



Winter Camp Information for Participants and Parents

As a local function of Scouting's Order of the Arrow, Winter Camp is in alignment with its purpose: Winter Camp, guided by the principles of the Scout Oath and Law, promotes camping with responsible outdoor programs while developing leaders of character and spirit who perpetuate a habit of cheerful service to others.

What started as a camping event between Christmas and New Years in 1977, has continued as such to this day, yet now fostering a holistic approach with such depth that it serves its positive purpose throughout the year.

The motto of Winter Camp – *Traditionally Unconventional* – could be taken in its simple form as an oxymoron. However, it represents an approach to maintain essential traditions, while employing creative approaches for new experiences. Some unique elements of Winter Camp include its own time zone, measurement system, dictionary, and even published novels.

Program:

Typically, Winter Camp is a four-night event held at D-bar-A Scout Ranch from December 27-31. Accommodations are in heated cabins with opportunities for tent camping or even sleeping under-the-stars. Many events are conducted outside, involving both physical and mental activities, frequently in a competitive environment. Some activities are held indoors. A full day is usually devoted to a service project. There are opportunities to participate in special ceremonies and faith-based programs. While some activities are repeated, there are new ones each year, often unique. Youth may earn a prestigious participation award.

Developing youth leaders is an outcome of a successful program, and as with other Order of the Arrow endeavors, the Winter Camp program is largely run by youth. It is an educational experience, where an annual theme may provide for some fun activities, but also teach something more of a cultural or historical significance. Everyone in attendance has an opportunity to pursue new hobbies and badges. Often, the Winter Camp University provides curricula in winter camping, engineering, history, or leadership skills. Winter Camp has augmented the Scouting experience helping many youth aspire to successful careers. The participant return rate to the event year-after-year has been exceptional.

Food Service:

A full menu with three meals and a snack is provided daily. Participants learn to bake bread and make pizza from scratch. Many meals follow a theme and feature new dishes or behaviors, such as the "Prison Breakfast" or "Emily Post Dinner." Everyone has a role in meal preparation, and will often learn to make things from scratch rather than simply opening a box. In the early years, when Winter Campers were from families that had roots in the Great Depression, they learned to save money by making things from raw ingredients. A small trading post is usually available, where campers may purchase buffalo nickels to use with the vintage candy machine.

The food operation is guided by software to assure balanced meals to supply enough energy to the participants. (Yes – the program measures calories.) Winter Camp has its own recipe book, and customized preparation materials are provided for each meal. This food preparation system, developed for Winter Camp, was used by a council for a Scout summer camp.

Adult Leadership:

Winter Camp has been blessed with abundant adult leadership, largely due to its success. Three of the participants attending the first one in 1977 are still involved, having attended every one since then. While there is always an adult adviser for the youth leader and his or her assistants, other adults take supportive roles. However, Winter Camp is unique in that adults do not sit around drinking coffee all day, rather they participate appropriately in the activities.

Adults at Winter Camp come with a wide range of talents and experiences to share with the youth. Their current or past professions may include accountants, CEOs, computer programmers, developers, doctors, electricians, engineers, managers, mathematicians, mechanics, professors, Scout executives, teachers, technicians, and veterinarians. Yet, Winter Camp can provide knowledge and growth in leadership skills for all ages.

Adult (18+) participants or visiting guests must be currently registered in Scouting and have an unexpired Youth Protection Training certification. Winter Camp participants need to be members of the Order of the Arrow.

Health and Safety:

Winter Camp will follow the guidelines outlined in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, and by the Michigan Crossroads Council and governmental authorities. A certified health officer will be present at camp, along with a certified ServSafe Manager overseeing the food operation. A review of the program is conducted annually by a Short-Term Camp Administrator, and there is often a plethora of various certifications held by adults and some of the youth.

All participants are required to submit a BSA Annual Medical Health Form, and some may need to provide other documents because of age or condition. Efforts will be made to address special dietary or other restrictions.

A formal check-in upon arrival is required to verify the presence of the necessary forms, emergency contacts, and current health status. Youth under 18 will need to identify any prescriptions with the health officer.

Contacts for emergencies and other information are indicated on the registration website. Parents and other family members will want to be sure to have the cell phone numbers of key advisors, but should know that cell coverage is not dependable in all areas of camp and a response may be delayed.

Registration and Preparation:

Registration and fees are paid through a website operated by the Michigan Crossroads Council. Participants are advised that there is typically a deadline of a week in advance. While group gear is provided, personal gear will be necessary for a four-night experience, both for indoors and extended time outdoors. If an individual is planning to camp outside one or more nights, extra sleeping gear may be needed. Temperatures at Winter Camp have ranged from -13 to 58 degrees.