

Christian Boy Scouts Alternative Blazes New Trail

More than 1,200 former Scoutmasters, Eagle Scouts, parents, church leaders and former Boy Scouts of America (BSA) professionals gathered last week for the inaugural leadership convention of a youth character development organization in Nashville, Tenn. The convention's theme was "Honoring the Legacy ... Raising the Standard." Forty-four states were represented, including Alaska and Hawaii.

The name and visual branding for Trail Life USA were unveiled publicly for the first time to great applause and excitement by those gathered to launch a Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts of America. Trail Life USA will be an outdoor Scouting-like program designed for boys ages 5 to 17 that will focus on adventure, character and leadership.

The new group will have a strong inclusion policy for youth—all boys are welcome to the program regardless of religion, race, national origin or socio-economic status. However, adult leaders in the program will be Christian and must sign a statement of faith and submit to background checks. Both boys and adults will be required to adhere to a code of conduct. The full membership policy can be read online at .

The Trail Life USA leadership team includes some highly decorated former BSA members and former professional BSA executives. Among these are:

- Rob Green, Trail Life USA's interim executive director; served as a professional BSA executive for 20 years in Florida and South Carolina before resigning after the BSA's membership change in May.
- Attorney Richard Mathews, consultant and legal counsel

for Trail Life USA. Richard worked for the BSA professionally as their in-house legal counsel for 11 years, culminating as the BSA's general counsel for the last three years.

- John Burkitt, considered by many to be one of the greatest Boy Scout historians alive today, having compared, studied and analyzed every Boy Scout, Cub Scout and Scoutmaster handbook ever published, from Baden-Powell's original *Scouting for Boys* to the present. John has served as the primary editor and author of the first edition of the adventuring handbook that will be used in the Trail Life USA program.

"Our vision will be to become the premier national character development organization for young men which produces godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens," says Eagle Scout and former Scoutmaster John Stemberger, chairman of the board for Trail Life USA. "Parents are going love the new outdoor adventure program, and we are very excited to be part of this next chapter in the history of Scouting in America."

More than 30,000 former Scoutmasters, Eagle Scouts, parents and church leaders have contacted the organization about the new program. Chartering new troops will occur in late September, and the program will officially launch on Jan. 1. For more information, churches, parents and former BSA members can visit the website at [or](#) contact [Info@](#).