

From the Chief: The Presidential Visit

Scouting Family,

In the last two weeks, we have celebrated the best of Scouting at our 20th National Jamboree with nearly 40,000 participants, volunteers, staff and visitors. The 2017 National Jamboree has showcased and furthered the Scouting mission by combining adventure and leadership development to give youth life-changing experiences. Scouts from Alaska met Scouts from Alabama; Scouts from New Mexico met those from New York, and American youth met youth from 59 other countries.

Over the course of ten days, Scouts have taken part in adventures, learned new skills, made new and lasting friendships and completed over 200 community service projects that offered 100,000 hours of service to the community by young men and women eager to do the right thing for the right reasons.

These character-building experiences have not diminished in recent days at the jamboree – Scouts have continued to trade patches, climb rock walls, and share stories about the day's adventures. But for our Scouting family at home not able to see these real moments of Scouting, we know the past few days have been overshadowed by the remarks offered by the President of the United States.

I want to extend my sincere apologies to those in our Scouting family who were offended by the political rhetoric that was inserted into the jamboree. That was never our intent. The invitation for the sitting U.S. President to visit the National Jamboree is a long-standing tradition that has been extended to the leader of our nation that has had a Jamboree during his term since 1937. It is in no way an endorsement of

any person, party or policies. For years, people have called upon us to take a position on political issues, and we have steadfastly remained non-partisan and refused to comment on political matters. We sincerely regret that politics were inserted into the Scouting program.

While we live in a challenging time in a country divided along political lines, the focus of Scouting remains the same today as every day.

Trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness and bravery are just a few of the admirable traits Scouts aspire to develop – in fact, they make up the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

As part of our program's duty to country, we teach youth to become active citizens, to participate in their government, respect the variety of perspectives and to stand up for individual rights.

Few will argue the importance of teaching values and responsibility to our youth – not only right from wrong, but specific positive values such as fairness, courage, honor and respect for others.

For all of the adventure we provide youth such as hiking, camping and zip-lining, those activities actually serve as proven pathways and opportunities to develop leadership skills and become people of character.

In a time when differences seem to separate our country, we hope the true spirit of Scouting will empower our next generation of leaders to bring people together to do good in the world.

Yours in Scouting,
Mike Surbaugh