

YAFA, or the Youth and Family Achievement program, is a progression-based achievement program designed to teach medieval skills to youths across the SCA. With levels for age groups starting at five up through seventeen, the proposed YAFA program would provide a common SCA-wide platform that would allow families and children to explore together areas of their own interest while learning from a designated mentor.

The general email for the YAFA program is yafa@sca.org.

YAFA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Q: Who is the proposed YAFA program for?

A: The program is for all members of the SCA that have an interest in fostering family and youth involvement within the SCA. It is for children and youth between the ages of 5 and 17, it is for parents, and it is for other adults (who may or may not be parents), who wish to share their skills with the next generation.

Q: What is the point of the proposed YAFA program?

A: YAFA is designed both to facilitate the continuous involvement of families with the SCA by developing a common Society-wide program of shared activity, and to ensure that we continue to evolve an energetic society of honorable citizens developed from within. This program will guide and encourage young people and their families in seeking opportunities for involvement in the Society. It will aid in the development of the next generation of artisans and craftsmen for the SCA.

Q: How will the proposed YAFA program be helpful to families in the SCA?

A: YAFA is a well-defined, carefully structured program to mentor youths who are interested in learning about and gaining skills related to the Middle Ages and the SCA itself. It encourages and guides the youths in their chosen topics and helps them gain a certain level of proficiency. Because the youths are making the choice of topics that are of interest to them, it avoids the "have-to" stigma of school while enhancing interest and participation levels through self-direction. Mentors provide guidance and evaluation of progress, but success and completion depends on the youth, not the Mentor or the parent. Involved youths do the work themselves, and the "reward" (Achievement Tokens) system acknowledges their accomplishments and encourages them to stay involved and progress to higher levels or new topics. Accountability is a foundation of the program. There will not only be accountability by the youth to the Mentor, but more importantly, the Mentor will be modeling accountability to the youth based on their participation. Participating youths will come out of their YAFA experiences not only more knowledgeable and proficient in medieval topics and skills, but more importantly, as more independent, well-rounded individuals. The program will also give participating youths a deeper and more continuous sense of involvement in the SCA – making them more likely to be willing to share in and be involved with the interests of their parents. In addition, the core values and the achievement topics are not only relevant to the Middle Ages, but also have modern world

applications and are thus designed to additionally help participating youths as they grow and develop within the modern world. Chivalry, ethics, mercy and the rest of the seven noble virtues taught through the program are keys to being a successful adult – and learning about these virtues will serve participating youths and their family at home, at school and at their future workplace.

Q: What are the Achievement Tokens in the proposed YAFA program?

A: Achievement tokens are common Society-wide rewards which recognize the successful completion of each Achievement subject at each participation level within YAFA. They are not awards or honors, per se, but simply physical tokens to recognize success and achievement within the YAFA program. While the tokens are an external manifestation of achievement and are designed to be attractive and sought-after, they are simply recognitions of the more valuable reward of the program – the participation and achievement itself.

Q: What ages would be included in the YAFA program?

A: The YAFA program is divided into four age groups for youth ages 5-17 and their families. The first three groups provide opportunities to study the same or similar subjects as adult Society members with age-appropriate materials and activities suitable for that age group. Each successive age group builds upon the knowledge and skill set of the prior group, providing a plan to greater understanding and deeper skill levels. The fourth age group is encouraged to take a more active role in their local branch and participate at a near-adult level.

- Division 1: Ages 5 to 8 years old. They participate mainly with the attendance and help of their parents, as is appropriate to their social development.*
- Division 2: Ages 9 to 11 years old. While increasingly independent, this age group is still anchored in the family while exploring beyond those boundaries. While parental participation may occur here, children at this age range will begin developing independence as they work with mentors.*
- Division 3: Ages 12 to 14 years old. These participants are ready to act independently with their contemporaries and with selected adult mentors while still strengthening their ties to their families and households through interaction and feedback.*
- Division 4: Ages 15 to 17. The oldest participants are right on the cusp of adult participation in the Society. They are ready to act independently with their contemporaries and with selected adult Mentors. They will develop the skills they have become interested in at a near- adult level and would prefer participation in adult classes to youth activities. As such, no token requirements have been developed for them. They are working on becoming the next generation of artisans and craftsmen in the society. It is hoped they will exercise leadership for younger participants in the YAFA areas in which they have gained expertise.*

Q: Will Kingdoms be required to institute the proposed program?

A: YAFA is optional at all levels. Kingdoms are free to implement and use the YAFA program, or not, as suits the needs of their families. Some kingdoms have expressed interest in using YAFA alongside, or integrating it into, their existing Page Guilds and other youth programs. By providing a common Society-wide system of activities in the arts and sciences with goals, along with administrative and training systems for participating youths, parents, and Mentors, we believe the SCA can more fully integrate youth and their families; maintaining and extending their participation. YAFA will aid in the development of the next generation of artisans and craftsmen of the Society. It is not designed to replace existing programs, but to support and supplement them. At this point in the program we are not proposing that individual groups can sign up so it will be dependent on the Kingdom joining the program.

Q: What will be the Achievement subjects and categories of the proposed program?

A: There are wide arrays of skills, crafts, and knowledge that will be available for learning through the SCA YAFA program. Families and young people will be able to browse a variety of subject areas and choose to explore and pursue those they find interesting. Some subjects are in arts and/or craftwork, some in vocational fields, some in service to others, and several are in cultural or life skills areas. Parents and guardians have the ability to select the different divisions for their youths to pursue based on their knowledge of their child's capabilities. Twenty-seven subject areas have already been developed. They are: Agriculture, Archery, Arms & Armor, Basketry, Calligraphy – Illumination, Cooking, Costuming, Dance, Equestrian, Family Life, Fighting, Games, Glassworks, Heraldry, Herbalism – Medicine, Horn working – Bone carving, Jewelry – Lapidary, Metalworking, Music, Papermaking – Bookbinding, Pottery, Rapier, Siege Weaponry, Textiles, Thrown Weapons and Woodworking. More topics will be added as the program evolves and more subject matter experts join.

Q: How will I be able to get my family involved in the proposed program?

A: Families that are interested in becoming involved with YAFA should contact their kingdom youth officer to make sure their kingdom is involved in the project. If so, they can then go online to the YAFA webpage to enroll their minor child(ren).

- *During this part of the process they provide the SCA name, gender, and year of birth of each minor child that will participate in the program to ensure that the system will provide the age-appropriate achievements for each minor child to pursue.*
- *The parents will need to provide their SCA and modern names, membership number, phone number, e-mail address, residential zip code/postal code, kingdom and local branch name.*
- *Once the online enrollment is complete, parents will be directed to download the pamphlet, "How to Protect Your Children" to ensure that all parents are familiar with and aware of fundamental security issues and processes.*
- *Parents must select "Yes, I've downloaded the file", once the pamphlet has been downloaded. This action will also generate an e-mail to their kingdom youth officer for record keeping purposes, so that each kingdom will be aware of those families who choose to participate in the program.*
- *Parents can then log in to the YAFA webpage to browse and then download the various Achievement information and worksheets for their child, and to administer the involvement of the child in the program.*

Once parents have decided on achievement(s) for their child(ren) to pursue, the parents are responsible for choosing the appropriate Mentor for the selected achievement(s) and for making the initial contact with that Mentor. Lists of available mentors for each achievement are available through the YAFA webpage directly, or can be found by contacting the kingdom youth officials responsible for administering the YAFA program within each participating kingdom.

Q: How will I be able to become a Mentor in the proposed program?

A: Becoming a mentor to participating and interested youth is a multi-step process that is explained in detail in the YAFA manual, available on the YAFA webpage. Mentor applicants must fill out an electronic form available on the YAFA webpage, specifying the age groups and activities for which they seek to become Mentors. Applications are then screened by the local area YAFA program administrator for suitability to serve as mentors to the selected age groups for the selected activities – and endorsed as appropriate. The kingdom YAFA administrator will then review the application. If accepted, the Mentor will complete an online training course available through the YAFA webpage to demonstrate an understanding of mentor responsibilities. Once this course is completed and passed, the Mentor will be listed as a mentor and may begin

working with students. Mentors become eligible to procure and wear the Mentor tokens only after successfully mentoring their first youth.

Q: How will the proposed YAFA program be administered?

A: Administration of the YAFA program is explained in detail in Chapter II of the YAFA Program Handbook, available on the YAFA webpage. Roles and responsibilities are laid out for the following levels of administration: Family/Parental level, Local area level, Kingdom level, and Society level. Most of the administration of the program is completed by participants at all levels on-line, in response to emails generated by the system. A series of YouTube videos have been developed (also available through the YAFA webpage) to give the administrators at each level step-by-step instruction on how to administer the YAFA program.

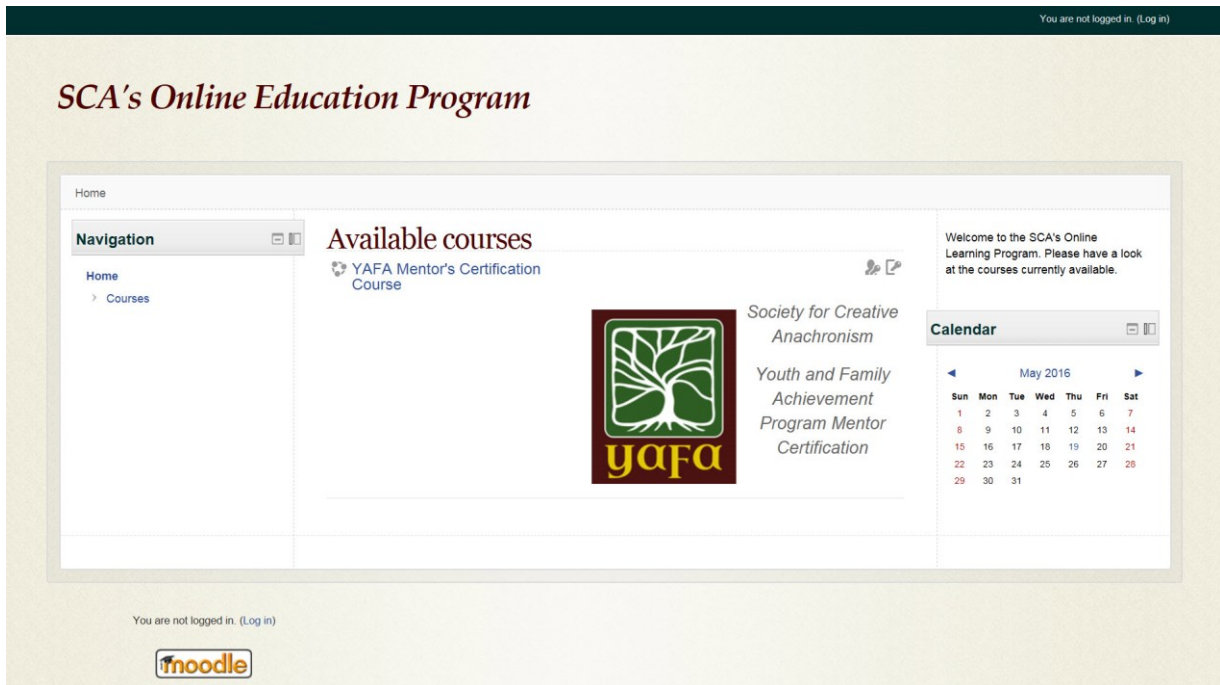
Q: What will the online YAFA system look like?

A: The online system will have all the information you need to participate in the YAFA program and its activities – for parents, children, mentors, and program administrators at the local area, Kingdom, and Society levels. The goals, guidelines, and responsibilities are listed in easy-to-access formats. There will be a catalog of files for mentors and participants – ranging from achievement worksheets to SCA policies. The system will automatically generate an email to the appropriate Kingdom administrator when parents acknowledge receipt of safety information after signing up for the program. The system is designed from the outset to be easy to use and will use continuous feedback from participants for any improvements that need to be made.



Q: What will the online mentor training system look like?

A: *The online mentor training system is a concise overview of the Mentor's general responsibilities. Since few mentors are professional teachers in their everyday lives, the overview includes helpful hints for dealing with youths and families.*



Q: How will we be able to get Achievement Tokens to participants who complete their requirements?

A: *Obtaining the Achievement Tokens will be enabled through several different ways, and the program is designed to allow each of the kingdoms decide which approach best suits their own culture, policies, and climate.*

a. *EITHER... As the Kingdom youth officer receives the completed achievement worksheets, the system will allow them to add each participant's name to the SCA Stock Clerk's list of those eligible to receive each of the various YAFA Achievement Tokens. The list specifies eligibility by subject and division. The youth officer updates the completed worksheets and e-mails the parents/guardians that they can purchase the appropriate Token from the SCA Stock Clerk.*

b. *OR... As the Kingdom youth officer receives the completed achievement worksheets, the system will allow them to add each participant's name to the SCA Stock Clerk's list of those eligible to receive each of the various YAFA Achievement Tokens. The list specifies eligibility by subject and division. The Kingdom youth officer will then themselves procure the appropriate Token from the SCA Stock Clerk in accordance with their Kingdom Financial Policy. They update the completed worksheets and e-mail the parent/guardian to inform them that the appropriate Token has been purchased from the SCA Stock Clerk, and to determine the most effective way to provide the token to the child that earned it, given the desires expressed by the parent/guardian as indicated on the front page of the completed worksheet and consistent with Kingdom policies and the preferences of the Crown. This option would be funded in various ways depending on Kingdom preferences, policies, and YAFA and SCA financial policies.*

Q: What is the “buddy system” part of the program, and what will it be like?

A: Young people enjoy working on projects together, and social interaction with other young people and unrelated adults is an important part of their social development. The YAFA program encourages this development by making a “buddy system” a part of the achievement program. The program is designed so that together, at least two or more young people meet with mentors, plan projects, and bounce ideas off of each other. Having two or more young people working on the same Achievement, even when making different choices within the Achievement requirements, gives them opportunities to provide encouragement for each other, and to be able to share what they are learning within the different aspects of the subject area.

Q: What will it cost me for my family to participate in the proposed YAFA program?

A: Participation is open to families with at least one current paid member. There are no costs to member parents for registering or participating in the Achievement program. Some achievement activities, however, may naturally have material costs that would be incurred by participants. For example, the Division 1 Woodworking Achievement Worksheet asks the child to “Make a toolbox, birdhouse, a set of bookends, or something else useful,” which would require that the child acquire wood, fasteners, and tools to do so, in accordance with the preferences and recommendations of the Mentor. Since families may choose which Achievement Worksheets their young people work on, their costs would depend on the activities they choose and the materials they, in coordination with the Mentor, choose to use. Upon successful completion of each Achievement, parents should be prepared to pay the cost for the Tokens – currently estimated to be about \$4.00 each – depending on the specific distribution system setup by their Kingdom.

Q How about background checks; will those be required in the YAFA program for those who want to be mentors? If so how will you get that done?

A: Mentors are required to have a background check. Please contact your local Seneschal for further information.

Q How will the proposed YAFA program help the SCA? Why are family programs important?

A: YAFA will assist with the active participation of families with children, youths, and teens in the study of many medieval subjects and age appropriate activities. These age appropriate activities and achievements are designed to retain and support SCA members and their families through education and activities while respecting and protecting the cultural climate of our individual kingdoms. YAFA will also allow for an opportunity to share experiences and accomplishments amongst the youth of the Society – both within their own and across all the kingdoms – while making an investment in the future of our Society, our youth. The program is designed to result in an energetic and growing society of honorable artisans and craftsmen developed from within the SCA. Additionally, through family programs, families within the Society can grow and bond together and maintain continuous participation in the Society as they strive to raise their children. The 2010 SCA Census demonstrated that a third of SCA participants have children under the age of 18, and that while participation naturally diminishes significantly in the early years of parenting, parents become somewhat more active in those years targeted by the YAFA program. By enhancing the opportunities for youth participation itself – and more importantly for family participation with youth activities and efforts – we believe the YAFA program can significantly improve participation and enjoyment in the Society for that third of our participants during these crucial years in the development of their children and their families.