

Ray & Deborah Dillon



The Dillon family was involved in family Scouting before it formally existed.

When Ray or Deborah Dillon of Little Rock, Ark., tells a story about Scouting, it rarely features just one member of the family. The Dillons' Scouting stories are usually about an experience the family shared. From the day their only daughter, Amanda, attended her brothers' Boy Scout meeting and told her mother she wanted to join, Scouting has been a family activity for the Dillons. That's one reason Ray and Deborah are still enthusiastic supporters of family Scouting, even though their children are grown.

"We were involved in family Scouting before family Scouting was cool," says Ray.

One memorable Scout trip included all four of the Dillon children — including Amanda — canoeing the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness along the U.S./Canadian border.

"Participating in the Boundary Waters trip with her brothers was a great experience for Amanda," says Ray. "She really wanted an active program."

Ray and Deborah are proud to note that all three of their sons — Jonathan, Gregory and Robert —

reached the rank of Eagle and that their daughter was the first female to receive the Venturing Ranger Award in Illinois. And though they take no credit for their children's Scouting achievements, the couple was central to their children's Scouting experiences, accompanying them on high-adventure trips and becoming Scouting volunteers.

Deborah Dillon became the den leader of her oldest son's Cub Scout den, holding that position until her youngest son crossed over to Boy Scouting. She has also served as an assistant Cubmaster and day camp director, and has held numerous other volunteer positions.

"It was always busy!" she says. "With three sons in three different levels of Cub Scouting, there was never a dull moment."

Ray Dillon, who spent his career as an executive in the timber industry, including 13 years as president and CEO of Deltic Timber Corporation, focused his volunteer efforts on the council level. He is a current member of the Quapaw Area Council's board of directors, a past council president, and a recipient of the Silver Beaver Award and the Winthrop Rockefeller Award. Recently, he became the Boy Scouts of America's Area 8 president.

He is also an enthusiastic

supporter of family Scouting, believing that including boys and girls in all of the BSA's programming was the right decision.

"It allows families to have family time where everyone can participate — sons and daughters," says Ray. "And it teaches the principles of Scouting to all youth, not just a few. Family Scouting is the future of Scouting."

Scouting broadened horizons for the Dillon children, revealing knowledge not taught in schools and introducing them to once-in-a-lifetime adventures and experiences.

"Scouting exposed my children to things that were not part of their normal day," says Deborah. "They gained knowledge in areas they would not normally experience, and it gave them self-confidence that I thought was important. Scouting also gave them the opportunity for high-adventure trips that we as a family probably would not have taken."

Ray agrees.

"Scouting taught them to be confident leaders," he says. "Without that experience, I don't think they would have been as successful as they are today. I grew up in a rural environment, and I experienced the outdoors every day. My children grew up in an urban environment, so Scouting allowed them to experience the outdoors and

learn to respect it."

The couple believes Scouting has left an indelible mark on their family. All four of the Dillon children were changed by their participation in Scouting programs, developing skills that have stayed with them into adulthood.

The lessons learned by the Dillon children in Scouting also saved a life. One evening during a family meal, Deborah began to choke on a piece of food. Amanda and Greg leaped into action to perform the first aid they learned during their time in Scouting.

"Even though my choking experience was 10 years after he left Scouting, Greg knew exactly what to do — and did it well," says Deborah.

"My wife would not be with us today had it not

been for Amanda and Greg acting to save her life," says Ray. "And they would never have had that knowledge or been prompted to take action had it not been for their Scouting experience."

With their children now grown, Ray and Deborah are preparing for the next generation of Dillon Scouts. They have five young grandchildren, and the couple hopes they all have the opportunity to become Scouts and learn everything Scouting teaches.

To that end, Ray and Deborah decided to share their blessings to support the Scouting movement. They made a gift to fund the Ray and Deborah Dillon Amphitheater at the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve. The venue, located on the shores of



Goodrich Lake, consists of a bowl-shaped space surrounded on three sides by water. The open-air amphitheater is a place where Scouts can gather in a scenic outdoor setting for programs such as informal lectures, storytelling, religious services and team-building activities, as well as training sessions and merit badge requirements classes.

With this new venue, Ray and Deborah are proud to contribute to preparing the

next generation for adulthood and helping Scouts develop the tools and skills they need to be successful. "In Scouting, we are growing tomorrow's future leaders," says Ray. "And that is very important for our community, our state and our country."

"Scouting is one of the only organizations today that teaches leadership, duty, honor, respect and the 12 points of the Scout Law," says Ray. "Not only does Scouting teach these principles, it expects Scouts to put them in action." The Dillons also hope to ensure that Scouting possesses programs and facilities that appeal to young people for generations to come. "Deborah and I give to Scouting to ensure that Scouting is here when we are not," says Ray. "We want to make sure that the individuals of tomorrow have the opportunity to experience Scouting."

WHY WE GIVE

To share our blessings and enhance Scouting's future

IT'S A SIMPLE LINE of Bible verse from Luke 12:48 that inspires Ray and Deborah Dillon's philanthropy. It reads, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." For the couple, it is a simple truth. They have been greatly blessed; thus, they are compelled to share those blessings with others.

Ray and Deborah especially enjoy sharing their blessings with young people. "I tend to lean toward causes that help children and teens," Deborah says. "I know that they are our future and hope to support causes to help them become the adults our country needs."

Providing a space where youth can learn was the impetus behind the Dillons' gift to the Summit Bechtel Reserve.

"When I was a child, my father told me that whatever I learned, no one could ever take away from me," says Ray. "That's why it is so important to me to create venues for learning and why Deborah and I are giving to the Summit Bechtel Reserve and establishing the amphitheater."

In addition, directing their philanthropy toward Scouting aligns with the Dillons' desire to develop our nation's future leaders.