

# MEMO

**TO:** Council Officers, Board of Directors, Council Advisory Committee, Trust Advisory Committee, District Chairs, District Commissioners, Members at Large, Area 2 Director Matt DeVore, Regional Director Brad Farmer, Rick Williamson, Matt Adams, Michael Chaffee and our great Troop Scoutmasters

**Cc:** Council Staff, Council Support Staff, National Scout Store Staff

**FROM:** Michael D. Sulgrove, Scout Executive

**DATE:** December 26, 2008

**RE:** ***DINING HALL COLLAPSE***

On Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, about 9:00 a.m., Merrill Dining Hall (Main Boy Scout Dining Hall) suffered a structural collapse. The collapse was so fast and hard that it blew out three of the Dining Hall support walls. Its fourth wall, which is also the front wall to the Dining Hall Kitchen, is still standing at this point. In fact, the entire kitchen is still standing and completely serviceable.

Upon learning of this situation from our Camp Ranger on Christmas Eve morning, I met with our Council Vice President of Properties, Michael Melinn, our insurance agent, Al Rant, our Summer Camp Director, Scott Herrick and our Camp Ranger, Charlie Brown at the site. We were able to salvage many of the camp's historical treasures from under the debris. We were also able to make next step decisions on the kitchen area. Our Council Properties Committee is meeting again today at the site to begin discussing the demolition and re-construction.

I want each of you to know that I believe that this is an opportunity for many blessings for us.

**Blessing 1** No one was inside the building when it collapsed, when in less than 48 hours there would have been. No one would have escaped that building once the collapse began. I have said many prayers of thanks for this alone.

**Blessing 2** We have used this dining hall for twelve summers (since it's dedication in 1997), but have found these last four summers that we are getting more and more camp weeks that exceed the 480 person capacity of the dining hall. Our summer camp is rapidly approaching its 2,100 (300 Scouts x 7 weeks of camp) capacity and needs to be expanded if we are to continue

this pattern of growth into the future. So now we have the opportunity to build a new dining hall that will be even larger and certainly stronger!

**Blessing 3** We have from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 157 days to have this new dining hall up and operational for our 2009 Boy Scout Summer Camp. I have always found that a crisis brings out the very best in people, and I believe that our Scouting family will do everything in its' power to help us meet this deadline.

A new, larger and stronger dining hall will serve us for many years to come. With our insurance dollars on the previous structure plus the new dollars we will need to raise, we can create a great new focal point at Gerber Boy Scout Summer Camp.

While certainly none of us are very happy that our Merrill Dining Hall has collapsed, this is a unique opportunity for us and our many Scouting friends in the West Michigan community to make it bigger and better and that's the kind of challenge that each of us can be a part of for our Scouts.