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

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