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Camporama In Review



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Royal Rangers National Camporama -- An Adventure of A Lifetime!

They came from across the country and around the world — thousands of boys and their leaders — to attend the tenth quadrennial Royal Rangers National Camporama and celebrate the 50th anniversary of Royal Rangers at the Royal Rangers campgrounds in Eagle Rock, Missouri.

Spreading out across three miles of campground sites and numbering in excess of 5,200 boys and men — larger than a lot of small towns — this wasn't just a week of camping at some park. For many of those in attendance at this week-long event (July 9-13, 2012), this was the adventure of a lifetime!

The secluded campgrounds in Eagle Rock offer 1,500 acres of possibilities. Districts are assigned camp locations, with many districts building an impressive "entry way" into their section of the camp. For example, the Arizona district built a mock old West community, complete with wooden sidewalk and false-front stores while the Penn-Del District had a massive, towering arch frame and signage that marked the entrance to their section of the campgrounds.

Each day began with a cannon shot at 6 a.m. followed by preparations for the day, including breakfast and devotions. ". . . the most important thing that we want to achieve at Camporama is the spiritual impact upon the lives of boys and young men," states Doug Marsh, Royal Rangers national director, in a video message. "The emphasis, aside from celebrating our 50th anniversary, is taking these boys and young men on a journey to become the godly men that God intends for them to be."

John Hicks, Royal Rangers national program director, says days were filled with nearly non-stop fun and adventure for the boys while the evenings focused on spiritual development and growth.

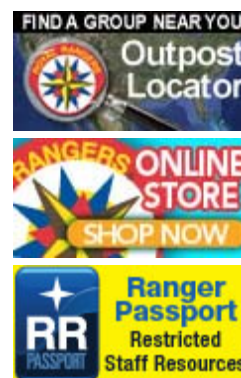
"We've added so many new activities," Hicks explains. "We have a new adventure course with repelling tower as well as a high ropes course and two zip lines for the campers to travel down."

In addition, campers could try their hand at the archery range; go swimming in one of five pools; demonstrate their musical/artistic ability in the Muse; enjoy inflatables (including a huge water slide — which was very welcomed in the 90-degree weather); marvel at the lumberjack show brought in from Hayward, Wisconsin; watch a chainsaw carver demonstrate his craft; participate in a 5K race; take part in target sports and laser tag; and much more!

For some of boys and men in attendance, one of the great surprises came in the target sports area. The man supervising the area was former NFL Washington Redskin Dave Butz. Even at 63 years old, the former Pro Bowl defensive tackle is still an imposing figure, standing at 6 feet 7 inches, broad-shouldered and somewhere around 275 to 300 pounds — he dwarfed those around him. He also allowed the boys to try on his pair of Super Bowl rings!

In addition to the numerous physical activities offered, the AG World Missions Eurasia Experience was presented to the Rangers and on Tuesday night, the national Youth Department sponsored a

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pizza pool party for the high school boys featuring Christian comedian Justin Fennell.

Although the National Royal Rangers Camporama is geared for Royal Rangers members, Hicks explains that the boys are encouraged to bring along friends to the event as an opportunity to introduce their friends to Royal Rangers — and Christ.

The evening services were pivotal for many of the campers in attendance, with Monday's opening session featuring General Superintendent George O. Wood and Assistant General Superintendent Alton Garrison. In addition to recognizing the Royal Rangers 50th anniversary and honoring former national commanders — Johnnie Barnes (deceased, but represented by his wife Juanita), Ken Hunt and Richard Mariott along with current director, Doug Marsh — the boys received a powerful message.

"The altar was flooded with boys coming forward — some for salvation, some for other needs," Wood recounts. "The services are held in this natural, outdoor amphitheater where the boys are seated on a hillside — and they were just streaming down to the altar at the end of the service."

Marsh ministered to the Rangers the rest of the week, basing the messages on his book, "A Guy's Journey to Manhood." Hicks says that the evening services also included a teaching time with Christian illusionist Joshua Jordan.

"Every night, the altars were filled," Hicks says. "On Wednesday evening, the worship lasted for 2 1/2 hours. I overheard one Royal Ranger ask, 'Why can't church be like this?'"

Although the Camporama is mostly populated with boys and leaders from the United States, Royal Rangers North Central Regional Coordinator Rick Scott says there were 30 countries represented at this year's Camporama, including groups from Japan, Australia, Russia, Germany and the Virgin Islands.

Hicks, however, is quick to point out that none of this could have happened without the thousands of hours put in by RV Volunteers and leaders during and prior to Camporama.

"All together, more than 100 MAPS RVers were here during the last three to six months fixing and repairing things, mowing, weed eating, painting and building snacks bars," Hicks says. "And the adults who accompany the boys are also volunteering, many choosing to work multiple shifts — mowing, grating and watering roads, helping with set up, working in the cafeteria — so the boys could have an experience they'll never forget."

Hicks says that the feedback on this year's Camporama has been overwhelmingly positive, as boys and leaders have frequently expressed their appreciation for the variety of activities and great evening services.

The next Royal Rangers National Camporama is schedule for 2016.