

Soaring Like the Eagles

by Diane Grubbs

Re-registered in 1993 with six Boy Scouts, Pack 652 now boasts a membership of 49. The pack is setting high goals and they are meeting with success. In seven years, eight boys have spread their wings to become Eagle Scouts, which is not an easy task. "The requirements are rather rigid," said Scoutmaster Pete Garza. "The boys have to be disciplined in various areas and complete 21 merit badges."

The pack recently received a dual charter at Hale Farm and Village. This dual charter signifies that pack 652 is represented and sponsored in the Greater Cleveland Council by St. Basil's Church and in the Great Trail Council by Hale Farm and Village. Having a dual charter is a rare privilege. "There are certain benefits that we get," said Scout leader and former Scoutmaster Alan Sasala. The boys are now able to participate in activities in both councils.

Sasala, 47, has been involved with the Boy Scouts since 1993 when his son Steven registered. "Steven went all the way up the troop," said Sasala. Steven, now in his second year of college, is one of the Eagle Scouts. The entire Sasala family is highly involved in Scouts. "My wife has been a Girl Scout leader for both of our daughters," said Sasala. "It is a lot of fun and I think it should be an adult/child adventure. There is always something to do." Sasala plans to move to the younger generation of Scouts. "My son Daniel, is five years old and he will be starting in the Tiger Cubs this year." This is the youngest group of Boy Scouts, and Sasala is eager to volunteer. "I will be involved with whatever they ask me to do."

There will be plenty to do. The Boy Scouts are constantly involved in service projects, fund raisers and field trips. "At about sixth grade, they start camping,

fishing, hiking and canoeing. There are a lot of field trips," said Sasala.

"This year we plan on opening an exploring post with high adventure type activities for the older members," Garza explained. This program will offer rappelling, hiking and white water rafting to high school juniors and seniors and college-age Scouts.



Alan Sasala, assistant scoutmaster of Troop 652, presents one of the dual charters to John Guild, executive director of Hale Farm. Photo by J. Fahey

Throughout the year, the Scouts serve their community by working at St. Basil's church picnic and other church events, parking cars at Hale Farm and packaging meals at food centers. "We try to expose the boys to different things so they can understand and appreciate what they have," said Garza.

The Scouts learn responsibility by earning their own money for field trips and camps. Of course, Mom and Dad will be there if something goes wrong. "If they don't have enough money, naturally the family would help," laughed Garza. However, the boys work hard for their income. Fund-raisers include a Christmas bake sale, popcorn sales, soda pop sales at the Fair in the Square, and a rent-a-scout program. "With this program, people call the committee and say they need help with

some sort of clean-up," said Garza. "The Scouts are given the opportunity to participate and the person receiving the help donates what they think the child was worth." This encourages quality workmanship.

There is another motivating factor for this year's Boy Scouts. Not all of them are Eagle Scouts, but several may be soaring like eagles in a year Blue skies, clear waters and long, white, sandy beaches are capturing their attention. "We are talking about going to Hawaii next summer," said Sasala. Planning a group trip to Hawaii takes a hit of effort. "It's not going to be easy," said Garza, but it sure will be fun. "We are looking into plane tickets right now."

Organizing all of the Boy Scout activities takes a great deal of time and energy. "We share the work load," said Garza. His wife Jeanette is a constant support. "Without her help, We would not be able to function." Although the list of supporters is too long to mention. Garza noted his side supports. "Al (Sasala) is my left-hand man and Dead Ross is my right-hand man. Without him, I would not be able to keep the group afloat," said Garza.

Scouting does involve a lot of work. but many amenities accompany the efforts. "It is nice to see the kids having fun," said Sasala. "They learn a lot and they have interaction with other kids and families."

"I enjoy watching them grow from young boys to young men and seeing them achieve the goals that they started," said Garza, who first got involved with the Scouts when son Chad was 13. Chad, now 20, is another one of the Eagle Scouts. Although Chad is now in college, Garza plans to continue his work with the Boy Scouts. "They all seem to be part of my family," he said. At 47, Garza still enjoys the kids, perhaps there is still a bit of kid left in him, too. "I am a young 47," he added.



Participants in activities at Hale Farm during the re-enactment were, front row: Phillip Symons, Paul Coso Dee Nemeth adult leader, Shawna Melnykowski and John Guild, executive director at Hale Farm. Back row: Anthony Scalisi, Kay Broadbent, adult leader, Alan Sasala, assistant scoutmaster Troop 652, Shawn Broadbent, Barbara Byler, special events director at Hale Farm, Bret Nement and Jeff Armstrong. Photo by J. Fahey