

# Joe Crafton



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His aim: Leave Scouting better than he found it.

For Joe Crafton, one of the most valuable benefits he got from Scouting was learning to work effectively with many different kinds of people with different backgrounds and beliefs. “My ability to deal with diversity, whether it’s cognitive diversity or background diversity, is one of my strengths,” says the chief executive officer of Dallas-based Crossmark, a century-old leader in sales and marketing services with 35,000 employees.

He acquired that useful business skill in part by leading fellow Scouts from Troop 57 in Memphis, Tenn. — they called it “Heinz 57” for the heterogeneity of its members — in projects including building cooking fires and constructing rope bridges. “In the community I grew up in, we all had very similar backgrounds. Scouting introduced me to people who were different from me,” he says. “It shaped my ability to work with a diverse group to achieve common goals.”

When Crafton received his Eagle Scout Award in 1978, he took an oath to give back more to Scouting than he’d gotten. Since then, he has tried to fulfill that promise. He has devoted countless hours as a Scoutmaster, Wood Badge staffer,

Crafton’s sons, (from upper left) James, David and Reeves, join him during the dedication of the Joe Crafton Sportsman’s Complex at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia. When the construction is complete, the six-building structure will offer Scouts an opportunity to learn shooting sports as well as important conservation lessons.



KEVIN PERRY

Circle Ten Council executive board director and a member of the BSA’s National Executive Board of Directors, where he chairs the development and corporate alliances committee. He has supported Scouting financially as well, including the underwriting of the Joe Crafton Sportsman’s Complex at the new Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve in West Virginia.

Not surprisingly, Crafton introduced his three sons to Scouting. Two are now Eagle Scouts, and a third is a Life Scout. If, as seems likely, the youngest Crafton achieves Scouting’s highest rank, he’ll join not only his brothers and father but two uncles who also are among the 4 percent of Scouts who ultimately complete the Eagle requirements.

To hear Crafton tell it, earning Eagle is largely a matter of following a well laid-out path. “If you do all the things involved in Scouting — participate and follow the patrol method,” he says, “one day you’re only a few clicks away from being Eagle. Then you push to the finish.” But the outcome is hardly routine. He was reminded of that one day when he was out duck hunting and ran across a wooden duck nesting box that bore his name. It was one he’d built years ago for his own Eagle project. “It was really rewarding,” Crafton says of that experience.

Crafton gives credit to the Scouting mentors who influenced him. They include one Scoutmaster who built a large construction services company while still donating a large percentage of profits to charity. Another gave up his big-city medical practice to treat residents of an impoverished American Indian reservation.

One of Crafton’s motivations for being involved with Scouting is the desire to emulate those selfless men in dedicating himself to something bigger. In particular, he’d like to help kids see the value in conserving nature. That’s why he chose to back the Summit’s sportsman’s complex,



Scouts from Circle Ten Council’s Troop 70 present Joe Crafton with a Summit Bechtel Reserve flag to thank him for his leadership and contribution to the Joe Crafton Sportsman’s Complex.

where youth can learn about fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities. It’s important to connect the critical relationship among sportsman, habitat and wildlife. His theory is that exposing young people to outdoor activities isn’t just good fun for Scouts and Venturers; it’s good for the Earth and its future residents. “The more that people care about wetlands, forests and habitat,” he says, “the better chance we have to make this planet more livable.”

Any organized conservation efforts, Crafton says, are likely to be led by a former Scout like himself. In part, that’s because the business leader can look back and see how unremarkable he was before exposure to Scouting’s leadership development opportunities. “I was a lousy patrol leader,” he says. “A typical happy-go-lucky-but-unorganized boy, not comfortable demonstrating leadership to other people, a goofball kid who learned everything by trial and error.”

Projects like organizing everyone in a patrol to build a cooking fire took care of that for him and will do the same for others. “The game is building a fire,” he says. “The purpose

is learning about the consequences of good planning and poor planning. They learn how to plan a process, execute a process and work with other people to get results. That’s life, and that’s business.”

Crafton appreciates a great deal more about Scouting, including the way it gave him and his father an activity they could do together. But the biggest reason he has been involved and supportive of Scouting as an adult is the way it teaches ordinary boys to lead all kinds of people.

“We have a system that produces leaders,” he says. “It’s shown by the disproportionate percentage of people in leadership positions who have come from Scouting. I’d go so far as to say it’s the greatest leadership-training program ever designed. And it’s tried and true for 100 years.”

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