

VENTURING MAGAZINE

Venturing in the Caribbean, an International Experience!

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It's the adventure most of us dream about...summer in the Caribbean. But that's exactly where Venturer **Mariah Houston** found herself this past July. She was part of the BSA's national contingent making the journey to Curacao, site of the **15th Caribbean Jamboree**. A member of Crew 2052 in the Heart of America Council, Mariah was one of 15 youth chosen by the BSA from across the country and was the only female scout selected to attend. She joined 14 other youth, all boy scouts, to serve as the youth representative of the Venturing-BSA program.

The island nation of Curacao is located about 40 miles off the coast of South America. The United States was one of **16 countries** represented at this international jamboree hosted by *Scouting Antiano*, the national scouting organization serving the former Netherlands Antilles...more commonly known as Dutch West Indies. Curacao, the largest of these islands, gained independence from the Netherlands in 2010. While Dutch is still the official national language, a local dialect known as Papiamentu is the language of choice for most of the local people on the island. English is widely spoken as well...as is French and Spanish. The Caribbean basin is truly a melting pot of cultures as a result of its long colonial heritage.

The BSA contingent hailed from over a dozen different states ranging from California to Massachusetts...and Minnesota to Florida. Scouts and Scouters from across the country met each other for the first time in Miami and then flew as a contingent to Curacao. Our youth joined hundreds of other Scouts from nations across the Caribbean basin including Aruba, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guadalupe, Martinique and many



others. All contingents camped together at *Ronde Klip*, a beautiful and rustic local scout camp ground just outside the capital city of Willemstad. The troops and patrols were each assigned to one of four different sub-camps: *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water*. The theme of this jamboree was "**LIFE: Tracking Treasures**".



Scouting youth from the different countries joined together to participate in a rich and diverse program of cultural immersion. Jamboree modules included field trips to explore Willemstad and learn about the rich history of Curacao. Another module featured workshops that allowed the scouts to experience a variety of local art and performance. The nature module took scouts to the national park to go off road biking

on the beaches...or join a team to hike deep into the interior in an attempt to climb **Mt. Christoffel**, the highest mountain on the island. The fourth program module featured aquatic activities including boating, swimming, kayaking, and scuba. In addition to the program modules, a Global Development Village was staged in camp with a variety of programs to help the scouts become more aware of the many complex issues facing the world today. The theme of the GDV was "*Connecting the Dots of Life*".

Of course, no Jamboree would be complete without arena events and an active night program. The opening campfire was spectacular! Though initially unfamiliar with each other and although several languages were spoken, the BSA youth quickly became good friends with the other contingents and their enthusiasm for scouting was contagious. The highlight of the week was Cultural Festival Day in which every scouting contingent had the chance to display their pride in their homeland's traditions, food and attire. The day was capped off with performances in the arena by the scouts and the members of the BSA Contingent were among the most popular performers of the evening!



International friendship was a point of emphasis at the jamboree. All scouts had the opportunity to earn the *Friendship Award* by completing a significant number of tasks demonstrating full and active participation in all aspects of the Jamboree program. Mariah was among those who successfully completed all these requirements and earned this award.

At the end of the week, it was not easy for the youth from the US to say good bye to all their new Scouting friends. All members of the contingent felt a new appreciation for their connection to the fellowship of Scouting around the world. Venturer Mariah Houston and the rest of the fine Scouts of this BSA contingent are extremely proud to have represented the United States of America at the **2014 Caribbean Jamboree**. Several of the youth members are already making plans to meet once again at the *23rd World Jamboree* in Japan next year!

Photos courtesy of Scouting Antiano.

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