

RANGERS ROCK!

... and scuba dive, mountain bike, snowboard—and more, in earning Venturing's top award for outdoor skills and leadership.

By Scott Daniels

Photographs by John R. Fulton Jr.

Featuring members of Venturing Crew 582, Kenmore, Wash.

- [Ranger Award Requirements](#)
- [Venturing's Advancement Trail](#)



Erica Taylor reaches for a toehold as she climbs the 65-foot Pinnacle inside REI's flagship store in Seattle. Personnel at the outdoor retailer serve as climbing consultants for Crew 582.

In June, Venturer David Rawlins rafted the frothy whitewater of Washington's Wenatchee River. In July, he served as crew leader while hiking nearly 70 miles and climbing the landmark Tooth of Time at Philmont Scout Ranch.

In August David spent a week at summer camp in Oregon. And then, barely a week later, it was north to Alaska with Venturing Crew 582 to tackle the historical Chilkoot Trail, a rugged, gut-checking hike of steep climbs and foul weather.

A packed three months. As Mary Rawlins, David's mom, said, "I haven't seen a lot of my son this summer." Or of her husband, Dane, who is Advisor for the Kenmore, Wash., crew.

Whitewater, backpacking, rock climbing. Snowboarding, skiing, scuba. Crew 582's activity schedule reads like a guidebook to high adventure. It's a program filled with exciting challenges, and one committee chairman Joe Garrett says can enable every one of the 14-member coed crew to earn the Ranger Award, Venturing's highest recognition for proficiency in outdoor skills and leadership.

Everything old is new again

In the 1940s, the BSA struggled to develop a program for older boys. The result was Explorer Scouts, with four levels of outdoor advancement: Apprentice, Woodsman, Frontiersman, and Ranger. Between 1945 and 1949, 2,787 people earned the Ranger Award. In 1950, a new Exploring program debuted and requirements for Ranger were folded into the new Silver Award.

Exploring's advancement trail vanished in the 60s, as the program focused more on special interests and careers. However, when the BSA launched Venturing in 1998, a new advancement program was introduced, and teen-agers could once again earn the Ranger Award.

To become a Ranger, Venturers must pass requirements in eight core subjects. In addition, they must complete at least four of 18 electives. Earning the Ranger Award recognizes a person as an elite outdoorsman, skilled in a variety of outdoor sports and interests, trained in outdoor safety, and capable of leading or assisting others in high adventure activities.

Donna and Larry Cunningham of Amarillo, Tex., are members of Venturing's National Outdoor Committee and helped develop the new Ranger Award.

"This program helps keep the older Scout in Scouting," Donna said. "It's a challenge above and beyond what is required for Eagle or for the Gold Award in Girl Scouting."

Prior Scouting experience, however, isn't necessary, said Larry. "No one should back off trying to earn this award," he said. "Any boy or girl willing to put out the effort can achieve it."

David Hearn is Advisor of Venturing Crew 250 in Pratt, Kan., and some of his Venturers found the Ranger requirements

Among Ranger subjects are ...



Equestrian: Lacey Stanton grooms her mount.



Lifesaver: Ian West practices a rescue.



Physical Fitness: Erica Taylor and Keleka Hookano run.

tougher than anticipated.

"Several boys thought the First Aid and Wilderness Survival requirements would be easy," he said, "because they had earned the Boy Scout merit badges with the same names. They discovered the Ranger requirements are more difficult and challenging."

That was the plan, says Bill Evans, national associate director of Venturing. "One of our goals was to make the Ranger program a challenge for Eagle Scouts as well as the 14- or 15-year-old who had never been in Scouting."

For example, the First Aid elective requires completion of a 25-hour emergency first-aid course or passing a 45-hour emergency response course or completing a basic EMT course. In Land Navigation, a Venturer has to navigate a two-and-a-half-mile orienteering course with map and compass as well as learn to use a global positioning system (GPS) receiver and find a fixed coordinate at night.

Sharing knowledge with other Scout groups is another Ranger goal, said Evans. "To accomplish that, each core and elective subject includes a requirement that the Venturer teach a skill to another crew or group of Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts. That way we have learning with a purpose.

"Teen-agers are very capable people," Evans added. "What better teachers can you find for an 8- to 12-year-old than a 15-year-old? It makes Venturers feel good about themselves, good about sharing, and it's good for Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting."

The plan is set, but will teen-agers, already busy with school and social agendas, buy into a program that requires a year to 18 months to complete? Early reports reflect an emphatic yes.

Dick Hewitt, Advisor of Crew 234 in Kalamazoo, Mich., handed each Venturer a copy of the *Ranger Guidebook* (BSA Supply No. 3128) on this summer's train trip from Chicago to Philmont.

"Frankly, I expected them to stuff the book into their carry-on bags, never to be seen again," he said. "But I couldn't have been



Cycling: REI's Doug Byrum explains gear ratios.



Watercraft: Venturers go whitewater rafting.



Backpacking: Keleka and Chad Force purify water.

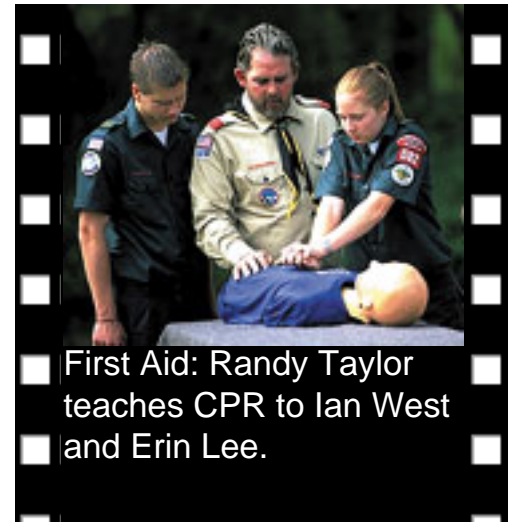


Scuba: Joe Garrett shows gear.

more wrong. They asked me questions about the program for the whole trip."

At Philmont the Venturers worked on Ranger requirements at each program camp. "My son was on staff at Philmont, and he shared the guidebook with some colleagues," Hewitt said. "Now the book is worn and dogeared, a sure sign of use."

Crew 582's Joe Garrett said: "Four boys in our crew wouldn't be in Scouting if not for Venturing and the Ranger program. There is a commitment level I've not seen before. They're pushing me. As soon as we return from a trip, they want to know when we are going out again so they can pass off more requirements."



First Aid: Randy Taylor teaches CPR to Ian West and Erin Lee.



Chelsea Stanton, Ian West, and Joe Garrett pause during a hike near Deception Falls to discuss the principles of Leave No Trace camping.

Adam Snyder of Waukegan, Ill., is the first Venturer in the nation to become a Ranger. A member of Crew 2055, Adam chose the First Aid, Physical Fitness, Outdoor Living History, and Lifesaver electives to complete his Ranger requirements.

"It was a lot harder than earning my Eagle," he said. "The Wilderness Survival requirements were especially difficult."

Bill Evans expects a dozen more Venturers will earn the award this year. "And next year we hope

300 to 500 will become Rangers," he said.

Adult leaders don't have to be modern-day Daniel Boones to run a Ranger program. No one can be an expert in all the core and elective subject areas. That's why the guidebook lists resources and Web sites that can help a crew Advisor find qualified instructors.

Larry Cunningham encourages Venturing leaders to attend a BSA Powder Horn course if they want to learn how to support the Ranger program.



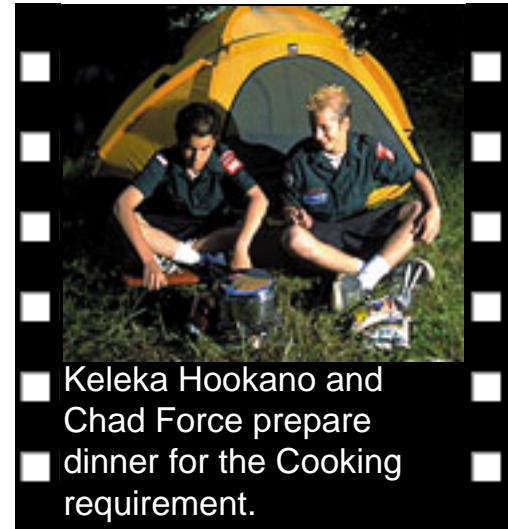
Rangers must learn how to use a global positioning system (GPS) receiver

"Each BSA region will hold several Powder Horn courses next year," he said. "This weeklong or three-weekend course provides a taste of Ranger skills and teaches how to find qualified program consultants for crew activities."

Check with your local Scout council service center for information about the Powder Horn courses scheduled in your region.

Outdoor Venturing crews can plan their annual activity calendar based upon the Ranger requirements, said Bill Evans of the BSA's Venturing Division.

"With 26 different subjects, you can keep a crew busy with programs for more than two years," he said.



Keleka Hookano and Chad Force prepare dinner for the Cooking requirement.



Each Ranger subject requires a Venturer to share skills and knowledge with others.

"The Ranger Guidebook is a cookbook of possible activities," said Joe Garrett. "Take Equestrian. I own two horses, and it never occurred to me to take the crew out for riding lessons."

"We finished the Backpacking requirements at Philmont," Garrett said, "and we had already completed Winter Sports. Next summer the crew is going to the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base, and we can work on scuba there."

Dick Hewitt summed up the enthusiasm many leaders have for the Ranger program, saying: "I can't remember seeing teens pick up and devour a program the way they go after the Ranger Award. We're on to something great!"

Scott Daniels is the executive editor of Scouting magazine.

To Earn the Ranger Award, a Venturer Must Complete Requirements in ...

Eight core subjects:

- First Aid
- Emergency Preparedness
- Leave No Trace
- Land Navigation
- Wilderness Survival
- Communications
- Cooking
- Conservation



And four of 18 electives:

- Backpacking
- Cave Exploring
- Cycling/Mountain Biking
- Ecology
- Equestrian
- First Aid
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Lifesaver
- Mountaineering
- Outdoor Living History
- Physical Fitness
- Plants and Wildlife
- Project COPE
- Scuba
- Shooting Sports
- Watercraft
- Winter Sports

Bronze, Gold, and Silver Awards—Venturing's Advancement Trail

The Ranger Award and Sea Scouting's Quartermaster Award are two highly specialized recognitions in the Venturing advancement program that also includes the Bronze, Gold, and Silver Awards.

The Bronze Award is Venturing's first level of achievement. There are actually five different Bronze Awards, with requirements specific to each of Venturing's five interest areas: Arts and Hobbies, Outdoor, Sports, Youth Ministries, and Sea Scout (within which it's called the Ordinary rank). Any Venturer, regardless of his or her crew's specialty, may earn all five.

The Gold Award recognizes a Venturer's outstanding performance in activities relating to the program's six experience areas: leadership,



Gold Award

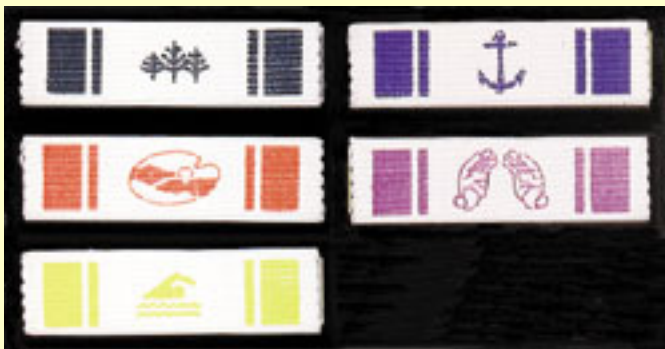


Silver Award

citizenship, social, outdoor, service, and fitness. Among the requirements are the following: at least one year of active membership, service in a leadership position, accomplishment of a personal goal in each experience area, and participation in a district, council, or national Venturing event.

The Silver Award is Venturing's highest recognition. A candidate must have earned a Bronze and Gold Award, be proficient in emergency preparedness (including standard first aid, CPR, and Safe Swim Defense), participate in at least two Ethical Controversies activities, and complete the Venturing Leadership Skills Course.

Unlike other BSA advancement programs, Venturers can simultaneously work on and pass requirements for the Bronze Award, Gold Award, and Silver Award programs. Or they can work on only one program at a time.



Bronze Awards

The Bronze Award is a military-style campaign ribbon bar, worn centered above the left breast pocket on the uniform. Multiple Bronze Awards may be worn.

The Gold, Silver, Ranger, and Quartermaster Awards are medals suspended from a ribbon and worn on the uniform's left breast pocket. A square knot is also available for earning the Silver Award.

Requirements and procedures for earning the awards are listed in the *Venturing Leader Manual* (BSA Supply No. 34655), the *Venturer Handbook* (Supply No. 33493, available Dec. 1), *Sea Scouting Manual* (No. 33239A), and the *Ranger Guidebook* (No. 3128).

[Top of Page](#)

[Current Issue](#) | [Archives](#)

[November-December 1999 Table of Contents](#)

Copyright © 1999 by the Boy Scouts of America. All rights thereunder reserved; anything appearing in *Scouting* magazine or on its Web site may not be reprinted either wholly or in part without written permission. Because of freedom given authors, opinions may not reflect official concurrence.

The Boy Scouts of America



<http://www.scouting.org>