

Is it time for a Venturing Service and Honor Society?

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The Boy Scout Division of BSA has for decades promoted its own service and honor society called the Order of the Arrow. Scouts are elected to this honor by their own Troops and must attend a 24 hour ordeal, typically at Scout Camp, in order to join. Its mission is to promote camping within the Boy Scout movement. This includes attendance at Scout Summer Camps as well as year round Troop campouts.

Since Order of the Arrow is intended as a society to promote camping in Troops of Boy Scouts, its membership is not open to Venturers. Young men who were elected to OA while they were Boy Scouts may maintain their membership, including wearing their Council's Lodge flap on the Venturing uniform. Since all youth inductees must have achieved the rank of First Class, there is no way for a Venturer without Scouting experience to become a member.

A grass roots movement to create a Venturing service society started in the Midwest and South in 1999, and is growing every day. That organization is called the Venturing Corps of Discovery and is modeled after the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803. In 2005, a pocket flap patch depicting Lewis and Clark overlooking the Missouri River in Central Montana was commissioned. Several hundred of these pocket flaps have been distributed across the US.



An email list for members was created using Yahoogroups, and can be seen at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/corpsofdiscovery>. (To join this group, simply send a blank email to corpsofdiscovery@yahogroups.com) A membership database is maintained at that site and currently contains members from Mt. Baker, Chief Seattle, Old Baldy, San Gabriel Valley, Grand Canyon, Tidewater, and Circle Ten Councils. Most of these members were inducted during closing ceremonies of Kodiak Treks. Many of them had served as staff, whitewater guides, or youth instructors for Kodiak Courses.

While no formal requirements have been developed for the admission to the Corps of Discovery, it is widely felt that service to Venturing and adherence to the Venturing Oath are necessary. Service to Venturing has been widely defined and includes staffing Kodiaks, volunteering on Council or District committees and events, teaching, or otherwise providing visibility for Venturing and Venturers among the scouting community.

Each Council is free to use the Corps of Discovery in its own way, deciding what form of the service is required of the membership. In some Councils, Corps of Discovery activities includes starting and maintaining a Venturing Officers Association. In others, it can be as simple as providing visibility to Venturing by serving as staff (in green uniform, of course) at District and Council Scouting events. Sometimes, Corps of Discovery members are called upon to staff adult leader training sessions such as Universities of Scouting, Leader Specific Training, and even Powderhorns.

In some Councils, the Corps of Discovery is tightly associated with the Venturing Officers Association or Teen Leaders Cabinet. This is a District or Council level committee of Crew youth leaders who meet monthly or quarterly to plan Venturing events. Their activities are intended for all Crews in their service areas and include such social activities as dances, online game events, and camp weekends (sometimes called Venturepaloozas). They also sponsor skills events such as Ranger Quests, orienteering days, road rallies, and other fun events. The goal behind these efforts is to help build stronger Venturing crews.

