GVSU Lanthorn Article: Fall 2005

GVSU backpacking club offers trips, rafting, friends

**GVSU’s Backpacking and outdoor club offers a variety of experiences and trips**

**Angela Harris**
Grand Valley Lanthorn

College life can be stressful and sometimes students simply need to escape the hustle and bustle of campus and simply enjoy the beauty of nature.

Grand Valley State University’s Backpacking and Outdoors Club offers this escape to students through various trips throughout the year.

The club is designed as an opportunity for students to gather together and enjoy the outdoors and to educate students about low-impact hiking and protecting the environment.

Mark Bryson, a sophomore and the president of the club, said the club is a great way to participate in new experiences and to get away from the fast pace of campus and to enjoy the outdoors.

David Bryson, senior computer science major, added the club is an excellent way to reduce the stress of college classes.

“Backpacking, white-water rafting and camping are always great ways to get away from all my books and term papers,” Bry said. “The outings definitely are not all about just being a nature lover or enjoying the serenity of trees and grass fields.

“Camping is just another of the many ways that people can really get to know one another, and that is what student organizations should do for us,” he added.

Bryson said he joined the club because he had always been interested in camping and being outdoors.

Bry also said he joined because he has always enjoyed camping and being able to survive in the outdoors and brag about it to his friends.

Bryson said the club has taken three trips so far this year including a visit to Manistee National Forest, white-water rafting on the Gull River in West Virginia and most recently, to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Munising, Mich., in the upper peninsula.


Bryson said the group hiked from the Little Beaver Lake campground to the Mosquito Campground and for most of the 11 miles, the trail was along Lake Superior where there were 100-200 foot cliffs.

The group also saw Chapel Rock and Spray Falls, which empties into the lake.

“Honestly, the best part of the trip was eating nice warm food for dinner and getting into dry clothes because of the rain, but also seeing all the great rock formations and hiking along the cliffs,” Bryson said.

The club also went white-water rafting at New River Gorge, W.Va. on Oct. 15, 16 and 17.

Bryson said the group rafted for about six hours on the Gull River. The group rafted half way, stopped for lunch, continued to the end and then traveled back to the starting location by bus.

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He added the only thing that members of the group have to pay for is food and gas and the club takes care of everything else. The group plans the trips and takes care of obtaining the permits for backpacking and the parks that they visit.

Also, the group provides some of the basic backpacking equipment for its members to use on the trips which it stores in the fieldhouse so that the members do not have to go out and buy it. The equipment managers, Nick Johnson and Carl Jets, are in charge of all of the equipment.

The club is also planning a Christmas party to take place during their meeting on Dec. 9, during which they will show an outdoor themed movie such as “Escanaba in da Moonlight” or “The Great Outdoors.”

The club’s meetings are held on Thursdays at 9 p.m. in Manitou 102.
Cleaning the ravines

By Christen Oliveto
GVSU Staff Writer

The Student Environmental Coalition will take a stand this Earth Day to improve the Grand Valley State University campus by hosting its third and largest clean-up of the GVSU ravines.

In response to the accumulating garbage in GVSU’s ravines, SEC is hosting Earth Day CleanUp, with volunteers meeting on Saturday in Parking Lot R at 10 a.m.

Some workers will be focusing on the southern-most ravines on the Allendale Campus to remove metal pieces from an old municipal scrap metal dump. The garbage includes objects ranging from plastic and glass bottles to cars and refrigerators.

GVSU senior and SEC Vice President Jordan DeVries said there are about 25 to 30 tons of scrap in the ravine, including a dozen cars, 30 washing machines, a handful of refrigerators and nearly 50 tires.

It is important to clean up this part of the ravine mainly because the garbage is not supposed to be located there, GVSU senior and SEC Adviser, Shawn Lewis, said.

“It’s an environmental eyesore for people who hike, bike and run through the trails surrounding the ravines,” Lewis added.

Lending additional hands, the Backpacking Club, Biology Club, Geology Club and Soil and Water Conservation Society will be among the participants walking through the remainder of the ravines with trash bags, removing general litter that was dumped or blown into the ravines throughout the year.

GVSU senior and SEC President Kevin Donner said part of this opportunity is to remove participants from the ordinary college experience.

“Seeing trash, plastic bags and bottles simply reminds you of responsibilities and stress that you have to return to,” he added.

The event will serve as a clear announcement that GVSU students care for their surrounding environment and are willing to work to maintain a clean campus by fixing the mistakes of the past and present, Donner said. He added he hopes it will give students pride in their campus and prevent such frequent littering in the future.

“I do not believe throwing things from the Little Mac bridge would be quite as popular if students were required to remove those objects weeks later,” he said.

Faculty, students and community volunteers are also welcome and encouraged to participate in the cleanup. Lewis said GVSU will send volunteers with heavy machinery to help remove larger objects from the south ravine area.

“Our university has an obligation to be a leader within our community and set an example for other universities out there,” DeVries said. “This is why a clean-up of the ravines is a joint effort between the administration and the student body.”

According to the SEC’s Web site, Earth Day Cleanup is a part of the group’s mission to spread awareness of the environmental issues faced in today’s society.

“Bring a pair of hiking boots, some old clothes you don’t mind getting dirty and a hug for some of the trees, DeVries said. “After all, this is your campus.”

Helping out: GVSU students Dave Faling (left) and Mark Bryson carry a microwave they found in the ravines earlier this month during one of the Student Environmental Coalition’s initial cleanups.

Courtesy of Shawn Lewis
Berrien County Record Article: Winter