Planning and Conducting a Rendezvous

This section is intended for those who are in charge of organizing a rendezvous or in charge of a section of the rendezvous. It is intended to give you a sketch and some ideas on how to get it organized, delegated and operational. The information presented here is by no means the only way to run a rendezvous. I am privileged to live in an area where Varsity Scouting is very active and most of the teams in our area understand and work the program correctly. As a result we have many resources that have been cultivated over the years and these same resources are understandably not available in other areas. We also have a large number of dedicated volunteers which help us staff our rendezvous events. The picture I’ll paint here is for a large rendezvous. In your area an activity of this scale may not be possible. Don’t be discouraged, you can start small and still have a great event. The rendezvous as explained here has taken us over ten years to evolve to. Each rendezvous has been a success but we started small and grew it each time. We’ve continuously added more events and activities. People have studied in areas that we were weak so that we can now offer to teach skills in areas that we couldn’t before.
Establishing Your Goals
Before you can organize the actual event you need to establish targets or goals. This will be a key factor in determining facilities, staff, resources and other items needed to put the rendezvous together. Here are some of the key criteria that I use in setting these goals:

How many boys will attend?
This is one of the most important factors used in determining your needs. In my area I had the advantage of coming into an existing program with a history. In our area the rendezvous started out small with 25 to 50 boys. This was done at a Stake level (See terms at the end of this book for information). Our district then began organizing a district level event which drew about 300 boys. Our previous years rendezvous was attended by 500 boys and we set the goal for our last rendezvous at 850. Although we did achieve the 850 during pre-registration, the actual attendance dropped due to attrition. This number probably represents about 30% of our total district youth. The main point here is that you will need to start small and grow the program. The information presented here has been developed from conducting rendezvous for over eight years.

When will the rendezvous be held?
We determined a few years back to hold our rendezvous during Spring break. This allows for a multiple day event. The drawback is that many families travel out of town during this week and many boys are not able to attend. We have previously conducted a mountain man rendezvous every two years and a Klondike (snow based) rendezvous each year in between. Beginning last year we have replaced the Klondike rendezvous with another event called the Varsity Games. This was done for two primary reasons:

1. We live in Arizona and snow in the high country is a hit or miss deal. Most of the times we have missed. Scout teams have prepared for the Klondike rendezvous by making snowshoes, sleds and other items that require snow to function. It was always a disappointment to show up with items that required hours of work in preparation, which items could not be used due to lack of snow.
2. With the growth of rendezvous it now takes an extreme amount of effort to put one on. Taxing scout leaders every two years instead of every year makes it more manageable. It is too much to ask to try and pull these resources together every year. Many activities take six or more months to prepare for.

How long will the rendezvous be conducted?
The actual time of the rendezvous can vary. A small taste of rendezvous can be achieved as a day or even an evening activity. Once you get your rendezvous organized and see the amount of effort involved in it then you will probably want to make it several days. Our large district rendezvous is a three day event. I have seen smaller ones in a two day format. Depending upon the number of activities and the number of participants then you can determine the exact format.

What will the rendezvous cost per boy?
We try to keep our costs to a minimum. The rendezvous event is what we use to fund general district operations during the year. District operations include handouts, newsletters, signs, banners, and equipment. Each rendezvous must pay completely for itself. Currently the cost that we charge is $15 per boy for early registration, $17 per boy late registration, and $5 per adult leader. This is sufficient for us to cover basic costs such as patches, port-a-johns, black powder, archery and some other supplies.
What is the theme of the rendezvous?
The theme is very important as it should be kept in mind as the event is organized. Each activity of the rendezvous should contribute in some way to the theme. These contributions do not need to be blatant but rather should be subliminal in nature. Using this method we teach all those in attendance without preaching to them.

Some of the themes we have used in the past include:
- Live the Oath, Obey the Law
- A Lifetime of Achievements Through Your Decisions Today
- Frontier Quest – Strength Through Character

Once these items are considered then the rest of the rendezvous can be planned. This book will focus on presenting the program for a large (500+ boys) rendezvous. The principles presented here can be scaled down to any smaller size.
Basic Event Organization

The rendezvous will work with any size group from a small team to a large gathering of the masses. Our rendezvous here in Mesa are a three day event held at the end of Spring break. The Spring 2001 rendezvous had about 500 youth, 250 adult leaders, and about 210 staff members. The adults like it so much that we’ve considered having something else just for them. We have the possibility to grow the youth past the 1,500 mark with the youth in our area. Each year we grow fairly significantly as word gets around. We hold our rendezvous every two years. This is primarily because it takes a lot to organize it and if held every year would burn people out and put undue pressure on families of staff. It takes a tremendous effort to transport all the materials needed up into the mountains and setup a full encampment.

Our district is made up of all the Varsity scouts in the City of Mesa and a few outlying areas. All of these units are sponsored by the LDS church. We invite the non-LDS troops to involve their older boy patrols but we have had very little involvement from them. At any rate our district is currently made up of 19 LDS Stakes. Each Stake has approximately 8 Wards in it and each Ward sponsors a Varsity Team of approximately 8-14 boys. Now if you do the math you’ll see we have about 1,400 youth in our district.

Each Stake has a “Young Men’s Presidency” that has one of the counselors assigned to the Varsity Scouting age youth. Each of these serve as Assistant District Commissioners or ADC’s. Most of the Stakes also have one or more “Unit Commissioners” or UC’s who assist in the Varsity Program. As a District we organize all of these adult leaders as a Varsity Team at the District level. We call each Stake a “Squad”. Therefore our District varsity Team has 19 Squads. Each Squad is made up of the ADC, the UC’s and all the Team Coaches from their Stake’s Wards and Teams as well as committee members and other adult volunteers.

I explain all this as it is critical in how we organize our rendezvous. For each rendezvous we (the District Leaders) select or “volunteer” someone to head up the rendezvous. This person is known as the “Booshway” in rendezvous circles. The Booshway selects someone to be their right hand man. This person is known as the “Segundo”. In many case the Booshway was the Segundo for the previous rendezvous. We generally never have anyone be the Booshway twice, that way many people get a chance to lead the rendezvous over the years. These leaders are usually selected at least a year in advance of the rendezvous. Previous Booshways are also made available to help where needed.

Our rendezvous is a semi-council activity. Mesa district is the only really active varsity program in the council. Other districts have some teams that are trying but the districts as a whole struggle with the program. Because of this our rendezvous are open to anyone, even teams outside of our council. Through running some very successful rendezvous we have determined that this program is some of the best training we can give both the adult and youth leaders. Because we organize it as a varsity team should be organized, and because we operate it that way, leaders get to see the program work from the top down. We also reinforce this with the youth during the event. The adult coaches have little or no voice during the activity, all communication must go through their youth leaders. Most teams and leaders carry these methods back with them. Many struggle to understand the concept during the first part of the rendezvous.
Outposts and Activities

All of the activities are broken up into groups we call “Outposts”. We have developed outpost names based on mountain man terms and geographic names in our area. For example, we call our rendezvous the “Mogollon Rendezvous” (NOT Mongolian!) after the Mogollon Rim which is a prominent cliff that runs across Arizona and is visible from our rendezvous site. We have used the following names for our outposts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outpost</th>
<th>Type of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anasazi</td>
<td>Primitive Indian skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Cruisers</td>
<td>Lumberjacking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Valley Wranglers</td>
<td>Cowboy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Survival Oriented Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Building</td>
<td>Team Building Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marksman</td>
<td>Shooting Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountaineering</td>
<td>Rappelling, Zip lines, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty</td>
<td>Invited Groups (OA, Hams, Police, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonto Buckskinners</td>
<td>Firemaking, Leatherwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiverano</td>
<td>Headquarters, Trading Blanket, Medical, Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the organization described above, we assign two Stakes to each outpost area with the exception of the Hiverano outpost which is staffed by the Booshway and his team. Each outpost is provided with a list of recommended activities which should be included in the outpost area. The outpost leaders are free to make changes as long as those changes are run by the Booshway for approval. The Booshway ensures that one outpost is not duplicating another’s activities. We challenge each outpost to have at least eight activities. For us, that will make up about 80 activities. Each activity is designed to occupy a team for 15-20 minutes. Some are a little more. Rappelling is one that we allocate two hours for. Each team going through rappelling must first go through some C.O.P.E. challenges before they go to the cliff. The rappelling times are all pre-scheduled when teams register.

With more than 60 activities we have made it so there is no way a team can do all of the activities. This encourages them to plan ahead and it ensures there’s no idle time while the activities are open. We run a free-form format where teams can go to any activity (except rappelling) at any time. This gives them the freedom to pick, choose and prioritize their time at the rendezvous. It also encourages them to get there early and to get on to the activities.

Once all the activities are assigned out we discuss them in detail at our monthly commissioners meeting. There as a group we offer names of experts where needed. Between everyone at that meeting we can usually come up with all the resources we need. Sometimes we encourage the activity leaders to study up and build their own expertise. We also encourage them to recruit staff from other districts and from Venture crews (youth over 16) in our own district. They can also use other church leaders as well as scoutmasters. We ask that they do not use Varsity Coaches as their place is to be with their teams at the rendezvous, not in staffing an activity.

We also prepare a handout for each outpost leader which describes what we expect from the outpost. This includes roping off the area around the outpost and building an entry gate with a sign indicating the name of the outpost. This is also what is expected of most scout troops when they setup camps so we as leaders need to set the same example. We also emphasize that it could...
be hot so they should ensure activity areas have shade cover which will also help should it rain. Each outpost and specifically each event is in charge of any shade covers, tables, seating or other materials they may need. The outpost leaders (ADC’s) are responsible to ensure each activity is delegated to an activity leader.

Some of the outposts arrange for staff t-shirts so the staff can be easily recognized. We do not provide t-shirts for all the rendezvous staff as it is too costly. For the last rendezvous we created a staff patch. It looked just like the participant patch but instead of a green border it had an orange one. We then stapled the patch to a piece of elastic so it could be worn around the upper arm (over clothing). This made all of the rendezvous staff easy to recognize.

Each activity area is also charged with coming up with an award for their activity. We ask that the award be something nice (not a bag of candy bars) and that it be something that a team or individual would be proud to hang on the wall or show their peers. Usually these awards symbolize the event. For example, traps and snares created a nice plaque with several mouse and rat traps mounted on it and an inscription. Each area also needs to select a winner for these awards. The winners can be individuals or teams. The criteria is entirely up to them. Some activities can be scored for best time, best score, etc. Others may be based on trying the hardest, staying the longest, best spirit, service attitudes, etc. Using this process we have about 60 activity awards to give out at the final awards ceremony in addition to the other awards.
**Event Staffing**

So hopefully through all the previous babble you now understand how our staffing works. Basically the ADC’s select event leaders who then recruit their staff. We recommend that each activity have at least three staff members. Year after year the biggest complaint we hear from staff is that they didn’t have any slack time to use the restroom, eat lunch, etc. Our activities run beginning Thursday afternoon to evening, and then all day Friday. We don’t stop for lunch and to be honest, most of the varsity teams don’t either. There is so much to do that everyone is running from activity to activity so they can get as much done as they can. If an activity has a bare bones staff then they will have no break time.

We also arrange for staff meals. We have a staff meal ticket which can be purchased by the staff as they check-in. The meals are fairly hearty as staff tends to be totally beat by the time the day is done. We try to take care of them. Each day at breakfast there are fixings on a table so they can make a sack lunch to take with them. Some lucky staff can come to the mess area and get a hot lunch.

We also provide bunk areas for staff. Staff usually has very little gear as most everything is at their activity area. Usually it’s just an overnight bag and a sleeping bag. Sometimes a cot. Some outposts live in their outpost areas. We have some that cook their own staff food and sleep there as well. Sometimes this is needed to secure their activity gear such as the black powder area, trading blanket and some craft areas.

During check-in we have each staff member fill in a short form. It has basic contact information such as name, address, phone(s), Email, etc. It also asks what unit they are affiliated with and what area they are working in. These forms, when consolidated at the end of the rendezvous, provide a baseline of resources that the next Booshway can use during the next rendezvous. By doing this each time we get to know what skills are out there and who knows how to do it.
Other than meal tickets there is no cost to staff. The staff patches are funded through the regular participant registration fees. Since most staff members begin arriving a day before the rendezvous we feel that we shouldn’t ask them for money for that privilege. We truly appreciate their efforts of service and want to recognize them for that as much as we can.

Here is a list of the specific staff that was put together for the headquarters area. Each of these key people will determine their area staffing needs and assemble their respective staffs.

**Booshway**
This is a mountain man term meaning the man in charge. This is the person who will oversee the entire rendezvous effort. It should be someone who knows how to get things organized and done. This person should also be aware of how to find and use resources.

**Segundo**
This is another mountain man term meaning second in charge. In our area we use this position not only to assist the booshway but to get someone else trained who most likely will be the booshway at the next rendezvous.

**Facilities**
This person will be charged with layout of the facility. This may include campsite placement, outpost placement, parking and campfire areas.

**Staff Cook**
This position is required for larger gatherings. Your staff will be so busy running their events that they should not have to worry about food. We offer staff meals at $5 each or $20 for all meals. We get a cook with a lot of large group experience and he in turn gets a staff of about eight others to help him. They put on top quality meals and the staff appreciates it. The event staff will need all the energy you can provide so don’t scrimp on the meals. We had a

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The Booshways from our last seven rendezvous.

The ADC staff from our 1997 rendezvous.

The shortest one here is Butterknife and the man in the middle is Butterknife’s Dad. The others are just proud to be called friends of Butterknife.
klondike rendezvous once where three cooks made stews and soups the whole time. Staff had limited energy and was always hungry. Keep your staff happy – get good food.

**Historian**
This is a group of people assigned to take pictures, gather notes, etc. This is an important piece. Once the event is over and you plan your next one, many if not all of the participants will have moved on. You need to stimulate and excite a whole new group of boys. This is done through these pictures and comments. You will find a history from three of our rendezvous included on the CD that accompanies this book.

**Service Manager**
This person manages the service area at our rendezvous. It is a key position and requires someone that can think on their feet. For more information see the “Service Event” description section.

**Uniform Inspection**
This person should be familiar with all aspects of the Class A scout uniform, the full mountain man regalia uniform, and the class B uniform. They and their team will be charged with performing uniform inspections throughout the rendezvous.
Facilities and Logistics

In our council we have several great camps. The one we choose to use is R-C Scout Ranch. It’s probably the smallest of all our camps but the general layout and atmosphere is perfect for what we want. The camp is meant to hold about 250-300 people. We push that a little when we bring 1,000+ to the rendezvous. This has been a concern of our council environmental committee as well. Reality is that we leave the camp much better than we found it. This is described in the “Service” section below.

There are some regular campsites in camp but we don’t use them. Instead we lay out a grid of areas around the camp where the campsites are. We pack teams into these grids. In some areas they are literally cheek to cheek. We encourage them to adjust themselves around and work together during setup so that all can be accommodated. They have done this well and usually we have very few complaints. Each team is responsible for their own tentage. We ask that they rope it off so their area is clear. We also ask that they bring fire barrels as there are not nearly as many fire rings as there are teams. We camp the teams in the regular camping areas which are away from the events and headquarters.

In the past we have setup military tents for staff. Last time we did this we setup one GP-Large for staff bunking, a GP-Medium for the cook tent, a GP-Large for staff mess and cracker barrels and a GP-Medium for the trading blanket. With our consistent growth we found that the bunk tent was absolutely packed and the mess tent was barely big enough to hold the team captains for cracker barrel (and they were all standing). Note: a GP-Medium is about 16 x 36 feet, a GP-Large is 18 x 56 feet.

The last rendezvous we changed things and went a little less primitive. We used the large mess hall and kitchen for staff meals and the nightly cracker barrels. This made the cook staff really happy as they didn’t have to haul up trailers with ovens and grills. Instead they just had to bring the food and cooking utensils and pans. There was also much more counter space for them and less dirt around the cook area.

We also used the bunk houses in the camp for staff. There are several cabins, each of which with 12 bunks in them. We put staff in these bunks and some brought their own cots. This worked much better. We reserved the bunk house closest to the lodge for the cook staff, Booshway and
Segundo. This cut down on walking distance for those folks and put all the late night/early risers in the same place.

Because of our large attendance numbers, we have serious congestion problems especially during check-in. To resolve this we located a highway department gravel pit area one mile up the road from the camp. We use that as our check-in and parking area. Teams arrive there, park their vehicles, check-in and then begin their one mile hike with packs to the rendezvous. Once they arrive at the rendezvous we take a team picture and then radio back to the gravel pits to release their equipment vehicle. We limit equipment vehicles to one per team. The equipment vehicle re-enters the highway and drives to camp. They then unload the heavy gear and the vehicle returns to the gravel pits where it is parked. The driver then catches a ride with another vehicle going to camp. This works well as the majority of all vehicles are parked out of camp. The only vehicles parked in the camp are staff vehicles and those are in the parking lots. To pull this off we have to recruit staff to help at the gravel pits (check-in, parking coordination, incoming traffic routing, outgoing traffic dispatching, hiker orientation, etc.). We also have a staff in the camp (Gatekeeper, photographers, campsite spotters, traffic control). It tends to be a little crazy for a few hours but it all works out in the end.

We also coordinate and ask assistance from the highway patrol. They assist in traffic control on and off the highway. This includes positioning their vehicles a half mile before the turnoff with lights flashing to get highway traffic to slow down. They also ensure there is no backups on the highway and they facilitate our vehicles pulling off the highway to the parking/check-in lot and back on the highway to get equipment to the camp from the gravel pits. The law enforcement agencies have always been very cooperative in this regard. There are also police explorers and others who may be able to assist in this process.

Because of our size we have a few other hurdles to get over as well. We can’t use the campfire ring at the camp as it’s not made to host 1,000 people. We do have an open area up near the staff cabins and mess hall where we setup a scaffolding stage for the campfire. We also setup a P.A. system there which is a must. We use this are for flag ceremonies each morning as well as a campfire on Friday night and the awards ceremony on Saturday.

We locate the specialty outpost just above the gathering area and below the staff mess area. This creates a general headquarters area. All other outposts are located in a lower meadow area of camp. Using this format we’ve been able to accommodate everyone,

We also use radios fairly heavily throughout the rendezvous. We have access to an individual who has built an all-band repeater that allows us to use a good mixture of radio equipment throughout all of camp and even to the gravel pits which is just over a hill. All outpost leaders get a radio as well as most of headquarters staff. These are an absolute necessity and a great time saver. Last year we had someone land a helicopter in the meadow area during the rendezvous “to see what was going on”. We were able to quickly determine what was going on and quickly convey a message to the pilot from headquarters staff. As a result the situation was handled much quicker and with far less effort than if we did not have the radios.
Funding and Donations

Donations are an important part of keeping the rendezvous cost down to a reasonable level. Each outpost is challenged to achieve self-funding where possible. This can be done from Stake budgets or private donations. There are some areas, such as black powder, that tend to be more expensive to operate than others. Still if the activity leaders start working early it can usually be funded from their own sources.

We encourage people to look at their working relationships. Many coaches work with other companies they can ask. Some purchase large amounts of product from potential sponsors. Others have neighbors, friends or associates who are willing to help. We have found it’s easier if you know specifically what you need and have researched the exact cost. Develop that information and then ask for specifics. A general “will you donate” doesn’t get very far but if you have a list and ask them if they can help in getting some of these items then your chance of success is much greater.

When presented with a list most corporate sponsors will just write a check for the total amount. If you have a specific vendor that already has stuff you need then ask for it, but don’t limit yourself to only those who have stuff you need. One of my biggest sponsors is a printing company. They will write a check for whatever we need because of my business relationship with them. I solidified that relationship by inviting the big boss of the company to a rendezvous after they donated to it. I took him on a tour and explained what we do and why we do it. At the conclusion of the tour he told me to call him earlier before the next rendezvous and he would take care of us. He said it’s a good thing we’re doing and he’ll support it all he can in the future.

Cultivate relationships. Make sure they know where their money is going. Take pictures, send thank-you letters, invite them to see what it’s all about. It can also help to get press coverage. Send out press releases and invite the press to attend. Then save copies of anything published to use in requests for donations the next time. The key is to start early and to think outside of the box for funding resources. We also get around budget requests by making this a district activity. If it was just a single Stake or Ward then we would need to live within the budget guidelines of that area. As a district our fund raising guidelines are much less restrictive.
Service Cultivation and Opportunities

Service is a big part of our rendezvous. One of the things we hope to accomplish during this activity is to instill an attitude of service into the youth. To facilitate this we have put several programs into place and educated the event staff to support these programs and to foster service in every way possible.

LTO Awards

“LTO” stands for Live The Oath or backwards Obey the Law. This was the theme of a Klondike rendezvous we had several years ago. Since then this theme has stuck and is now a part of all our rendezvous. The message is simple, live what you say you live, do what you say you do as contained in the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. We encourage all the youth to look for opportunities to serve others without being asked.

Everyone on staff has LTO Cards they carry in their pocket. They are asked to write down anyone or any team they see that exemplifies service. Perhaps a team stayed and helped an activity cleanup or someone picked up trash on the ground, or maybe they ran a message for someone on staff. These are what we look for. These nominations are turned in each night and then at flag each morning we recognize some of these and award them items that we’ve had donated to us. The items are usually simple. Things like baseball caps (advertising for those who donate), flashlights, compasses, ponchos, and other stuff. Our staff cooks usually get involved as well and give out fresh baked pizzas, cinnamon rolls, cobbler, etc. Imagine how those teams feel when they sit down with a hot pepperoni pizza in the middle of a rendezvous!

All of the rendezvous staff is involved with these awards. Trader Joe who runs the trading blanket called a boy up who turned a nice knife into the lost and found. He gave the boy an even nicer knife he had made and thanked him for living the oath. Staff is getting pretty good at coming up with these special LTO recognition awards.

After the first day most teams start to get the picture and they look for ways to serve. Once during a Klondike rendezvous we had a large tent (GP-Large) that I brought up for an activity area. The snow all melted and we ended up having a mud bog. I was trying to figure out how to get my tent down
on the last day without getting it covered with mud. I figured I’d get it down and rolled up at first
light while the ground was still frozen. That morning it started sprinkling at about 4am and
continued into daylight. After breakfast as I stood there wondering how we were going to get the
tent down and pondering the work that would need to be done in cleaning it once we arrived
home, a team came up and asked if they could help. I explained the situation and they gathered
together, talked about it and devised a plan. They recruited another team to help and each boy
grabbed a pole, lifted and they marched the entire 600 pound tent about a quarter mile to a grassy
area. There they laid it down, removed the poles and rolled it up. They then hoisted it, brought it
back and laid it in the trailer. This was not a unique incident, we found that all the teams were
pitching in and helping any way they could. That was the rendezvous where we started the LTO
theme.

We had another rendezvous where the service outpost (see next section) had people
spreading wood chips throughout a meadow area all during rendezvous. During that
rendezvous we distributed tons of wood chips to help the grass grow and reduce our wear in
traveled areas. At the conclusion of the rendezvous there were several teams who
stayed and helped pack up the headquarters area. When everything was pretty much
packed a team captain came up to a staff member and asked if there was anything else
needed to be done. The staff member in a serious tone said that yes, they needed to
gather up all the wood chips and put them back into neat piles over on the side. The boy took one look around this massive area spread with chips and without any other comments said, “well, I’ll have to get some help”. He didn’t have to
rake the chips but the attitude of service was extremely evident.

We also have a LTO award that we present at the closing awards ceremony. This has usually
been a nice shotgun for the team. The gun is donated to us by a local supplier. We base this award on
finding what we feel is the most representative service oriented team. We use LTO nominations from staff,
number of times they came through the service outpost (see below) and
general spirit. When all these are
considered there is usually a fairly clear winner.

Service Outpost
The service outpost located in the
headquarters area is a required event. Like all other events it takes about
15-20 minutes for a team to
complete. Upon completion of their first service activity the team receives their event patches. Teams that do not come to service don’t get patches. The service coordinator has a large list of things that can be done. We contact the camp ranger months ahead and have him get a list of service things that need to get done on the camp property. During the last rendezvous we accomplished all but one item on a 36 item list. The camp ranger was thrilled as he only expected one or two to be done.

We have a local power crew that trims trees next to power lines in the camp area. We have them dump truckloads of wood chips in the meadows in the months preceding the rendezvous and then we spread the chips around using rakes and wheelbarrows. Service also has teams run water and supplies to the activity areas, run messages, clean the restrooms, move equipment, assist in setting up areas, help prepare staff meals, clean the mess hall, and anything else we can come up with.

Most teams come back to service more than once. Some as often as six times! Everyone on staff is good at expressing appreciation to these groups as they do service. Sometimes there are hidden rewards, such as working in the kitchen where our staff cooks always have a treat for them when their done.

The tough part is coming up with service ideas. The camp rangers tend to be fairly narrow minded in their ideas. The list is a good start but there is so much more we can do while we’re there. We have tremendous resources with the number of people and the capabilities of the leaders. We look for things around camp that need attention like plumbing, carpentry, etc. With all the team coaches and leaders we come up with virtually any tools or materials we may need.

This last rendezvous we also had an adult service project. We took an old wooden building and converted it into a ramada. This was coordinated months ahead through our council properties manager. We had an architect do a site survey and draw up the plans. Then we got the materials we needed donated. During the rendezvous we asked adult
leaders to assist in the effort. The result was a great new ramada and an example of service from the leaders.

We also keep a full service log. We use that to show council executives what we have done. By doing this we are sometimes to waive fees they normally impose for camp usage. Like I said, when we leave the camp there is a noticeable difference in it’s appearance. We leave it far better than we found it. This is especially important because we exceed the camp capacity every rendezvous which turns a lot of heads at council.
Flag Ceremonies

Each morning of our rendezvous we gather all the teams together for flag ceremony. We try to make this short but special for the teams. In the past we have had trumpeters, buglers, canons and singing to help in this regard.

We also use this time to present some LTO awards and we have used this gathering to collect self-uniform and campsite inspection forms. These forms must be handed in prior to the start of flag and are also counted towards an extra “on-time” points in the total team score. Forms presented after our flag ceremony are not accepted. Those teams not represented within the collected forms do not get the on-time credited points.

We also use our flag gathering to announce lost or found items as well as any other special announcements. We try to keep it as short and pertinent as possible as most participants are eager to get to the day’s activities.
**First-Aid Medical Support**

Each rendezvous has at least one EMT on staff who is dedicated to medical needs. This has proven to be a necessity. The last rendezvous we had three EMT’s who took turns being on duty. We also identify any medical staff who are leaders of the participants or elsewhere on staff. This includes doctors, dentists, nurses, etc.

At each rendezvous we have had a lot of little things arise that need medical attention. These range from ingrown toenails, asthma, special medications, to knife cuts. We have also had broken fingers and a couple of severe cuts. Seldom if ever are these the result of our organized activities. We strongly encourage everyone to be safety conscious and utilize the guidelines contained in the “Guide to Safe Scouting”. We also require a class 3 medical form for all staff members, participants and participant leaders.

Through being prepared we have been able to treat all of the injuries on-site. Some are sent home to recover (as in the case of stitches in a foot for example) but most return to the activities. Our primary “Medicine Man” does a great job of recruiting help and setting up a quality medical lodge. He has a sign-in register where he can track everyone who came by and why. He also has a great primitive medical room he sets up with authentic looking glass bottles and his medicine stick he can wave around. We try to bring the mountain man theme into every aspect of what we do.

We also make sure that contact is made to the local police, fire and emergency units in and around the camp area. They are put on notice that we will be there with over 1,000 people. These units are really good at helping us organize and facilitate emergency crews should they be required. Our emergency plan includes landing areas for aircraft, ensuring roads are unblocked, etc. We’ve never had to use these plans and we hope not to but it feels good to be ready should they be required.
The Trading Blanket

The trading blanket is an important part of the rendezvous. We are fortunate to have Trader Joe run our district blanket. This is not a money making venture for us. Every year we fund the deficit in blanket supplies. Joe also is very good at making knives and brings up quite a number of those that he has made or bought and put elk horn handles on. These are available on the blanket as is various leather, skins, antlers, horns, teeth, necklaces, bags, skulls, and just about everything else imaginable.

Throughout the rendezvous there is always a full house at the trading tent. Most come prepared with cash to buy something. There are a few who come prepared to trade, some with unbelievable craft items they’ve made. Trader Joe works with them on pricing and special deals. He always concludes a sale with a handshake and by both parties saying “Good trade”.

I saw a youth come up to the blanket one year who really wanted this one very nice knife. But he only had a dollar and the knife was worth far more than that. But Joe traded his dollar for a rabbit skin and a needle and thread. He encouraged him to go make a bag from it and then bring it back. He did and then traded that for some other stuff. This kept going for each day of the rendezvous until by the end of the rendezvous the youth had traded up to the knife he wanted. All with just a dollar and some time.

I have also seen Joe play games with the kids. One kid wanted a knife but couldn’t afford it. The one he could afford he didn’t really want. Joe then took both knives in his hands and put them behind his back. He told the youth to pick a hand. He had a 50/50 chance of getting the good knife. In the end he did get it.

One year I watch as Trader Joe explained to each scout that certain items, like the brass tomahawks, were for sale only and could not be traded for. After explaining this to these youth a scout walked in with two beautiful scrimshawed powder horns he had made. Trader Joe threw out the rule book on that one and offered him anything they had there for one of those horns. He ended up trading for one of them with a picture of an elk carved into it. I believe the scout got a brass hawk and some other stuff for it. Good trade Joe!

Trader Joe has several people who help him as well. I believe at the last rendezvous he had about six people working the trading blanket and we know we still need more next time. It’s a very popular event.

By the end of each rendezvous Joe ends up with a large box of cheap pocketknives. These were brought in by the scouts and used as trade items throughout the rendezvous. By the time the rendezvous is over we have traded everything for anything. The boys go home happy knowing they got a good deal and the little bit it costs the district each year is worth it.
The Colter Run

The Colter run is conducted on the last morning of the rendezvous. This works out well as the event areas are closed and that staff can be used to assist in running the Colter run. Each team has an assigned start time which was given to them when they registered on the first day. The last rendezvous we had four teams starting at each time slot. The entire team is required to participate in this event.

The Colter run is made up of selected events that are already in the activity areas. The normal events we have used are black powder rifle, hawk and knife throwing, blow guns, log hoist, rope climb, chariot race and then we add the group knot tie at the end.

There are two areas of the Colter run that require planning. One is the scoring system. We have yet to really perfect this. We have Colter run cards that each team receives at the start. Each team is responsible for keeping their time. The tough part is making the scoring fair where all events are equal. We have setup scoring based on times only to have every team beat the best time during the Colter run and almost everyone then gets the maximum points for that event. We try to base the scores on what we have observed when the events were running during the rendezvous. Since this is published ahead of time we have teams that actively practice events during the rendezvous. A team may spend 45 minutes ahead of time at the log hoist practicing to perfect their teamwork and time so they can do it well in the Colter run. This type of spirit is encouraged.

The timing is critical and has a lot to do with the overall Colter Run score. Sometimes there is a backup on the course, such as at the black powder rifle range. In this case the coaches (who are the timekeepers for their team), are instructed to stop their stopwatches. Once the backup is removed they are instructed to start their watch and the team continues. This starting and stopping process makes it impossible to just use a start time and an end time on the course. We need to rely on the coaches stopwatch (which they must provide) at the end. We have had courses where the best teams are running just over 20 minutes to complete the event. Suddenly we’ll get a team that has a 12 minute time and they aren’t the one’s we’d expect that kind of performance from. This has been difficult to handle. In most cases the team admits they may be wrong. The hard part is that we keep a leaders board and each team knows what their times were. The best teams watch that closely and to have another team come up and shatter their time by almost half is tough to understand. Especially when no other team can match or even come close to that time.

The other area that needs planning is the routing. One year we had them running down to the rifle range, up to the blow guns and then back down to other events. We almost killed off several coaches who are required to accompany their teams throughout the event. Now we try to make it
straightforward. They run down to activities and come back up at the end to the finish. It still is a little rough on coaches but it’s for the youth right?

The normal finish to our Colter run is the group knot tie. In this event the entire team gathers in a circle, each person holds a short piece of rope around their back and in both hands. The entire team must tie all the ropes together using square knots and only using one hand along with their neighbors to get each knot tied. The time stops when the entire team leans back against the ropes and places their hands in the air. The ropes are then checked for valid square knots (no grannies or thieves knots). This is not a normal rendezvous activity so most teams have not had a chance to practice it during the rendezvous. But we expect most Varsity age scouts to be able to tie a square knot.

The Colter run is also a time where they can really shine as a team. One year we had a team captain come to headquarters asking questions about the Colter Run. Seems they had one boy who was physically challenged and unable to run the course. They wondered how they should proceed for the Colter Run the following day. We left it up to them to decide. The next day their whole team showed up, including the disabled boy. They ran the whole Colter run together and they carried the disabled youth as they ran. They didn’t get the top score but they all knew that they had given it their best and done it as a team.

The winner of the Colter run is presented with a special “Hair of the Bear” award during the closing ceremony. This award is usually some nice medicine pouches (enough for the whole team and leaders) adorned with a piece of bear hide with the hair still on it. These are usually worn proudly as part of that teams Class A uniform from that time forward.
The Unofficial Varsity Scout Reference for Rendezvous!

The Top Team Award
At check-in each team is given a “Passport” card. This card has a blank for each of the activities at the rendezvous except for the Colter run. As they participate in each activity they receive a score. The score represents teamwork, spirit, skill, enthusiasm and service. This means those that just want to run the activities to get scores generally score lower than those who are there to actively participate.

In the past we had some teams that would try to get to all the activities offered. Since then we have added many new activities and published the fact that they are not expected to complete them all. We want them to choose and go to those of interest.

All of the passport cards are turned in Friday evening. These are then tallied and a “Top Team” is selected based on the score. The scoring not only includes this card but can also include points from properly completed paperwork presented at check-in, campsite inspections, uniform inspections and on-time for flag ceremonies. It’s always been interesting that the “Top Team” is also generally at the top in LTO awards, the Colter Run, number of times at service, etc. I don’t think we’ve ever had a team at the back in other areas be at the top in one of these awards. In fact now we look at where the top team falls in other categories just as a check and balance to make sure the scoring was done correctly.

Once all of this is tabulated and we have a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place then we take all the scores and split them into three groups. Each of these groups will get either a yellow, red or blue ribbon. The yellow ribbon we call the “Participation Award”, the red is “Segundo’s Choice” and the blue is the “Booshway’s Choice” award.

When all this scoring is completed then we generally destroy all of the scoring materials. We have found that coaches always want to know why they didn’t win. With everything destroyed it makes reconciliation impossible and everyone has to take the results as published with no second guessing.

The Top Team award is the last one presented at the awards ceremony. We usually have a black powder rifle, startup kit and a rifle case to present to this team. The rifle is adorned with some feathers and beads and the Booshway usually carries it around during the Colter Run so people can see and ask about it.
**Headquarter Displays**

We have started setting up display areas around our headquarters area to promote other aspects of scouting. Included in these displays are council and district events such as On-Target, Turkey-shoot, etc as well as other branches of scouting including the Order of the Arrow, Police Explorers, Fire Explorers, and the Ham Radio Post. We also invite groups such as a Mormon Battalion group which promotes authentic costuming, history and promotion of trails associated with the Mormon Battalion. In other areas of the country there may be Civil War re-enactment groups that have a similar focus. Council and District training program can also be represented here including basic training, Silver Axe or JLT, Woodbadge, Outdoor Training, etc.

All of these allow the scouts to see other facets of scouting and organizations that they could get involved in. Headquarters is a fairly active area due to the trading blanket and service events being housed there. These displays are a great opportunity to show off and recruit scouts and leaders to participate in other activities.

At our last rendezvous the Order of the Arrow set up a full encampment. They brought a number of youth who assisted with parking and general security and access. This provided them with an opportunity for service and it allowed them to expose their program more to the Varsity Scouts. With a full teepee setup in their camp in the middle of an open area they were hard to miss. This same type of win/win situation was also evident with the ham radio post that assisted with our communications and showed off their base station to scouts. This is one area that we plan on continuing to cultivate in the future.
A Vespers Trail Experience

This year we added a special vespers trail on Thursday night and sent a special invitation to the first 11 teams that registered to attend it. This turned out to be a great experience for those teams and we will repeat it in future rendezvous.

Our thoughts were that most of the youth have probably never experienced a true vespers trail. We wanted to have a top notch spiritual and patriotic experience for those that attended. We set up six stations, each of which took about five minutes. We were able to use a side of the camp where no one was camped and there was a great hiking trail through the trees.

Each station had a great message. People had American flags on stands, pictures, and other things to reinforce their message. Each spoke softly or through sign language and the groups walked silently through without lights. The last station couldn’t be seen until they came up a hill and around the corner. Then they came in a clearing that had a 30 foot by 17 foot flag hung between two trees with a bright light behind it. Seated in front of the flag was a civil war soldier with a small writing table with a candle on it. He was writing a letter and welcomed the group to his camp. He asked to share his letter with them and read a great letter he was writing to his wife.

The letter stated how he didn’t know what lay ahead but he knew in his heart that the cause was where he needed to be. It emphasized his feelings of the spirit and confidence in those called to lead them. After reading the letter he placed it back on the table and said that this soldier was killed 10 days later in battle.

After having had five other great patriotic messages about service and their great country, and then hearing this, it was obvious that every boy and adult was greatly moved by the experience. We received numerous comments from the leaders and the boys in subsequent days indicating that this trail was a life changing experience for them. We considered it a great success in accomplishing what we set out to do. We will definitely continue to develop the vesper trail in future rendezvous.
The Awards Ceremony

On Saturday at the conclusion of the rendezvous we hold the final closing awards ceremony. Here each activity area lines up and presents their activity awards. We try to make this really quick, less than 30 seconds each. Then we sometimes give a few LTO awards if we’ve received more nominations for that day. This is an opportunity get rid of left over supplies. The cook staff usually has a couple of pies which teams can enjoy as their last rendezvous meal.

After those awards are done then we present the Hair of the Bear award to the team that has won the Colter Run. This is usually not a surprise as the scores are posted on a winners board throughout the event.

We then congratulate all on their service, give service statistics and explain some of what was done around camp. We then present the Top LTO award to a team.

Finally we finish by announcing the “Top Team”. No one knows who this will be until it is announced. We make a big deal out of the black powder rifle and award it to their team captain. We load the gun ahead of time (with powder only!) and explain that it’s never been fired before. We then let the team captain take the first shot which he does into the air.

We then close and encourage them to have a safe trip home. We usually have a canon around that fires the last shot.

Usually by noon it’s getting warm so we don’t want to take too much time. Teams are ready to go at that point (they’ve packed up their camps during the Colter run) and they tend to be restless. We try to cap off the event with some excitement and hope they’ll carry that back home and continue it in their teams.
The Main Campfire

For the main campfire we usually try to have a keynote speaker who is good with the boys. We have done some regular campfires with songs, skits, etc. but recently we’ve been using a guest speaker which has proven to be a great experience. At our last rendezvous we invited a General Authority from the LDS church to speak. Elder Dellenbach flew into Phoenix and was picked up at the airport and driven to the rendezvous for Friday’s campfire program. He also held a special meeting with the adult leaders on Friday afternoon (while the boys were at activities) and with the staff on Friday night (before the campfire).

Following the afternoon meeting we took him on a tour of the activities and he saw first hand what we were doing. He even rappelled down the cliff in his white shirt, tie and dress shoes just to try it out. As a result of his enthusiasm lives were touched. We heard about his talk for weeks after the rendezvous from every source imaginable.

Regardless of what special guest is there or what is to be presented, the campfire should be a spiritual experience for the boys. Use it to re-emphasize service, build on your theme and deliver a strong message. The boys are usually dead tired by then and can actually sit still long enough to hear what is said.

On a sad note we have had a couple of problems during past campfires with youth that were not in attendance. As a result we now keep watch in the trading tent, headquarters and other areas during that time to make sure no one is wandering around when they should be at the campfire. Since starting this practice the problems have ceased.

Our local Order of the Arrow chapter has been extremely helpful in providing security and parking support. We provide them with space to setup their camp in the main area so they can talk about their program with the varsity scouts. It’s a win win for both of us to have them at rendezvous.
**Building up the Excitement**

In order to get the maximum participation in the rendezvous it is important to build the excitement. We start this process many months before the rendezvous occurs. The basic start is putting the dates on the annual calendar and making sure everyone’s aware of them. Then as we get within seven months of it we begin talking about it at our monthly Huddle meetings and in our Commissioners meetings. By then assignments have been made to the ADC’s and they are talking about it regularly trying to get their outpost activities and staff established. We then create flyers and distribute those to all districts in the council inviting all to attend.

About three months before the rendezvous we have one of our monthly Huddles totally dedicated to rendezvous. There we setup a wide variety of resources for the teams including the trading blanket, capote patterns, medicine pouches, games, etc. We encourage the team coaches to bring their youth leaders. We try to provide names, resources and materials that they can use in their team to prepare for the rendezvous.

Two months before we have a mini-Rendezvous at Huddle. For this we meet in the parking lot and have each outpost prepare one or two of their activities. Teach coaches and their youth leaders are invited. As a result of that they go back pumped up and ready to explain what they saw to their teams. Unfortunately at this point it’s a little late to do a lot of team preparations. We constantly hear teams lamenting that they should have started preparing much further ahead of time. Reality is that teams aren’t interested in something that’s so far away. It’s a vicious cycle.

The Booshway and his staff are also available up to six months in advance to go talk to any other districts or even individual varsity teams by invitation. We also print a syllabus and make it available to registered teams. We try to promote pre-registration and pre-payment. This has been a little slow but is building. The last rendezvous actually filled up with pre-registrations and so for the first time we didn’t encourage anyone just to show up. We also added a couple of extra bonuses for those that were pre-registered which helped push the registrations up.

Between all the Huddles, displays at any other events, flyers and visits the excitement starts to build. Beginning four months ahead all of the event staff (ADC’s and Huddle staff) begin wearing regalia instead of Class A uniforms to Huddle. All of this combined builds the overall excitement we need.
The Administrative Paperwork

Try as we might the paperwork quantity is still very high for this event. Seems everything requires a form of some sort. I have put a forms printing checklist and a copy of all the forms in the appendix here for illustration. These forms change only slightly between rendezvous.

When teams check in they get their first scoring based on paperwork. They should have a vehicle checklist, a team roster, a tour permit and a release form and medical form for each person including medical forms for the adults. There is always a team or two that show up without some of these forms. For that purpose we have out official “Statement of Policies” posted at the registration table so there’s no argument. Some of these have said in the past that a tour permit is not required if they are going to a council property camp. While this is true, we clearly require them to obtain one in the syllabus and we therefore expect one to be filed at the council offices and presented at check-in.

Once they check in they receive a variety of other forms throughout the rendezvous. We try to color code these to make them easy to recognize and separate during the scoring process. We also put some on card stock if they are to be carried around by the team. Even on cardstock they come back in a barely readable state at times.

At the check-in table we have a line of the team captains. When the captain steps up to the table to check-in we become deaf to the team coach. This is important as the team coaches need to learn from the very start that the team captain is in charge. We direct all questions at the team captain and we listen for the answers from him. If the adults can’t keep quiet we ask them to step away, otherwise they are welcome to watch and “coach” their team captain. We follow this process during the entire rendezvous, especially at the event areas. The team captain is to present their team and he will be instructed by the event staff. The team captain can then explain what needs to be done to his team. During the check-in process we explain all this to the team captain.

At check-in we will inevitably have one or more teams check-in which do not have medical forms for all of their scouts. We have begun to produce a brightly colored “special” passport card for these teams. This passport is the first thing the rendezvous staff will see when the team enters their event area. Staff knows that the brightly colored passports indicate incomplete or missing medical forms. Staff can then determine the extent to which, if any, the team can participate in their activity.

We even conduct separate cracker barrels for the team captains and the adults. The team captains meet in the mess hall where the Booshway conducts their cracker barrel. The adults meet at a nearby ramada where the Segundo conducts their cracker barrel. We try not to change any of the scheduled times or events of the rendezvous during the rendezvous. The cracker barrel is a time to ask how it’s going, see what is needed, inform them of problems or changes, and to make the team captains feel important in the process. Our cook staff does a great job of feeding them something there as well.
**The Best Training There Is**

Every time we finish a rendezvous and look at the teams as they leave, we see major growth in each one. The rendezvous allows teams to really see what varsity is all about. They get a glimpse of many activities which they are now enthusiastic about exploring more as a team once they return home. Squad and team leaders have had a chance to be true leaders and have seen how they are expected to act as such. Adult leaders obtain a vision of what an active program is all about. Everyone goes home knowing what they can and should be doing in the varsity scouting program.

Only a small percentage of our leaders ever attend basic training. This is a sad but true fact. Through activities such as the rendezvous we are able to subliminally show them how the program works. We by no means want to replace the training that’s in place but we do have a goal to teach as many as we can what varsity is really all about and how it functions. The rendezvous does this very well. Even our ADC’s go through tremendous growth during the organization and delivery process of this event.

During the planning we look carefully at each step of the processes and activities and we try to implement the organization as taught in varsity leader fundamentals, the outdoor skills as taught in the Outdoor training, and the leadership skills as taught in Woodbadge. When this is done the rendezvous becomes a working model of scouting in action.

Through our rendezvous activities we also end up fostering many leaders into what we call “Passionate Advocates” of the Varsity program. These people then carry the message to other units that the varsity program does work and they have the vision that it can run smoothly if conducted according to the plan. Our rendezvous are not without a few problems but all in all considering the number of people, the tight quarters and the number of activities, our problems are almost non-existent. It runs very smooth. It’s some of the best training we can offer.
**In Summary**

Hopefully this information will help you in accomplishing your purposes. Again I realize this is from a large perspective but the principles are all applicable even to the smallest of rendezvous. The rendezvous was born out of boredom of Camporees,. By the time a boy reaches Varsity Scout age they have probably been to numerous camporees and the mere mention of the word is now a turn-off. Through the rendezvous we can take the things we would normally do in a camporee and put a twist on them and make them fun again. We can also make it challenging and educational for the youth.

I am a passionate advocate of this program. There is still much that can be done to expand it further in the future. That needs to continue so that these boys feel a constant challenge in their lives, for that is what builds them up to adults. I hope you understand not only the functional view of the rendezvous but that you also understand some of the underlying purposes or spiritual side of the program. When the spiritual and the function is brought together then magic occurs and teaching happens.

The remainder of this reference has information specific to each different activity that we’ve run during the rendezvous. This information is useful to teams preparing for as well as those assigned to conduct these activities. The best way to learn the skills required for each activity is to jump in and try them. Our district has fostered many of these skills in our adult leaders just by doing them. Start out small and before you know it you will be big.

I would urge you to be extra careful. The rendezvous is severely addicting! Our staff now comes to us in most cases, we don’t have to look too far to find them. Everyone loves the rendezvous. We have adult leaders who have moved on yet they still come and want to be involved in this activity. That’s because they’ve seen the magic and the changes it can make in the lives of others. Through properly organizing and conducting a rendezvous activity you too can help to deliver the promise of scouting!

I wish you all the best in your efforts.

Dave Gardner  
Scouter