

Men in the Making



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— Doug Marsh*

Thomas E. Trask, former general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, once called Royal Rangers "the number one soul-winning ministry in the Assemblies of God."

Doug Clay, general treasurer of the Assemblies of God, says Royal Rangers was instrumental in shaping his life as he grew up in a single-parent home.

"I never really realized I didn't have a father around because I had my Royal Rangers leaders," Clay says. "They came to my basketball games, helped me with my homework, and were there for me to talk to when I needed it."

Clay says his Royal Rangers commanders played a crucial role in preparing him for manhood and ministry.

"I needed a godly man's influence, and my Royal Rangers leaders filled that role," Clay says. "Truthfully, I always felt bad for the other kids because they had only one dad and I had six."

Marsh says there are many boys today who desperately need the influence of Christian men in their lives.

"The reality is, Rangers is needed more today than ever," Marsh says. "In some ways, boys haven't changed a bit. But they live in a different world. They are confronted with the disintegration of the home, limited interaction with male role models, challenges to their masculinity, and negative messages coming at them from every direction."

Royal Rangers is evolving with the times. Two years ago the national office began offering online curriculum that churches can download quickly and economically. The department maintains an active Internet presence, including a Facebook page.

Royal Rangers is also adapting to the changing interests of boys. While camping and outdoor activities were the program's focal points in the beginning, Royal Rangers is expanding to include a wider range of activities and options.

"Today, the interests of boys are

so diverse," Marsh says. "They are involved in sports, technology, the arts, computers and a variety of other things. We are building on the foundations that were laid in the past while working with a whole new generation of young men who need to be disciplined in new ways."

Marsh says the Royal Rangers curriculum is being revised to make it more adaptable to the needs of individual communities. Outdoor activities, uniforms and merits will be offered, but the program will be flexible enough to use without these things as well.

"Because of the availability of information and options, we can appeal to a broader group of boys instead of just those who are camping diehards," Marsh says.

Felix de Jesus, children's pastor at Christian Life Center, an urban and culturally diverse congregation in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is successfully using Royal Rangers to reach boys in his city — with a few adaptations.

"We've changed it to fit the culture of our kids," de Jesus says. "Being in the city, the camping experience is not at the top of their list. Our groups are more technology and sports based. Some things we've added, and some things we've taken away."

As Royal Rangers leaders prepare for future decades of ministry, Marsh says the program's original focus on discipleship will never change.

"Pastors aren't asking for camping programs, but they are needing mentoring programs," Marsh says. "Mentoring boys and pointing them to Jesus has always been our key mission and purpose — and it always will be." **E**

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For more information, visit RoyalRangers.com.

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