Long Beach Area Council to Welcome Robert Gates

The Board of the Long Beach Area Council is honored to announce that Dr. Robert Gates will be visiting Long Beach on March 5, 2015.

“This is a perfect opportunity,” says Scout Executive John Fullerton, “for Dr. Gates to meet our Board and community supporters who work so hard to make sure that all of our young men have a world-class Scouting experience.”

Fullerton said that local law firm Keesaal, Young and Logan will host a reception in their penthouse board room where Dr. Gates will be able to mingle, hear about the many and varied Scouting activities in Long Beach and discuss what’s happening with Scouting on the national level.

Added Fullerton, “We’re delighted and grateful that Dr. Gates is taking the time to visit Long Beach. We anticipate that many individuals and local corporate leaders who meet him at the reception will decide afterward to continue to support what is now his cause – Scouting!”

Dr. Gates came to BSA following a long and distinguished career in public service. Former Director of the CIA, member of the National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense, Dr. Gates has also served as Chancellor of the University of Kansas, and has served on the National Security Council.

But it was his Scouting experience that remains his greatest inspiration. Dr. Gates is a Distinguished Eagle Scout, Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow, former president of the National Eagle Scout Association, past National Executive Board member and Silver Buffalo Award recipient.

“I have no finer program for preparing our young men than the Boy Scouts of America,” Dr. Gates has said. “As an Eagle Scout, I know firsthand how impactful this program can be, and I believe its mission is more important today than ever before.”

Dr. Robert Gates was elected national BSA President on May 15, 2014. He has been visiting local councils around the country as his schedule permits.

It Takes a Village

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Thanks to the cooperation of Caltrans District 8 for their efforts in the permitting process. A thank you also goes out to Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal for her help in moving the process forward.

The Long Beach Area Council was fortunate indeed to have such partners and we thank all of them for their professionalism and dedication.

Summer Means Camping to Long Beach Scouts

Summer may be just another season to us adults, but to Scouts it’s a time for adventure, for trying new things, and for creating memories and friendships that last a lifetime. And, this summer was no exception when over 2,000 Scouts from the Greater Long Beach area took advantage of our council’s three extraordinary facilities.

Camp Tahquitz remains the favorite. Its pristine meadows, lush forests which include some of the world’s tallest Ponderosa pines, sparkling lake and spectacular views of the San Bernardino Mountains drew 1150 Scouts in only six week from June to August. At Camp Tahquitz, Scouts immersed themselves in the outdoor life, including camping, camp craft, and a variety of activities such as backpacking, archery, horseback riding, and even climbing and rappelling for the hardeast.

The shore proved more alluring for the nautical-minded. Over 680 Scouts participated in the Aquatics Camp at the Sea Base where they learned a host of water-based skills. Future seamen got a taste of canoeing, kayaking, sailing, all the while paying particular attention to water safety, teamwork and leadership skills.

But, the Cubs were not to be left behind. Cub Day Camp attracted 466 Cub Scouts, who loved their time creating duct tape wallets and bird feeders, racing the pinewood derby, horsing around with bottle rockets, catapults, trebuchets, learning map and compass, and competing in badminton, kickball, tin foil boats, and towel toss.

More than one parent contacted the Council to tell them how important and valuable summer camping is to their sons. Indeed, many Scouts themselves credit the challenges they meet at camp to be the first step in preparing them for life.

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Pedestrian Bridge Enhances Camp Tahquitz

Sixty onlookers, including Long Beach Council Board Members, staff, Tribemen, CalTrans representatives, neighbors and media gathered on Oct. 15th under a brilliant blue sky to see the dramatic installation of the new pedestrian bridge over Highway 38 at Camp Tahquitz in the Will J. Reid Scout Reservation. Long recognized as a public safety necessity, the bridge was made possible by a $350,000 capital grant from the AS & F Foundation and took 4 years to complete.

In the Camp’s early years, Highway 38, then a county road, meandered benignly through the Camp. But as Southern California grew, so did traffic. Trucks and cars roared around the curves, endangers Scouts, families and staff who were crossing over to access recreational and housing facilities on the other side.

A blend of cost-efficient construction and environmental sensitivity, the bridge was pre-fabricated in Corten steel, a steel alloy which eliminates the need for painting, and forms a stable rust-like appearance that lasts for several years. It was manufactured in Minnesota and shipped to the Camp where, in a heart-stopping climax, giant cranes lifted both sides of the bridge and fitted them precisely onto newly-constructed concrete abutments that bracketed the highway. When the last rivet was drilled, the crowd erupted into applause.

The bridge is 100’ in length, 8’ wide, has a 21’4” clearance and a load capacity of 10,000 lbs. Scout Executive John Fullerton estimates there will be over 20,000 pedestrian crossings each year. Said Executive Fullerton, “We are so grateful to all of our partners, particularly AS & F Foundation and CalTrans. Because of them, our Scouts, families and staff will be able to access the lake, family housing and other facilities in complete safety.”

Camp Tahquitz Dining Hall Capital Challenge

Thanks to a very generous gift from the Earl B. and Loraine H. Miller Foundation, we have currently raised $250,000 of a $750,000 challenge grant provided by the AS & F Foundation.

We extend a sincere thank you to all donors who have made generous pledges to date.

Southern California Sea Scouts Win the 2014 Koch Cup

On June 28, the Home Country USA team of Laura Roudebush and Ben Brough, both Orange County Sea Scouts, sailed to victory, winning the 2014 William I. Koch International Sea Scout Cup at Long Beach’s Alamitos Bay. The coveted award has been won by Southern California Sea Scouts five times in the last seven regattas since 2002.

Eighty top young Sea Scouts from across the country and around the world, including from Brazil, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and United Kingdom, converged on the Long Beach Yacht Club on the five day sailing competition, matching their seamanship and teamwork skills to take home the coveted cup. An original Maui carvering called the Kwi Cup, is presented to the top ship among the second tier.

The 2014 Koch Cup event was co-hosted by the Long Beach Area Council and the Long Beach Yacht Club, and underwritten by Oxbow Carbon LLC, while Cal State Long Beach provided the housing for the visiting Sea Scouts. Teams competed in Flying Junior sailboats provided by the Long Beach Sea Scouts, Long Beach Yacht Club and the United States Sailing Center. Like the world-famous America’s Cup, the Koch Cup was designed by Asprey Garrard’s at the request of William I. Koch who then donated it to the Boy Scouts of America. Between races, the Cup resides in the Rockwell Room at the national Boy Scouts museum in Irving, Texas.

Mark your calendars out for the Koch Cup to return to Long Beach in 2016. Apparently, our hospitality, weather, facilities, and the support provided by the Organizing Committee are second to none.

Sea Base Deck Gets a Facelift

The Long Beach Sea Scout Aquatic Center, which doubles as the Council’s Sea Base Camp, is a picturesque two-story building with a pagoda-like roof that sits right at the docks’ edge at the Long Beach Marina. Its second floor opens to the crisp ocean air with the help of an outdoor walkway that encircles the building and is protected by a waist-high railing. However beautiful it is, nevertheless, over the years the walkway and railing have fallen victim to the salt spray from the ocean, causing pockmarked pavement and peeling paint.

For the last three months, an intensive repair effort was underway to bring the walkway and railing up to current code and leave it gleaming under several coats of new waterproof paint. “Sea Base gets used year-round,” said Scout Executive John Fullerton. “We estimate it’s in use 15,000 user days each year, including every weekend. We have classrooms and activity rooms for learning seamanship skills and Scout badge requirements; during the week we repeat their routes to pick up the bags, which were now full of canned and packaged food. Other groups of Scouts were stationed in front of participating grocery stores where they collected newly-purchased food items from generous shoppers.

By the end of this year’s drive, Scouts had collected nearly 40,000 pounds of food which were then donated to two local food banks, the Long Beach Salvation Army and Lakewood’s Project Shepherd.

While it’s hard to give up a Saturday, the Scouts know how important the food they collect is to the food banks and the families they serve. Sadly, for many families, the food banks represent the only hope for a holiday meal.

This was confirmed by a representative of Project Shepherd. “In December of 2013 we served 1,582 individuals through the holiday program. It continues to be a tough time for many families and the Scouts’ contribution is always needed and appreciated.”

Scouts Serve their Community Through Scouting for Food

November is traditionally a time for giving thanks, and thousands of Long Beach Scouts and Cub Scouts gave back to their communities of Long Beach, Lakewood and Bellflower by spending two Saturdays of the month carrying out the annual Scouting for Food program.

On Saturday, November 1, approximately 750 Scouts and Cubs, accompanied by 300 adults, fanned out around their neighborhoods and left food collection bags at as many residential doors as they could access. The next Saturday saw them repeating their routes to pick up the bags, which were now full of canned and packaged food. Other groups of Scouts were stationed in front of participating grocery stores where they collected newly-purchased food items from generous shoppers.