



# TRAIL LIFE USA™

## OVERVIEW OF THE WOODLANDS TRAIL PROGRAM



### WELCOME TO THE WOODLANDS TRAIL PROGRAM!

Thank you for your interest in the Woodlands Trail Program of Trail Life USA. We have the opportunity to present a legacy project that will impact the lives of countless young men. The work of the Woodlands Trail requires perseverance and patience. It is demanding in both time and energy. However, the reward will be great. We are reminded of Colossians 3:23-24:

*<sup>23</sup> And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

The Woodlands Trail Development Team has gone to great lengths to provide a ready-to-deliver program that requires minimal preparation time and is fun to deliver.

### PURPOSE OF THE WOODLANDS TRAIL PROGRAM

The purpose of this overview is to provide you with basic information needed for the Woodlands Trail Unit curriculum. The curriculum is a 2-year course of study for Trailmen (boys) in three age groups:

- Foxes (Grades K-1)
- Hawks (Grades 2-3)
- Mountain Lions (Grades 4-5)

The Woodlands Trail Program focuses on meeting plans which revolve around a set curriculum to engage and teach program participants.

The Six Program Emphases that guide this program are:

- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Character
- ❖ Wisdom
- ❖ Heritage
- ❖ Faith

## THE BASIC MEETING PLAN

The Trail Guide shall preside over the Patrol meeting and select one Branch to work on at a time. Each month, three Patrol meetings shall follow Trail Life USA meeting lesson plans. **Every month also has a “Hit the Trail!” meeting which is a community outing or a patrol meeting held in an outside environment.**

## ALL MEETING PLANS INCLUDE THE SIX F’S:

**FOCUS:** The Focus portion of the patrol meeting is to provide an academic or instructional element. This is the emphasis of the patrol time together to lay a **foundation that the other F’s will build upon.** Meeting Plans have an emphases built around the Monthly themes and Meeting Chart located in the Woodlands Trail Leader Guide.

**FINGERS:** This portion offers an opportunity for the Trailmen to experience a project with “hands-on” learning. **This should be based from the Focus teaching segment.** It is understood that boys learn to apply a lesson better when they can see and build or make something that would remind them of what is being taught.

**FUN:** This portion allows a time where Trailmen can burn off some energy. This is the time of the meeting for the Trailmen to play games or participate in a physical activity.

**FAMILY:** The Family portion of the meeting is simply the family emphasis for the principle taught. As the Trailmen learn throughout the years, it is the desire of Trail Life USA and the Woodland Trails Program to inform and involve the family in the learning process as much as possible.

**FOREST BADGE:** Identifies the Branches taught and Leaves earned during a meeting for each age group.

**FAITH:** This final portion of the meeting communicates pertinent biblical truths, values, and wisdom corresponding to the lesson.

## HIT THE TRAIL MEETING

The Trail Guide shall preside over Hit the Trail! meetings. All Hit the Trail! monthly meetings shall contain the following elements:

- Gathering
- Prayer
- Hit the Trail! Activity, Event, Trip, or Community Project
- Closing Prayer

## WOODLAND TRAIL AWARDS

Woodlands Trail offers awards that can be earned at all unit levels within the program. Award criteria will be age-appropriate for the boy's cognitive and physical levels of development. The following categories of awards may be earned by boys within the Woodlands Trail program:



**THE BRANCH PATCH:** When a boy qualifies to enter one of the three (3) Woodlands Trail program age Patrols, the boy may earn the joining patch for that group. This patch will be worn on the uniform. This patch recognizes that the boy knows the basics of Trail Life USA which includes learning the oath, motto, salute, sign, and handshake. It is here he will attach his branch pins as he completes them.

**THE FOREST AWARD:** Earned at each age group upon completion of all 7 Branches plus 18 additional leaves (see below – What is a Branch, What is a Leaf?) from any branch or combination of branches. This badge will be a cumulative award. When a boy in a particular age group has completed work he is said to have earned his [Fox/Hawk/Mountain Lion] Forest Award. Boys that advance through age groups of the Woodlands Trail program will wear their latest earned Forest Badge on their right pocket. The Forest Badges are unique to the Woodlands Trail program and are set aside once boys are inducted into the Navigators program.



## WHAT IS A BRANCH?

A Branch is an area of study. The same seven Branches are earned within all three age groups (Fox, Hawk, and Mountain Lion). The Branch awards correspond to the seven main instructional areas of the Woodlands Trail program. Branches are earned by

completion of the requisite number of Leaves within the two-year program period. A Branch Pin will be given for each Branch completed.

Topics for meeting plans are selected to teach participants lessons within 7 general areas of instruction. These broad areas of instruction are called “Branches” within the Woodlands Trail Unit. A Branch is awarded after earning 9 leaves for that branch. A description of these areas of instruction are provided below.

**Heritage Branch (Brown):** An exploration of American Heritage, Christian Heritage, and a boy’s own family heritage. Emphasis is placed on upholding the finest traditions of the heritage we obtain from our forefathers.

**Hobbies Branch (Black):** An exploration of various indoor and outdoor hobbies that demand varying levels of knowledge, skill, or aptitude.

**Life Skills Branch (Burgundy):** Teaching life lessons ranging from the practical and mundane to higher-level interpersonal skill sets.

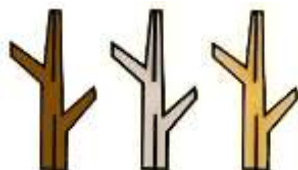
**Outdoor Activities Branch (Green):** Having fun in the outdoors with sports and other activities.

**Pioneering Skills Branch (Blue):** Gaining basic understanding of woodcraft, hiking, exploration, and camping skills.

**Science and Technology Branch (Yellow):** An exploration of physical and natural science concerning our created world.

**Values Branch (Red):** Instilling Biblical-based values within the boys regarding any number of pertinent topics. The central focus of this branch is teachings of the Christian faith.

The award representing each Branch earned changes with each age group so that there is differentiation between Branches earned as a Fox, a Hawk, and a Mountain Lion.



## WHAT IS A LEAF?

A single requirement that goes toward earning a Branch is called a Leaf. Through the accumulation of Leaves over the two-year program, boys earn their Branch awards. Leaves are earned by actively participating in meetings as well as completion of activities and projects.

## Leaves at Meetings

A boy's participation in the meeting earns him 2 Leaves toward the Branches identified in the meeting plan.

## Leaves for *Hit the Trail!* Activities

Hit the Trail! activities and projects can take many forms ranging from weekend events, after-school events, overnight events, camping trips, service projects or a summer adventure. Hit the Trail! meeting plans are provided for every Branch. For activities which do not require an overnight stay, the boy will earn three (3) Leaves. For any activity which includes one (1) or more overnight stays (such as camping) the boy will earn five (5) leaves.

## **NEW!** Leaves for Family Activities

The Trailman may earn one (1) leaf for completing the assigned Family activity portion of the lesson plan up to a maximum of two (2) leaves per branch and an additional two (2) leaves per Sylvan Star.

## **SPECIAL AWARDS**

Special awards are provided for completion of certain activities, projects, or accomplishments. Special awards are named for the purpose for which they are given.

### **Forest Badge Sylvan Stars**

Trailmen who receive their Forest Badge shall be eligible to earn certain additional Leaves through continued participation in the program within their age group. Trailmen who earn nine (9) additional Leaves in a single branch shall be eligible to receive a Forest Badge Sylvan Star. One Sylvan Star shall be awarded for each branch making a maximum of seven stars. Sylvan Stars are pinned to the Forest Badge and are worn on the uniform.

### **Fireguard**

This is an additional learning tool for the Mountain Lions Patrol to help instruct them on fire safety. Upon the completion of this instruction, as well as hands-on learning, the Mountain Lion may earn the **FIREGUARD CARD**, which may be carried as proof of completion of skills necessary to handle all aspects of camp fire safety when going on outdoor activities with his Patrol, Troop, or family.

### **Woodsmen**

This an additional learning tool for the Trailmen to help instruct on knife use and safety. Upon the completion of instruction, as well as hands on learning, the Trailmen may earn the **WOODSMEN CARD** which may be carried as proof of completion of skills necessary to handle all aspects of knife safety when going on outdoor activities with his family, Patrol, or Troop.

**Worthy Life Award:** The most important special award within the Woodlands Trail program centers on faith. This award is titled the Worthy Life Award. Requirements are different for different age groups. The award is earned once within each age group, with the badge for the award changing as the boy advances to the next age group.

**Timberline Award:** The Timberline Award is the highest award a Trailman can achieve in the Woodlands Trail program. It was developed to celebrate a boy's entrance into the new world of Trail Life USA's Navigators program. Just as the tall timbers stop at the Timberline's edge, so must a Mountain Lion's time stop in the Woodlands Trail program. As the Trailman proceeds on his individual path, he leaves the Woodlands Trail and embarks on a new trail of exploration and experiences in the Navigators program.

### SUMMER MONTHS – "SUMMER ADVENTURE"

The Woodland adventure continues through the summer with meetings held at least once per month. These meetings may consist of all or a portion of the Troop as designated by the Troopmaster and Committee Chair. Wide latitude is given to the local adult volunteers for structure of these meetings.

### GUIDING TRAILMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

God has specifically crafted every person with a unique personality, behaviors, and needs. Trail Life USA offers its boys and leaders structure and consistency, both of which are vital for boys with special needs. More information is included in the Woodlands Trail Leaders Guide.