

Dear Fellow Scout,

Over the past year, we've all been forced to learn a lot: whether about proper mask wearing techniques, or what "social distancing" is, or how coronavirus spike proteins work. But perhaps the most important thing that we've been pushed to collectively learn is how, in a moment of upheaval, we close in on the things that really matter to us. All of this time in lockdown has caused us to reflect on what brings us joy, and just how important it is to share those moments of joy with our friends and family. And if you're anything like me, you might have even ended up thinking about your time in Scouting.

For me, the memories that kept coming back were of my time at Philmont. Cooped up in my house, I kept thinking about the vast, open sky on top of Baldy and of the satisfaction of covering fifteen miles of trail in a day with some of my best friends. My wanderlust had me thinking about the bittersweet feeling of driving away from Philmont, watching the Tooth of Time fade into the background and immediately knowing I want to go back. Those twelve days in the backcountry helped kindle in me a love of backpacking which has only gotten stronger since.

But that time at Philmont also connected me with a broader tradition in Scouting. Just before the pandemic, I was walking through Penn Station in New York on my way back to campus when I saw an older gentleman wearing a Philmont belt buckle. They're pretty hard to miss. I approached him and asked when he had hiked there; he responded that he first went to Philmont in 1965. For a few brief minutes before he had to catch his train, we chatted about Philmont, Scouting, and how much it had meant to us and our families. For the rest of the day, and many times since, I've been brought back to that moment, thinking of how amazing it was that our shared Scouting experience could connect us over the generations. But I also kept thinking about how relevant Scouting had continued to be to me in college; whether it was the joy of realizing that another student I was talking to was a fellow Eagle Scout or Arrowman or keeping in touch with a lifelong friend I made in Scouting, I realized that, just as for the gentleman I met in the train station, Scouting is something that stays with you for your entire life.

In short, that's the reason that I support the NCAC Endowment. I give because it aims to sustain Scouting not just in the present, but perpetually into the future. And at a time like this, amid so much disruption and uncertainty, the value of a sustainable future in Scouting could not be clearer.

As you think about giving back as you graduate from college and begin your adult life, I'd urge you to consider giving to the NCAC Endowment. Your gift, no matter the size, will be invested and grow over time, allowing even a small donation to eventually have a sizeable impact.

At a time when we've lost so much, I hope you'll join me in ensuring that Scouting remains a presence in our area long into the future.

Yours in Scouting,

Ben Press