



The Fantastic FOCUS Event

What it is and how to run one

by Jessica Page

What is FOCUS?

With the 100th anniversary of our global Movement approaching, councils across the country are gearing up for a host of special jamborees and events, including CJ'07! A common prerequisite for youth Offers of

Service (OoS) at many of these activities is completion of a FOCUS event. So, just what is this, and how can you get a FOCUS event going for youth in your community? Read on — this article is for you!

FOCUS (Future Of Canada United in Scouting) is a “for-youth-by-youth” leadership event aimed towards Venturers and Rovers. First developed by the National Youth Committee in 1997, it was presented to a delegation of young people in the Scouting Movement from all across Canada at a conference called Forum '97. Those youth were given all the necessary materials to bring it back to their local communities; then helped spread their knowledge throughout the country. That's what makes FOCUS so special — it's designed such that any member of our older sections can pick up the trainer's manual, read it, and feel confident enough to present the material to their peers.

The basic FOCUS material consists of five modules which cover important skills for developing strong leadership ability:

Module #1—Who Am I? This module encourages participants to look within to identify strengths, as well as potential areas for improvement, and help to define an individual's character.

Module #2—Effective Communication This module covers the importance of clear, two-way communication in all facets of life and provides a wealth of tips for achieving this goal.

Module #3—Group Dynamics and Teamwork Participants learn the different roles people play when contributing

towards a team reaching a common goal. This module usually includes lots of experiential learning with tons of fun teamwork games!

Module #4—Goal Setting This module encourages participants to get into the habit of making goals for both their personal and Scouting lives, and provides ideas and support to help them with goal definition.

Module #5—Situational Leadership Different groups respond to different styles of leadership. Participants will learn tips on how to analyze the group they are working with and adapt their leadership style accordingly.

The module-based nature of FOCUS material provides great flexibility for delivery. It can be run all at once in a fun, themed, camp environment, or it can be run a module at a time in the evening at a local Scout hall — whatever works best for your area and group.

FOCUS provides two resources: a trainer's and participant's manual, which act as a fill-in-the-blanks supplement to the program. The trainer's manual contains detailed information about each of the topics covered in the syllabus, as well as suggestions of activities to help teach the concepts. By no means do trainers need to stick to the outlined activities; they can use whatever fun, inventive, and creative techniques they desire to teach FOCUS skills. **A FOCUS event is only as good as the trainers make it.** It is well worth



**When everyone
pulls together,
a tricky
challenge
is easy.**

Photographs: Jessica Page

After playing tin-foil fashion, you're not strangers any more. Strange maybe, but not strangers.



the trainers' time to put the effort into modifying it to best suit their group's age range, attention span, time constraints, and geographic needs. The most successful events require minimum sitting and listening and maximum moving and participating. "That game we just played taught us about two-way communication? No way!"

Just Another Hoop To Jump Through?

Although they might not realize it at the time, the knowledge gained in a weekend FOCUS event will stick with the participants, and they will find those skills pop into action at the most unlikely times. On top of that, FOCUS events can be super fun and provide an opportunity to meet new youth in their area or refresh old friendships.

For the trainers, planning and running a FOCUS event provides a learning opportunity that is difficult to achieve for people our age. It's one thing to plan a dance through your student council or a bottle drive for your group, but try planning an entire weekend leadership camp for 25 of your peers, covering every detail from food and lodging to training and recognition! I have personally seen youth positively blossom from the early planning to the final stages of completion. Plus, it looks great on a résumé. But don't take my word for it. Here are some real quotes from Scouts Canada's youth:

"What I found good and useful about FOCUS was that it brought Scouts from a wide geographic area together to learn in a smaller group" – Lee Turner, Venturer

"FOCUS was a weekend where I got to meet new people from all over the [BC] northwest. We learned about who we really were, played some awesome games, learned new things and made new friends. I don't know anyone who [has] gone to a FOCUS of some sort and not had a good time. It's just something you have to experience for yourself and have a blast." – Sam MacLachlan, Rover

"The general evaluation from the participants for the FOCUS [event] was that it was very well-run, well-planned, and the trainers were really good at what they did. Many asked to help train at future FOCUS events, which made the trainers think that we must have done a good job!" – Amanda Zutz, Rover

"This weekend has been so much fun! Thanks for reminding me why I stuck with Scouting." – Venturer participant

You've sold me! How Do I Get One Going in My Area?

Any Venturer or Rover can get a team of youth trainers together and run an event in their area. Of course, getting some guidance from an adult advisor is OK, too. To obtain a copy of the trainer's manual, contact your Deputy Council Commissioner for Youth, or your local Scout office. Although the trainer's manual provides all the information to run a FOCUS event, it is usually best if at least someone on the training team has completed the program themselves. Your local DCC-Youth should be able to provide guidance specific to your community.

Take the challenge: Put on a FOCUS event for the youth of your community today! You'll see the benefits in both them AND you. ^

– Jessica Page is DEC-Youth (Western) and a 3-time FOCUS event leader. She has trained in BC and the Yukon, and loved every minute of it!

Linking to Strategic Direction #4.

Communication Confusion!

Materials: jar of peanut butter, jar of jam, loaf of bread (in bag), knife

Directions:

Ask for a volunteer from the group who thinks they are a good communicator. Tell them that one of the trainers is a robot who does not know how to make a PB&J sandwich, and that they will have to provide the robot with all instructions for the creation of the sandwich. The participant will then dictate instructions to the robot, who will follow them EXACTLY. (i.e. "put the peanut butter on the bread" would result in the jar of peanut butter being placed on top of the loaf of bread)

Debrief: Discuss with the group how tricky the task was and how easy it was for a seemingly simple statement to be misinterpreted. Talk about similar situations seen in real life (i.e. e-mails taken the wrong way)

Variations: Try other tasks, such as: brushing teeth, getting dressed, and setting up a tent.