

HOW TO USE THE AFMS/FRA BADGE PROGRAM

Here are answers to 4 common questions I always receive about the AFMS/FRA badge program:

How Does the Badge Program Work?

The program consists of an FRA Membership patch, 20 badges (Rocks & Minerals, Earth Resources, Fossils, Lapidary Arts, Collecting, Showmanship, Communication, Field Trips, Leadership, Earth Processes, Earth in Space, Gemstone Lore & Legend, Stone Age Tools & Art, Gold Panning & Prospecting, Rocking on the Computer, The World in Miniature, Special Effects, Fluorescent Minerals, Reaching Across Generations, and Maps), and a “Rockhound Badge” for kids who earn 6 of the 20 badges. Kids earning all 20 badges are awarded an AFMS cloisonné pin. A 223-page guidebook describes and outlines requirements for each of the 20 badges. There are 118 activities to choose from, or about a half dozen activities per badge, with kids required to complete only 3 activities to earn any particular badge. Checklists in the guidebook make it easy for youth leaders to sign off on activities as junior members complete them. In addition, brief back-up pages and suggestions help leaders guide their kids through each activity. The guidebook is available both in hardcopy format (photocopied) and on the AFMS web site (http://www.amfed.org/fra/fra_badge.htm). To save on costs to the program, which is being provided entirely free, I encourage you to download a copy of the guidebook and its checklist sheets from the web. If this is not possible, contact me for a copy.

How Do I Sign up the Kids in My Local Club?

The program is for clubs with youth members enrolled in the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America (FRA). To enroll your kids, contact me (call [805-659-3577](tel:805-659-3577) or email jbraceth@roadrunner.com). All you need is a group of kids (up to age 18), a sponsoring club, a key contact person, and an application to FRA. (An application form is included with this sheet.) Your club must be affiliated with the AFMS. The number of youth is not important: you can have as few as just 1 or 2—or as many as you can handle!

How Do I Order the Badges?

In order to keep this program free to participating clubs, we are only able to order limited quantities of badges at a time. Thus, rather than send bulk quantities of badges to local youth leaders and exhaust our supply, I ask that local leaders at individual clubs send me requests for badges only as they are earned and needed.

How to go about this? You should make multiple copies of the activity checklists that are included in the badge guidebook. For each child, check off activities as they are completed. When at least 3 activities are checked off for any one badge, both the child and youth leader sign the checklist, write in the mailing address of the youth leader, and send it to me: Jim Brace-Thompson, AFMS Juniors Program Chair, 7319 Eisenhower Street, Ventura, CA 93003. I’ll record the information and send the badge. To speed the whole process, I’m also willing to do fulfillment via the phone or email (see my contact info, above) rather than through the mail so long as the youth leader indicates: 1) the badge being requested, 2) which activities a child has completed to earn that badge, 3) the child’s name and name of his/her club, and 4) name and mailing address of the youth leader to send the badge to.

I know this is a bit cumbersome and will mean a time lag in getting badges to kids. But in discussing this with others in the AFMS, I’ve decided it’s best to use this centralized approach in order to monitor how much the program is getting utilized and in order to keep tabs on which activities are proving most popular and how many badges actually end up getting awarded. This way, we’ll have an accurate record for the future in estimating budgets for how many badges, and which ones, will need to be manufactured on a regular basis. In order to keep the program free, we need to monitor all costs closely and keep a lid on those costs by only distributing what’s actually being used, and we appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

How Can We Make the Badge Program Better?

Finally, I welcome feedback, comments for improvements to existing activities, and ideas of new activities and badges to add to the program. My hope is to add new badges every 4 years or so. We started this in 2004 with 9 badges, which were augmented in 2008 with 6 more, and another 5 in 2012, many of which were the direct result of suggestions by kids and their youth leaders. So let’s all pitch in to provide an educational program by which kids learn, earn rewards, and—as always—have fun!