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Laingsburg kicks off 100 years of Scouting event

By MICHAEL PETERSON Argus-Press Staff Writer

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Thursday, June 26, 2008 10:05 AM EDT

LAINGSBURG - The city has been chosen as the kickoff point for a year-long trek to salute the 100-year anniversary of Boy Scouts of America.

Fourteen "road teams" of dedicated Scouters are traveling across the country with the mission to visit every Boy Scout Council in the United States. The project, called A Century of Values, will span an entire year leading up to the anniversary. Each team will travel between two to four weeks.

Tom Turek, the publicity lead for the Laingsburg team, said they are excited to be chosen as the starting point for the tour.

"We are just ecstatic here," Turek said. "I'm a lifelong resident and I don't remember ever having anything bigger than this. We are absolutely honored to be chosen to do this."

The Laingsburg kickoff weekend will be Feb. 7-8, 2009, in the Laingsburg High School gym. Feb. 7 will be the "local day," and on Feb. 8 state and national officials will visit for the official nationwide kickoff.

Then, the ACOV caravan will leave Laingsburg for a presentation to the Chief Okemos Council on the steps of the Capitol in Lansing Feb. 9.

The tour is the brainchild of Frank Mallon, a former Laingsburg resident and first Scout in his community to receive the Catholic Religious Award and the rank of Eagle Scout. He then went on to become a professional scouter serving in two council offices in Michigan.

Bob Freehan, the ACOV chairman of the public relations committee, said they chose Laingsburg as their starting point for more reasons than it being Mallon's hometown.

"The nature of Laingsburg - and small towns - tends to be a focal point for more of the traditional values that have been around for the 100 years of Scouting," Freehan said. "Scout troops have always played a very strong role in small towns of America. So, it is a look back at the history of that tradition. But it will also be a look forward to recognize the volunteers who have been instrumental through the years to making the program successful and who will continue for the next 100 years."

At each council visited, the team will present to the council executive a 2-by 3-foot color mural that depicts key figures and events in the history of Scouting.

Mallon said he first got the idea to have a commemorative mural about 20 years ago. However, he said it took him 12 years to find an artist.

That artist was Bill Morrison, an Eagle Scout and illustrator. Morrison has worked with the Walt Disney Co. for designing movie posters, including "Peter Pan," "Bambi" and "The Little Mermaid." In 1990, Morrison was recruited by Twentieth Century Fox to help design merchandise for "The Simpsons" and contribute to the show.

He is also the art director of Bongo Comics and drew the very first "Simpsons" comic story.

Morrison has been working on the mural since 2003. The finished product is yet to be unveiled, but Mallon said he believes it will be finished in the next two weeks.

Each mural given to the councils will be framed and autographed by Morrison. Mallon estimates that each mural would roughly be a \$250 gift.

The tour will end Feb. 8, 2010, and will have spanned 48 states, 302 councils and about 45,000 miles. The last stop will be at the National Scouting Museum in Irving, Texas, where the original mural will be presented.

Mallon also said he believes 2010 will be an exciting time for the BSA and fully expects enrollment will be up.

"Every Scout and every council in every pack and troop will be celebrating and having a good time. It should be an exciting year for the history of Scouting," Mallon said. "We are just cheerleading and setting the pace for them."

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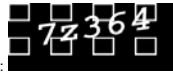


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