

Our Council has the following patches available.

Starting a Pack Hiking Program



October 2006 – Pack 110, Starved Rock State Park, IL

So why did your son want to join Scouting? He wanted to do out-of-door stuff, hike, camp, *and explore the out-of-doors.*

The program is presented as a “Hiking Club”, where miles are tracked; at 50 miles they receive the 50 mile patch and their hiking stick. Scouts receive additional recognition as miles accumulate.

One of the easiest and most fun ways to get your Scouts out is to start a hiking program in your pack. The Three Fires Council will support you in getting the program up and running.

Packs within the Council have been successfully running hiking programs at the Cub Scout level. Pack 110 in Naperville has been running the District Hiking Program since 1991. Several other packs have recently started hiking programs (Pack 63 Wheaton and 643 Naperville). The packs hike monthly, year round.

The program is presented as a “Hiking Club”, where miles are tracked; and the Scouts “earn” segments (there are handy “X” segments for each 10 miles), a cool general hiking patch, we’d recommend for a scout’s first hike, and then patches for every 50 miles they go.

The Scout is also awarded a hiking stick along the way. Now, since this is your program, just when that happens is your call. Typically this has been awarded at either the 25 mile mark or the 50 mile mark.



The hiking stick is easily “manufactured” using a standard dowel from a hardware store and a “Leather Grip” from the Scout Shop. The cost for the dowel is around \$5 (from Menard’s) and the cost for the grip is roughly \$8. Hiking sticks are also available from the Scout Shops from \$4 (5 foot dowel only) to \$18 for a medium price hiking stick, and up to \$50 to \$60 for more elaborate hiking sticks. Whichever “model” you choose, it should be uniform for the Pack.

Miles earned as a Cub Scout transfer to their Boy Scout Troop.

Once the program is up and running regularly you can expect nearly all of your Cub Scouts to become hiking club members (earn their hiking stick). For packs that are out monthly, it is the exception for a Scout not to have received their hiking stick, and by the time they finish Webelos most have more than 100 miles! A determined Scout will likely cross-over to Boy Scouts with more than 200 miles!

We would recommend that not only Scouts, earn a hiking stick, but also their parents, and guardians (miles are tracked and receive recognition). Now, again this is your program, but we would recommend that to manage the program, siblings do not accrue miles. Also, until a younger boy becomes a Scout, miles hiked don’t count.

GETTING STARTED

Hiking Coordinator: Your first hurdle will be having someone volunteer as the Pack “Hiking Coordinator”. This individual schedules the hikes and tracks miles.

Contact one of our Scout Shops for current pricing on walking stick and patches.

How Far. Hike lengths range typically 3 – 7 miles. Tigers have no problem with 3 – 4 mile hikes. Just ensure that the parent-guardian has plenty of water along, and a few snacks (for both of them).

On longer hikes we will typically eat lunch on the trail (practicing “Leave No Trace” at all times). Scouts will carry water bottles and may use day packs (or parent-guardian acts as the beast of burden). On warmer weather hikes, a small water bottle is not enough for even the smallest Scout.

During winter, prior to departure, double check the dress of the Scouts (particularly newer Scouts) to ensure they are properly prepared. If not, you may need to wait for them to go and pick up the forgotten, hat, gloves, mittens, coat, boots, etc.

An adult leader is assigned to the “tail” position. No one is allowed behind this individual. The Pack hikes as a unit. We start together, break together, etc., with everyone following the same trail. We may allow an older Scout to “Lead”. We will usually work in map reading with them, where we have a route we want to take on the map from the Forest Preserve. It’s up to the Scout to sort out to sort out the forks, etc., in the trail. However, they will have their parent-guardian with them also.

Benefits:

- 1) Very outdoor oriented (Council surveys have indicated that one of the key items our Scouts want is more camping and outdoor activities).
- 2) Helps ready Scout for Boy Scouts. By their Webelos year, they are very comfortable in outdoor situations.
- 3) Recruitment. The hiking stick is a very positive incentive for new Scouts.
- 4) Increases participation in the Pack. Scouts look forward to earning their hiking stick, feathers, etc.
- 5) Miles transfer to Boy Scouts.
- 6) Easy to reinforce buddy system along trail, walks to outhouse, etc.
- 7) Numerous opportunities to draw in Scouting requirements and lessons.

Challenges to Running:

- 1) Need adult volunteer willing to track and schedule hikes.
- 2) Someone (usually hiking coordinator) needs to make hiking sticks.
- 3) Need two deep (minimum) on all hikes.
- 4) Need to remain mindful of safety. Most common issue is hydration.

For more information, the District’s website has a document called “TFC Hiking Program”. This is our current best resource for starting up your hiking program (except dropping an email to one of the folks listed under contacts).

Closing thought;

In putting together this outline, it came to me, that by the time my son finished Cub Scouting we had hiked together and with friends, roughly 180 miles through the local forests and woods.

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Our Scout Shops:

Deicke Scout Shop: 630-231-3194

Norris Scout Shop: 630-584-9250