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Michiganders hit the road to celebrate 100 years of Boy Scouting

BY JEFF SEIDEL • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • FEBRUARY 3, 2009

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Nearly a century of values. Nearly a century of leadership. From the little kids in Cub Scouts, to the den mothers, to the Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts and Venture Scouts, to all the parents who got their boys involved.



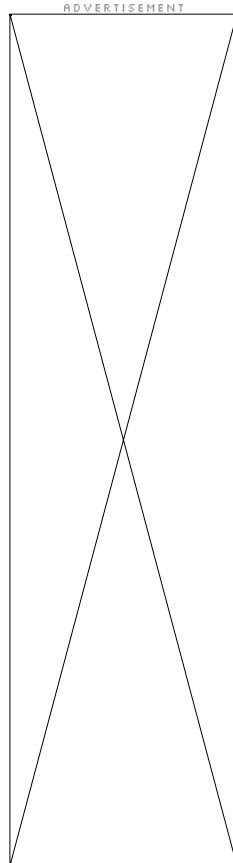
ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press

Ray Williams of Novi and Frank Mallon of Laingsburg will visit every Boy Scout Council in the continental United States to kick off the organization's 100th anniversary.



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Frank Mallon with a mural by Bill Morison, an Eagle Scout from metro Detroit, which includes more than 50 images and famous Boy Scouts.



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Boy Scouts of America will celebrate its 100th birthday on Feb.8, 2010, and volunteers from Michigan will lead the yearlong celebration. Starting this week, 14 teams of adults -- most from metr Detroit -- will spend the next year traveling around the country in a 32-foot motor home to bring in

the Boy Scouts' 100th birthday.

In all, they will travel 45,000 miles and make more than 300 stops in 48 states, while visiting every Boy Scout council in the continental United States.

But this is more than a road trip. These volunteers feel as if they are doing something for the country, an act of service to get fellow Scout supporters and the general public excited about the anniversary.

There are about 2.9 million Boy Scouts in the United States, and the people on this tour will represent Michigan at every stop.

"We are so proud of them," said Rick Williamson, chief executive officer of the Detroit Area Council, the local organization for 21,309 Boy Scouts in portions of Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties. "They put a lot of time and effort into it."

By the numbers, it is a massive, complex, highly organized trip. It will be run like a military operation that involves more than 150 volunteers. Here's a look at how it breaks down:

One man's idea: Frank Mallon, 66, of Novi, came up with the idea. Mallon, an Eagle Scout, retired Army lieutenant colonel and Vietnam veteran, attended the 50th Boy Scout Jamboree in Colorado and wanted to do something special for the 100th anniversary. He spent several years thinking about the trip. Talking about the trip. Getting people excited about the trip. Gently twisting arms to get donations to support the trip. And finally, organizing the trip.

The tour, named, "A Century of Values," begins Sunday, the day the Boy Scouts turn 99.

"And we'll end on the 100th birthday," Mallon said. "We see ourselves as the cheerleaders for the rest of the country."

Two vehicles: Six-person teams will travel together at one time. The Coachman motor home was donated by All American Homes. Ford donated an Escape hybrid that will be used as a chase vehicle and to pull a trailer. An anonymous donor is paying for the gas and maintenance. "We have a vehicle traveling around the country, basically promoting Michigan," Mallon said. "What a neat thing because of all the negatives that are coming out of Michigan."

Three-day celebration: The kickoff is to start at 5 p.m. Friday in Laingsburg, where Mallon grew up. Several activities will be tied to the kickoff weekend, including a dinner with dignitaries and a ceremony in which local clergy will bless the motor home. Some of the first few stops will be Lansing and Waterford on Monday and Ann Arbor on Feb.10. The tour will end a year from now at the Boy Scouts' national headquarters in Irving, Texas.

"We've had a great first 100 years, a tremendous legacy," Williamson said. "The next 100 years are just beginning and it's critical to keep people involved so kids get the same basic values and leadership skills to allow them to lead our community and country going forward."

Five bunk beds: The motor home has been outfitted with four bunk beds in back, one in front and another bed in the kitchen area. The RV has all the comforts of home, like a toilet, shower, high-definition television and a microwave. But space is at a premium and each person is limited to one bag of clothes.

Six people per team: Each person has specific duties: a chief, a presenter, a navigator, a computer expert, a finance person and a quartermaster. On average, each team will stop at two councils a day and spend three or four hours at each site. They plan to park the motor home in parking lots at night, although KOA Campgrounds of America has donated vouchers to stay in various campgrounds for free. Each team will be gone between two and four weeks. Each stop has been scheduled precisely, down to the minute they are to arrive.

Ten-year search: For 10 years, Mallon looked for an artist who could create a mural that captures 100 years of Scouting. Then, he found Bill Morrison, an Eagle Scout from metro Detroit who lives in California now and has worked on the "Simpsons." Morrison created a painting that shows more than 50 images and famous Boy Scouts such as Gerald Ford and John F. Kennedy.

At each stop of the trip, the Michigan team will give the local council an autographed copy of the



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mural. Al Hellar, 66, of Jackson said the mural symbolizes the best in Boy Scouts. Hellar will travel the first leg of the tour with Mallon. "What has been significant over the last 100 years was teaching values to the youth of America," Hellar said.

35 days: Mallon is on the first team; it will visit 34 councils in 35 days. It will travel 3,895 miles, and its part of the trip ends March 15 in Baton Rouge, La. At that point, the second team will jump into the motor home and continue the tour.

65 years old: The average age of the people on Mallon's team. "We call ourselves the pacesetters," Mallon said. "But other teams have married couples. One group is former Venture Scouters, young adults, and they are going to the Ohio and Pennsylvania area. We might have team adjustments because of the economy. Some have been laid off or kind of looking for other jobs."

150 volunteers: In all, about 150 people are working on this trip, including a support staff staying in Michigan. "I think 90% of the people involved on this trip are from our council," Williamson said.

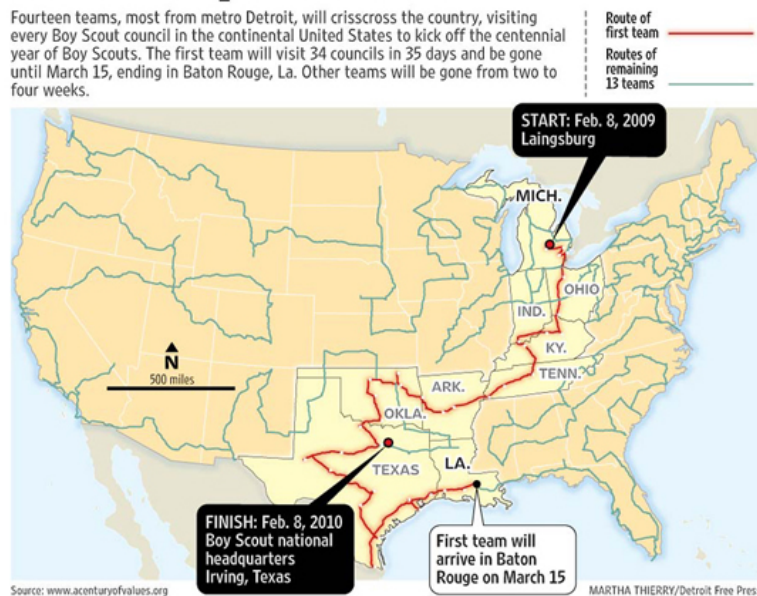
90,306 Boy Scouts in Michigan: The tour will visit all 11 councils in Michigan, although the visits are spread out over the year. In addition to the 21,309 Boy Scouts, the Detroit Area Council has about 10,000 adult volunteers.

One million signatures: At each stop, the teams will collect signatures. They hope to get 1 million. The log book will be given to the National Scouting Museum in Irving. "We figured out that it could be 10 feet tall," Mallon said.

Contact **JEFF SEIDEL** at 313-223-4558 or jseidel@freepress.com.

Cross-country centennial tour

Fourteen teams, most from metro Detroit, will crisscross the country, visiting every Boy Scout council in the continental United States to kick off the centennial year of Boy Scouts. The first team will visit 34 councils in 35 days and be gone until March 15, ending in Baton Rouge, La. Other teams will be gone from two to four weeks.



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marian40 wrote:

As parents of an Eagle Scout and part of one of the traveling teams I am so proud. Jeff wrote a wonderful article. Too find out where and read what the RV is at go to acenturyofvalues.com. A lot of men and women have put in time and effort to get the RV on the road.

02/11/2009 4:33:51 p.m. EDT

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nothistoric wrote:

Great Story.

I'd love to catch these guys when they hit Ann Arbor or Waterford.

I was never a scout, but my son is. I cannot say enough about the organization. I
02/07/2009 3:02:40 p.m. EDT

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grmjw1211 wrote:

Thank you to the Free Press and Jeff Seidel for a terrific article. It will be great to track this exciting project around our great country.

It is wonderful to read all the posts on every individual's Scouting experiences. Please visit www.dacbsa.org for information on local Scouting.
02/04/2009 5:35:36 p.m. EDT

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tshell wrote:

Good for those boys and the organization... it may beneficial to look into some mobile shower trailers to take along with the bunk rv's.

02/04/2009 1:54:42 p.m. EDT

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tshell wrote:

Good for those boys and the organization... it may beneficial to look into some mobile shower trailers to take along with the bunk rv's.

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