



THE VOICE

FOR THE FULLER LIFE OF OUR ASCENSION FAMILY



Jerry Kassman (right) stocking shelves at the food pantry. Article on page 3.



Giving Tree program helped 96 families from Catholic Social Services as well as clients from Elizabeth's New Life Center and our own parish families.

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LENT 2009

“Return to Me” is God’s daily call to each of us, but during the forty days of Lent it is especially urgent. Our return to God, the source of our being, the source of all love, is to be one of joy. By being open to this truth, we hasten our return. Our Lenten practices are ways to show gratitude, to say “Thanks,” to our Lord.

They help us correct our faults and praise our God.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the core preparation for the Paschal Mystery - the suffering, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ. As we journey through Lent to return to God, we remember His Son’s coming to earth, and being one with us.

Fasting from food, TV, cell phones, anger, impatience, or _____ (fill in the blank) reminds us of our dependence on God just as Jesus depended on His Father when he walked with us as a man. With prayer, these sacrifices raise our awareness of other’s needs and sufferings...their hunger for basic necessities...desire for love and companionship...enslavement of mind and body ... devaluation by societies that do not treat them as God’s children. When we look beyond ourselves, we recognize the condition of those around us. We share with our brothers and sisters our wealth of food, money and hospitality...our alms. We reach out as a community to end discrimination, homelessness, joblessness...

As we prayerfully remove excesses, distractions and earthly cravings from our lives, and increase our almsgiving, we are opened to hear God’s call, “Return to Me.” Our Lenten journey inevitably leads us to Easter. With the Easter fire, the alleluias, the peeling of the bells, we rejoice knowing we will be greeted with open arms, as the Prodigal Son was, with hugs from our loving Father and God.

FR. WITZMAN SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED BY ASCENSION PARISH

The Fr. Witzman Scholarship is available to any student from Ascension Parish planning to attend a Grade 9-12 Catholic High School next school year. Three (3) scholarships will be awarded for \$600 apiece. Application materials may be obtained by calling or stopping in the Ascension Parish, Religious Education or School Offices. The application deadline is Monday, March 2. The Fr. Witzman Scholarship was established with the estate of founding

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LENTEN OPPORTUNITIES



Ash Wednesday, February 25, is a day of fasting and abstinence. Ashes will be distributed at 9:00 a.m., Noon and 7:00 p.m. Masses. No meat and little food that day remind us that real joy comes from the hunger to return to God. Parish opportunities to

enhance our Lenten journey to return to God through prayer, sacrifice and almsgiving include:

- **“Little Black Book”** was first put together by the late Bishop Untener of Saginaw, Michigan to encourage his people to spend time with scripture, Church history, and her people during Lent. The cover was plain black so people could read it...on a bus, on lunch break, in a waiting room...without calling attention to themselves. The goal is to spend 6 minutes reflecting on God’s message. The “Little Black Books” will be available in church Sunday, February 22. Take one - open yourself to the wonders prayer with the “Little Black Book” offer.

- **Reconciliation** will be celebrated with our One Bread, One Body collaborative Tuesday, March 3, 7:00 p.m. at Ascension and Thursday, April 2, 7:00 p.m. at St. Helen’s. Individual Reconciliation at Ascension is Saturdays 4:00-4:45 p.m., or by appointment. God’s call “Return to Me,” requires us to face our sinfulness and be assured He will embrace us with His forgiveness. See schedule for additional times/locations.

- **Operation Rice Bowl**, from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is the parish Lenten almsgiving project. Our fasting and sacrifices not only open us to hunger for God, but increase awareness to the physical hungers many suffer. One quarter of the money stays in our Archdiocese to respond to poverty alleviation and the remainder funds the CRS programs. Rice Bowl materials are in church along with special receptacles to receive your alms. Rice Bowl donations are presented in the Holy Thursday offertory procession.

- **Food Pantry** is an ongoing almsgiving opportunity. It is especially appropriate this Lent as our local community; including parishioners are experiencing economic uncertainty. When we shop, we remember their hunger and purchase something for them, too.

- **Stations of The Cross** will be prayed Fridays, 7:00 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

- **Evening Prayer**, part of the Liturgy of the Hours, which clergy pray daily, we are encouraged to pray too. The Marianist Novitiate Community, who

worship with us regularly, will lead Evening Prayer at Ascension on Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. Join in the official prayer of the Church for all of her people.

- **Little white crosses**, will be at the church doors. Slip one into your pocket. When you reach into your pocket for change, a tissue, or shopping list, touch the cross - remember God’s loving call to return to Him.

COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION SERVICES DURING LENT

Ascension	Tuesday, Mar. 3	7:00 p.m.
	(with St. Helen & Immaculate Conception)	
Incarnation	Tuesday, Mar. 10	7:00 p.m.
	(with St. Albert and St. Charles)	
Holy Angels	Tuesday, Mar. 17	1:00 & 7:30 pm
	(with St. Anthony)	
St. Henry	Thursday, Mar. 19	7:00 pm
St. Francis	Thursday, Mar. 26	7:00 pm
	(with St. Albert, St. Charles & Incarnation)	
St. Luke	Monday, Mar. 30	7:00 p.m.
St. Helen	Thursday, Apr. 2	7:00 p.m.
	(with Ascension & Immaculate Conception)	



LENTEN REGULATIONS FOR FAST AND ABSTINENCE

Rules for fasting and abstinence remind us that our obligation to observe Lent with penance is serious. We are called to return to God...to do penance for our sins and open ourselves to His love, a love that can change our hearts. We are called to do more than “just” obey the rules. Use these laws as a starting place for Lenten penance. Failure to meet the requirements for a specific day is not considered serious. However, the failure to observe the spirit of the law on a substantial number of days is serious.

Fasting: Ages 18-59 Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. One full meal and no more than two smaller meals each day. No snacking between meals.

Abstinence: Ages 14-up. Abstain from meat Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all Fridays of Lent.

SPOTLIGHTING THE NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR FOOD PANTRY

It has been more than 40 years since our Food Pantry ministry began in the basement of the Greenmont-Oak Park Community Church (GOPCC). Since that time, dedicated volunteers from Ascension and GOPCC have been working together to improve on providing food for our neighbors in need.

Last year the pantry helped 1566 households, an increase from 1400 the previous year. Some concern has risen due to the fact that so many new families have been showing up in the past few months. The Pantry receives its largest contribution from the downtown food bank, which has also experienced a steady increase in customers over the last year.

More than ever the food drives are so important. "Financially, the pantry has been blessed by many donations from many people," says Jerry Kassman, the Food Trip Coordinator for the Food Pantry. "Ascension folks have been most generous this past year, seeing a real need for help."

"While the total numbers are large, we need to remember that there is always an individual person or family with a story or struggle that comes through our door for help," says Brian Donovan, Co-Chairperson of the Food Pantry Mission Outreach committee. "We are sincerely thankful for each one of you that gives a food item or monetary donation; this ministry truly wouldn't be possible without the generous people at GOPCC and Ascension."

There are now more than 40 regular volunteers from Ascension and the GOPCC. Jerry Kassman, credits his wife, Georgie, as his inspiration to get involved. "We kind of work as a team on most things and have done so in this venture for over 10 years." The Kassmans are joined by other Ascension volunteers including Janet Alderman, Wendy Mulligan, Arlene Phillips, and Tom and Audrey Loges. Volunteers can help in many ways, including taking food over from the Sunday collection, making trips to the downtown Food Bank and preparing Christmas baskets. More help is always welcome, especially during the winter when many of the regular volunteers take vacations.

Jerry Kassman has decided to hand over the Food Trip Coordinator position. This person will serve as contact person to the Food Bank, manage the volunteer teams, communicate with participating churches and manage the Christmas food basket preparation. Food Bank trips are every other

Tuesday morning and last about 3 hours. If interested, Please contact Jerry Kassman at 299-4975.

The Bible tell us (1 Kings 17:12-15) when we are willing to give what we have to help others, our generosity will be rewarded. The operators and volunteers for the Neighbor to Neighbor Food Pantry are very appreciative of all donations. The sharing of our time, talent and treasure is instrumental in providing for all in need and for growing to meet the continuously expanding needs of our community. Brian Donovan expresses his thanks. "One thing that I can say for sure is that the Pantry couldn't have expanded operations over the past 10 years without Ascension's partnership at every level ... from the Monday team feedings, to the Food Bank team (lead by Jerry), Christmas Basket preparation, and all the financial and food donations that come from your parish on a regular basis."

-Lauren Boyd

PARISH STAFF

Rev. Chris Worland *Pastor*
 Rev. Pat Tonry, SM *Weekend Associate*
 Deacon Vic Hildebrand *Pastoral Associate*
 Deacon Dan Kraus
 Jim Murray *Director of Ministry & Catechesis*
 Joe Ollier *Coordinator of Youth Ministry*
 Sr. Agnes Kramer, CDP *Pastoral Associate*
 Tom Platfoot *Business Manager*
 Diane Oliver *Parish Secretary*
 Wendi Mulligan *Evening Secretary*
 Dave Timpone *Music Director*
 Diane Larochele *Organist / Choir Director*

SCHOOL

Brent Devitt *Principal*
 Connie Wahle *Administrative Assistant*
 Sr. Maureen Heavey, RSM *Administrative Assistant*

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

Sue Graham *Coordinator of Religious Ed*
 Katherine Wagner *RE Programs Assistant*
 Cyndy Pellegrino .. *Early Childhood Coordinator*
 Maryellen Fargey *Sacramental Prep Coordinator*

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36th ANNUAL MARCH FOR LIFE

"Hey, hey ho, ho Roe v. Wade has got to go!" and "Pro-Choice that's a lie babies don't choose to die!" are a few of the numerous chants heard in Washington D.C. January 22, 2009 for the 36th Annual March for Life, which began in 1973. It is always on January 22 as that is when Roe v. Wade was passed. On January 18, 8:00 a.m., 32 people (18 youth and 14 adults), including Letitia Giambrone 94 year-old mother of parishioner Al Giambrone, departed from Ascension for D.C. for the March and Presidential Inauguration. Dubbed the Marching Knights, we arrived in D.C. through freezing rain, snow, and heavy inauguration traffic. Jeannette Niezgodski, trip coordinator, has run the trip for five years now and participated numerous preceding years.

After arrival, we began the day praying the Rosary for Life, in which each decade is devoted for a specific pro-life cause. We visited Sherrod Brown's office to deposit letters encouraging him to not support FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act). Many went to the American History Museum after singing 'Happy Birthday' to Abe Lincoln. On Inauguration Day a few trekked successfully to see it. Others were unsuccessful after only moving two feet in four hours! Most just watched it on TV at the hotel. Many went to the parade. Others went sightseeing.

We took a brief Supreme Court tour, purchased our March for Life apparel at the Right to Life Convention stopping Fr. Frank Provone for a quick photo, a stop at the newly opened Pentagon Memorial, and sat in the main part of the Basilica for the Pro-Life vigil Mass after a 3-1/2 hour wait. Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia and chairman of the USCCB Committee on pro-life activities was the principal celebrant and homilist. Thursday we went to a highly-praised, energizing Pro-Life youth Mass at the Verizon Center. The Rally was an amazing experience, seeing all the pro-life people gathered together was mind-blowing. We then went to the rally at the mall where we listened to speakers share experiences with abortion and messages to the government about being pro-life. We ended with the core event as we marched up Capitol Hill and said a prayer in front of the Supreme Court. About 250,000 people were vying for change, to be the voice of the unborn. The adventure ended at 4:15 a.m., January 23 as we unloaded, back at Ascension, but the feelings, friendships, and Pro-Life enthusiasm remains strong.

The March is a wonderful, exhilarating experience. Try to attend sometime in your life. You are never

too young or too old to go on this pilgrimage for life. Here is a prayer to end abortion by Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director Priests for Life:

Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life,
And for the lives of all my brothers and sisters.
I know there is nothing that destroys more life than
abortion,
Yet I rejoice that you have conquered death by the
Resurrection of your Son.
I am ready to do my part in ending abortion.
Today I commit myself
Never to be silent,
Never to be passive,
Never to be forgetful of the unborn.
I commit myself to be active in the Pro-Life
movement,
And never to stop defending life
Until all my brothers and sisters are protected,
And our nation once again becomes
A nation with liberty and justice
Not just for some, but for all,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen!

- Jennifer Balog, Carroll High School Senior

- Meagan Niezgodski, Beaver Creek High School
Sophomore



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

The anticipation builds as many of our students continue their preparation for sacraments. We have five children in the RCIA process who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil and will celebrate the Rite of Election with Archbishop Pilarczyk at Immaculate Conception Church on the First Sunday of Lent.

First Reconciliation will be celebrated on February 7. Thirty-five children have been prepared for the sacrament by their parents along with attending a Zacchaeus Day retreat. During the reconciliation service, which this year will be attended by both school and RE students, they will light candles which they decorated at home. For the first time, parents will have the opportunity to also participate in receiving the sacrament with their child.

Parents of children preparing for First Communion this year will meet on February 9 to receive the books and other materials that will be used to prepare the children at home for First Communion. The children will celebrate their First Communion with their families at weekend Masses during the Easter season.

Confirmation candidates are continuing their preparation by meeting with their sponsors and by doing acts of Christian service.

Early Childhood classes will celebrate Love Sunday in the School Cafeteria on February 8; their parents will join them after Mass to receive tokens of affection and to share refreshments.

Catechists are busy making special plans for their classes to observe Lent. "Little purple books" and rice bowl materials will be sent home in the Family Envelopes. Grades 2-5 will have a communal penance service during class time on March 23. Grades 6-8 will participate in the sacrament during classtime on March 15, 22 and 23.

Congratulations to the "Peacemakers of the Month" for November: Jonathan Doepker (grade 3) and Trace Jordan (grade 3); for December: Thomas Wisniewski (grade 1) and Tony Foster (grade 2).

Thank you to those who have been helping raise funds for the RE program through the Meijer Community Awards program. We now receive 1% of purchases made with a Meijer Credit Card and .5% of purchases made with cash or debit card using the Meijer One Card. Either way – your help is appreciated! Not signed up yet? Forms are available in the RE Office, or you can go online at www.meijer.com/mcr/rewards.jsp. Our number for Ascension Religious Education is **571556**. Thank you for your continued support!

SKI TRIP A WINTER BLAST!

The annual Youth Ministry/Boy Scout ski trip and retreat on January 24-25 was a winter blast before the weather blast the next week. Combine 70 Ascensionites with over 1000 Boy Scouts and beautiful Perfect North Slopes, and you've got yourself one great day! Skiing, snowboarding and tubing were the order of the day outside, while enough food and drink to feed an army kept everyone happy indoors. From first time skiers to seasoned veterans, Ascension's youth and their families used the time to bond as families, make new friends, and have wonderful time.

The overnight retreat the night before the ski trip took place at the Gamble Nippert YMCA on the west side of Cincinnati, and featured a powerful witness by Carroll Senior and Star Scout Matthew Curliss; games, activities, and small group discussion led by high school students and Scouts; Saturday Mass at a local parish; and swimming, basketball, racquetball, and a pretty competitive game of indoor Ultimate Frisbee during free time. Young people reflected on their journey of faith and the challenges that are part of the Christian walk.

We Catholics have a wonderful tradition of seeing the Sacramental nature on life, of finding God's grace everywhere. Whether it's careening down a snow covered slope, tasting the sweet goodness of hot cocoa, or sharing our faith with peers and family, God's grace is ever present. Praise him!



GREETINGS FROM NUESTRA SENORA DE LA LUZ

Padre Maximo Mesia Alacon, pastor of Nuestra Senora de la Luz, sent our Ascension family a Christmas letter. First Communion for 120 children and Confirmation for 98 took place December 8. Confirmation candidates collected clothing, food and toys for the poor, elderly and children. Padre Maximo said this is a very emotional event for the community as these young people come closer to Jesus.

"Posada" was carried out over nine days, a novena. In the reenactment, Mary and Joseph were refused shelter until they came to the house that took them in. The Mass of the Rooster, La Misa de Gallo, was celebrated close to midnight Christmas Eve. It is called this as the rooster was among the first to witness Jesus' birth, and thus be the one to announce it.

Padre Maximo shared his own reflections with us, paraphrased here: For many centuries people awaited the coming of Jesus Christ. This is what we relive at Christmas. Unfortunately, we (he included himself in this) today become so preoccupied with material things, preparing the house, making the food and buying things to decorate that we lose sight of what is most important, Jesus Christ.

Padre goes on to ask us to focus on the revelation of Christmas - "God is with us!" Jesus is being born to call us to conversion and reconciliation that prepares us so He can live within us. We need interior silence in our daily life to prepare ourselves and recognize Jesus within us. Jesus joins the family of humanity as the Son of Man to make us part of His divine Family. Thus, love is born. This is the salvation Jesus gives us, this is our real celebration!

Spend a few minutes with the people of our twinning parish, Nuestra Senora de la Luz, at www.panaluz.com. Learn more about twinning - call Steve Mueller, 299-8035 or Lois Keil, 299-0257 or the parish office.

WE WELCOME:

- Lawrence & Suzanne Kalal, Meriline Ave
- Michael Maize, Meadowcroft Rd
- Christopher & Ann Zukoski, Farrington Drive
- Lorie & Charles Cassity, Taggart St
- Marie & Gordon Jones, Margate Drive
- Heather & Thomas Wade, Mohican Ave
- Mary Jo McCarty & Jim Denker, Robertann Drive
- Melissa & Kevin Pierce, Coventry Rd
- Bradley Stolfa, Ferncliff Ave
- George & Jane Bebout, Martin Way
- Darren & Tera Stockler, Ferncliff Avenue
- Brian & Tricia Beecroft, Morse Ave



COMPLETING THE CATHOLIC JOURNEY

Danny and Samantha Johnson started attending Mass at Ascension Church more than two years ago when their son enrolled in the 4th grade at Ascension

School. The couple, who had been born and raised in the Dayton area, instantly felt welcome. "People accepted us, and our son Ben, right away," Samantha said. "It was kind of like we've always gone here. We never really felt like the 'new' people." After being in school a short time, Ben was drawn to become Catholic and completed the RCIA program last Easter. The feeling was contagious, spreading to Danny and Samantha who started their trek a short time later.

The couple, along with **Barb Frey**, finished their journey on January 11 when they were welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church at 10:30 Mass. After receiving Confirmation, the trio also received First Eucharist. The event was a culmination of more than six months of the RCIA program. All three were previously baptized in another Christian tradition.

"It was an incredible experience," Danny said of becoming Catholic. "All of it started with the families we met through the school. It's brought us closer to our faith and our walk with God."

Rick and Lisa McCaffrey sponsored the Johnsons. The couples have been friends since their kids started kindergarten together.

Barb Frey of Kettering, had been attending a church of another faith but over the last ten years began coming to Ascension occasionally with her husband, Bob. "I had been thinking about it and praying about it for a long time," Barb said about her decision to become Catholic. "I really loved (RCIA); I really enjoyed the classes a lot." Maryann Wendlyn was Barb's sponsor.

Father Chris Worland, pastor of Ascension, was impressed with the three newcomers to the faith. "They just strike me as very sincere people," he said. "It's always a privilege for me as a priest to receive adults - baptizing them and confirming them. That's always a highlight of my priesthood because these are folks who are choosing the faith. They've been elsewhere and they've chosen what we've been given."

SCHOOL NEWS

Helping Families Better Afford Catholic Education

Parents considering a Catholic Education for their children are reminded of the old adage, "Where there is a will there is a way." Ascension has historically had the lowest tuition in the metropolitan Dayton area, yet with rising costs in the past 10 years tuition at Ascension has doubled. This trend is universally shared by many Catholic Schools in the area. It's a result of a number of factors including rising costs and lessening dependence upon parish support. Still 35% of the school's annual budget is supported by the generosity of Ascension parishioners, while 55% of the school budget is covered by parent tuition. Another 15% percent of school revenue is generated from a combination of state funding, gifts and the Ascension PTO (Parent Teacher Organization).

The goal of Ascension Parish remains that no child will be refused admission based solely on an inability to pay the full tuition. Ascension Parish will be adding \$10,000 in additional tuition assistance for the 2009-10 school year, which is up from \$30,000 to \$40,000, thanks to the growing Education Ascension Fund built largely on proceeds from Ascension BINGO.

The process for parents to request tuition assistance begins with completing a PSAS (Private School Aid Service) application. This may be completed online from the school website. Beside Education Ascension assistance funds there are scholarship and tuition assistance options available through **PACE (Parents Advancing Choice in Education)** and the **Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program**.

Catholic families also are encouraged to consider participation in Partnerships for Success, a Dayton area initiative to match employers with parents and young adults with part time positions to help them supplement their family income to help pay for tuition.

Information about these tuition assistance opportunities may be accessed online in the **Prospective Student** section of the school website at: ascensionkettering.org/ascension-school/

FR. WITZMAN SCHOLARSHIP

(Continued from page 1)

Pastor Arnold Witzman. In addition to the winners of the high school scholarships numerous Ascension families have received elementary school and religious education tuition assistance through the Witzman Fund.

ASCENSION STUDENTS BUSY AS BEES THIS WINTER

National Geography Bee Winners

Winner's of our school National Geography Bee on Jan. 9 were: 1st place **Alex Trimbach** (Gr. 7). and 2nd place **Luke Sheidler** (Gr. 5) Alex received a medal and certificate and has taken the state qualifying test for the chance to qualify for the state competition. Here's a list of all participants and winners in their respective grade levels:

- Gr. 4 – Renae Vulgamore, Justin Koesel
- Gr. 5 – Luke Sheidler, Danny Barbaro
- Gr. 6 – Patrick Hemmert, Claudia McAllister
- Gr. 7 – Alex Trimbach, Cassidy Stevens
- Gr. 8 – Ashlyn Steineman, Joe Minardi



Spelling Bee Winners

Our School Spelling Bee was held on Dec. 12. Winners in our school bee were: 1st – **Brian McLaughlin**, 2nd – **Craig Ramby**, 3rd – **Rachel Ollier**. Brian represented Ascension at the Kettering District Spelling Bee in January. Grade level participants were:

- Gr. 2 - Austin Thayer, Sam Hunter
- Gr. 3 - Elysia Smith, Mattaus Tracy
- Gr. 4 - Meg Hemmert, Hannah Eberly
- Gr. 5 - Luke Sheidler, Rachel Ollier
- Gr. 6 - Alan Vest, Julia Farrell
- Gr. 7 - Andy Walker, Craig Ramby
- Gr. 8 - Brian McLaughlin, A.J. Michalo



TROOP 167's EAGLE'S NEST CONTINUES TO GROW

During the last two years, Ascension's Boy Scout Troop 167 has produced ten members who have attained the prestigious rank of Eagle. All of these Scouts have dedicated hundreds of hours to reaching this goal and each completed a challenging project. Each of these projects required that the Scouts learned to plan, organize and lead others to complete the task. Listed below are the five most recent recipients, the others will be recognized in the next issue of the *Voice*.



Kevin Stroud graduated from Fairmont and is currently attending Bowling Green University. His project involved organizing a food drive for St. Vincent De Paul and then leading a group of volunteers to reorganize the food pantry at the St. Vincent Hotel.

Kevin is majoring in sports management and communications with a goal to become a sportscaster and writer.

Adam Becker attends Carroll and his project consisted of constructing storage facilities to house baby cribs



and mattresses at the Elizabeth New Life Center. Adam plans to attend UD and major in history.

Andrew Becker also attends Carroll and wants to pursue a degree in business at the University of Dayton. For his project, Andrew renovated a storage room into a parish library at Holy Trinity. He also organized their collection of books, tapes and periodicals.

David Brun graduated from Chaminade Julianne and currently attends UD. David created a memorial area at his high school where students can reflect on the life and selfless actions of Sr. Dorothy Stang.



Nick Fahrig attends Beaver creek H. S. and has plans to attend UD to major in computer engineering. Nick designed and built wooden benches and other structures at Lake Loramie State Park.

Congratulations to all of these Scouts, their parents and the leaders of Troop 167.



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