

An Idea That Became a Reality!

A successful Boy Scout troop is one that is run by the scouts with assistance and guidance from the troop's uniformed leaders and troop committee. Boy Scout Troop 316 in Apex is one of these troops.

At their annual Patrol Leaders Council (PLC) planning meeting for the 2007-2008 scout year, the troop's senior scout leadership laid out an aggressive agenda for the coming year. One activity on the agenda was to go caving, or more commonly called spelunking. Senior Patrol Leader, Corey Ames, the head scout of the PLC, presented their agenda to the scoutmasters and committee. The agenda was accepted by the troop's leadership. The only problem was the scouts wanted to go spelunking in 6 weeks.

This would be the first spelunking trip for the entire troop. The committee sprang into action and located an outfitter in Virginia who operated under the same philosophy of the Boy Scout Guide to Safe Scouting. He agreed to lead the scouts and leaders through Roberts Cave in Sugar Grove, VA.

A week before the trip, local spelunker, Bill Bussey, visited the troop to take them through what they should expect while caving and what to pack for the trip – “Be Prepared”. His extensive caving experience – he's caved in 45 of the 50 states as well as in Mexico & Belize – was extremely beneficial and entertaining to the troop.

Approximately 21 scouts and leaders loaded up on Friday night November 9th for the 4 hour drive to Hungry Mother State Park in Marion, VA. The planned trip was so popular that a Boy Scout from another troop signed up to go with one of his Troop 316 friends. The troop camped out at the state park on Friday and Saturday nights thru sub-freezing temperatures. The spelunkers entered the dark cave with miner's helmets, with head lamps, as their only source of light. Scout Nick Schaffer said just after entering the cave... "there's no way I can do this," but within 15 minutes he said, "wow, this is a lot of FUN, this was the coolest thing we've done since I've joined the troop." He wasn't talking about the constant 55 degrees temperature in the cave.

One of the highlights for all of the scouts and leaders was learning about stalagmites and stalactites and the critters that survive in the many areas of the cave. While inside the cave, live bats were seen hanging upside down on the cave ceiling. The troop was divided into two groups. While one group was inside the cave for roughly two hours, the other group decided to tackle the park's most difficult black-diamond hiking trail, Molly's Knob, which has an elevation of 3,270 ft. and enjoyed a breathtaking view of the mountains.

Pedro Patrol Leader Michael Kunath said, “Having an idea and seeing it accomplished with the help of the troop's leadership is why I joined this troop.” Temperatures at the state park on Saturday night fell into the mid-20s but Assistant Senior Patrol leader Hunter Smith wasn't complaining while eating hot beef stew prepared by his patrol.

Other activities planned by the troop this year are their annual Shotgun Campout in which the scouts get to shoot 12 and 20 gauge shotguns while working on their merit badge. In addition, the troop will take their annual Martin Luther King long weekend trip to West Virginia for skiing at Winterplace.

To learn more about scouting and how the legend of Hungry Mother State Park began, stop by a weekly troop meeting. Troop 316 is sponsored by the St. Andrew Mens' Society (SAMS) and meets at St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church at 7:00 PM every Tuesday. SAMS has been the Troop's charter organization for the past 12 years. Anyone interested in joining Troop 316 please contact Brandon Smith, Scoutmaster, at 387-1487 or Lloyd Allen, Committee Chairman, at 380-1254. Visit the Troop's website for additional information at <http://home.earthlink.net/~troop316/id22.html>