Why Dedicate a Program Specifically to Boys?

1) Boys need to burn lots of energy and need physical challenges. While community or school based athletics programs accomplish this goal efficiently, they typically fail to provide faith discipling or substantive male mentoring since the coach is appropriately focused on game tactics instead of becoming a self-reliant, responsible husband/father in the future. Further, public school or community based programs are necessarily devoid of any faith focus and are by definition, godless. We can offer something better by blending a Christian worldview into our outdoor adventures. There is ample opportunity to discuss faith matters while hiking, backpacking or camping.

2) Learning life skills and doing activities tailored to boys interests. The program is FUN for boys and it keeps their motivation at high levels. Boating, hiking, climbing, camping, cooking over a fire, crafts and shooting sports along with a wide range of vocational and hobby interests are covered in the program. Exploring these interests and testing new things helps boys figure out specific talents and skills that could be developed into a lifelong career.

2) Developing self-reliance and responsibility to set up a man to be ready for job, spouse, children, and active role in the church takes a special effort to provide teens with practice in “doing for themselves”, “planning for others” and “following through to completion.” Our program progresses from parental responsibility for elementary grade boys, but shifts to personal responsibility and then group responsibility as they move through high school. This puts boys in charge of boys, under the guidance of men. This method forces boys to accept responsibility for themselves and others, face consequences of failed responsibility (i.e. forgot to pack a tent, get wet sleeping under an emergency shelter, never forget tent again) and develop wisdom in learning to plan ahead for contingencies. This is the basis of “practical leadership” and the program provides opportunities to practice in a controlled environment.

3) All youth adventure programs have a “pinnacle award” program of some type. In the Boy Scouts of America, it’s the highly marketed and touted “Eagle Scout” award. In Christian Service Brigade, it’s the “Herald of Christ” award. Our award is the “Freedom Award.” The purpose of any “pinnacle award” program is to foster a desire within the boy to plan, execute and accomplish a long-term goal. When the goal is three years in the future, we can teach youth to be patient, determined, and deliberate instead of letting them learn to shrink their attention span to the level of the common video game or you tube video presentation. The reward of earning some positive praise and attention from completing the goal is not likely to be corrupted into a problem with vanity, but rather an appropriate, earned sense of self-assuredness and self-esteem.

4) Our youth adventure programs stress “service/ministry projects” that benefit other people, including the sponsoring organization. This is vital for two reasons:

   1. We want to provide an alternative to the typical “competitive model” presented in athletics which can slip into a “me-first” system of accomplishment (“I achieve to earn praise and earn a shot at scholarships”)

   2. Our program crafts an “others first” mentality which is practical servant leadership found in the Bible. (“I serve others because God modeled love towards us while we were unworthy (Rom 5:8) and because my commitments to my own future family depend on leading them by loving them and providing for their needs above my own).”

   3. In each boy’s progression towards the “pinnacle award” one of the service projects will be planned and lead 100% by that youth member. This is their opportunity to take what they’ve learned and put it all into practice – planning, organizing, recruiting helpers, setting budgets, raising money and executing the plan by leading others to get the work done. The personal responsibility to accomplish the program will be carried over into adulthood and provide a basis for continued involvement with the church -- to lead and to fulfill.

5) Our spiritual development program is tailored to the specific concerns of being male in God’s design for the world. As boys growing into men there are temptations and there are responsibilities to be faced that are not the same as what girls/women must face. By tailoring the program to these concerns, and by involving both “dad” and the youth ministry team of the church, we can assure the right message is delivered and processed.

We see a compelling need to give boys practical responsibilities, leadership opportunities, spiritual mentoring and service projects while enjoying the fun of an outdoors adventure program. We’d love to be part of a mechanism to reverse the trends of men disappearing from church and we believe that adventure programs can help get boys to grow up into men who not only attend, but lead in their churches (notably, this connection has been confirmed by a Baylor University study of men who grew up in an outdoor adventure program being more likely to support a church with active participation, financial support and leadership through service).

Won’t you consider investigating TRAIL LIFE USA more closely as an active ministry of your church?