



## Mowogo Lodge ♦ Northeast Georgia Council

### Boy Scouts of America

148 Boy Scout Trail, Pendergrass, Georgia 30549



### Inclusion in The Order of The Arrow and Duncan Lawrence's Experience

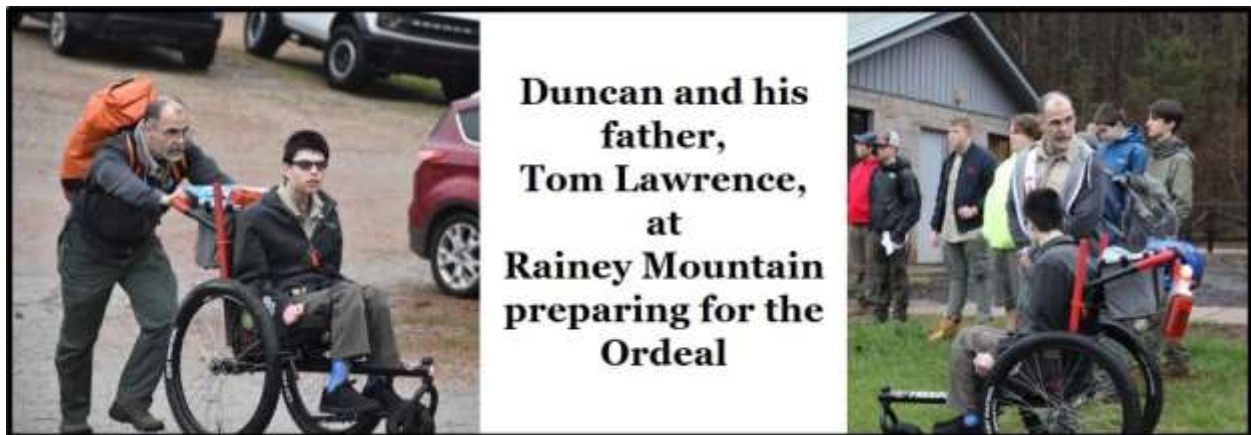
*Over the past few years, The Boy Scouts of America have worked tirelessly to create an inclusive environment for Scouts with disabilities. The BSA has put together a "toolbox," that provides leaders and advisers with many helpful resources that allow them to include these individuals in all activities. Further information can be found on the BSA's website or at this [link](#).*

The Order of the Arrow recognizes Scouts who exemplify the virtues of service, leadership, and good character. For Scouts who have been elected into this organization, the Ordeal Ceremony is a highly anticipated event that marks the beginning of their journey towards becoming full members of the Order. The excitement of the Ordeal Ceremony stems from the mystery and anticipation surrounding the event, as well as the opportunity for scouts to deepen their commitment to the values of the Order and forge lifelong bonds with their fellow Arrowmen. Unfortunately, many Scouts around the country do not have access to opportunities like this because of their special needs. Many lodges and units have yet to adapt ways for scouts with disabilities to actively participate in their programs, or fail to recognize how easy it can be to modify and adapt programs to meet the needs of individual Scouts. Recently, the Northeast Georgia Council, BSA was able to induct a Scout with disabilities into its Mowogo Lodge.

Meet Duncan Lawrence.



Duncan Lawrence, a Scout from Troop 101 in Blairsville, Georgia, has a disability called Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy greatly impacts the body's nervous system, affecting muscular function and general strength. It can also largely affect an individual's ability to move or maintain good balance and posture. In Duncan's case, Cerebral Palsy has affected his muscles and his ability to walk, which is why he uses a wheelchair. Duncan also has a visual impairment, which makes it difficult for him to see shapes or far away figures. Despite the challenges faced by Duncan, he has become very active in the Scouting program and he has attended multiple summer camps at his local council camp, Camp Rainey Mountain. While at camp, he has broken many boundaries, earned multiple merit badges, and even had an opportunity to swim in the lake.



When Duncan was approached with the opportunity to take the next step in Scouting and join Scouting's National Honor Society, The Order of The Arrow, he was more than excited to get started. However, by accepting his candidacy into Mowogo Lodge, Duncan knew he would face a new set of obstacles he had not yet encountered in Scouting. Thankfully, Duncan's father, Mr. Tom Lawrence, happened to have been a member of the Order as a youth, which made him eligible to be trained as an Elangomat. Elangomats help to guide new Candidates through their Ordeal process. In the weeks before his son's own Ordeal, Mr. Lawrence worked with both Alex Sutter, Vice Chief of Membership for Mowogo Lodge, and Mr. Rusty Royston, Lodge Adviser, to create an Ordeal experience that would continue to reflect the Order's long-standing values and expectations towards Ordeal Candidates. With the rest of the Lodge Executive Committee, they worked to find an area at Camp Rainey Mountain that was suitable for Duncan's needs. This required making sure simple needs such as wheelchair access to ceremony rings and other Ordeal areas were met. Precautions would also have to be taken by the Service Chair for Mowogo Lodge, Patrick McNair, in working to find projects that Duncan could participate in despite his mobility challenges.



For Duncan's Ordeal, he helped to move downed limbs and branches from the roads and campsites around Camp Rainey Mountain to the camp's firewood pile. While Mr. Lawrence occasionally helped his son to break down larger limbs, the little bit of extra planning conducted by Mowogo Lodge allowed for Duncan to actively work throughout his Ordeal. Despite the unique challenges Duncan faced during his Ordeal, he never gave up on his tasks. Duncan was able to complete his service projects all day without obstruction, participating as much as any other candidate.



After the day's service projects had concluded, Duncan got to participate in his Ordeal Ceremony. While many of Camp Rainey Mountain's ceremonial rings are not accessible for wheelchairs, Mowogo Lodge's Vice Chief of Indian Affairs, Jayce Wiggs, was committed to ensuring there would be a ring with an adequate pathway for Duncan to use. In the months leading up to the Spring Fellowship Ordeal, Jayce worked with other volunteers from the lodge to clean and rebuild a ceremony ring to meet the needs of Duncan, as well as the needs of future special needs Candidates.

At the end of his Ordeal, Duncan was able to speak about his experience with Mowogo Lodge's Executive Committee. He stated that he had a great time and felt very welcome in the program and was relieved that the work projects were able to be adapted without

taking away from the same experience anyone else would have received. He also said that he was very tired and ready for bed! Because of the small amount of prior work by Mowogo Lodge, this experience is now something that Duncan will remember forever. He will recall performing service with his father and he will never forget the vows of the Ordeal and his first experiences in the Order.



Duncan's experience has helped to open the eyes of many of Mowogo Lodge's members. Seeing Duncan complete his work and join the Lodge shared a message with all. Just because some Scouts may have a disability does not stop them from pursuing their interests. Duncan has changed the way Mowogo Lodge will go about Ordeal weekends for years to come.



A bit of extra care and planning can ensure that Scouting remains accessible for generations of youth to come. By making your lodge's Ordeal and other events accessible for those who have a physical or mental disability, you help to secure the legacy of Scouts BSA and The Order of The Arrow and ready the program for any Scout. Both programs provide a unique and valuable experience that teaches important life skills, fosters personal growth, and builds lifelong friendships. By making accommodations and creating an inclusive environment, Scouts with disabilities can participate in the same activities and learn the same lessons as their peers without disabilities. Additionally, the proper use of Scouting and The Order can serve as a powerful tool for promoting acceptance, understanding, and respect for people with disabilities within the broader community. As Scouts, many Americans often look to us for guidance. Ultimately, by accounting for disabilities, Scouting and The Order of The Arrow becomes a more diverse and enriching experience for all involved.

An individual's disability does not define what their abilities are. When you open your programs to include and invest in people with disabilities, you will be surprised by how amazingly talented these individuals are.

Yours in Brotherhood,

**Elizabeth A. Brown** | Vice Chief of Communication

**ORDER OF THE ARROW**

**Mowogo Lodge**

