



Photos by Julysa Sosa / San Antonio Express-News

Eight-year-old Sean Malcolm takes aims during a four-day camp at McGimsey Scout Park, where the boys of Project Águila, or Project Eagle, are learning values and skills to help them soar in life.

Project Águila helps youths spread wings

By Vincent T. Davis

More than 100 Cub Scouts in multicolored T-shirts spread across McGimsey Scout Park on Tuesday afternoon for field-day activities and character building. They fired arrows and shot BB guns, guided by a squad of adult volunteers.

But the focus wasn't so much on sports as on discipline, structure and the scouting way of communicating.

Thomas Urbina, 7, was among the Scouts who learned about archery basics from range officer David Rohrer.

It was the first day of a four-day camp at the North Central park for the boys of Project Águila,

or Project Eagle, learning values and skills to help them soar in life. The Alamo Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America created the program to recruit more boys, parents and adult volunteers. The focus is providing Cub Scouting for boys in the first through the fifth grade or ages 7 to 10.

The council first offered the initiative on the South Side in August 2011 to create long-term units in areas identified by the council as in need of a course to prepare boys for life.

Currently, one elementary school in the Edgewood Independent School District and five in Harlandale ISD are participating in the project.



Thomas Urbina (left), 7, and Andrew Carrillo, 8, yell back the pool rules. In addition to swimming, there's archery and shooting, yet the real focus is discipline, structure and the scouting way of communicating.

There are 162 Cub Scouts, 82 of whom have advanced in rank in the past year, and 63 adult volunteers involved in the program.

The program has posted a 73.7 percent retention rate as opposed to the average rate of 60 percent to 65 percent.

Council members named the project after the highest rank to guide

the Cub Scouts toward becoming Boy Scouts and work toward earning Eagle Scout status.

The council provides financial aid for staff, uniforms, camp dues, supplies and recognition for scouts and adults for three years.

"Teaching the parents and boys to become self-sufficient is one of the *Águila continues on B8*



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Thomas Urbina (left) and Andrew Carrillo of Pack 1135 find relief from the hot summer day.

ÁGUILA

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keys to the success of this program," said Michael de los Santos, council executive. "And high retention rates and kid advancements mean this program is healthy and fun."

Rose Malcom, a school nurse and den leader in Pack 1135, volunteered so she could share the experience with her 8-year-old son.

"The objective over the next 20 years is to grow these kids into Eagle Scouts."

Jeff Rummel, Alamo Area Council

"The more visible we were, more boys wanted to join," Malcom said. "I'm super-excited to see them be part of something and give back."

The program is also about transcending cultures and getting similar enrollment in all parts of town, said Jeff Rummel, president of the board for the Alamo Area Council.

"The objective over the next 20 years is to grow these kids into Eagle Scouts, and then their kids, and you'll have a self-sustaining program," Rummel said. "Scouting is for all kids."

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