

First Oklahoma Urban Girl Scout camp to combine camping, STEM activities



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A rendering by REES Architecture of the zero entry pool that will be featured at Camp Trivera, the nation's first Urban Girl Scout Camp. The camp is set to open Fall 2020. [provided]

The Girl Scouts of Western Oklahoma is in the midst of building the nation's first Urban STE(A)M Girl Scout camp, just east of the Oklahoma City Zoo.

Linda Whittington, co-chairman of the Camp Trivera capital campaign, and Farooq Karim, vice president of REES Architecture and overseer of the project, spoke to Oklahoma City's Rotary Club Tuesday about the camp. The camp will combine STE(A)M-focused activities, the A standing for arts, with camping for girls to discover scouting in a whole new way.

The camp's name was inspired by two things, Whittington said. Tri represents the three parts of the Girl Scout promise: "To serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout Law," while Vera is a woman's name that means hope and faith.

"Our camp will be unique," Whittington said. "The first of its kind in the United States of America, and one that introduces girls to the outdoors, and at the same time provides challenges for more experienced campers."

Camp Trivera, set to open Fall 2020 will sit on 17 acres on a woodland site leased by Oklahoma City. The campground will feature nature trails, a STEM lab, an amphitheater, waterfront activities, a sports court donated by the OKC Thunder, a zip line across the lake into the zoo and a zero entry swimming pool.

Shannon Evers, CEO of Girl Scouts of Western Oklahoma, said what makes Camp Trivera the first camp of its kind is that there is a "STE(A)M surprise around every corner."

When the girls participate in the zip line, they will also learn about aerodynamics. When it's time to bring their luggage upstairs, they will use a pulley system instead of carrying it. The building will also have exposed and labeled pipe systems for the girls to learn about.

"The uniqueness about this facility is that it has everything a Girl Scout camp has," Evers said, "but...when it comes to STE(A)M programming we're very intentional about those opportunities."

Each camper will also receive a free pass to either the Oklahoma City Zoo or the Science Museum Oklahoma.

One of the first things girls will see when checking in is the “Wall of Women,” a digital interactive experience that will have information about different women and their careers, Karim said.

“We wanted the facility to be inspiring and fun from the moment that you drive onto the camp and the moment you walk in the front door,” Karim said.

Once checked in, campers will have a variety of opportunities and ways to spend their days and nights.

Karim recalled his own sons camping with their Boy Scout troops, and the memories they made sleeping under the stars.

“When you think about Girl Scouts, ... you think about camping, think about being around a campfire and think about and sleeping in a sleeping bag, feeling when it's hot and cold,” Karim said.

However, Camp Trivera will go a step further from traditional camping by featuring treehouses, covered porch camping and indoor bunk beds, along with tent camping.

Each indoor bunk room will have its own special theme, chosen by local Girl Scout troops, Karim said.

“For girls to have a place like this, I think it's going to be really exciting and special,” Karim said. “We want to make sure that we help them create experiences that will last a lifetime.”

There will be anti-climb fencing around the site and a storm shelter, Karim said, with safety being a big priority.

The nature trails will only be open to public use when the site is not in scout use. Karim also mentioned that the north part of the property will not be part of Camp Trivera, and therefore will always be open to public use for fishing and other activities.

Whittington said most camps are only in use about 50% of the time, but Camp Trivera will allow rental use.

“We envision that the other 50% of the time it will be used by people and businesses in our community for trainings, retreats, family gatherings, business meetings, whatever,” Whittington said. “We're going to keep our fees reasonable, and that income will help us keep the camp in operating order.”

With a lodge that sleeps 60, a dining hall that seats 350 and a full kitchen, Camp Trivera can accommodate most groups, Whittington said.

Camp prices are still being decided, Whittington said, but there will be scholarships available. Sixty percent of the girls that Girl Scouts of Western Oklahoma serves are from low-income families, she said, and so those scholarships will be impor

“By teaching these girls skills they need to succeed and progress through life, we can be a factor in lessening Oklahoma,” Whittington said.

One of the reasons Camp Trivera is STE(A)M-focused is because The Girl Scouts of the United States of America announced plans to place 2.5 million girls into the STEM workforce by 2025, Whittington said.

“We are part of that pledge here in western Oklahoma, and we're going to strive to introduce 15,000 girls into this pipeline, as well,” Whittington said. “Our camp will provide the impetus for us to deliver on our portion of the pledge.”

Camp Trivera is a \$12.2 million project, and about \$2 million is still needed to complete the building process.

Those who wish to partner with or donate to the project can visit the Camp Trivera page on camp.gswestok.org.