Scouts camp, learn at Union Point event

Colton Hynes prepares to launch Pine Wood Derby cars during Saturday's Scout-O-Rama.



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Leonardo da Vinci's name on a bridge at a Scout-O-Rama at Union Point Saturday showed visitors a new depth - and width - for the artist and scouting.

The bridge challenges scouts to cross a water obstacle on wood with no nails or adhesives, as demonstrated by Josh Flye of Trent Woods Troop 132 from Garber United Methodist Church.

"It's completely made of wood and will hold up to 60 pounds," he said of the smaller of two bridges set up at that troop's exhibit. It was one of 26 stations at the Neuse River Basin scouting event.

Led by Scout Master Jim Burns and Assistant Scout Master Le McConnell, the 25-member troop — and Boy Scouting in general — is looking at a lot of new-old ideas, including world sustainability and robotics, in addition to the traditional basics of outdoor survival and enjoyment, character building and community service.

They were one of eight units participating in a Friday night Boy Scout campout at New Bern's Union Point Park. It became the Neuse Basin District Scout-O-Rama on Saturday with activities for the scouts and visitors.

All were welcomed to the day-long even, which brought in New Bern High School Navy JROTC members to provide gate security. Participants got a taste of breakfast and lunch cooked over open fires.

Every activity was a lesson for the Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, Webelos, Boy Scouts and their leaders.

That's the objective, said Jim Ward, an Eagle Scout himself and now an aerospace industry executive and chairman of Boy Scouts of America East Carolina Council.

"It's the first time we've done this," said Ward, the father of three daughters who sees his role in scouting activities and civic duties as encouraging scouts in community service and to raise awareness in the community of what Boy Scouts do for young men.

"That's one reason we chose such a very public location," Ward said.

Damian Nobles of Troop 683 from Arapahoe Free Will Baptist Church was hanging out at the Pinewood Derby track under the Gazebo.

A scout since a Tiger Cub in the first grade, the sixth grader said he won that event last year with a focus on the aerodynamics of the basic inclined plane.

He painted his car, made from a five-ounce block of wood with four nails and four wheels, "with some Carolina Tar Heels but I didn't have too much decorations. It was about the winning."

There are currently about 800 scouts and about 400 adults involved in leadership which requires "critical and intense training," Ward said. But the troops are in place and most have room to grow so the push is on to recruit youngsters for "a safe, secure, good opportunity to experience and learn."

The East Carolina Council is based in Kinston with new District Executive Joella Gniewkowski supervising Boy Scouting activities in nine counties including Neuse Basin District scouting units in Craven, Jones and Pamlico counties.

Asked why a woman is district executive, Gniewkowski said, "There are a lot of mom's involved in scouting" and in the age 14 to 21 Venturing Scout group, which is not new, both boys and girls participate.