



Michigan Crossroads Council

Eastern Division

2026 Hodag Leaders' Guide

*A Youth-Run, Patrol-Based Winter Event for
Scouts, AOLs, Webelos, Venturers, and Ships*

January 16th – 17th, 2026

Camp Agawam

1223 West Clarkston Road, Lake Orion, MI 48362

Hosted by Pontiac-Manito Chapter, Mishigami Lodge 29, Order of the Arrow

Chapter Vice-Chief of Activities: Cole Russell

Chapter VC Activities Advisor: Matt Jones

Chapter Chief: Kay Russell

Chapter Advisor: John Pineau





The Hodag

The Hodag is a one-day, one-night winter campout in which Scouts compete in Patrols or Crews in events variously emphasizing Scout skills, teamwork, and spirit. Youth-led units compete to win The Coveted Golden Coffee Thingy.

Why call it a Hodag?

The word “Hodag” comes from an alleged mythical beast (like the Loch Ness Monster or Bigfoot or Paul Bunyan’s Babe the Blue Ox) exhibited to the public in a large-scale prank in the 1890s in Rochester, Wisconsin. The prank ended when the Smithsonian Institution announced it would investigate the existence of the Hodag. Our OA brothers from the Central Region sponsored a party at the 2006 National Order of the Arrow Conference entitled “The Hodag.”

Pontiac-Manito Chapter brought the spirit of that great gathering home to this event in 2007, which had previously been known as a Klondike. The theme of the Hodag changes each year. Don’t over-analyze the fun of the Hodag, or it might disappear, just like it did in 1896.





This Year's Theme:

Many's MegaMart - Big Box Stores: Ever walked into a Cosco and thought, “this would be way better with more mooses”?? Now, for a limited time, you can enjoy the comfort of your shopping experience while Manny the moose and the hodag are right there by your side.

Who Is Invited:

Scouts BSA Troops, Venture Crews, Ships, and AOLs may attend overnight. Webelos may attend Saturday-only and are required to attach themselves to a Scouts BSA Troop for competition, preferably to a Troop they are considering joining. Scouts (with attached AOLs), Ships, and Venturers camp overnight. Webelos Dens not camping with troops arrive Saturday morning. Webelos must be attached to a Troop for the day. If the AOLs camp, a parent/guardian must accompany them.

Patrol Method and Leadership

One of the two purposes of the Hodag is to learn and have fun while using the Patrol Method. The competition is organized by Patrol or Crew. All Scout Patrols should always be under the leadership of a Patrol Leader (PL), with an Assistant Scoutmaster or other designated adult leader present. Scout troops should be under the direct leadership of a Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), guided by a Scoutmaster or other designated adult leader. Venture Crews should be under the leadership of their President, with the Advisor or other designated adult leader present. Two-Deep Leadership is required at all times.

Youth Staff

The Hodag is a 100% youth-created, youth-run, and youth-led event. The event and its activities have been planned and developed by the youth and will be staffed by youth, as part of the Order of the Arrow's leadership development mission.

The second purpose of the Hodag is to provide a learning experience for staff. Staff objectives include learning and practicing brotherhood, cheerful service, and an introduction to event management/leadership on a modest scale. While the staff and their advisors strive to prevent or minimize problems, we ask unit leaders, in the spirit of Scouting, to help turn any issues that may arise into positive learning opportunities for all. Scout troops are strongly encouraged to provide at least one OA member (preferably a buddy system of 2) other than the SPL and PLs to help staff the Hodag (example: OA Troop Rep and a first-year Arrowman). It is important possible staff members sign up in advance to receive the benefits of being on staff. Do not register approved staff members as part of your unit's contingent.





Facilities

THIS IS A LEAVE NO TRACE EVENT

Out of respect for the facilities made available to us, please ask your members to help us leave the grounds and buildings cleaner than we found them. Straw bedding is not permitted at this event, unless securely contained in mattresses packed in advance and disposed of after returning home. Please, follow the LNT guidelines for this event and leave the facilities better than we found them. NO burning of straw will be allowed.

Restrooms

Restrooms are in the Birch Grove building and near Peterson Lodge. Please remind your members to respect others by leaving the restrooms as clean as or cleaner than they found them. **2026 Note: The Alberici Building is undergoing plumbing maintenance during the Hodag event, and the restrooms will be unavailable and out of order.**

Clothing

One of the most important parts of a winter event is to keep warm and dry. Each Scout must be prepared for the weather and temperature and dress appropriately. The weather is changeable, requiring preparedness for almost any condition. A nice day can turn into a blizzard or become rainy and cold.

For colder weather, dress in layers: A waterproof outer layer, a warm middle layer, and a wicking layer next to the skin. Units should teach participants to avoid working up too much perspiration and to regulate their temperature by removing or adding layers of clothing as needed. Waterproof boots, coats, headgear, and gloves/mittens are essential, as are waterproof snow pants or rain pants. For warmth, insulated boots, wool or synthetic socks, hooded coats or wool or synthetic caps, wool shirts and synthetic long underwear are strongly recommended. Cotton clothing is strongly discouraged. Teach your members to use good judgment when preparing for the weekend and to check the weather forecast to ensure a safe and comfortable event.

Unit leaders should visually inspect each Scout. Prior to every meal, ask every scout if their clothing is dry. If not, have him change into dry clothes before eating.





★ WINTER CAMPING ★

The Hodag is a winter camping event. Attending the Hodag as an overnight camper is the best way to experience the event. Having the right sleeping setup is the key to an enjoyable experience. We strongly recommend the use of a sleeping system – to keep warm at night and so to be prepared for the next day. We recommend watching BSA Northern Tier's OKPIK sleeping system video (<http://goo.gl/UnmHf>) and show your participants how to use the sleeping system for this event. Please read, print, and distribute the "Winter Camping Tips" portion of this document to your Scouts and use it for discussion in a meeting prior to attending the Hodag.

Polar Bear Award Requirements

All Troop, Post, Ships or Venturing Crew youth and adults may earn this award.

Recipients must camp, using the patrol method, for a minimum of 24 hours consecutively in a tent or other unheated shelter between December 1 and March 31, including cooking and eating a breakfast, a lunch and a dinner.

Except in an emergency, the only buildings that may be entered during the 24-hour period are a latrine or a church.

Patches are available at the Scout Shop in Troy.

First Aid

Each unit should be prepared with first aid equipment and supplies (readily identifiable) for caring for cold exposure and small wounds. More serious injuries must be taken to the Health and Safety Officer at the event headquarters for immediate treatment or departure to a local hospital.

HEALTH COMPLIANCE INFORMATION:

All units need to ensure that the paperwork required by Council for your unit to gather is on hand in case it is needed. An accurate roster must be turned in when you register.

Our staff is being trained to also watch over the safety aspects of their stations this weekend. Please help them. Remember, they are volunteers and mostly youth.





CAMPING

Sites and Parking

Campsites will be assigned. Please expect to share your site with another unit. You will find out your site and partner unit(s) at check in. Please contact the person listed on the event details page to make a site request or to request to share with a particular unit, if desired. Site preferences will be honored upon advance request if possible.

Units are strongly encouraged to carpool. All vehicles are required to be parked in designated parking areas, not in campsites or alongside roads. Trailers may be unhitched and kept in the unit's campsite.

Tent Camping

Camping will be in tents or similar outdoor shelters. NO cabins are available. An indoor warming room will be available overnight for campers, if needed. Use of straw bedding is not permitted, except if securely contained in mattresses packed in advance and disposed of after returning home.

Equipment

Each unit must provide its own camping, cooking, and event equipment. Decorate your Klondike sled to theme for extra points! Check the HOA's Rules and Regulations (attached at the bottom of this document) to see what other items you should bring.

Flags

Each unit and patrol/den are requested to bring a troop, patrol, crew, pack, or den flag.

Water

Water is available in the camp. However, units may wish to bring their own water with them. Please ensure that your Scouts remain hydrated by regularly offering warm drinks. Hydration is critical to participant safety.





Ground Fires

Ground fires are NOT PERMITTED at this event, except as used by staff for activities. Open fires are allowed in established fire rings only.

Lights Out / Quiet Time

The Lights Out / Quiet time listed on the agenda should be strictly followed. Leaders are asked to make sure all members respect this rule.

Meals and Cooking

A warm Saturday lunch will be served in Alberici Lodge. Those campers working on the Polar Bear award must identify themselves at check in, deliver their food to them so they can eat outside. Other meals such as Breakfast or Dinner on Saturday are the responsibility of the Unit.

Trash in – Trash out.

Remember the Outdoor Code and leave the grounds cleaner than you found it. Please take the trash your unit will generate at this event home with you for disposal there. This includes any straw mattresses your unit may have used.

Clean Up and Check Out

The unit is responsible for cleaning up its camping area before check-out. When a unit is ready to check out after the closing ceremony, the youth and adult leader must come to the registration headquarters to receive patches and pick up medical forms. End of Program is Saturday Night after closing, though units are welcome to continue camping into Sunday until noon.

Group Size

Patrols and Crews must have 6 but no more than 12 youth participants to compete for The Coveted Golden Coffee Thingy so the events may be scored fairly. Members of different units may be paired together to form a full patrol.





Competition Skills, Activities and Preparation

The competition activities will be listed in a summary that will be distributed. This will include the skills and equipment which patrols, crews or dens need to bring and equipment to be provided by the Hodag staff. Prepare your Scouts accordingly.

Scoring

Scoring will be assessed on Teamwork, Spirit, Creativity and Achievement. The point values of each competitive activity will be listed in the Competition Summary.

Spirit Competition

Which unit has the most spirit per participant? Size doesn't matter, but lung power per person, costuming, bling and any other indicators of enthusiasm will count. Show your creativity and passion for this year's Hodag theme and you may be the proud new custodian of The Golden Coffee Thingy until they return to Hodag 2027.

For More Hodag Information, you may contact the leaders listed on the cover sheet here, or find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/ponman.moose>





WINTER CAMPING TIPS

The following are some winter camping tips for a successful Winter Camping experience. Oftentimes the HODAG is held in below-freezing temperatures – that's part of the fun, and it's all about skills and technique to ensure a safe and fun experience. It doesn't have to cost a huge amount of money to acquire the gear necessary to camp comfortably in cold temperatures – oftentimes items can be found at Home Depot or Tractor Supply Company for reasonable prices that can stand in for high-end items you'd find at REI.

- Do NOT wear cotton! Cotton will collect your sweat and not dry out easily, making you cold!
- Put your clothes for the next day in your sleeping bag all the way to your feet to keep them warm for the morning.
- Put your water bottle in one of your socks and stick it upside down in one of your boots. This will keep it from freezing at the top of the water bottle.
- Use a closed foam cell pad, Tyvek type wrap or reflective foil insulation piece under your sleeping bag, but on top of your sleeping pad to keep the cold from the ground radiating up to you though your sleeping bag.
- If you have a water bladder in your backpack, blow out the hose completely and disconnect it from the bladder before you go to bed. Wrap the entire bladder and hose in a piece of reflective foil insulation or clothes to keep it from freezing during the night.
- If your bag is too big for you, or you get cold, add more layers if you have them. If you don't, stuff all the rest of your clothes and jackets inside the sleeping bag around you to fill up the space. The more extra space that is in the sleeping bag, the more area your body must heat, which will make you cold. If you are still cold, get up and do jumping jacks. This will warm you up.
- If you must pee in the middle of the night, do not hold it. Your body will expend more energy keeping the contents of your bladder warm, than keeping the rest of you warm. Just get up and go to the bathroom.
- To keep your boots from freezing overnight, lay them down under your sleeping bag under your feet. Lay them down like they came in their original box.
- Bring a set of clothes to change into to sleep in, including socks. You don't realize that you might have sweated during the day. When you go to bed, that bit of moisture in your clothes will make you cold.
- Wear a hat to bed! You lose a lot of warmth through your head at night.
- Dress in layers. Base layer (polyester or wool), middle insulating layer (like fleece, down, or synthetic down), then outer layer to protect from wind.
- To warm up your sleeping bag before you go to bed, activate a bunch of hand warmers, and toss them in various parts of your sleeping bag an hour before you go to bed.





AGENDA

Friday

6:00pm — 8:00pm	Check-in (Troops/Crews) @ Birch Grove Cabin
8:00 pm	Welcome to Camp - All Troops @ Alberici Flagpole
8:30 pm	SPL/SM Meeting @ Birch Grove Cabin
9:00 pm	OA Brotherhood Ceremony – Candidates meet at Birch Grove Cabin
10:30 pm	Lights Out / Quiet

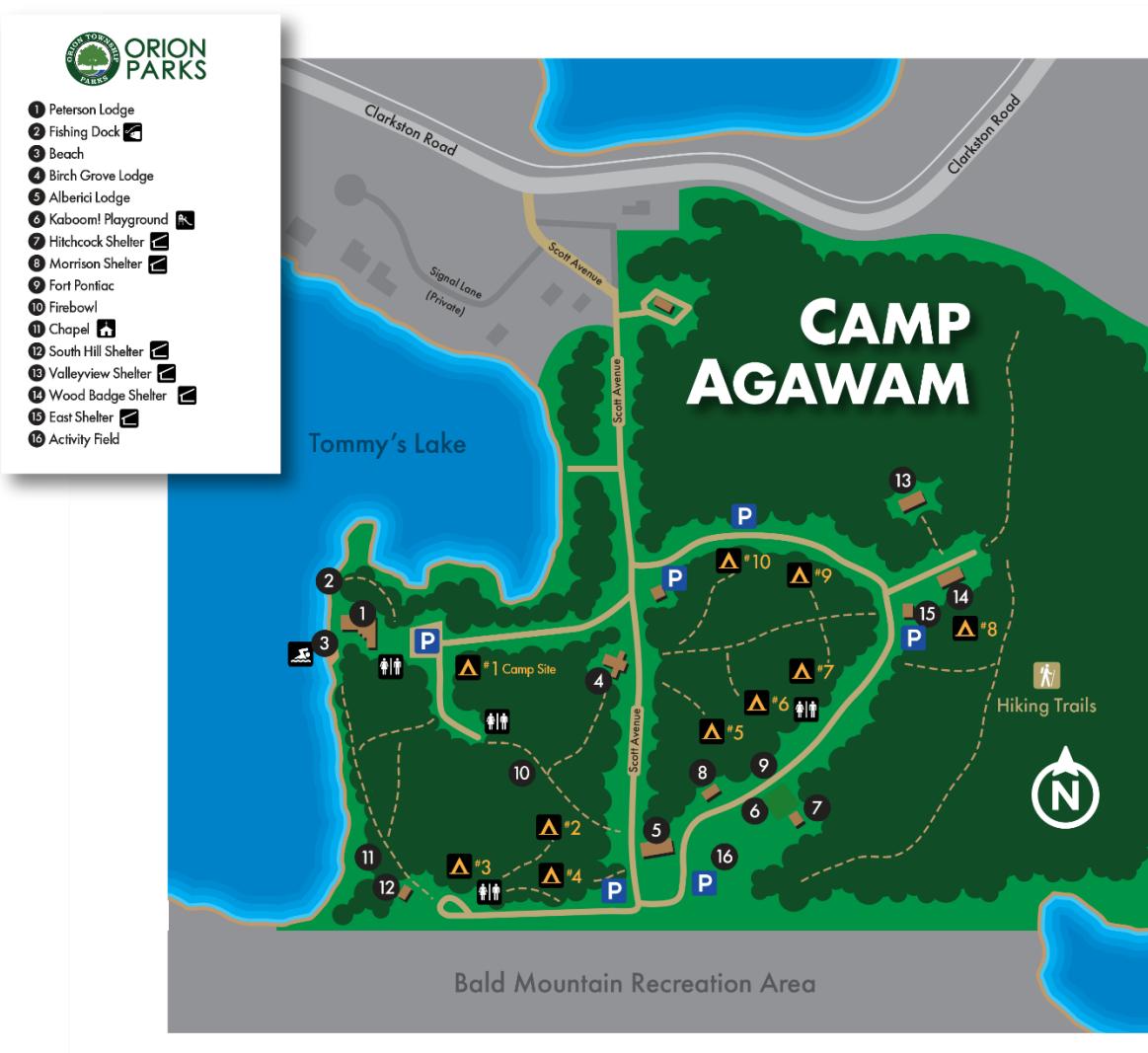
Saturday

8:00 – 8:30 am	Day-only Check-in @ Birch Grove Cabin
9:00 am	Opening Ceremony @ Alberici Cabin Flagpole
9:15 – 11:45 am	Morning Competition
12:00 pm	Lunch @ Alberici Cabin Field
1:00 – 3:30 pm	Afternoon Competition
3:45 pm	Spirit Competition @ Alberici Cabin Flagpole
4:00 pm	Awards Ceremony @Alberici Cabin Flagpole
5:00 pm	Dinner (Troop provided)
6:00 pm	Fellowship, location TBD

Updates

Changes will be posted in the registration area and/or announced at the SPL/SM meeting or Scoutmaster's Roundtable.





We will have access to all 10 campsites in camp. Campsites will be assigned at registration on a first-come-first serve basis.

Registration will be at Birch Grove (8). Program will take place in front of Alberici (5) as well as the Activity Field (16), the Fort (9), and the two shelters (7 and 8)





HODAG SKILL Events

Event locations are to be determined at the event, with conditions dictating.

	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	1	
METHOD/SKILL	Fire Lighting	
OBJECTIVE	To build a fire and burn the string as quickly as possible. Fuel can be laid no closer than 6" from the string. Patrols will be given two matches. If more matches are needed, 5 seconds will be added per match. Time starts when the Patrol begins to lay the fire.	
TIME LIMIT	5 minutes per patrol	
SCORING	1 point 2 points 3 points 4 points 5 points 6 points 8 points 10 points	Burned in 5 minutes Burned in 4:30 minutes Burned in 4 minutes Burned in 3:30 minutes Burned in 3 minutes Burned in 2:30 minutes Burned in 2 minutes Burned in 1:30 minutes or less
MATERIALS NEEDED	Up to 8 patrol members Troops may bring their own tinder and kindling, natural only; no homemade fire starters	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	4 stakes for 2 fire building stations; 50' of cotton string/twine, matches	





PHASE	STATION	MAP LOCATION
Afternoon	2	
METHOD/SKILL	Hot Dog Carry	
OBJECTIVE	Complete the obstacle course 6 times as quickly as possible without dropping your hot dog off the spatula and using 8 patrol members.	
TIME LIMIT	10 Minutes	
SCORING	1 point	Completed in 10 Minutes
	2 points	Completed in 9 Minutes
	3 points	Completed in 8 Minutes
	4 points	Completed in 7 Minutes
	5 points	Completed in 6 Minutes
	6 points	Completed in 5 Minutes
	7 points	Completed in 4 Minutes
	8 points	Completed in 3 Minutes
MATERIALS NEEDED	Up to 8 patrol members	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Hot Dogs, Spatula, Obstacles	





	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	3	
METHOD/SKILL	Black Friday tent-out	
OBJECTIVE	Set up and take down your tent before the store opens for black friday! Hint: It's a very big tent.	
TIME LIMIT	10 Minutes	
SCORING	1 point	10% Completion
	2 points	20% Completion
	3 points	30% Completion
	6 points	50% Completion
	8 points	70% Completion
	10 points	80% Completion
	15 points	90% Completion
	20 points	100% Completion
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Tent	





	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	4	
METHOD/SKILL	Can Return Toss	
OBJECTIVE	Throw the cans into the bin to return them to the store in as few tries as possible.	
TIME LIMIT	Until the patrol makes it to the target	
Scoring	1 point	1-2 cans
	2 points	3 cans
	3 points	4 cans
	4 points	5 cans
	5 points	6 cans
	6 points	7 cans
	8 points	8-9 cans
	10 points	10 cans
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Cans, Can Return Bin	





	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	5	
METHOD/SKILL	Store Trivia	
OBJECTIVE	Answer as many store-themed questions correctly as possible. Hint: They'll be tough questions	
TIME LIMIT	5 minutes	
SCORING	.5 point per every question answered correctly.	
MATERIALS NEEDED	Up to 8 patrol members	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	25 trivia cards	

PHASE	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	6	
METHOD/SKILL	Inventory Check	
OBJECTIVE	To remember all the items inside of the store. You will get 1 minute to look at the items and five minutes for recollection.	
TIME LIMIT	1 minute to view the board, 5 for recollection	
SCORING	25% of the items 50% of the items 60% of the items 75% of the items 90% of the items 100% of the items	2 points 4 points 6 points 8 points 10 points 15 points
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	





MATERIALS PROVIDED	Assortment of Grocery-Related Items
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	STATION	MAP LOCATION
	7	
METHOD/SKILL	Shelf Sort	
OBJECTIVE	Patrol members will play Jenga against another Patrol	
TIME LIMIT	Until tower falls	
SCORING	One point for every grocery item found -3 points for knocking down the tower	
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Jenga blocks	





PHASE	STATION	MAP LOCATION
Afternoon	8	
METHOD/SKILL	Guess the Sample	
OBJECTIVE	Patrol members will take turns guessing if the food item they are given is generic brand or off brand	
TIME LIMIT	Until the food is finished	
SCORING	1 point for every correct guess	
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Food Items (Both Generic and Off Brand)	

PHASE	STATION	MAP LOCATION
Afternoon	9	
METHOD/SKILL	The Price is Right	
OBJECTIVE	Patrol Members take turns guessing the price of items without going over, competing against another patrol to win.	
TIME LIMIT	The game goes until patrols have gotten through every item.	
SCORING	One Point for every correct guess	
MATERIALS NEEDED	None	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	20 items	





PHASE	STATION	MAP LOCATION
Afternoon	10	
METHOD/SKILL	Make your Own Store Sign	
OBJECTIVE	Patrol members work together to design a store sign	
TIME LIMIT	Until time at station is done	
SCORING	Staff member will judge based on how well sign is made	
MATERIALS NEEDED	Optional: Extra Craft Supplies	
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Craft Supplies, Piece of Wood, Tools	





	STATION	MAP LOCATION										
Afternoon	Alpha	Activity Field										
METHOD/SKILL	Sled Race											
OBJECTIVE	For patrol members to pull a sled carrying one Scout, guided by another, through the designated course, while collecting your shopping items											
ADDITIONAL RULES	Your sled must not be wider than 2 feet, with no poles sticking out of the sled. Sleds must be checked in with staff ten minutes before races begin to make sure they adhere to all rules. Riders will be given your team's sled number - this must be displayed on the sled during races. This will be their team number and will be used by staff to announce teams for the next races. (Up next, On Deck, In the Hole)											
TIME LIMIT	As fast as possible											
SCORING – Each patrol will run in the First Round Qualifier. The six fastest teams will advance to the Semifinal Round. The two fastest teams from the Semifinal Round will advance to the Final Race.	Patrols will be run 2 at a time. When all Patrols have run the course, staff will announce which teams are moving on to the next round. <table><tbody><tr><td>First Round Qualifier</td><td>5 points</td></tr><tr><td>Semifinal Round Qualifier</td><td>8 points</td></tr><tr><td>Finals Qualifier (Runner-Up)</td><td>10 points</td></tr><tr><td>Winner with the Fastest time</td><td>16 points</td></tr><tr><td>Theme-appropriate decoration</td><td>6 points</td></tr></tbody></table>		First Round Qualifier	5 points	Semifinal Round Qualifier	8 points	Finals Qualifier (Runner-Up)	10 points	Winner with the Fastest time	16 points	Theme-appropriate decoration	6 points
First Round Qualifier	5 points											
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Finals Qualifier (Runner-Up)	10 points											
Winner with the Fastest time	16 points											
Theme-appropriate decoration	6 points											
MATERIALS NEEDED	Patrol members, sled with reins to be pulled by Patrol											
MATERIALS PROVIDED	Course, Rider number, timers											





2026 HODAG Patrol Roster

Patrol Name: _____

Troop: _____

Patrol Leader: _____

Scout: _____

Feel free to print off your own Patrol Roster, pre-filled. We will have these on-site as well





Manny's MegaMart Rules

In Many's MegaMart, by decorating your campsite or dressing up, you can gain extra points throughout the event!

Troops may choose to decorate their campsite after a certain big box store. Doing so will result in all the patrols in the campsite earning an extra number of points based on a certain judging system. This system includes criteria such as how many decorations are visible, how “all out” did your troop went, do the decorations relate to the theme, and more.

Troops may also decide to dress up in a costume that relates to the theme. For each patrol member who is “dressed up” in a way that is easily recognizable to staff, your patrol can gain an extra 2 points.

