downside possibly to having summertime activities?

AL: Not as far as the summertime, no. Our advisors are fairly lenient, like when the Explorers have to travel or go on vacations or have certain things. We do the same thing during the year if they're involved in football or band. We advise that our advisors use proper judgment and understand that, there's other activities that the youth have to do. And so a lot of times during the summer it's not necessarily a mandatory but we definitely want to have the opportunity to participate if they want to.

KRISTEN: Right. Okay. Can you tell our listeners if there is any resources available to assist in finding post activities during the summertime?

AL: What we rely on is other agencies. We'll talk to other agencies and have guest speakers come in from the state, local and national level to maybe

give discussions to them. One thing that we do have a challenge is sometimes on the finance. Finance appears to be some issues sometimes and we discover different ways to raise money and that has been very helpful.

GARFIELD: So, Lieutenant, is there anything else about Active Summertime Post that we haven't discussed that can be shared with our listeners?

AL: The biggest thing that we've done down here in the Houston area is we created a Summer Academy which is a five-day academy for Explorers and during that time we have guest speakers that come in and we have a lot of hands-on training and exposure and the kids just really love that part of it. And we've also expanded to an advanced academy for the leadership in the Explorers for our rank structure within the Explorers, and so as we can teach them a little bit about being a supervisor or a leader within their group. It gives them an opportunity to experience a little of the traditional side. It's not all training, so we try to take them to summer camp or a campout or like the Explorer Fest and those kind of activities during the summer you get more attendance during the summer because a lot of the youth have the free time.

GARFIELD: And this being May, now is the time for Explorers to start planning these activities. Al, thanks for coming on ExploringCast with these great ideas.

AL: Thank you.

KRISTEN: Thanks, Lieutenant. Okay, listeners. If you're an Exploring Executive, be sure you're collecting those Career Interest Surveys. Head over to

Exploring.org to download your very own copy of the Career Interest Survey Guidebook.

GARFIELD: And to help you even more, you can also go back and listen to the July 2016 ExploringCast for everything you need to know about using the Career Interest Survey.

KRISTEN: But wait, dear Post Advisor, we have a tip just for you. There are all kinds of brand new e-learning modules on my.scouting to assist you with training for your advisor experience. There are modules on the structure of the Exploring program and how to register or renew your post. There's even modules on youth officer elections and planning activities, which is the perfect companion piece for this episode.

GARFIELD: They average about 10 minutes for each module and they're pretty interactive so you'll have some fun, too.

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GARFIELD: So, that, ladies and gentlemen, brings us to the close of the May ExploringCast. Thanks to our guest, Al Blendermann, for joining us.

KRISTEN: And thanks to you for listening, but don't keep all the fun for yourself. Be sure your fellow leaders are tuning in as well. And if there are other topics you'd like to hear about, please let us know by sending us an email to exploringcast@scouting.org, or a tweet to [@exploringcast](https://twitter.com/exploringcast). With that, I'm Kristen Falatko.

GARFIELD: And I'm Garfield Murden. Join us next month as we talk about the Exploring Commissioner. Be sure to head over to Exploring.org where you can sign up for the monthly newsletter, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and visit the Exploring YouTube Channel.

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