

# **Education**

## **Going for the Gold Award: Girl Scouts, Cavers, and Government Working Together for Cave and Karst Sourcewater Protection**

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### **Abstract**

Good things can happen when diverse groups of people work together. This is one example. The Girl Scouts of the Virginia Skyline Council Adventurers have provided many opportunities to educate young people and the public about the importance of cave conservation and karst sourcewater protection. Involvement with the Adventurers began with a few Girl Scout Caving Trips led by the author with assistance from members of the VPI Cave Club. Presentation of a strong safety and conservation message and basic information on cave science was a major element of every trip. Over the years, as the program's reputation gradually became established, opportunities to spread the word about karst-related environmental issues presented themselves. Occasional feature stories in area newspapers provided an excellent venue to inform the public about why karst sourcewater protection and cave conservation are essential. The scout trips continued at a rate of two or three trips per year. The aim was to allow small groups of motivated young people to learn about and experience caves without appreciably increasing the number of new cavers. One particularly enjoyable media experience was a project to produce a piece on the Adventurers Caving Program for the National Geographic Today Show. The National Geographic Television segment delivered a strong cave conservation message to a national audience. A recent project to clean out a trash dump from Nellies Cave in Blacksburg, Virginia, involved cooperation between girl scouts, members of the Virginia Region of the NSS, local and state government agencies, and the news media.

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### **About the Author**

Joey Fagan started caving in 1966 in Virginia. He works as a Karst Protection Specialist for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage Karst Program. Joey currently serves as the Secretary of the Virginia Cave Board. He is one of the founding members of the Blue Ridge Grotto, a member and Conservation Chairman of the VPI Cave Club, and active in the Virginia Region of the

NSS. He was VAR Conservation Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer during the 1970s as well as a past Director of the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias and of the Virginia Speleological Survey. He serves as the Caving Coordinator for the Girl Scouts of the Virginia Skyline Council Adventurers Program and is on the NSS Youth Group Liaison Committee. Joey has been a member of the NSS for more than 35 years and became a Fellow of the Society in 2003.