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## Scouting The Southwest

Scouts from Woodbury recently returned from a 17-day New Mexico backpacking trip.

By [Derrick Knutson](#) | [Email the author](#) | August 30, 2011



Woodbury Boy Scout Troop 72 recently returned from a scouting expedition they will not soon forget.

The troop spent more than two weeks at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, backpacking and learning about how Americans in the southern U.S. went about their lives in the 1800s and 1900s.

Scout leader David Hart, who has been with Troop 72 for 20 years and a scoutmaster for nearly 40, said the 17-day backpacking trek was a great experience.

A total of 28 Woodbury-area scouts and leaders went on the trip; nine were adults helping lead the expedition.

Hart said each scout and leader was saddled with a pack that weighed 40-50 pounds, and being able to handle that weight while hiking through the wilderness took some training before the trip.

“That’s a lot of weight to carry on your back,” he said. “We had several indoor meetings to talk about how to cut down on the weight and bulk of the packs, and we had practice weekend trips so (the scouts and leaders) could build up the stamina needed to do this trip.”

That stamina was much needed for the hiking, but not the entire trip was spent traversing the ranch, which spans more than 135,000 acres.

Hart said some of the camping areas the troop bedded down at during the nights were un-staffed, but some had ranch personnel on-hand to teach the group about various aspects of New Mexico life hundreds of years ago.

One of those areas was Chiphers Mine camp, where the scouts and leaders learned about the gold mine that used to be in the area over 100 years ago.

“The staff dressed in character and taught us how to pan for gold,” Hart said. “We also got to take a tour of the mine to see how mining was done in those days.”

## ‘High Adventure’ Experience

Andy Kaufer, a 16-year-old junior attending East Ridge High School, has been a part of Troop 72 since first grade, and said the trip down to Philmont Scout Ranch was an experience he will remember for years to come.

Kaufer said he and his Troop have went on other “High Adventure” trips to the Boundary Waters, but this was the first time they’ve done anything in the southern U.S.

Scout troops across the nation participate in High Adventure treks at three camp locations across the country—Florida, New Mexico and the Boundary Waters in Minnesota and southern Canada.

Kaufer said not all scout troops are so adventurous as Troop 72, and participation in the High Adventure program is not required to become an Eagle Scout.

Reflecting on the trip, Kaufer said he enjoyed all aspects of it, but perhaps his favorite day was when the troop visited the “Tooth of Time,” an igneous rock intrusion that juts out of the New Mexico landscape near one of the Ranch’s trails.

“There was a 360-degree view of miles of land, and the view was unlike anything in the world,” he said. “It’s just a cool experience.”

Kaufer mother, Sheila, said her son has been sharing stories about the trip since his troop returned Aug. 21.

“The boys and the adults had an awesome time,” she said.

## Lifelong Passion

Kaufer said being involved with the Boy Scouts has allowed him to build connections with people he hopes will last a lifetime.

“I’ve known a lot of them (fellow scouts) since Kindergarten, and over time you become brothers,” he said. “You might not see them for a long time after Scouts is over, but you never forget them.”

Kaufer said after he completes his Eagle Scout project—replacing and refinishing benches and a garbage disposal area at a local church—he plans to attend college. At that point, he'll be officially done with Boy Scouts, but he said he plans to stay involved with the program that has been such an integral part of his youth in some way.

Hart, who went all the way through the Boy Scouts just like Kaufer plans to do, said staying involved with the program as a Scout leader has allowed him to relay his experiences to his Scout groups.

"I've been in the Boy Scouts since I was 11 years old," he said. "Some neighborhood kids invited me to join and I became an adult leader when I was 21. I enjoy scouting a lot and I enjoy working with the kids and helping them have some of the same experiences I did as a Boy Scout."



