

INTO THE WOODS

CUB SCOUT OUTDOOR SKILLS WEEKEND

LEADER GUIDE

NOVEMBER 6 - 8, 2026

Smilin' V Scout Ranch • Liberty Hill, Texas

250 County Road 286 Spur • Liberty Hill, TX 78642

Event Chairs: Arthur and Christen Venegas

PREPARE	PRACTICE	PROTECT
Know what to bring.	Build skills together.	Make safe outdoor choices.

A hands-on weekend where Cub Scouts learn to be prepared, make smart decisions, grow more confident outdoors, and meet local Scout Troops to see what the next level of Scouting is all about.

WELCOME TO INTO THE WOODS

A leader-focused guide for delivering a safe, engaging, age-appropriate outdoor weekend.

Dear Leaders and Scouters,

Thank you for giving your time to create an outdoor experience that Cub Scouts will remember. Into the Woods is designed around a simple idea: Scouts learn best when they can see a skill, try it themselves, make a decision, and then talk about what they learned. Across five hands-on stations, Scouts will practice trail preparedness, basic navigation, shelter-building concepts, food and campsite safety, and fire safety in ways that grow with their rank.

Our goal is not to make every Scout an expert in a weekend. Our goal is to help every Scout leave more prepared than when they arrived - able to recognize hazards, ask for help, work with a team, and apply outdoor skills with confidence. Leaders make that possible by keeping the experience positive, active, and appropriately challenging for each age group.

Please remember that unit leadership remains responsible for supervision of its Scouts throughout the event. Station staff are instructors and facilitators; they do not replace the unit's required adult leadership. All activities are subject to current Scouting America policies, the Guide to Safe Scouting, the Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities, local fire restrictions, and direction from Capitol Area Council and the Smilin' V ranger staff.

LEADER MINDSET

Teach the why, not just the how. Ask Scouts what they notice, what could go wrong, and what choice would make the situation safer. The best outcome is a Scout who can explain the decision behind the skill.

Event Purpose

- **Connect Cub Scouts and their families with local Scout Troops, giving Troops an opportunity to showcase their programs, build relationships with prospective Scouts, and support future recruitment and crossover.**
- Provide meaningful, hands-on outdoor skill practice for Lions through Arrow of Light Scouts that give insight into their future experience as Scouts, BSA.
- Build confidence and independence while reinforcing the buddy system, adult communication, and safe decision-making.
- Give older Cub Scouts greater responsibility and complexity without asking younger Scouts to perform skills beyond their age or experience.
- Create shared experiences that strengthen dens, families, and the broader Scouting community.

Five Program Stations

- Missing Hiker: Trail Safety & Navigation
- Beaver Builder Challenge
- Bear Bag & Food Safety Challenge
- Camp Oh No / Camp Let's Go!
- Build a Fire: Skills and Safety

EVENT AT A GLANCE

Dates	Friday, November 6 - Sunday, November 8, 2026
Location	Smilin' V Scout Ranch
Address	250 County Road 286 Spur, Liberty Hill, TX 78642
Audience	Cub Scouts - Lion, Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos, and AOL
Program	Five rank-adjusted outdoor skill stations plus campsite and evening programming

Leader Responsibilities

- Maintain required unit supervision and the buddy system during all movement and program activities.
- Take a head count before leaving a campsite or station and again upon arrival at the next location.
- Know where your Scouts are, who their buddies are, and who is responsible for each youth at all times.
- Bring required health forms (see Leader Resources) and be aware of medical, allergy, mobility, behavioral, or sensory needs that may affect participation.
- Support station staff by keeping Scouts engaged, reinforcing safety expectations, and helping with transitions.
- Stop an activity and ask for help whenever conditions, equipment, weather, or participant behavior make the activity unsafe.

Attendance Options

Families may camp overnight Friday and Saturday night for the full weekend experience or attend as day participants for Saturday activities only.

Overnight Camping Requirement: Any adult camping Friday or Saturday night must have completed Safeguarding Youth Training (see Leader Resources) and present a current completion certificate at event check-in.

Direction to Smilin' V

Capitol Area Council recommends approaching the ranch from Liberty Hill via RR 1869. After approximately six miles, turn at the second CR 285 intersection when you see the blue Smilin' V Ranch sign, then follow the blue camp signs to the property. Do not use the first CR 285 intersection. Final arrival and parking instructions should be distributed with the event check-in communication.

Site Contacts

For questions, assistance, or event support while at Into the Woods, please contact:

Arthur Venegas

Event Chair

951.830.7307

Christen Venegas

Event Chair

714.402.7692

cubscoutmaster@pack222.org

For life-threatening emergencies, call 911 first, then notify an Event Chair or event headquarters.

WEEKEND SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
Friday - November 6th	
3:00 PM	Set up for admin staff
5:00 PM	Arrival and check in for participants
6:00 PM	Kick-off and welcome
7:00 PM	Cracker barrel
10:00 PM	Lights out
Friday - November 7th	
7:00 AM	Staff arrival / introductions and assignments / station setup
8:00 AM	Participant check-in begins (non-Friday campers)
8:45 AM	Opening flags, welcome, safety briefing, station assignments
9:00 AM	Rotation 1
10:10 AM	Rotation 2
11:20 AM	Rotation 3
12:20 PM	Lunch / reset / staff check-in
1:15 PM	Rotation 4
2:25 PM	Rotation 5
3:35 PM	Troop Connections (Webelos and AOL) / Shooting Sports (All Others) / Games and freetime
5:00 PM	Dinner in campsites
6:30 PM	Evening campfire program
7:30 PM	Dutchover Dessert Bar / leader announcements
10:00 PM	Lights out
Sunday - November 15	
8:00 AM	Wake up / breakfast
8:30 AM	Closing Flags / Scouts Own
9:00 AM	Leave No Trace / pack campsite
10:30 AM	Campsite inspection and departure

PROGRAM ROTATION OVERVIEW

#	Station	Core Learning
1	Missing Hiker	Preparedness, trail decisions, communication, age-appropriate map skills, and first-aid response.
2	Beaver Builder Challenge	Knots, shelter concepts, teamwork, and age-appropriate pioneering skills.
3	Bear Bag Challenge	Food safety, wildlife-safe storage, campsite sanitation, and secure hanging/staking techniques.
4	Camp Oh No / Camp Let's Go!	Hazard recognition, campsite layout, Leave No Trace, and turning a poor campsite into a safe one.
5	Build a Fire	Fire safety, material identification, fire lays, ignition concepts, extinguishment, and responsible tool awareness.

Station Flow

- Welcome & objective (3-5 minutes): Tell Scouts what they are going to learn and why it matters.
- Teach & demonstrate (10-15 minutes): Show only the skills needed for the challenge; keep the lesson interactive.
- Scout challenge (30-40 minutes): Scouts perform the task in teams with adults/older scouts coaching rather than taking over.
- Debrief (5 minutes): Ask what worked, what was hard, and what they would do differently next time.
- Reset (5-10 minutes): Return all props, count critical equipment, refill consumables, and prepare for the next group.

DIFFERENT BY RANK, EQUAL IN VALUE

Younger Scouts should not simply receive a shorter version of the older Scout challenge. Their station should emphasize observation, communication, and simple choices. Older Scouts can add navigation, planning, knot application, and more independent problem-solving.

1

MISSING HIKER: TRAIL SAFETY & NAVIGATION

Be prepared. Stay calm. Communicate clearly. Make the safest next choice.

Objective

Scouts will learn how preparation and calm decision-making can prevent a routine hike from becoming an emergency. Through a staged trail scenario, they will practice choosing appropriate essentials, recognizing when to stop and seek help, communicating useful information over a radio or simulated phone, and applying rank-appropriate navigation and first-aid concepts. Older Cub Scouts will use maps and compasses on a marked course; younger Scouts will use visual clues and landmarks. The emphasis is on safe trail behavior and problem-solving - not on conducting a real search-and-rescue mission.

Core Teaching Points

- Hike with a buddy and tell an adult where you are going.
- Carry the Cub Scout Six Essentials; Arrow of Light Scouts can compare them with the 10 Scout Basic Essentials.
- If separated or unsure of your location, stop moving, stay calm, stay together, make yourself easy to find, and communicate with an adult or emergency services when appropriate.
- When encountering an injured person: check the scene, stay calm, call for appropriate help, and provide only the care you have been taught.
- Do not move a badly injured person unless remaining in place presents a greater danger. Training props and dummies are used for this station.

Rank-Adjusted Challenge

Rank	Program Delivery
Lions	Follow laminated animal tracks along an adult-supervised, clearly bounded route to a staged “missing hiker.” Use a simple scenario card to decide whether to find an adult or simulate calling 911. Target distance: about 0.5-mile round trip.
Tigers	Follow large visual signs and exaggerated landmarks along an adult-supervised route. Use a simple scenario card to identify what information to give an adult or 911. Target distance: about 0.5-mile round trip. Use landmarks / map pictures only - no compass work.
Wolves	Use a simple trail map with obvious landmarks and fixed checkpoints to reach the staged hiker. Practice age-appropriate trail first aid and identify what supplies would be needed. An adult may demonstrate an improvised stretcher; youth do not conduct a rescue carry. Target distance: about 1-mile round trip.
Bears	Use a simple map and compass orientation exercise on a marked trail, with adults remaining with the group. Carry selected first-aid materials to the scenario and choose the correct response from scenario cards. Stretcher concepts may be demonstrated with training props; no live patient carry.
Webelos	Use a map and compass to follow short, supervised navigation legs on a marked route to a staged hiker. Practice trail first aid, build a simple ground-level improvised stretcher using approved materials, and discuss when a patient should or should not be moved. Use a lightweight dummy and stretcher concept. Target distance: about 1-mile round trip.
Arrow of Light	Complete the most complex map-and-compass version of the marked route, identify the hiker location, communicate a concise situation report by radio, apply age-appropriate first aid, and build an improvised stretcher as a team. Use a lightweight training dummy and stretcher concept. Rotate roles so every Scout practices leadership and communication. Target distance: about 1-mile round trip.

2

BEAVER BUILDER CHALLENGE

Tie it right. Work as a team. Build with purpose.

Objective

Scouts will discover how rope skills, planning, and teamwork can turn simple materials into useful outdoor structures. The station teaches the purpose of secure attachment, tension, and bracing while reinforcing communication and shared roles. Younger Scouts work with small-scale materials and assist with tarp setup; Webelos and Arrow of Light Scouts apply pioneering concepts to a full-size, ground-level shelter structure. The challenge should reward a stable, thoughtful build - not speed.

Skill Focus

- Clove hitch as an attachment knot.
- Two half hitches or another simple finishing knot for securing tarp lines.
- Frapping as the tightening turns used within a lashing - not a separate knot.
- Tripod / shelter geometry: wide base, stable legs, balanced tension, and no climbing on the structure.
- Team roles: rope lead, pole handlers, tarp crew, safety checker, and final inspector.

Rank-Adjusted Challenge

Rank	Program Delivery
Lions	Practice a clove hitch motion on oversized dowels or rope boards with adult partners. Help clip or tie a tarp to a pre-built low frame and identify what keeps a shelter dry and stable.
Tigers	Practice a clove hitch and simple tarp-line tie on dowels. Work as a team to arrange poles / dowels into a model tripod and help secure a tarp to a low, pre-staged frame.
Wolves	Tie knots on dowels or tabletop poles, then build a small model shelter. Focus on choosing anchor points, keeping lines organized, and checking the build for stability.
Bears	Build a larger model or low, non-load-bearing shelter using dowels / lightweight poles and rope. Practice clove hitch, a simple finishing knot, and frapping concepts with close adult coaching.
Webelos	Construct two full-size, ground-level tripods using approved pioneering poles and lashings, connect them as designed, and secure a tarp. Scouts should perform the rope work while adults manage spacing and safety.
Arrow of Light	Plan roles before building, construct the two-tripod shelter, tension the tarp, inspect the structure, and explain why each knot / lashing was selected. Add a timed "weather change" that requires adjusting one guy line or tarp angle safely.

SAFETY BOUNDARY

All structures remain ground-level and non-load-bearing. No Scout climbs, hangs from, sits on, or enters a structure until a station leader has inspected it. Younger ranks use models or pre-built frames rather than full pioneering projects.

3

BEAR BAG & FOOD SAFETY CHALLENGE*Protect the food. Protect the campsite. Protect wildlife.***Objective**

Scouts will learn that food storage is both a health issue and an outdoor ethics issue. They will compare foods suited for a car-camping weekend with foods better suited for a hike, distinguish shelf-stable items from foods that require temperature control, identify containers that protect food from moisture and animals, and practice keeping food, trash, cooking areas, and sleeping areas separated. The “bear bag” is used as a memorable teaching tool for managing attractants even when local wildlife risks differ by location.

Core Teaching Points

- Choose food that matches the trip: distance, weather, cooking method, storage capacity, and group needs.
- Keep perishable foods safely temperature-controlled and use current food-safety guidance when demonstrating coolers or hot foods.
- Store food, scented items, and trash using the method required by the campground; keep them away from sleeping areas.
- Select a safe anchor point and keep ropes away from faces, necks, walkways, and overhead hazards.
- Use a throw bag or soft weighted line - never a rock, brick, or hard object - to place a line over a branch.
- Pack out scraps and trash, protect food from rain, and leave the campsite cleaner than you found it.

Rank-Adjusted Challenge

Rank	Program Delivery
Lions	Sort picture cards or food props into “good for a hike,” “better for car camping,” and “needs to stay cold.” Load a small bag, choose a safe tree / storage location, and practice an adult-assisted soft throw-line activity.
Tigers	Repeat the food sort with simple discussion of packaging and moisture. Practice choosing an anchor point and help stake a low demonstration line; adults drive stakes as needed.
Wolves	Use scenario cards to decide what happens to food when the day is hot, the bag gets wet, or the campsite has animals. Load a bag efficiently, select an appropriate anchor, and practice a soft throw line and secure tie-off.
Bears	Add container and weight choices: identify which foods are heavy, fragile, wet, scented, or perishable. Set up a secure food-storage demonstration and explain how trash and toiletries fit into the plan.
Webelos	Plan storage for a weekend campsite: food bag, trash / smellables, water, patrol box, and cooking area. Compare backpacking food with car-camping food and explain how rain changes the packing strategy.
Arrow of Light	Build a complete campsite food-management plan using two bags (food / trash or smellables), patrol box, water storage, cooking area, and disposal plan. Consider group size, food weight, MRE / dehydrated options, weather, cleanup, scraps, and what to do when hanging a bag is not the approved storage method.

4

CAMP OH NO / CAMP LET'S GO!*Spot the problem. Explain the risk. Build the better campsite.***Objective**

Scouts will develop the habit of looking at a campsite before they begin using it. They will inspect a deliberately unsafe or disorganized “Camp Oh No,” identify hazards, explain why each one matters, and then help stage “Camp Let’s Go” using safer campsite practices. The station blends campsite selection, fire and stove safety, food storage, sanitation, weather awareness, gear care, first-aid readiness, and Leave No Trace into one highly visual challenge.

Camp Oh No - Hazards to Stage

- Tent in a low spot / drainage path where water can collect.
- Tent beneath dead limbs, an unstable tree, or another overhead hazard.
- Tent not staked or guyed for expected conditions.
- Ground cloth / footprint extending beyond the tent and positioned to collect rainwater.
- Tent door left open and personal gear scattered where it can get wet or become a trip hazard.
- Sleeping bag / clothing left exposed to damp conditions.
- Food, trash, or scented items left in or beside the sleeping area.
- Cooking stove positioned too close to a tent, tarp, dry grass, or traffic area.
- Cooking utensils and patrol-box items left dirty or unsecured.
- No clear hand-washing / dishwashing system; dishes being “washed in the creek” (use blue cloth as a prop).
- Drinking-water supply confused with wash water or left uncapped.
- Firewood scattered through walkways or stored too close to the fire area.
- Fire area not cleared / extinguishing tools not ready / fire ring left messy.
- First-aid kit missing, blocked, or staged in an obviously unsafe location.
- Backpacks and loose gear blocking paths or emergency access.

Rank-Adjusted Delivery

Rank	Program Delivery
Lions	Find 5 obvious problems using picture clues or colored dots. For each, answer: “Is this safe?” and “Who would you tell?”
Tigers	Find 6-8 obvious campsite problems, then move or point to one item that would make the site safer.
Wolves	Identify 8-10 hazards and sort them into weather, food, fire, gear, or cleanliness. Help reset part of the safe campsite.
Bears	Inspect the full scene in teams, explain why each hazard matters, and stage a corrected sleeping area and cooking / cleanup zone.
Webelos	Use a written campsite inspection card and redesign the site: tent placement, kitchen, food storage, water, fire / stove area, wash area, first aid, and gear storage.
Arrow of Light	Act as the campsite leadership team. Conduct a timed inspection, prioritize the highest-risk issues first, assign correction tasks, and brief the instructor on the final layout and Leave No Trace plan.

5

BUILD A FIRE

Respect the fire. Build it small. Put it completely out.

Objective

Scouts will learn that a campfire is a tool that requires planning, supervision, and respect. They will identify tinder, kindling, and fuel wood; explain what makes a safe fire site; compare common fire lays; make a simple fire starter; and demonstrate the steps for extinguishing a fire until it is cold out. Rank-appropriate Scouts may build and light a small fire under direct adult supervision when current policy, camp rules, weather, and burn restrictions allow. The learning goal is control and responsibility - not making the biggest or fastest fire.

Core Teaching Points

- Fire needs heat, fuel, and oxygen; removing one side of the fire triangle stops combustion.
- Clear the site and establish a safety zone before ignition. Keep water and appropriate extinguishing tools immediately available.
- Tinder catches first, kindling builds the flame, and fuel wood sustains it.
- Never use liquid accelerants or flame-enhancing additives.
- A fire is never left unattended. Extinguish, stir, and verify the site is cold before leaving.
- Local burn bans, high winds, or dry conditions override the planned activity.

Rank-Adjusted Challenge

Rank	Program Delivery
Lions	Learn fire safety, identify who to tell if they see an unsafe fire, sort tinder / kindling / fuel, build an unlit pretend fire structure, make a take-home fire-starter craft, and demonstrate extinguishing steps with a cold prop.
Tigers	Repeat fire-safety and material identification with more independence. Build an unlit teepee or log-cabin fire lay and explain where water / rake / adult supervision should be positioned.
Wolves	Build an unlit fire lay, identify safe vs unsafe fire sites, make a fire starter, and practice the sequence for putting a fire completely out. Do not light a youth-built fire.
Bears	Build and compare two unlit fire lays, explain which one fits a cooking / warming scenario, make a fire starter, and lead the cold-out checklist. Do not light a youth-built fire.
Webelos	When conditions and event rules permit, select a safe fire site, build a small fire lay with tinder, kindling, and fuel, light it under direct adult supervision, complete a controlled skill challenge such as burning through a suspended twine, and extinguish to cold out.
Arrow of Light	Plan the fire from start to finish: site, fuel, ignition method, safety tools, roles, and extinguishment. Build and light a small fire under direct adult supervision when authorized; compare waterproof matches / lighter / ferro rod concepts and discuss charcoal chimney use and responsible cooking fires.

PARTICIPANT PACKING LIST

Pack for the weather, the terrain, and a full day outside.

All Scouts

- Water bottle - filled before arrival
- Closed-toe hiking or athletic shoes
- Weather-appropriate layers
- Rain jacket / poncho
- Hat and sun protection
- Small daypack
- Cub Scout Six Essentials: water, first-aid kit, whistle, flashlight, sun protection, trail food
- Any personal medication carried and managed according to unit / family procedures
- Notebook and pencil (optional but useful)
- Camp chair (optional)

Arrow of Light

AOL Scouts can use the weekend to reinforce the Scout Basic Essentials: pocketknife (only after current knife-safety requirements are met), rain gear, trail food, flashlight, extra clothing, first-aid kit, sun protection, map and compass, authorized fire-starting materials only when permitted, and water bottle.

If Camping Overnight

- Tent, ground cloth / footprint, stakes, and appropriate sleeping gear
- Sleeping bag rated for expected overnight temperatures and sleeping pad
- Sleepwear and change of clothing
- Extra socks
- Personal toiletries
- Headlamp / flashlight with spare batteries
- Mess kit / eating utensils if meals require them
- Pack food only as directed by your unit / event meal plan
- Small wagon for transporting gear

Leave at Home

Personal fireworks, firearms or ammunition, alcohol, illegal substances, unnecessary valuables, and any prohibited or age-inappropriate equipment. Follow the current Guide to Safe Scouting and all event-specific instructions.

CAMP OPERATIONS

Campsites

- Units are responsible for tents, personal gear, food, cooking equipment, and campsite supervision.
- Follow camp instructions for fires, food storage, gray water, trash, and vehicle access.
- Conduct a campsite inspection before departure and leave the site cleaner than it was found.

STATION LEADER OPERATING CHECKLIST

60 Minutes Before Program

- Walk the full station footprint and remove / flag hazards.
- Confirm boundaries, entry, exit, and emergency access remain clear.
- Check all equipment for damage and confirm age-appropriate materials are separated by rank.
- Review the station script, learning objective, safety limits, and no-go conditions.
- Test radios and confirm the event channel, call signs, and emergency phrase.
- Verify water, first-aid support, shade / weather protection, and staff coverage.

At the Start of Every Rotation

- Introduce the station and the “why” behind the skill.
- State the physical boundaries and one or two critical safety rules.
- Ask the den leader for any accommodations or participation concerns before starting.
- Count Scouts and adults and confirm buddies remain together.

At the End of Every Rotation

- Debrief: What did you notice? What choice made the situation safer? What would you do next time?
- Return the group to the den leader and complete a head count.
- Reset all props exactly as designed and remove any real hazards created during the activity.
- Report broken equipment, supply shortages, incidents, near misses, or emerging weather issues immediately.

Staff Roles

Role	Program Delivery
Station Lead	Owns lesson quality, timing, safety stop decisions, and reset standards.
Safety / Equipment Lead	Monitors boundaries, tools, fire equipment, route conditions, and critical gear.
Instructor(s)	Demonstrate skills, coach small groups, and adapt language by rank.
Trail / Course Guide	For Missing Hiker, remains with each group or controls a clearly marked route segment.
Den Leader / Unit Adults	Maintain unit supervision, behavior support, buddy system, and head counts.

LEADER RESOURCES

Current Resources to Review Before Publishing

Scouting America - Guide to Safe Scouting: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/>

Scouting America - Guidelines for Activities: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/680-685.pdf>

Scouting America - SAFE Checklist: <https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/scouting-america-safe-checklist/>

Scouting America - Cub Scout Camping: <https://www.scouting.org/programs/cub-scouts/activities/cub-scout-camping/>

Capitol Area Council - Smilin' V Scout Ranch: <https://www.capitolareascouting.org/activities/camping/smilin-v/>

Medical Forms: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/680-001_AB.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Safeguarding Youth Training: https://www.scouting.org/training/safeguarding-youth/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

SAFETY & EMERGENCY READINESS

Into the Woods is run using Scouting America's SAFE framework: qualified Supervision, thoughtful Assessment of risk, appropriate Fitness and Skill, and safe Equipment and Environment.

Program-Wide Safety Expectations

- Closed-toe shoes are strongly recommended for all outdoor stations.
- Each Scout must carry water and age-appropriate essentials. Water breaks will be planned between every rotation.
- No running with tools, poles, compasses, stakes, fire materials, or first-aid props.
- Fire activities require a dedicated adult safety lead, extinguishing equipment, and an immediate no-fire alternative when burn bans, wind, or site conditions require it.

On-Site Emergency Basics

- For life-threatening fire, police, or medical emergencies: call 911, then notify event headquarters/ranger so responders can be directed into camp. Camp street address: 250 County Road 286 Spur, Liberty Hill, TX 78642.
- For on-site assistance, questions, or to report an emergency after calling 911, contact an Event Chair: **Christen Venegas at 714.402.7692** or **Arthur Venegas at 951.830.7307**.