

It is 7:30 am and a beautiful morning as I pull out of my driveway, beginning the 30 minute drive to the Boy Scout Camp. I quick grab my sunglasses after hitting the street, because the glare off the snow is blinding me. I'll pick up my friend Kurt along the way, and hope he is better dressed for splitting wood than last time, when he only wore a light jacket.

I reach the curvy road along the ridge near my house, and kick up the engine to 35. I imagine splitting wood, and remember past times: mopping and waxing floors, cleaning cabins, building trails. I love camp workdays, not only because I get to work with some of my closest friends, but for the feeling of success that I receive after eight hours of work. Somehow, driving home covered in dirt seems like a noteworthy accomplishment.

In French class, when we would discuss our weekends, I would always have some of the oddest stories to tell. More than half the time I'd be talking about Boy Scouts. Maybe I'd just been on a campout, or a work weekend, or putting on an event. It seemed sometimes like Scouting was all I did.

Even my summer is completely devoted to Scouting. 2010 will be my fourth summer on staff at the Howard H. Cherry Scout Reservation, and I can't wait until our first week of work starts. It is by far the best job a high-schooler could have.

I always knew that I was really involved with Scouting; the semi-frequent chiding from my friends told me I was a bit of an odd duck. Still, I was taken off guard last summer when Russell, a scout who had been in my rowing merit badge class in 2008, walked up to me after the closing campfire. We started talking about the week, and Russell kept saying how great it had been. Russell mentioned that he wouldn't be able to make it to camp next year, because he needed to help out on his family's farm. I knew he was disappointed, because he was going to apply to work on staff. Our conversation was winding down and I was about to turn to leave, when Russell told me what I'll never forget: "You have made these past two years of summer camp the best weeks of my life." He started to cry. I cried too.

Camp staff is a paid position, but looking back, I've done "camp staff" work in many of my volunteer jobs in scouting: Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop Instructor, Order of the Arrow Lodge Chief, and OA Section Vice-Chief. Each job I do with the same passion, and after talking to Russell, with the same purpose: helping people to grow.

I pull into Kurt's driveway as he jogs down his steps, this time with his thick Carhartt jacket. He slides into the car. "Ready to split some wood?" "Sure am," I reply, and put the car in reverse. The physical service I give through Boy Scouts, be it working at camp, walking door to door in the fall food drive, teaching scouts on a campout, or running OA events for 300 people as lodge chief, will always give me a feeling of satisfaction. But it is the chance to make lives better, to show I care, and to watch a person grow that gives me my purpose in life.

Comment [LSB1]: Maybe "7:30 on a beautiful..."—eliminates redundancy of "a.m." and "morning."

Comment [LSB2]: Lower case camp

Comment [LSB3]: quickly

Comment [LSB4]: At

Comment [LSB5]: I

Comment [LSB6]: Splitting wood,

Comment [LSB7]: probably two words

Comment [LSB8]: feels?

Comment [LSB9]: Does it matter that it's French class? Maybe just "in school"—the specificity of the reference to French class leaves me waiting for a second reference that never comes.

Comment [LSB10]: These two sentences can be streamlined by about half.

Comment [LSB11]: I checked for AP style on this, and you are correct to cap "Scouting" and "Scouts," even without the preceding "Boy." Link to a recent AP story for reference: <http://airamerica.com/lifestyle/12-20-2009/at-100-boy-scouts-say-theyre-still-essential/>

Comment [LSB12]: The full name is a nice touch, but dispensable if you really need to gain four words.

Comment [LSB13]: Cap

Comment [LSB14]: Had planned?

Comment [LSB15]: turning

Comment [LSB16]: I think the quotation marks are redundant after the colon. One or the other. Frankly, make the quote material a paragraph on its own for greater impact.

Comment [LSB17]: cap

Comment [LSB18]: Might be best broken into paragraphs per the rules of writing dialog.

Comment [LSB19]: Nice detail but could cut if needed

Comment [LSB20]: You're over by 69 words, which we can readily get out. Easy to streamline and not hurt meaning—in fact, improve it. I've made a few suggestions that will probably lead you to more.