

Exploring®

Youth Leader Guide

Welcome to Exploring

As you begin this guide, you might know little or nothing about Exploring or you might already have experience as an Explorer post officer. Wherever you're starting, you will find this guide useful.

The purpose of this guide is to help you understand what it means to be a youth leader in an Explorer post. It answers questions about

- Effective leadership
- Planning
- Practical help
- Responsibilities

What Is Exploring?

Exploring is Learning for Life's career-education program for young men and women age 14 (and have completed the eighth grade) to 20 years old.

That's the factual, outside definition of Exploring. Let's look for a moment at Exploring from the inside, at the spirit of Exploring.

Exploring is a catalyst. It brings together adults and young people. The experiences that can emerge from this group of people are up to the people themselves. For example, a post in Minnesota organized an activity to go sailing off the coast of Africa. A post in Houston sent along experiments on a recent space-shuttle mission. A post in California worked nearly 10,000 hours making the nature trails of Angeles National Forest more accessible to the visually impaired by installing trail posts in braille to identify the forest's flora and fauna.

Exploring is discovery. With discovery, you step into the unknown, into new areas; you grow. In Exploring, this discovery is guided. Ideas so

not stay on the drawing board; they happen. You learn how to go from a dream to a reality.

Exploring is empowering. Most of us have some sense of our abilities and strengths. Maybe we haven't had the opportunity, however, to bring those abilities into the open. Exploring is empowering because people discover things about themselves they never realized before. You might be surprised to learn that you are a good negotiator, creative when it comes to program suggestions, quick to react to change, and insightful when reflecting on an experience—these are the kinds of abilities necessary in any career.

In Exploring, you will have the opportunity to pursue a career interest; but you will discover much more. It is this "much more" that best describes Exploring.

What Has Happened Up to This Point?

Most of this guide is about looking ahead, to the kinds of things you will be doing as an officer in an Explorer post. But for a moment, to better understand that which you are becoming a part, look back at what happened before you were elected to office.

These important things have already happened:

1. Your participating organization made a definite commitment to organize your Explorer post. That meant organizing a post committee, identifying and selecting a good Advisor and associate Advisors, and working with Learning for Life representatives.
2. Adult leaders attended Advisor training.
3. Adults associated with your post completed the adult resource survey. Your Advisor, post committee, and other adults indicated how they are willing to share their careers, skills, and outside contacts with the post.
4. Young people received invitations to attend the open house, the first post meeting at which

new youth participants are recruited.

5. The participating organization, post committee, and adult leaders carefully planned the first few month's meeting programs.
6. The post has been organized with the local Learning for Life office.
7. Post participants elected officers.

These are activities designed to give your post a solid foundation from an organizational standpoint and with a view of establishing Exploring spirit—the spirit to explore.

The Explorer Motto

Our best today for a better tomorrow!

Responsibilities of an Explorer Officer

As an Explorer officer, you are encouraged to take responsibility for many facets of the post's operations and others. Your role as an Explorer officer is to

- foster and develop an environment within your Explorer post that has a true sense of community and encourages growth and

- responsibility,
- work in a spirit of partnership with the post Advisors,
- develop a program of activities for your post and carry them out,
- uphold the standards and policies of the participating organization and Learning for Life,
- ensure that activities are conducted within safety guidelines and requirements,
- cultivate the capacity to enjoy life—to have fun and explore as you lead.

Position Descriptions for Explorer Post Officers

An Explorer post has five officer positions:

- President
- Administrative vice president
- Program vice president
- Secretary
- Treasurer

(Officer titles can be used to reflect the normal titles used by the participating organization.)

Post President

- Serves as youth leader of the post
- Implements the post program in cooperation with officers and participants

- Works closely with Advisors and other adult leaders in a spirit of partnership
- Represents the post at Learning for Life program planning conferences and is available to report to the participating organization and post committee
- Assists the post Advisor in conducting the post officers' seminar
- Appoints youth chairs for special projects and appoints special post officers
- Presents the annual report to the participating organization at the conclusion of the term of office
- Assesses frequently whether the responsibilities of the officers are being considered and carried out effectively
- Approaches Exploring, and encourages others to approach Exploring, in a spirit of fun and enjoyment

As president, you are the primary leader of your post. You were selected by post participants as the best person to lead and represent them. Being president carries honor and privilege, but it also requires hard work, responsibility, and dedication.

You share the responsibilities of leading your post with the other elected officers, working together to develop a leadership team. When you delegate specific responsibilities to other officers and participants, it is your responsibility, with the support of your Advisor, to encourage and follow up to be sure that their jobs have been carried out. You provide leadership at all post meetings and activities, and you conduct monthly officers' meetings in consultation with your Advisor. Communication with your Advisor, officers, and post participants is essential.

You also represent post members to the participating organization. You should know their needs and desires so you can adequately represent the post.

You set an example for participants by following the rules and standards of the post. You may counsel individual post participants who have problems, questions, or concerns. Listen to what they say and help them find answers that are best for the post.

With your Advisor, direct the planning of your post

program and use this guide to plan meetings and activities. The post president appoints post participants to serve as activity chairs. With your Advisor's help, select participants who are suited to the activity and need leadership experience. Coaching and follow-up are necessary to be sure they understand what to do.

Don't hesitate to ask your Advisor for help. That is the Advisor's responsibility. It is likely that neither of you know everything about Exploring, but together you can learn how to make your post succeed. It is important that you work with, not around, your Advisor, who is held responsible by the post's participating organization for the programs and actions of your post.

Your duty as post president is exciting, important, and challenging. You are one person who can really make the difference in how successful your post is. Read this guide carefully and attend Learning for Life program conferences to learn from other post presidents.

Administrative Vice President

- Serves as administrative officer of the post
- Assumes the responsibilities of the post president in his or her absence
- Leads the recruitment and admission of new youth participants during the year
- Organizes and recognizes the achievements of post participants
- Conducts opening and closing ceremonies for special occasions as scheduled
- Attends all post activities
- Participates in the Learning for Life program conference
- Approaches Exploring in a spirit of fun and seeks to reflect this spirit when recruiting new youth participants and by recognizing the achievements of post youth participants

Two key responsibilities characterize your position:

1. Leading the recruiting efforts for new post youth participants,
2. Managing the recognition of youth participants.

First, you provide leadership for the recruitment of new youth participants into the

post by ensuring that prospective participants are made aware of the post and are invited to the post open house and encouraging youth participants to bring friends to post meetings. You follow up with any youth participants who seem to be losing interest. Find out why, so that their needs can be addressed in officers' meetings and planning.

Second, you are responsible for recognizing participants and making them feel a part of the post. When prospective participants come to the post open house, it is your responsibility to welcome each one. It is also your job to stage the installation ceremony, admitting new youth participants if such a ceremony is a tradition in your post.

It is your responsibility to recognize the achievements of individual youth participants, honoring those who win scholarships or awards or gain other achievements in or out of Exploring. You may also conduct opening and closing ceremonies to add color and meaning to post meetings.

Program Vice President

- Serves as the program officer of the post and, in that position, arranges the program planning process for the post
- Collects and maintains a post activity file consisting of the adult resource survey, a list of post youth participant interests and suggestions for activities, program resources, and an annual activity schedule
- Determines the interests of the post youth participants on an ongoing basis using the Explorer activity interest survey
- Provides support for the chair and committee for each activity
- Maintains an up-to-date calendar of post meetings and activities
- Approaches and encourages others to approach Exploring activities in a spirit of fun and enjoyment

Much of a post's success depends on the program of activities, and managing the development of a good program is the core of your responsibility. Exploring is based on planning a program that meets the needs and interests of post participants. This is done by asking post

members what they want to see their post do and being sure that meetings and activities are adequately evaluated after they take place.

It is your responsibility to maintain an activity file of programs, projects, and trips in which the post can participate. Base this file of ideas for activities on responses you have collected from the adult resource survey, Explorer activity interest survey, and activity planners completed by activity chairs. Keep your ears open for ideas from unexpected sources, and ask other posts with your career or interest what they are doing.

You are also responsible for keeping an up-to-date post schedule and being sure that all the participants in the post know what is happening. You maintain the post's calendar and should coordinate it with school and community calendars to avoid scheduling conflicts. It might be useful to publish a calendar or newsletter on a regular basis to keep post participants informed.

You help the post's activity chairs plan and conduct successful activities by sharing ideas from the

activity file, discussing possible activities, and coordinating their dates with the post calendar.

One of the post's associate Advisors is recruited to help with program responsibilities. Meet as often as possible with this person to share ideas, improve the activity file, support activity chairs, and review the interests of youth participants.

Secretary

- Serves as the communications officer and, in that position, manages all communications and publicity for the post
- Maintains post participation and attendance records
- Handles post correspondence and minutes
- Coordinates post publicity through local media, post newsletters, and the post's telephone network
- Approaches Exploring in a spirit of fun and reflects this spirit in the publicity and communications of the post

Effective communication is a key ingredient in any organization. As the post secretary, you are primarily responsible for the

communication that needs to be put into writing—correspondence, records, and minutes showing decisions, plans, and publicity. It is up to you to ensure that everyone has the right information.

You keep minutes of officers' meetings and post meetings, which include post decisions and action taken by officers. You record the names of those assigned to carry out activities, including all dates, times, locations, and important details.

You remind the president and other officers of agreed-upon decisions that affect them. Most people appreciate a friendly reminder.

You keep participation records for the post using the Explorer secretary's records, which will help you keep accurate enrollment and attendance information. You supervise all post correspondence, calling officers' attention to important items and writing letters on behalf of the post.

You help the program vice president publish a schedule or newsletter for post participants and keep them informed about meeting plans, activities, and last-

minute changes. You should organize a telephone network among post participants. You handle all publicity through school or community newspapers, newsletters, radio, television, speakers, bulletin boards, and other media.

Effective communication is an important leadership skill. You have the challenge and the opportunity to use this skill for your post. An adult participant of the post committee may be assigned to assist you. If you become overwhelmed by the publicity and communications needs of your post, don't hesitate to enlist the help of other post youth participants. Sharing your responsibility with others is part of Exploring. It's a quality of good leadership.

Treasurer

- Serves as the financial officer and, in that position, maintains financial records and monitors the post budget
- Collects and disburses post funds
- Communicates with officers and participants on a regular basis to keep them informed about the post's finances

- Approaches Exploring in a spirit of fun and spreads this spirit in carrying out the treasurer's responsibilities

As post treasurer, you are responsible for keeping accurate records of income and expenditures. Your post expects an exact accounting of all the money taken in or paid out.

You collect, deposit, and account for all money coming to the post from dues, money-earning projects, or other sources. If your post collects dues, you keep accurate records and review them with the other officers at officers' meetings. You make regular reports at post meetings and officers' meetings on the status of the post's budget and treasury.

Use the Explorer treasurer's records to help you set up a budget by estimating income and expenses based on the post's activity calendar. Review this budget with post officers, your Advisor, and the chair for each activity.

You see to it that all expenditures are approved by post officers and the Advisor before writing any checks. An adult auditor from the post

committee may be assigned to assist you in setting up bookkeeping procedures, bank accounts, and money-handling methods.

Explorer Activity Interest Surveys

The adult resource survey process provides the post with information concerning the expertise and availability of the adults associated with the post. This expertise must be matched to the interests of the post. That is the purpose of the Explorer activity interest survey.

Ideally, the Explorer activity interest survey should be conducted at the open house or prior to the post activity program development meeting because it is at this meeting that you develop the year's program of activities. You need to know the interests of your youth participants to make this program meaningful. It is also important that you continue to conduct Explorer activity interest surveys consistently throughout the year to fine-tune your program as the year progresses.

As officers, you can design your own method for gathering information about the interests of your post youth participants.

Whatever method you choose, it is important that it accomplish three things:

- All participants are surveyed for their interests.
- Every participant feels that his or her interests are important to the post and is, therefore, open about expressing his or her interests and ideas for activities.
- The results of the surveys are put into writing and filed.

The program vice president should ensure that Explorer activity interest surveys are conducted on a regular basis, and the secretary should ensure that the results are in writing and filed.

Post Officers' Seminar

The post officers' seminar is a training and planning seminar for newly elected officers. It is led by your Advisor, associate Advisors, and the post president. This is an extremely important session because it provides in-depth training for officers.

The objectives of the post officers' seminar are

- to have you, the youth officers, learn your position responsibilities,
- to build a working leadership team,
- to set goals for the officers,
- to acquaint the officers with Exploring leadership skills and program-planning tools.

This is the first time you, as officers, actually undertake your leadership responsibilities. This is a hands-on seminar. You will clarify the expectations and goals for your post. You will make important decisions. You will consider how to share your program and get the entire post committed to it.

That is why the seminar is so important; it is an experience that, in one day, parallels the kind of leadership you will need to exercise throughout the coming year.

Regular Post Meetings

It is up to each individual post to determine how many regular meetings it holds each month. Most posts have a minimum of two meetings. At a post meeting, you need to take time to discuss important

business, but the rest of the time should be reserved for the planned activity.

The president leads the post meeting. Develop a detailed, written agenda for each meeting, and give a copy to those on the program. The program vice president and activity chair prepare the room, program materials, and equipment. The activity chair makes reminder phone calls to program presenters or consultants. The president should ensure that all post meetings start on time. All meetings should have an opening and closing. Introduce guests, and make them feel welcome.

In a post meeting, the report and business items should be handled efficiently to be sure youth participants know the issues and understand what is going to happen. Give activity chairs for upcoming events time to briefly explain and promote their activity. Ask post officers to make regular, but brief, reports. The administrative vice president or secretary follows up with youth participants who missed a meeting to inform them of any business or announcements.

Qualities of a Good Program

Every post wants a successful and satisfying post program. How can you achieve that kind of program in your post? Every program will be different because every post is unique, but certain things contribute to that uniqueness. The post program should

- demonstrate a good match between the adult resource survey and the Explorer activity interest surveys;
- address the needs and interests of the post members;
- be balanced and centered on the five program emphasis areas;
- involve as many post participants as possible through the course of the year in suggesting ideas for activities, planning the activities, and participating in the activities;
- be based on careful, consistent planning by the Explorers;
- emphasize new skills, new ideas, experiences, and challenges.

Role of the Activity Chair

The activity chair is selected by the post president and

Advisor and is responsible for planning, promoting, and staging an activity. For relatively simple activities, the activity chair alone may be sufficient to carry out these three responsibilities. However, some activities in a post are more complicated. For these, the activity chair recruits a committee and, depending upon the activity, receives help from the Advisor, post committee, and consultants.

For example, if the activity is a bowling night, the activity chair probably can organize, promote, and run it alone. However, if the activity is a waterskiing party, then the activity chair might need other Explorers and adults to help with things such as equipment and transportation. Use the adult resource survey to find adults who can serve as consultants, obtain equipment, provide instruction, or supervise safety procedures.

When a committee works with the activity chair to plan an activity, the chair and the committee should go through the planning steps together. Be sure that the Exploring activity planner is filled out and filed.

Post Bylaws

The post president may appoint a committee chaired by the administrative vice president to draft the post bylaws. The draft is to be reviewed and approved by the officers and then approved by the post youth participants. Subsequent additions and revisions can be made at a regular officers' meeting and presented for approval at the next post meeting.

Elected post officers are expected to live by and enforce the post bylaws. New youth members should be given a copy of the bylaws and asked to sign or otherwise indicate that they understand and agree to them.

The Explorer motto should be the preamble to your post bylaws. (See Guide, Suggested Post Bylaws at www.Learning-for-Life.Org/Exploring.)

Post bylaws often include

- Participating organization policies
- Post meeting and operation plan
- Youth leadership standards
- Participation standards
- Behavior standards, expectations/resolution
- Meeting pattern
- Dress code

- Financial or money-earning expectations
- Purpose and mission of post
- Adult leader organization

Helpful Exploring Tools at

www.learning-for-life.org/exploring

Book, Secretary's Records

Book, Treasurer's Records

Clip Art, Exploring

Form, Approval of Parents or Guardians

Form, Brainstorming Five Program Areas

Form, Money-Earning

Application

Games, Challenge Initiative

Games, Cooperative

Games, Problem-Solving Initiative

Guide, Becoming a Leader (post officers)

Guide, Developing Youth Leaders

Guide, Exploring for People With Disabilities

Guide, Leadership Checkup (post Advisor)

Guide, Leadership Checkup (post officers)

Guide, Post Advisor's Reflection

Guide, Post Officers' Reflection

Guide, Problem-solving Skills

Guide, Suggested Post Bylaws

How to Brainstorm

How to Conduct a Post Parents' Night

How to Develop Service Projects

How to Earn Money

How to Generate Publicity

How to Introduce a Speaker

How to Lead a Discussion

How to Make a Speech

How to Plan Your Superactivity

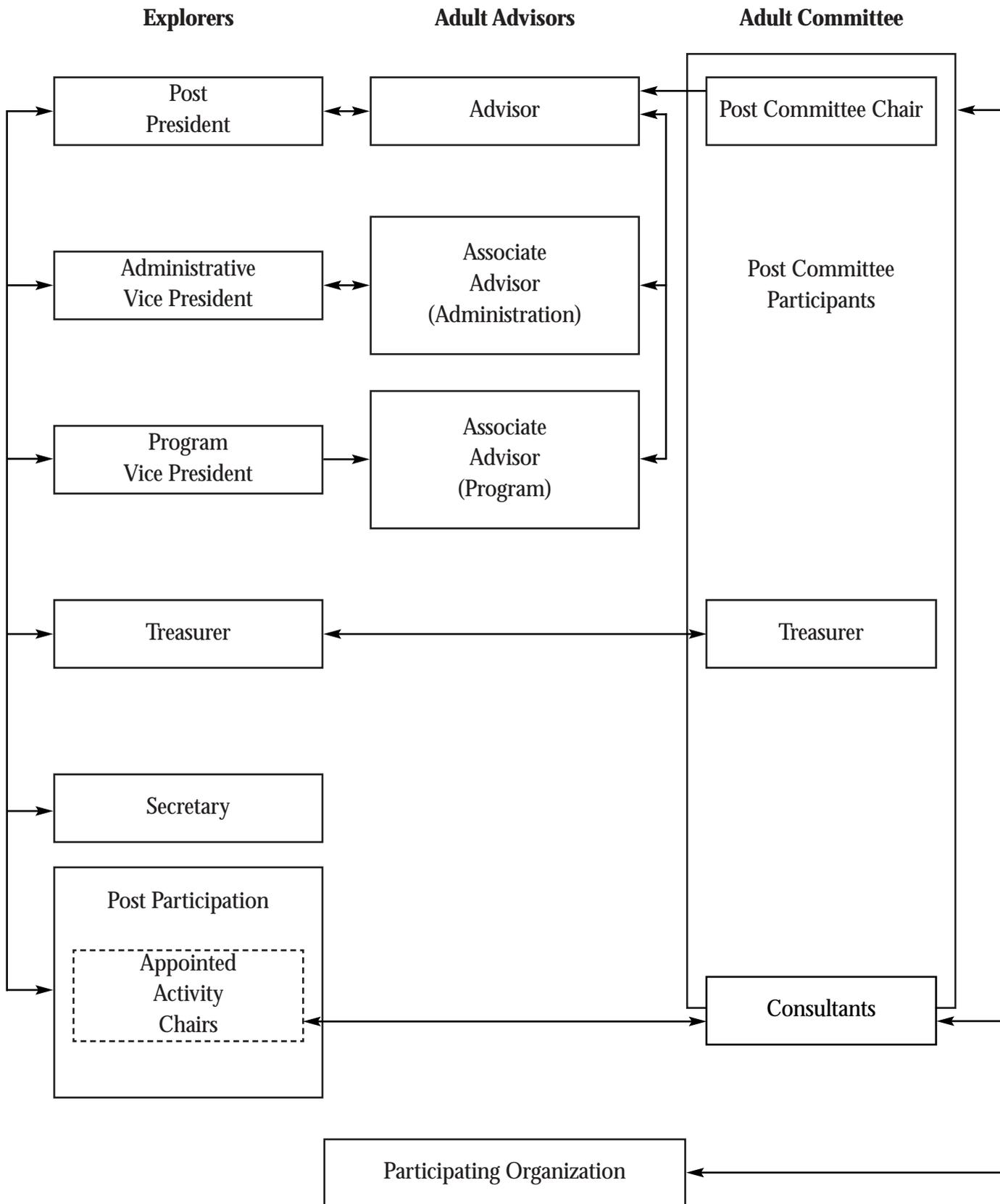
How to Recruit New Participants

How to Teach a Skill

How to Use Charts and Posters

How to Use Parliamentary Procedure

Typical Post Organization Chart



Exploring Activity Planner

Youth Activity Chairperson _____ Adult Consultant _____

Youth Phone No. _____ Adult Phone No. _____

Other information _____

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

RESOURCES NEEDED _____

ALTERNATIVES What is the alternate plan in case of bad weather or other factors? _____

PERSONNEL

Delegate responsibilities to appropriate members.

Job to be done

Assigned To

Follow up—At additional meetings and through personal contacts, follow up on all assignments until you are sure you are all set. If the going gets rough, call on your Advisor for help.

CARRY OUT THE PLAN/CONDUCT THE ACTIVITY

Just before the activity, double-check all arrangements.

NOTES: _____

After the activity, thank everyone involved, and leave things clean and in good order.

AFTER-ACTION EVALUATION

Use a separate sheet to explain your reasons for how you answered.

Should the post do this activity again? ____ Yes ____ No

Number participating: _____ Explorers _____ friends _____ adults

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Explorer Activity Interest Survey

Look at the list, and place a check mark in front of three items you would like to see planned as part of the Explorer post program for this year. Use the lines on the last three items to write in suggestions that are not on this list.

Name: _____ School: _____

Bowling

Movies

Sports Activities:

Camping

Music

Career Clinic

Photography

College Planning

River/White-water
Rafting

Hobby Interests:

Community Clean-up
Project

Rock
Climbing/Rappelling

Computers

Roller Skating

Other Ideas:

Conservation Project

Sailing/Canoeing

Cycling

Snorkeling/Scuba
Diving

Dance

Field Sports

Snow Skiing

First Aid Training

Swimming

Fishing

Tour of City (area)

Horseback Riding

TV or Radio Station Visit

Ice Skating

Waterskiing