



# CORE VALUES of TRAIL LIFE USA

*Understanding the Core Values and Culture of the Program*





# CORE VALUES of TRAIL LIFE USA

*Understanding the Core Values and Culture of the Program*

**1 CHRIST-CENTERED-** Trail Life USA (TLUSA) is a Christian Outdoor adventure program that emphasizes and teaches biblical moral values and requires all adult members to agree with, sign, and abide by the Trail Life USA Trinitarian Statement of Faith and the Statement of Values. The program is unapologetically Christian. However, the program is designed and intended to be presented without being “churchy” or “religious,” focusing on outdoor adventure, character, and leadership development. The analogy for this principle has been referred to as “carrot cake.” The carrots in the cake are not in big and obvious chunks, but are still present throughout the entire cake, as are the assumptions of a Christian worldview throughout the entire program. At the same time, the TLUSA program is not intended to replace or compete with other youth groups, Bible studies, or church programs, but rather to complement them and give youth an opportunity to exemplify and demonstrate Christian values in their relationships with others.

**2 CHURCH-OWNED AND OPERATED-** The Charter Organizations (most commonly churches) in the TLUSA program do not merely allow the organization to use space to meet in their building. The Charter Organization is expected to own and operate the Troop through selecting its adult leaders, integrating the Troop into the life of the church, and by involving the boys in mission trips, service projects and/or other ministry or ceremonial purposes. Each Charter Organization influences its Troop differently, but is encouraged to take ownership of the Troop as an active part of its ministry offerings to the members of the church and/or the community at large.

**3 OUTDOOR-FOCUSED-** We believe there is something special about being in the outdoors. This enables our program to instill “Adventure, Character, and Leadership” traits in boys and young men. Camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities help build deep relationships and provide a special context for leadership, problem solving, conflict resolution, and character building. We also value the outdoor focus of our program as a unique means of helping a boy see and appreciate the wonder, majesty, and grandness of God as reflected in His creation.

**4 SAFETY-** Trail Life USA is committed to the health, welfare, and safety of our youth, volunteers, staff, and employees. Physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health are integrated into everything we do to ensure as safe a program as possible. The goal should always be to provide challenging, adventurous, and fun activities in a manner that no injuries occur beyond those that are readily treatable by simple first aid.

**5 COURAGE-** The morals and values of our country are deteriorating at an exponential rate and are becoming increasingly opposed to true Christian values. As our organization grows and matures, future challenges will require increased character and courage by both adult and youth members as they stand for the timeless values articulated in the TLUSA Statement of Faith and Statement of Values which originate from the Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Church. With this cultural pressure in mind, we will continually commit ourselves to the truths found in the scriptures, that we are to fear God and not man, and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and understanding.



**6 MALE-CENTERED ADULT LEADERSHIP-** TLUSA is a program focused on turning boys into godly men. Our firm conviction is that this can only be done by allowing a boy the opportunity to interact, work with, and be mentored by and with other Christian men. Women can serve in a number of roles in the organization including the National Board of Directors, National Advisory Board, Regional Leadership, Area Leadership, Troop Committee members, and even as the Charter Organization Representative (COR). However, other than in the Woodlands Trail program for younger boys 5-10 years old, adult leaders in positions of direct contact to boys must be male.

**7 VOLUNTEER-DRIVEN-** Trail Life USA will be operated and supported by volunteers at every level. Troops connect with one another locally, and leaders are strongly encouraged to solve each other's problems at roundtable discussions, online forums, and the like. Area Teams of experienced volunteers, possessing expertise in Advancement, Camping, Activities, Community Service, Marketing, and much more, stand ready to help. Commissioners are appointed by the Area Team to coach and mentor Troop leaders. Areas report to Regional volunteer committees, and Regions to the professional staff. As a result — and by design — Home Office staff will be kept to a minimum. This is not only good stewardship but allows the members of the organization to take full ownership of and investment in the program.

**8 PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY-** The flexibility principle behind our program elements allows local Troops to adapt the program to fit the needs of their unit. A good example would be running only a Woodlands Trail and Adventurers program but not a Navigators program because of a lack of boys in a Troop or a lack of adult leaders. There will be some elements of the program which are unyielding and mandatory, but many parts of the way the program is delivered can be customized to fit the immediate needs of the local Troop and Charter Organization.

**9 SHARED LEADERSHIP-** Since the founding of the organization by a wide coalition of leaders in Louisville, Kentucky in June of 2013, TLUSA has operated under the principle of shared leadership. Shared leadership seeks to involve others in the process and not “hog” or “lord over” the authority and public nature of leadership. While we recognize the need for strong leadership at every level, we also encourage the sharing of leadership by all those holding positions. Examples of this principle might look like occasionally allowing other adult leaders to share in doing the Troopmaster's minute, delegating responsibilities, instituting term limits for Committee Chairmen, or having adult and youth Chaplains recruiting others to pray every now and then.

**10 YOUTH-CENTERED LEADERSHIP-** The youth should be leading other youth. Our firm conviction is that the only way a young man is going to learn the art of true Christian leadership is to allow him to initiate, to lead, and even to make mistakes. There is a constant temptation by adult leaders to step in and instruct the boys in weekly meetings, at campouts, and at other events

to show the boys how things should be done “right,” “better,” or “smarter.” While adults can and should advise, counsel, make suggestions to youth leaders, and provide oversight to those young men designated as leaders, youth should be allowed to plan, organize, make decisions, and be the primary leaders.

**11 CHARACTER-FOCUSED, NOT AWARDS-FOCUSED-** Some boys’ programs are very focused on helping the boy achieve as many awards as he can in the shortest period of time to achieve the highest rankings and awards the program has to offer. In contrast, TLUSA is more concerned with building character than with earning badges and ranks. While TLUSA has a robust and prominent ranking and awards structure, this will not be the focus of the program. The focus should always be on building character over merely earning awards. This value is reflected by the fact that a young man cannot simply earn the Freedom Award quickly in a couple of years; he must stay in the program over an extended period of time — demonstrating maturity and leadership — to earn the highest award in the program.

**12 SERVANT LEADERSHIP-** Leadership with a servant’s attitude by both adults and youth is a core value of TLUSA. Servant leadership is characterized by humility and the willingness to work alongside others and not just “boss” people around. Leading by example and sacrifice are also qualities of servant leadership.

**13 FAMILY-ORIENTED-** While this will not be the case in every location, ideally the goal would be to create a “family-centered” youth-enrichment experience where on one night, in one location, boys and their dads can participate in Trail Life USA, and girls and their moms can be involved with American Heritage Girls. There are many obvious strengths to this model, and those who are able to experience it will discover lasting impact and accelerated spiritual growth for every member of the family.

**14 DECENTRALIZED DECISION-MAKING-** Pursuant to the TLUSA By-Laws, after January 1, 2015, decisions regarding changes to the most important elements of the organization will be made by each Charter Organization casting a vote, and not by professionals or delegates chosen by professionals. This principle will be used for any changes to the governing Board Members of Trail Life USA. To ensure fidelity to the principles and values of Trail Life USA, any changes to the Statement of Faith, Statement of Values, or membership standards would require an 80% vote by all Charter Organizations.

**15 DEBT AVERSE-** The National Board of Directors is committed to being debt averse. The organization will continue to be self-funded with the annual budget for operating expenses growing in direct proportion to fees generated by the growth of the membership. The organization will not accept gifts of property unless it can clearly benefit from the gift without incurring debt from operational or other costs associated with the property.

**WALK WORTHY!**

Colossians 1:10

