

BOY SCOUTS JAMBOREE

Right on target

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Joe Crafton

Dallas Scout leader Joe Crafton helps 15-year-old son Reeves line up on a clay target at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia. The \$400 million high adventure camp, which opened by hosting the July Jamboree, features ranges for a variety of weapons.

Boys lap up gun lessons at new adventure camp

The Boy Scouts of America's \$400 million Summit Bechtel Reserve opened with a bang at the July Jamboree. There were 32,000 Scouts, 532 from the Dallas-based Circle Ten Council, who fired about 2 million rounds of ammunition during the 10-day event.

At 10,000 acres, the West Virginia facility is BSA's fourth high adventure camp. Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico is the best known, but Summit Bechtel Reserve's location could change the paradigm for future Scouts.

The mountainous terrain lends itself to activities from mountain biking to zip lines. Summit Bechtel Reserve also has shooting facilities second only to the NRAs. It has 148 shotgun stations, many nestled into the West Virginia mountainside. There are 100-yard ranges for rifles in .308 and .223 caliber.

The handgun range is unprecedented for a Scout facility. There are 33 handgun shooting stations that feature .22-caliber and 9 mm-caliber handguns. There are also 30 shooting skills stations for air rifles and 20 Laser Shot shotgun skills stations.

"The Scouts made 96,000 trips through the shooting stations," said Dallas Scout leader Joe Crafton. "Many of them would take their turn, then get back in line and do it all over again. They saved their targets and posted thousands of photos to social media. Most of these kids have no access to shooting and no one knowledgeable enough to teach them."

Crafton said the shooting stations were manned by hundreds of adult volunteers who paid their own travel expenses. "It was a remarkable sacrifice, but they all said the same thing: The reaction of the kids made it worthwhile," said Crafton, who's personally funding the Joe Crafton Sportsman Complex at Summit Bechtel Reserve.

When the project is complete, it will encompass six buildings with interactive conservation lessons. Crafton said he hopes to partner with sportsman-funded conservation groups and conservation leaders who have their own success stories to tell.

During the first 10 years it is open, Crafton expects the complex to attract 1.5 million Scouts, including 50,000 from 120 nations due for the 2019 World Jamboree.

Crafton and his two brothers are Eagle Scouts. Two of Crafton's three sons have their Eagle, and his youngest son is one step away.

"When BSA asked me to do this, I couldn't turn them down," Crafton said. "I can think of nothing better that brings together so many things that I feel strongly about. Our motto is, 'Sportsmen Equals Habitat Equals Wildlife.'"