

# Backwoods Bulletin



## Chief

What does it take to be a Chief?

"Trust in the Lord  
with all thine  
heart; and lean  
not unto thine  
own understand-  
ing. In all thy  
ways acknowl-  
edge him, and he  
shall direct thy  
paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6

**W**e are winding along the backroads of West Virginia. Our destination is a swimming hole up the road. The big old van is full of boys being boys. Several cheap harmonicas are playing different melodies; the chief is yodeling behind the wheel, and a steady chatter is going on. The van stops by a "No Trespassing" sign, and the boys spill out. In an organized manner, with Chief leading, we hike the jagged stream bed until we come to a place where the stream widens into a pool. Low cliffs make the perfect place for the boys to jump off into the cool pool below. They show me a "preachers' seat" dive, which consists of a painful landing with feet straight out and landing solidly on your bottom in a sitting position. I enjoy the chattering, bantering, and playful dunking together with their chief. Then we head back to the big old van in a proper, organized manner. At the van, Chief takes one boy to the side and has some serious words. Everyone looks sober. They realize a line has been crossed. Soon we are on our way home smelling like a damp bunch of happy swimmers.

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Just before turning in for the night, Chief leads the boys up a short winding trail above their camp. They all sit on a circle of logs. The boy whose turn it is to start a little fire gets the flames started with many suggestions, some not so helpful, coming from the others. Now was the time to discuss what went well that day. This is followed by an evening prayer from Chief.

As we leave the boys' camp that night, there are hands and faces sticking out from the tents with cheerful good nights being hollered.

The Chief will do his rounds yet. Earlier on the ready logs, he had asked who needed a personal talk with him at their tent before going to bed. Several of the boys had raised their hands. After these talks, Chief will go to each boy in bed and give a good night hug or sometimes a tussle. After he is in his own bed, he calls a soft "Hoya" and that signals "no more talking." The camp is now quiet except for the night sounds all about.

Next morning- It is mealtime in the chuck-wagon, and it is a buzz. Chief is filling each of the boy's plates and cups. There is plenty to eat. They can choose what size portion they get, but all comes from the hands of their chief. After breakfast, the boys seem to press around the chiefs. Some of them are sitting with their feet up on the bench and leaning against their chief. The boys seem to revel in the fact that they have a "touchable" chief.

This is what impressed me. The boys have touchable chiefs. The nerve of this whole program works on this truth. As the boys learn that chief is touchable, and even relates to them, they begin to trust chief. This then leads them to trusting their Chief's God. It's in all of us to want someone in whom to place our trust.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities..." Note that it even says

"the feeling.... of our infirmities." That is exactly what we all need. The woman touched Jesus' garment. Mary cried on his feet and wiped them with her hair. John, at the last supper was leaning on Jesus' breast (just like the campers were doing). Thomas, instead of being chastened for his stubbornness, was invited to touch the very wounds that covered the sin of his unbelief. Jesus even allowed the enemies to touch him in a cruel way. His prayer was that they know not what they do. The requirement to be a chief is to be in touch with this touchable High Priest.

The chiefs do not need to be perfect. Rather, they need to be touched by the boys' struggles and relate as common humans with them. Each chief also has his own battles. I sometimes say this program is so simple it should not really work. How can a couple of youth boys with very little training be out in the woods with some complex needs and make a difference in these boys' lives? The plan is simple but not usually easy. As the boys "touch" chief, they build trust and want to be like him. As stated, this then leads them to the Chief Shepherd himself.

One more thing to note. Jesus also practiced "Circle Ups." Sometimes as he was leading his disciples the "boys" were showing their human natures, each wanting to assert himself above the other. Jesus waited until later then called them to a circle up. He connected with their human desires and then led them to a higher way.

Chiefs, keep it simple. Be touchable and connect with these fellow humans. As you circle up, remember you don't need to instill your own wisdom into these boys. Point to the higher way. God bless you and all those giving of themselves at Sleepy Creek.

- Gideon Berniko



# Families Day

June 5, 2024



Eagerly we gather as families hoping to catch a glimpse of the one we love most at camp. A group of parents gathers near the hill by chuckwagon and begins renewing acquaintances as one big camp family. People from many different walks of life are brought together with a common purpose, to see our boys succeed.

The boys eventually file in with their chiefs and the hugs commence. A few announcements are made regarding the outline for the day and the introductions begin. Chiefs, cooks, and other camp staff gather on the hillside and introduce themselves. Next, the Trailblazers ascend a short distance up the hill and stand with their kin and introduce them to us. Finally, the Frontiersmen take

knives, picks, and shovels are divided among the campers and their parents while an orderly line is formed heading to each campsite with a chief in the lead and one following at the tail of each column. Each long line winds its way into the trees and loses sight of each other long before they reach their respective campsites.



their turn, and then the groups split up for the day's work. Crosscut saws, axes, draw



Work plans had been made ahead of time by the campers. Two campers in each group had been chosen for cooking duty and together with their kinfolk they enter the cook tents. Kindling is laid, vegetables are sliced, bars are stirred up, and meat is prepared. At the proper time, matches are requested from the chief's tent, and the fire is lit. All around the campsite, families work with their boys re-

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moving old ready-logs, skinning the bark from new ones, notching them to fit properly, and finally, by a great team effort, the new logs are carried into place. Stones are arranged into a retaining wall around parts of the camp. Eventually lunch is served with one group faring sumptuously on shrimp boil and the other group partaking of chicken fajitas. More work follows after lunch to finish up some of the projects. Chiefs keep a watchful eye on the attitudes and behaviors of the boys. Occasionally something needs to be dealt with, but by catching the behavior while it is small, escalation is prevented.

An activity has been planned for around 3 o'clock and we as parents walk up to a tent to find our boys lying on their backs in a row with only their bare feet showing from under the blankets. We are to put our boy's footwear on the correct pair of feet. While we parents deliberated, the temperature under the blankets rose steadily. At last the boys emerged and we could judge how well we had matched the shoes with the owners.

As the campers leave for the shower house, we parents split into two groups to talk over

the day's events and come up with a summary to present at pow wow later in the evening.

A delicious supper is served by the cooks in honor of a camper's graduation. Memories are shared and different groups sing songs. A plaque is presented to the graduating camper.

The rain has stopped and everyone moves their chairs out of the tent into a large circle around the pow wow fire. Some Trailblazers and a chief prepare the kindling and sticks and soon a fire is blazing. As the sparks and smoke ascend upward we talk over the day's events and discuss what went well and how we could do better next time. It has been a good day and much work was accomplished. Another wonderful Families Day comes to a close with a prayer, and we begin winding our separate ways though the hills, taking our boys home for another homestay. As the song around the fire said: "Lord, I hope Homestay is Good!"

-Written by a Frontiersmen Camper's Father

"The Bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

-Richard Bach





# Camp Life

Far, far away  
In a land of tall trees,  
Of mountains and valleys  
Of rivers and seas.  
There's a small humble village  
Far smaller than most,  
Made up only of tents  
It has nothing to boast.  
The people who live there  
Are healthy and wise.  
In fact, only youth  
Which it doesn't surprise.  
There are chiefs in this village.  
There are campers too.  
Yes, they always have problems,  
But they always get through.

One day at 6:30,  
while the sun was still low,  
The campers woke up  
Some are crabby, some just slow.  
Although no one knows  
Just what today will hold,  
They all trusted in God  
That his promise He'll hold.  
They crawled out of bed

and cleaned up the tent.  
Then had their devotions  
Which made lots of sense.  
Once they were finished,  
They came out and sat down.  
Then read off a day plan  
to get things around.

Then off to do chores  
Some sweep, and some rake.  
The chores are all finished  
It's ready logs or break.  
Since the chores are all done,  
It's time to wash hands.  
Three minutes till breakfast,  
They'll have to cover some land.

Some don't feel like running,  
But they all do, turns out.

Then they make it to logs  
And up goes a shout!

"Congrats, boys, we made it!"  
Says a jolly young man.  
It's cornbread and gravy;  
Eat as much as you can.

With breakfast completed,  
They continue their work.



They're building a craft tent.  
It's a work of art.  
It's all trees and sisal,  
Some dowels, and some glue.  
Don't forget those tarps,  
Gonna need them things too.  
It's tent tarps today.  
Twine holds them together.  
Just forget them ole windows,  
Its summer time weather.  
All the top tarps are on,  
Gotta nail on the sides.  
They cut washers from branches  
And use grommets besides.

They finish their goals.  
Then again race for logs.  
It's chicken and rice, boys,  
So don't eat like hogs.  
After prayer, Chief serves food,  
and there's gatorade too.  
So if you don't get seconds  
Then don't start to stew.

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After lunch is siesta.  
 They all rest for a half hour.  
 Some fiddle with string.  
 Some read a book, some act  
 sour.  
 After chiefs come and wake  
 them,  
 It's hard to get up.  
 But if they don't get their stuff  
 done,  
 They just might miss their sup.

It's time to get going,  
 There's stuff to be done.  
 They get to go swimming.  
 It's too hot in the sun.  
 They get the new hole today.  
 It's deep, and it's wide.  
 There's a place to jump in,  
 And a pond there besides.  
 They then take swim showers,  
 A good way to get clean.

Not as good as pure water,  
 But you know what I mean.  
 Then they go back to camp  
 In their dirty white bus.  
 The van smells so bad  
 It about makes them cuss.  
 For supper there's burgers,  
 Watermelon, and chips.  
 Then if they're not lucky,  
 They'll get carrots and dip.  
 They clean up the table.  
 Then talk of the day.  
 It doesn't seem long.

It's go to bed early.  
 They're all glad for that.  
 Snuggled up in their blankets,  
 They'll leave the night for the  
 cats.  
 The campers have pow-wow.

Then around tents they go.  
 The chiefs tuck them in,  
 And "Hoya" is called.  
 The night sounds are soothing.  
 The crickets are loud.  
 A screech owl is sounding  
 Somewhere in the dark shroud.  
 The forest is charming.  
 It can't be forgot.  
 Go and see it yourself.  
 You'll like it a lot.

-Written by a Trailblazer  
 Camper



wood tent



sleep tent

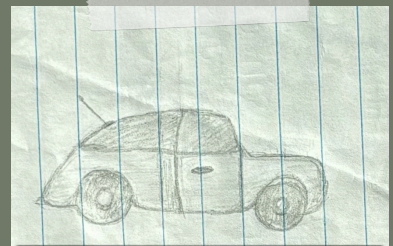
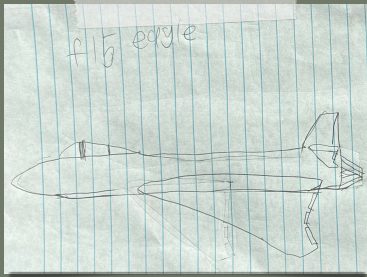


craft tent



“Not all classrooms  
have four walls.”

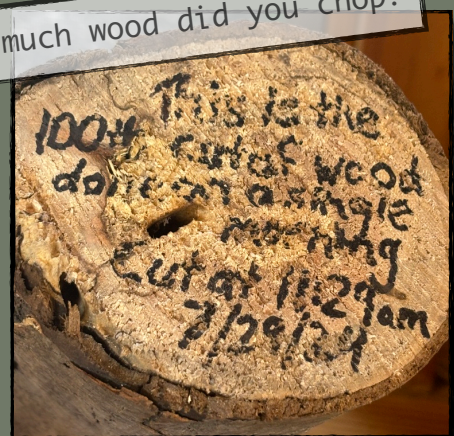
-Cynthia Martinez



Our bug collection



How much wood did you chop?





## Walkathon

A huge **THANK YOU** to our walkathon sponsors for the \$55,000 that was pledged! Six hundred fifty-nine miles were walked that day. Thank you for helping making the day a success!



## Welcome

To Chief Brandon Koehn from Ulysses, Kansas. Brandon has joined our team as chief for the Trailblazer group.

To Chief Braden Dyck from Ballico, California. Braden will be chiefing for the Trailblazer group.

## Goodbyes

Thank you, Chief TK, for the year and a half of service you gave to the Trailblazer group.

Chief Josh and Miss Luanne, thank you for all the time and effort you put into education director this past year.

