

Get in the Game! With Geocaching for the 100th Anniversary

Give kids a palm-size computer, tell them to hunt for hidden treasure, and watch them go! That's just what we do through geocaching, a high-tech scavenger hunt that's already adding excitement to outdoor Scouting programs nationwide.

The premise of the game is simple: Players hide and seek containers—called "caches" or "geocaches"—outdoors using GPS navigation devices. Then, they go online to Geocaching.com to report what they've found and give clues to others that might want to seek what they just hid.



Geocaching can be much more than a fun unit activity, though. As part of our 100th Anniversary Celebration, we're using geocaching to get at a goal that's important to every Scout leader: membership recruitment and retention. Through the "Get in the Game!" program, Scouts and non-Scouts alike can be invited to join the adventure. In addition to inviting them to participate in events, we'll also reach out to kids that are actively involved with geocaching who might not be scouts.

On top of being an exciting way to introduce new youth to Scouting, "Get in the Game!" activities teach valuable lessons that parents will appreciate. Lessons like leadership, problem solving, cooperation, and teamwork.

This program is also a great way to find and reconnect with Scouting alumni who are active in the sport. One Scouting alumnus that found a cache wrote in the logbook, "Wow. Didn't know the BSA is getting into geocaching. Makes me wish I had contact with a troop or pack again."

There are currently four components of the "Get in the Game!" program, with more to come:

- Cache to Eagle — recognizing the amazing work done through Eagle Scout projects in our council
- Treasures of Scouting — showcasing who we are as an organization and what we do through our programs
- Pillars of Scouting — sharing the Scouting values of Leadership, Achievement, Community Service, Character, and the Outdoors through items that travel from cache to cache across the country
- Race to 2010 — taking a Scouting icon nationwide on the longest Pinewood Derby track (or rather, trek) in America

We will be placing twelve special "Cache to Eagles" caches within our council area. Find all twelve caches and you have a chance to get a sharp looking patch and to be entered into a monthly drawing for a handsome geocaching coin.

If anyone is interested in learning more about these programs and geocaching, we have scheduled two training sessions in which participants will learn hands-on about geocaching. On Saturday, January 9th, we've scheduled the first session at Orlos Lodge at Elk Lick Scout Reserve. Training will be conducted from 9am through noon. On Saturday, March 13th, we've scheduled another session at Camp Merz at Dawson Training Center from 9am through noon also. If you can attend either of these email Bill Edgar at wedgar@verizon.net.

We'll talk about what geocaching is, how to find caches and give basic instruction on using a GPS. Participants will use a GPS to search for several caches at the training session.

We will be establishing a website page for 100 Year Scouting Anniversary geocaching in our council. This page will list training sessions and news about local 100 Year Scouting Anniversary geocaching events. This website address will be: www.alleghenyhighlandsgeocaching.com.

You can find more information about all of these programs in the "Get in the Game!" Tool kit on *YourSource* (www.scouting.org/100years) or, by contacting Bill Edgar at 814-362-1250 or wedgar@verizon.net. You can also learn more about this exciting sport by visiting **the** global geocaching authority, www.geocaching.com.