

## A Brief History of the disAbilities Awareness Challenge at the Boy Scout Jamboree

The mission of the disAbilities Awareness Challenge is to instill in participants knowledge and sensitivity to various types of disabilities that impact the human race. The vehicle to instill that knowledge and sensitivity is a collection of experience based exercises designed to simulate, as closely as possible, some of the challenges to everyday living created by various disabilities. The simulations are presented in the form of activities typically encountered by Scouts in unit, school and community settings. Included is information and the opportunity for reflective reactions to the simulations. The success of the dAC is based on first hand experience in a group setting: That a Scout/Scouter learns, feels, is sensitized to, and leaves with a more tolerant attitude for those with disAbilities. This program also presents the opportunity to complete requirements 3b, 3c and 3d for the Disabilities Awareness Merit Badge.

The nature of the program is a series of event stations, each comprised of a specific disAbility challenge. Each participant receives a program card or paper sheet listing all events. He can choose to complete any number of the challenges. The event presenter will hole punch out that challenge on the scout's card upon successful completion of that particular task. Scouts do love competition and this tactile record has proven effective time and again.

First introduced as the Handicapped Awareness Trail at the 1977 Boy Scout Jamboree held at Moraine State Park, Pa. the basis for dAC was a program developed by Dr. Jack Dinger, a professor of Special Education at Slippery Rock State College in Slippery

Rock, Pa. From his initial 6 trek event, dAC has grown to a 20+ station event at the Jamboree level. Credit for most of this program belongs to two gentlemen who, in 1989, introduced the redesigned disAbilities Awareness Challenge to the National Jamboree. Their staff of 12 attracted just over 4000 participants. Through the persistent efforts of David Davies (d. 2009) Professional Scouter of Virginia Beach, Va. and volunteer Fred "Chief" Hampton of Albuquerque, NM, the Challenge has grown to be one of the premier events of the National Jamboree. In 2005, chair Fred Hampton supervised the staff of 47 who introduced the 16 station disAbilities Awareness Challenge to just over 14,000 participants. Jamboree 2010, chaired by Sonya Whitehead, had an assigned staff of 50 but continued to deliver dAC to Scouters from all over with an on-site staff of 39. More than 15,300 visits averaging 6-7 events yielded 99,450 scout events. At the Summit in 2013 the disAbilities Awareness Challenge, chaired by Tony Mei, became one of the "must-do venues" of the Jamboree. Never turning away any of its participants, the Challenge earned its reputation as one of the top program choices. Tony Mei will continue as chair of dAC at the 2017 National Jamboree and is soliciting staff (up to 100) for that event. It is in that spirit that this program is recommended at the Council and local levels. It is true that the possibilities are endless and it is up to individuals to make the difference.

