



Not in the Handbook The Congressional Award

The partnership between Boy Scouts of America and the Congressional Award was started in 1999. Boy Scouts of America's mission is "to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law." Since 1910, Boy Scouts of America has been providing an educational



program to boys, young men and young women across the country. Boy Scout Troops and Venturing Crews allow youth to learn skills in leadership, citizenship, teamwork, personal fitness, and character. Opportunities for expedition and exploration are present at every camping trip and high adventure available to these Scouts. In 2007, 273 young Americans were recognized with the Congressional Award Gold Medal. Forty of these young men and women were associated with the Boy Scouts through Troops or Crews.

The Congressional Award (www.congressionalaward.org) is recognition for young adults who are:

- Giving to others, to their community and to our country.
- Investing in their health and physical well being.
- Expanding their horizons and exploring new territory.

This award is the highest recognition Congress bestows upon young people for community service, goal-setting, and personal development initiatives. Eileen Kane, a Congressional Award advisor since 1994 states: "The Congressional Award is great because it recognizes local volunteerism at a national level. It teaches young adults the benefits of working together towards a goal as well as develops their leadership skills."

Amy DiFrancesco, 2005-06 National Venturing President, was a recipient of the 2005 Gold Medal and wrote an interesting article for the National Venturing Youth Cabinet web site. The article can be found here:

www.sageventure.com/venturing/NVYC/February06.pdf.

Venturing Gold Award & the Congressional Award

Many times Venturers are not aware of significant awards outside of scouting that can be very valuable to ones resume and that overlap requirements for awards in Venturing. One such area is the overlap between the Venturing Gold Award and the Congressional Award. Requirement 5 of the Venturing Gold Award states:

The candidate must, in consultation with the crew Advisor or a member of the crew committee, set and accomplish one personal growth goal related to each of the following areas: citizenship, leadership, service to others, community/family, outdoor experience, and total fitness (six personal growth goals).

For the Congressional Award, the U.S. Congress challenges young Americans to challenge themselves and recognizes young people who set and achieve goals in four program areas:

1. Volunteer Public Service
2. Personal Development
3. Physical Fitness
4. Expedition/Exploration

It is clear that the four areas in the Congressional Award overlap the personal growth goals for the Venturing Gold Award. The age for earning the Congressional Award is 14 (minimum age to register is 13½) through 23 which includes the age range of Venturing. So in both respects, the two programs work well together.

There are six levels of Award -- Bronze, Silver, and Gold Certificates and Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medals. Each level is cumulative. This means time spent on one award is carried with you to the next level.

Certificate Levels			
Min. Hours per Program Area	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Voluntary Public Service	30	60	90
Personal Development	15	30	45
Physical Fitness	15	30	45
Expedition/Exploration	1 day	2 days	3 days
Min. Total Hours	60	120	180
Min. Time to Earn the Award	N/A	N/A	6 months

Medal Levels			
Min. Hours per Program Area	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Voluntary Public Service	100	200	400
Personal Development	50	100	200
Physical Fitness	50	100	200
Expedition/Exploration	1 overnight	2 consecutive overnights	4 consecutive overnights
Min. Total Hours	200	400	800
Min. Time to Earn the Award	7 months	12 months	24 months

Month requirements:

1. One must accumulate the requisite hours over at least 12 months (not necessarily consecutive) of activity in each activity area.
2. Months are cumulative.
3. Months are counted only once in the same activity area, meaning if you document two physical fitness activities during the same six-month period, you will only get credit for 6 months of activity, not 12.

Suggested process:

1. Review information about the Congressional Award. A helpful reference can be found here: www.isu.edu/~nickcrai/congressional_award/geninfo.html.
2. Review with your Venturing Advisor your six personal goals and discuss how they can fulfill the Congressional Award requirements. Ideas for activities can be found here: www.isu.edu/~nickcrai/congressional_award/guidelin.html. Goals should be measurable, achievable, worthwhile, challenging and fulfilling. Hours are accumulative so once an award level has been achieved, work with you Award Advisor to set new goals for the next level. You may select new activities or continue with your current goals and activities.
3. An adult volunteer must serve as a Congressional Award Advisor. This can be your Venturing Advisor. The Advisor's role and responsibilities can be found here: www.congressionalaward.org/adults/advisor.php.
4. Keep a record of your activities. The Congressional Award record book can be found here: www.congressionalaward.org/forms/recordbook.pdf.

References:

1. Official Congressional Award web site – www.congressionalaward.org
2. Article by Amy DiFrancesco, 2005-06 National Venturing President and Congressional Gold Medal recipient - www.sageventure.com/venturing/NVYC/February06.pdf
3. Congressional Award informational web site - www.isu.edu/~nickcrai/congressional_award/

Footnote:

When I wrote this article (12/27/07), BSA supported the Congressional Award. They have now changed their support to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award - www.dofeusa.org. The Congressional Award still exists and the requirements for both are very similar so it would be logical that a Venturer get both awards with good planning.