Round Up Report

Wow! The feedback from the Venturers was wonderful about the Inaugural Venturing Round-Up, held August 18-20, 2017!

Three crews from all across the Crossroads of America Council spent the weekend together at Camp Krietenstein in Center Point, Clay County, Indiana.

As always, the morning began with a flag raising.

During the morning, venturers participated in the BSA Cowboy Action shooting program under the watchful eyes of “Marshall” Ralph Schuster and his deputies from the Council Shooting Sports Committee and many from Wabash Valley, too.* Marshall Schuster reports that nearly 1000 shots were fired in a three hour period.

For lunch, long-time Wabash Valley stalwarts Robbie and Frank Mitchell provided the venturers, scouters, and faculty with a delicious hot lunch of sloppy joes, tater tots, grapes, and brownies with chocolate syrup. With their assistance, the venturers were quickly well-fed and back in action.

In the afternoon, long-time Voyageur staff instructors Don Bievenour from North Star District and Maurice Heitzman from Del-Mi District jointly chaired a abbreviated canoe skills training session. Don and Maurice were assisted by Voyageurs North Star’s Pete Holtz and Wabash Valley
Jennifer and Scott Lybacker (sp?). Then the venturers, scouters, and tag-alongs were let loose on the water. They had to navigate an obstacle course starting and ending on land. All competitors completed the long course with very respectable times. Wabash Valley Crew 38’s canoe number 38 had the fastest time.

Between the shooting and canoeing, the crews had to plan, design, and build a raft capable of carrying substantial weight. At the last minute, they were given large logs of wood from the trunk of a tree, estimated to weigh fifty (50) pounds. They then had to transport the logs out to a point in the middle of the lake and return to the dock. Brand-new to Venturing in the last several months, Sugar Creek Crew 338 won this event with a beautifully built raft. (From top to bottom: Crew 56, Crew 338, Crew 38.) Most importantly, when Crew 56 was running behind schedule in getting their raft to the waterfront, Crews 38 and 338 jumped in to help Crew 56 get their raft to the water. “A scout is . . . helpful,” indeed!

Finally, the crews had about two hours with the intervention of a heavy downpour to prepare a dish for a camp-wide pitch-in dinner. Sugar Creek Crew 338 offered two dishes, a delightful dutch oven pork chop in creamy mushroom sauce and a dutch oven molten brownie. North Star Crew 56 offered a “traditional American pork sausage, infused with tomatoes, onions, and ground beef, garnished with a one-month cheddar, served on a brioche bun. It is also called ‘chilli dogs.’” After the laughter subsided, Wabash Valley Crew 38’s representative looked around, grabbed a hold of the dutch oven cover handle, and loudly and simply proclaimed, “We have . . . lasagna!” Once again gales of laughter ran through the dining hall. Sometimes simple labels are powerful: these two dutch ovens of lasagna would make many Italian grandmas envious.
After dinner was cleaned up, the crews had to contend with a rained-out campfire area, so they decided to move the program indoors. The “indoor campfire” was kicked off with some tried-and-true scout skits. What was magical about it, though, was these experienced scouts-turned-venturers threw themselves into the material. As a result of some creative twists and commitment to the skits, they had the audience crying with laughter.

North Star Crew 56 kicked off with a rendition of “If I Weren’t A Venturer.” The first character was the old reliable “Scoutmaster I would be, big, round, and always sitting down.” The audience responded favorably by joining in full-throatedly. The next character was a statue. The venturer spend the rest of the skit staring at the audience, attempting to stifle his own laughter. This continued until the final venturer, a female, turned and proclaimed “A boy scout I would be, hey there, hi there, let’s burn something down.” (I think I quoted her correctly.)

I don’t want to share all the details of some of the other skits and readings, because I think each crew walked away with ideas that they could use at future campfires in their own districts. Why ruin the surprise?! But as an audience member, they each did very well. I am very proud of their efforts.

At the end of the campfire program, we reviewed the successes of the weekend and considered if this was an event they wanted to add to the annual calendar. The universal reply was that the raft race was the hand-downs winner of best event. The pitch-in dinner and cook off was well received, too. The canoeing and shooting received the most compliments when the venturers were given time to do the events at the own pace. Given the safety concerns of these two sports, the structure was inevitable, although the time constraints of a busy scheduled certainly limited the desired freedom.

At the end of the event, I explained that Venturing introduces the concept of a “Venturing Officers’ Association.” The VOA is a committee composed of Vice Presidents of Administration from each crew in the territory, in our case the Council. I suggested that the VPs of Admin from the three crews serve as an organizing committee for a council VOA, meeting the next morning. The crews present agreed that this was a good proposal.
The next morning there was a “Venturer’s Own” religious observance. The organizing committee for the VOA met the next morning. They agreed to share some conversations in the next 72 hours by Skype. They would look to have another Venturing Round Up placed on the annual calendar with a likely focus of a raft-race focused event with a traveling trophy. They would look to invite other crews to send their respective Vice Presidents of Administration to participate in future conversations in organizing the VOA and the next event.

Before wrapping up, a full report would be incomplete without thanking some very important people that made this possible. First, Council Staff Advisor Tucker La Prade for doing the paperwork and scheduling to make this possible (and his two tag-alongs: his Wolf and Lion shadows in full uniform). Second, Camp Ranger Levi Weakly for doing the logistical preparation after a bit of confusion and for helping Marshall Schuster on the firing range. Third, Howard Griffith for serving as the logistics officer on scene, running people where they needed to be and helping smooth out bumps along the way. His presence contributed to the smooth operation of the event. Fourth, Robbie Mitchell, Jennifer Hudson of Crew 38, and Mike Ferris of Crew 38 for making themselves available as medical support. Luckily their serves were never required. The first aid kits were broken open for cuts and bee stings, but no medical intervention was necessary.

* I did not do roll call on the deputies so I cannot tell all the districts represented.