

Powder Horn Experience

By
Amy DiFrancesco

When we developed www.nationalventuringyouthcabinet.org, our team brainstormed ideas about future articles. Powder Horn was on our first list, but was never added to the site. The reasons were twofold: first, Powder Horn is not a youth program – it is for our advisors and adult supporters; second, I did not know much about Powder Horn and no one else submitted an



article about it. Of course, I knew that “Mom and Dad” Powder Horn were Donna and Larry Cunningham, two of my treasured mentors. I knew adults who attended were proud to wear the medal – and that they had a great time.

Thanks to the opportunity provided me by the Grand Teton Council last week, I am now ready, willing and able to write about the fun and educational opportunities of Powder Horn. For one week, I joined about 40 adults and one other youth photographer in beautiful Island Park, the largest caldera in the world, as the Grand Teton Council hosted its third Powder Horn.

Imagine this:

- mountain biking down a rail to trail alongside a running river;
- canoeing down the river with a consultant who prepared Tom Hanks for his role in Castaway, watching classmates on kayaks and rafts engage in water fights;
- being introduced to SCUBA in a lake with professionals carefully monitoring every move;
- learning GPS and compass navigation with the Army National Guard;
- horseback riding among the trees;
- sailing with someone who has sailed internationally;
- participating in a Dutch Oven cook-off;
- learning to navigate by the stars;
- hearing about fly fishing from a guide who is paid \$250 for a morning of fishing;
- consulting with a physician about wilderness first aid;
- tying your own flies for fishing;
- experiencing high and low C.O.P.E.;
- learning mountaineering on a tall tower;
- firing a compound bow, black powder rifle, .22 pistol and shotgun at clay pigeons;
- learning Leave No Trace from professionals;
- enjoying a presentation on Outdoor Living History from a man on horseback, decked out in leather;
- learning about Ecology from a botanist while on a nature hike.



It sounds like a great summer camp, doesn't it? It is that and more. Powder Horn is a summer camp with a purpose for adults in Venturing (or other Scouting family members). The purpose is to familiarize adults with outdoor activities – not to make them experts – but to make them comfortable enough to be willing to accompany Venturers or other Scouts on their activities and provide them with professional resources and consultants available to embark on high adventure activities.

As Venturers, we can plan activities, but unless our advisors are comfortable with our activities and know whom to ask for help, our adventures might just remain plans. Powder Horn training makes the learning process so much fun, advisors can become enthusiastic, rather than reluctant, to be involved in activities.

I suggest all Venturers encourage their advisors to participate in a Powder Horn. If a Venturer is offered a chance to staff a Powder Horn, jump at the opportunity! As a photographer, I attended all sessions, taking photos of adults as they behaved like teenagers.



For more information about Powder Horn courses, check out this website: www.powderhorn-bsa.org. On the same web site are the Powder Horn Course Directors Courses (CDC) which are offered regionally. The current CDC are:

- Western Region – Tempe, AZ, September 29-30, 2006
- Central Region – Bloomington, IN, October 20-22, 2006
- Southern Region – February 9-11, 2007