

On My Honor

Local Organizations Offer Opportunities to Earn Scout Badges

Story and Photography by Judy Colbert



“We love our Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts,” says Nancy Easterling, executive director of Historic Sotterley Plantation in Hollywood. You will, too, when you walk the red brick path near the visitor center, built by a scout for his Eagle Scout project. “They’ve done some marvelous projects,” she explains, including building bluebird houses, picnic benches, pollination plots and trash can holders.

“While they’re camping out,” says Easterling, “in lieu of paying for camping, they’ll clean the trails” and do other small errands to help improve the property. Another scout created a moveable pavilion that can be in an archeological area one day and a different area the next. By the time you read this, other scouts will have transformed a children’s play area into one that has outdoor classroom elements, making musical instruments out of natural materials.

“One amazing young woman researched the clothing worn by the people who lived at Sotterley over its 300-year history. Then, she created new costumes for the interpreters to wear. She also repaired and improved the hand-me-downs.” She earned her Girl Scout Gold Award and established a wonderful credential for her future in costume design.

When you and your little ones make a model skipjack boat at the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, you may have a couple of Sea Scouts to thank, says Brenda Renninger, skipper of Ship 548. The group assists with the popular activity included in many of the museum’s events.

In Charles County, scouts can earn an “Inside Government” badge by discussing government issues that matter to them and becoming active citizens in their communities, says Erin Pomrenke, communications coordinator. They attend public hearings or other governmental meetings, and may follow that with a visit to the County Commissioners to see their elected officials in action.

Some scouts in Charles and Calvert counties participate in a “Grow It Eat It” (GIEI) program, coordinated by Terri Valenti, a Master Gardener and GIEI coordinator for Montgomery

Girl Scouts perform at Annmarie Garden.



County, Md. She works with students from second grade and up, starting them with garden preparation and planting. They then tend the flowers or edibles until they are ripe, picked, and displayed or eaten.

Annmarie Garden in Dowell has a “Badge in a Box” program that’s designed for Girl Scouts, says Jaimie Jeffrey, curator of public programs. The scouts come in and check out a box and, depending on their age and the program, go to a classroom or outdoors to complete a list of requirements. Annmarie has three letterboxes – similar to ones used in geocaching – that the girls find as they explore the gardens. Then, in the winter, they’re invited to participate in the Garden In Lights program, providing caroling for other guests (and receiving free hot cocoa).

(Continued on page 60.)

Top: A local Girl Scout participates in the “Grow It Eat It” program.

Bottom: Boy Scouts construct a pavilion at Sotterley Plantation.



(Continued from page 59.)

These are just a few examples of the work the scouts do to help and learn about the community. As a bonus, they earn badges and awards that show their commitment to scouting and helping others.

Other programs are in the works. Scouts soon will be able to participate in a program at the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum, says Corrine Moore, administrator. The museum periodically has scout troops in to tour the museum, usually under the guidance of Conductor John Riedesel. Moore says the museum board is hoping to create a badge that will include some local history, a tour of the museum, and a craft program. Another program may include an heirloom garden.

Says Easterling, "The scouts who come here are so conscientious they give you hope for the future." That's a sentiment that's surely felt throughout Southern Maryland. •

Judy Colbert is the author of 100 Things to Do in Baltimore Before You Die.

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