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Scouts hike at Philmont

News Journal staff report

ASHLAND -- A crew of Boy Scouts from Troop 586 in Ashland went on a life-changing summer backpacking trek through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico at Philmont Scout Ranch from June 18 to July 3.

Philmont covers 214 square miles of vast wilderness. The group from Troop 586 covered 83 of those miles in the course of 10 days on the trail.

The group of nine Scouts and three adult advisers carried everything they needed to survive during the trek on their backs while hiking from camp to camp. The Scouts participated in back-country activities including spar pole climbing, gold prospecting, blacksmithing and mountain climbing.

The trek included a conservation project where the Scouts participated in the upkeep of Philmont's ecosystem.

Along the trek, which included five significant mountain peaks over 11,000 feet, the Scouts endured tough challenges including being in bear and mountain lion country, dry camps, steep climbs and dust devils caused by high winds and extreme drought conditions.

"Given the tough, dry conditions and smoke from recent and ongoing fires in Arizona and Colorado, the boys did extremely well backpacking Philmont," adult adviser Tom Grandy said. "Our trek was a tough one with more hiking than activities, but crew leaders Evan Kulka and Ian Emser kept our spirits high with their leadership and Scouting spirit."

The 12 members of Troop 586 were part of a larger Heart of Ohio Council contingent that totaled 72 Boy Scouts and their leaders who took a train to New Mexico and participated in different itineraries based on their abilities and interests.

The crew made what amounted to a Scouting pilgrimage with their trip to Philmont. Among those who participated were: William MacDonald, Logan Leon, Jacob Emser, Ian Emser, Ryan Stewart, Erik Fortney, John Emser, Tom Grandy, Mitchell Grandy, Evan Kulka, Kyle Conkle and Dale Fortney.

Philmont Scout Ranch continues to be the Boy Scouts of America's premier High Adventure Camp and largest youth camp in the world, serving more than 22,000 participants each summer.
