

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: Beyond Roasting Marshmallows Winning Is About Building A Team

BY COLIN HEFFINGER

Scouting isn't just about roasting marshmallows around a camp fire. For boys, girls and young adults, Scouting is the catalyst of developing leadership skills, learning to work together in a team and instilling a long-term ethic to give back to the community. Each year, Scouts are expected to contribute significant amounts of community service. Last year over 167,000 hours of community service were contributed by the Del-Mar-Va Council Scouting efforts alone.

The Del-Mar-Va Council was established in 1917 and currently serves nearly 10,000 families throughout the peninsula. Almost 35 full-time staff members and over 3,300 registered volunteers dedicate their time to working with youth to teach them new life skills, build their self-esteem and reinforce the core values of the Scout Oath and Law.

Justin Rodstrom, Chief Development & Strategy Officer for the Del-Mar-Va Council, reflects on the impact of their program. "Our programs are a great equalizer for children; there are tremendous measurable benefits for their lifetime development, they become others-oriented and focus on the community's needs each and every day, learn how to work and lead in a team as well as develop pro-social skills that are critical in today's society. It's no surprise that young people who go through the program have higher graduation rates, higher lifetime earnings and higher overall marital happiness."

This past spring was the first time that girls were offered the opportunity



for involvement in the week-long BSA camping program, featuring rock climbing, drone racing, environmental science, wilderness survival and more. The Del-Mar-Va Council serves over 13,000 Scouts annually at its three properties here on the peninsula - Rodney Scout Reservation (North East, MD), Henson Scout Reservation (Rhodesdale, MD), and Akridge Scout Reservation (Dover, DE).

For the Del-Mar-Va Council, opening the program to boys and girls helps with logistics, making it a one-stop shop for the whole family. Landmark changes throughout the programs over the past 10 years have created opportunity for continued growth and diversity to invite the entire family and local community.

"In sports, winning is defined as defeating your opponent. In Scouting, winning is defined as building your team and contributing to your community," reflects Justin.

Not only has the Council made a tremendous commitment to growth and diversity but they've also prioritized ensuring everyone can join if they wish to do so. Many of the programs have been set up for 50 to 100 years or more and now they have been working with local volunteers and parents to build that same infrastructure for girls. They are off to a great start, but it's a continuous process and the Del-Mar-Va Council is always looking for new partners and opportunities to welcome girls in the program.

The Del-Mar-Va Council's commitment to families in need across our state also runs deep. "The Del-Mar-Va Council is committed that no family be turned away from our programs because of financial hardship," Justin states. "We set aside more than \$300,000 every year to make sure that families can afford it. The Del-Mar-Va Council and Scouting is here to make sure that everyone can join if they wish to do so. This is an incredibly important commitment because we know the benefits and values make a real difference in the community."