

MARKHAM WOODS PATHFINDER CLUB

HANDBOOK

2023 – 2024

Statement of Mission

The mission of the Markham Woods Pathfinder Club is, through spiritual, social, outreach, and outdoor activities, to develop in the church's young people a lasting respect and love for God, for family, for others, for the church and for nature.

Statement of Philosophy

Pathfinder-age young people are at a pivotal stage in their lives: They are establishing their own identities, fine-tuning their values and assuming increasing responsibility. To assist in this developmental process, the Markham Woods Church provides active Sabbath School and Christian Education programs. The Pathfinder Club offers an additional experience that focuses on hands-on learning and growth opportunities that for many may not be available anywhere else.

Young people have a natural love of adventure. Thus, the Pathfinder Club utilizes camping and other exciting nature activities to teach lessons and develop individual and team skills that will be beneficial throughout life.

Statement of General Goals

1. Teach spiritual concepts through outdoor adventure activities.
2. Teach young people both individual and team skills.
3. Develop in each young person a sense of self-worth and self-reliance.
4. Create a bond of friendship and respect between young people and adults.
5. Ensure a sense of belonging to the individual unit, to the Pathfinder Club, to the Markham Woods congregation and to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
6. Inspire a desire to serve others.
7. Promote a love and respect for nature.
8. Instill a sensitivity for the feelings of others.
9. Teach personal responsibility and self-control.
10. Encourage young people to transfer the skills and lessons learned in Pathfinders to their family, school, church and community.

General Information

Membership Criteria

The Markham Woods Pathfinder Club is open to young people in grades 4-12. There was a time (not too long ago) when anyone could join Markham Woods Pathfinders, but the club got way too big. As a result, only young people who meet **ONE** of the following criteria can join the club:

- The young person is a member of Markham Woods SDA Church.
- (OR) one legal guardian is a member of Markham Woods SDA Church.
- (OR) the young person and his/her legal guardians are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Cost

We do not charge anything for Pathfinders because Markham Woods Church has a “Free for All” philosophy (explained on page 3).

Registration and Mandatory Parent’s Meeting

Online registration begins on Monday, July 31 through Monday, August 14, 2023. We will hold a MANDATORY meeting on Saturday, August 19, 2023. Your child cannot join the club unless one LEGAL GUARDIAN attends the required meeting. Here’s how the meeting is organized:

- 5:00 pm – **PATHFINDER CLUB ORIENTATION and PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR**
 - This meeting is required for EVERYONE! This includes new parents and parents of kids who were in the club previously.

Regular Meetings and Summer Activities

Our regular meetings start in late August and continue until April. We meet about twice a month on Wednesday nights from 7:00 - 8:30 pm.

Uniforms

Markham Woods Pathfinders do not wear the traditional Pathfinder uniform, nor do we give out any honor patches. Our Pathfinders are given a club T-shirt at the beginning of each year, and they are expected to wear it at EVERY Pathfinder meeting.

Overnight Events

Markham Woods Pathfinders will go on 2 or 3 campouts (TBD) and have 2 lock-ins this year (weather permitting). We typically meet at the church on Friday at 5:30 pm, and return on Sunday at 12:30 pm.

"Free for All" Philosophy

Many organizations "nickel and dime" their members nearly to death. Markham Woods Church seeks to be an exception. As part of its overall philosophy, the church does not charge for most activities.

There are several reasons for this:

- First, it's a pain to always be collecting money at church social and recreational events.
- Second, we don't want our activities to only be enjoyed by the "Haves" and exclude the "Have Nots" from participation. If we charged, some people wouldn't be able to join in.
- Third, it's more efficient just to give money to the Church Budget than to pay for the services provided by the church, because money given to the church is tax-deductible.

Here's an example: If a family in the 25 percent tax bracket pays \$100 to participate in a church function, that's \$100 gone. But if that same family is allowed to participate for free, with absolutely no strings attached, yet chooses to donate \$100, their gift is tax-deductible. And they've just saved \$25 in tax. They can keep the \$25 for themselves or use it for some other charity. Either way, the gift approach benefits them.

But won't some people take advantage when you merely encourage giving but don't demand it? Won't they avoid their fair share of the burden? That may happen occasionally. And there are some people who simply can't afford to give. We understand that. Still others just choose not to give. But most people want to be supportive. So, overall, the positives of our approach far outweigh the negatives.

So how much does Pathfinders cost? In the past few years, the average cost is around \$35,000 per year. About 50 percent comes from the Church Budget and the other 50 percent from contributions made directly to the club. We have a group of 50 Pathfinders. If each Pathfinder paid his/her share of actual costs, the charge would be about \$700 per child per year. ***

Why does it cost so much? To provide these activities, we maintain, license and insure a chuckwagon, an equipment trailer, two 10-canoe trailers, a minivan and a pickup truck. We provide all transportation, food, tents, camping equipment, camping fees and activity costs for all campouts and lock-ins.

Nothing is ever truly free. Someone pays. Our approach simply ensures that it's paid in the most efficient and most inclusive way possible. Please continue to support our Church Budget. Thank You!

***Yearly and individual cost is to be determined soon

Guidelines for Pathfinder Meetings

1. ATTENDANCE – Attendance of Pathfinder meetings is strongly urged. The reasons for this are threefold:

- We want to develop in each young person a sense of responsibility and commitment. Those who join the club should commit themselves to wholehearted participation. The Pathfinder Club is staffed by volunteers. If these volunteers are willing to make a commitment of their time for the benefit of the young people, then the young people should in turn make a similar commitment.
- During the Wednesday night meetings a number of skills classes will be taught. It is essential that each Pathfinder progress with the rest of his/her unit through the instruction sequence.
- During the meetings prior to each campout the Pathfinders may be taught the skills and teamwork necessary for the campout, and they may also be involved in planning certain aspects of the campout.
 - Attendance to the meeting PRIOR to a campout is REQUIRED. The skills learned and practiced during the meeting will be essential for the campout. These skills will provide a superior experience during the campout.
 - We discourage the absence from the meetings as it would put a Pathfinder at a disadvantage on the campout and create extra work for the leaders, who would have to try to instruct him/her on site.

2. BE ON TIME – We meet about twice a month on Wednesday nights from 7:00 - 8:30 pm. Pathfinders are expected to be punctual, so please ensure that your Pathfinders arrive on time and are picked up on time. Do not wait for your Pathfinder to phone you to say she or he is ready to be picked up. Please be here promptly at 8:30 pm.

3. UNIFORM – Pathfinders are required to wear the current Markham Woods Pathfinder T-shirt to all Wednesday night meetings. Pathfinders are given a new T-shirt at the beginning of each year. With their T-shirts, Pathfinders can wear jeans or shorts, but the T-shirt is the only compulsory part of the uniform.

A major part of being a Pathfinder is learning responsibility, so we would ask parents to urge their Pathfinder to see that their T-shirt is ready. We will not accept as an excuse: "my mom/dad didn't get it washed and ready for me."

4. CAMPOUT GEAR DROP-OFF – There is always a Pathfinder meeting scheduled on the Wednesday night before each campout. All Pathfinders going on the campout must attend this meeting and bring their camping gear to the church that Wednesday night, or they cannot attend the campout.

A few days before that meeting, all Pathfinder parents will be sent a campout information email detailing our camping location and address, emergency contact numbers, description of weekend activities, and a packing list. It is your responsibility to make sure we have your correct email address.

Pathfinder Discipline Policy

A Value Based Ministry: P.A.T.H

Because Pathfinders is a ministry of the Markham Woods Church, a distinctly Christian organization, there are very specific values we expect our participants to embrace. These values are represented by the acronym **P.A.T.H**: **P**romote Community **A**ssure Personal Space **T**ransmit Respect **H**eed Directions

If a participant is engaging in behavior that violates one of the above values, immediate redirection is needed. This is done through our Steps of Grace Process.

Steps of Grace

Any type of redirection must adhere to the “steps of grace” outlined below:

1. In the event that any of the values are violated, the counselor will issue a clear directive to the offender. If someone who is not the offender’s counselor observes the violation, the witness will report to the counselor and explain the violation. The counselor will then give the offender a clear directive.
2. If the values are violated again, the counselor will take the offender to the Segment Leader and explain the values violation. The Segment Leader will issue another clear directive to the offender.
3. If the values are violated for a third time, the counselor will report to the Segment Leader and to the Administrative Staff and explain the values violation. The Administrative Staff will issue a third clear directive to the offender. Along with the directive, a warning will be given to the offender explaining that further violations will result in disciplinary action.
4. If after receiving such an unquestionably clear directive in the presence of Administrative Staff, the offender persists in violating the values, the Administrative Staff will apply one or more of the following disciplinary procedures:
 - Place a call to the offender’s parents, and the offender will have to explain, in the presence of the Administrative Staff, the violation that has taken place and what has been asked of him or her. The Administrative Staff will answer any questions the parents may have.
 - Ask the offender to not participate in a scheduled activity.
 - Place a call to the offender’s parents and request that the child be picked up (regardless of the distance).

The Right to Search

Throughout the “General Rules of Campout Conduct,” Pathfinders are informed of items that they are NOT to bring on campouts. We have very valid and well-considered reasons why we don’t want the children to have these items. Please explain to your child that we’re completely serious about this ban. We mean what we say. And if such items are found, the above “Disciplinary Policy” will apply.

Furthermore, please be aware (and inform your child) that the Pathfinder Staff reserve the right to search all tents, individual bags, and the contents of non-allowed electronic devices such as cameras, music/video players and mobile phones.

General Rules of Campout Conduct

PATHFINDERS WILL RESPECT ALL PATHFINDER STAFF BY...

1. Quickly carrying out all requests from Pathfinder Staff - without grumbling!
2. Coming immediately when summoned to the general meeting area.
3. Having a teachable spirit and a humble, cooperative attitude.

PATHFINDERS WILL RESPECT OTHER PATHFINDERS BY...

4. Not belittling or humiliating others. Pathfinder activities are a “No Put-Down Zone”.
5. Not swearing or using crude or obscene language.
6. Avoiding physical contact of any kind, which includes (but is not limited to): hugging, kissing, tickling, holding hands, sitting on laps, carrying others, fighting, wrestling, pushing or tripping.
7. Refraining from water/food fights—unless by leader direction.

PATHFINDERS WILL RESPECT THE CAMPSITE BY...

8. Not tampering with someone else’s tent, which includes (but is not limited to): touching it, throwing something on or in it, and tampering with or removing its contents.
9. Not going into, or spending the night in, any tent other than the one assigned to them.
10. Picking up their own trash and participating in keeping the campsite clean.

PATHFINDERS WILL RESPECT THEIR OWN TENT BY...

11. Showing respect for, and not tampering with, the property of their tent-mates.
12. Not bringing food into their tent, including food brought from home.
13. Refraining from all horseplay in their tent.

PATHFINDERS WILL RESPECT THE SAFETY RULES BY...

14. Turning in all needed medications to Club Administration on the Friday of a campout.
15. Not leaving the campsite! The ONLY exceptions are the following:
 - Accompanied by their **OWN COUNSELOR**.
 - Receiving permission from their own counselor to leave with another staff member.
16. Not starting or playing with fires, or possessing incendiary devices (matches, lighters or fireworks).
17. Not swimming or playing in water unless supervised by a staff member.
18. Not possessing the following items on campouts or on the bus: phones, electronic devices, or cutting tools of any kind. These items must be turned into Pathfinder Administration before entering the bus (or upon arriving at the campsite if the Pathfinder has alternate transportation).
19. Not feeding or teasing any animals (wild or domesticated).

PLEASE NOTE: Additional rules relevant to each camping situation may be added.

Generic Pathfinder Campout Schedule

Friday

- 5:30 pm Meet at Markham Woods Church
Sack supper is provided for each Pathfinder
Load the buses and depart
- 7:30 pm Arrive at campsite / pitch tents / unload and organize personal gear
- 8:30 pm Worship / Campfire / Announcements and Rules
- 9:30 pm Preparation for bed
- 10:00 pm Quiet time

Sabbath

- 7:00 am Early rising time (not allowed out of tent any earlier)
- 8:00 am Wake-up / personal hygiene
- 8:30 am Breakfast
- 9:15 am Unit duties or free time
- 10:30 am Sabbath morning camp worship
- 12:30 pm Lunch
- 1:30 pm Unit duties or free time
- 3:00 pm Afternoon activity
- 6:00 pm Supper
- 6:45 pm Unit duties or free time
- 7:30 pm Worship
- 8:00 pm Group games
- 9:30 pm Preparation for bed
- 10:00 p.m. Quiet time

Sunday

- 7:00 am Early rising time (not allowed out of tent any earlier)
- 8:00 am Wake-up / personal hygiene / pack up / camp tear down
- 8:30 am Breakfast
- 9:15 am Continue pack up / camp tear down
- 10:30 am Departure
- 12:30 pm Arrive at Markham Woods Church

Generic Campout Packing List

PLEASE NOTE: Everything (except sleeping bag) must fit into **ONE** duffle bag or suitcase!
We realize the list below is not exhaustive. You may bring extra items as long as it all fits into one bag.

Must Bring:

Sleeping bag (tightly rolled, tied up)

Pillow

Extra blanket (cold weather)

Optional: pad / small air mattress (there may be 3-4 Pathfinders in a tent)

Duffle bag or light suitcase for clothes and gear (no hard suitcases or plastic bags full of clothes)

Shirts / shorts / jeans / underwear / socks

2 pairs of comfortable walking shoes (close-toed only)

Cap/Hat

Cold weather: Jacket / sweatshirt / long underwear / gloves / hand warmers

Towel / washcloth

Personal items: toothbrush / paste / comb / soap / etc.

Flashlight (with good batteries)

Insect repellent

Sunscreen

Small poncho

Bible

Swimming: bathing suit / water shoes / flip-flops

Optional: mask and snorkel

Do Not Bring:

Electronic devices of any kind

Incendiary devices (matches, lighters or fireworks)

Cutting tools of any kind

Food, candy or beverages

REMEMBER: The Pathfinder Staff reserve the right to search all tents, individual bags, and the contents of non-allowed electronic devices such as cameras, music/video players and mobile phones.

Parents Attending Campouts

From time to time, parents like to join their children on Pathfinder campouts, and we're delighted to have you. However, we want you to know what's expected. Thus we're providing the following information, which we would ask you to treat seriously.

1. The North American Division (the governing body of the SDA Church in North America) requires that ALL adults (18+ years) who are involved in any way with our church children must complete the "Sterling Volunteers" course and background check. You cannot attend Pathfinder meetings, special events or campouts until the church is informed that you have been cleared.

2. When your child attends a campout, our Pathfinder staff is totally in charge of your child...even when you are present. Specifically, this means that if your child asks you if he or she can go for a walk down by the lake or sit in your car, your answer should be, "I can't give you that permission; you'll have to talk to your Pathfinder counselor." Please honor your status as a guest and leave all decision-making and permission-granting to the Pathfinder staff.

3. You may see things that you think could be done better. And you may well be right. Of course, it's also possible that your idea has been tried and found not to work as well as you envision. Your observations and suggestions are always welcome—but share them with the Pathfinder Director in private, not to the Pathfinder staff or to the Pathfinders themselves. Critical comments, even well-intended ones, can destroy morale and create dissension if they aren't directed to the right source.

4. If you need to take your child away from camp for a family activity, notify the Pathfinder Director by the Wednesday night before the campout. At the campout, alert the Director before you depart, take only your child, and do not return later with the child. We try to keep track of all Pathfinders at all times, but when children are coming and going with their parents, it creates a supervision nightmare that potentially means your child could be left somewhere because we assumed he or she is with you.

5. Pathfinder campouts are outdoor adventures and we sleep in tents. If you find that too adventuresome, feel free to stay somewhere more comfortable and day-trip to our campsite. If you want to stay in an RV, it must be totally removed from our campsite. No Pathfinders are allowed to sleep with you. Overall, it's easier simply to operate on an egalitarian basis...we're all "tenting it."

6. Please do not bring non-Pathfinder children who are of Pathfinder age (whether yours or anyone else's) on a campout. It creates major problems when Pathfinders operate under one set of rules, but non-Pathfinder visitors can operate under a different set of rules.

6. **Do not** bring pets to a campout (not even for the day), even if the park/camp allows it.

7. Parents will be allowed to join us for **TWO** campouts a year, one overnight campout and one on Sabbath only. If you wish to join us on a campout (for the day or overnight), we need to know at the Wednesday night meeting before the campout. Please tell us how many are coming and what meals they'll be eating with us. Without this information, food, tents and/or campsites (we do not book extra sites) may be inadequate.