

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.

*John Muir, Our National Parks, 1901*

John Muir penned these words 111 years ago.

Powerful words – winds will blow their freshness into you and storms their energy

Inviting words – cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.

If we were going to market the Outdoor Pursuits Program to the uninitiated, I can't think of better words to use. They are enticing, alluring... they're beautiful.

Much more appealing than "climb the mountains and suffer sleep deprivation, sore feet, a pounding dehydration headache, and several papers to catch up on when you return to town."

These words are not appealing at all, but they contain the hidden truth that outdoor adventure is awfully hard work, and there's a price to be paid.

However, in the process of embracing the unique challenges demanded by playing in adverse environments and circumstances, people soon come to realize that it's worth every challenging step.

There's something magical about embracing challenge that can be hard to put into words.

In the end, words are less meaningful than the richness of the experience itself. Outdoor adventure takes each of us on a personal journey that charts a distinct path as the days, weeks, months and years unfold.

It begins with an initial step and for a variety of reasons:

- to learn new skills
- to enhance the safety of one's personal adventures
- to go places you otherwise could not
- to challenge oneself and in the process push the envelope of individual potential.
- To become a competent outdoor leader.

Whatever the reason for starting in OUR program, I believe that, once immersed, people come to realize that they are part of a special community. A community solidified by the common bond of adventuring into beautiful places, of sharing challenges together, helping each other, trusting other's with one's life, and learning and laughing together.

Hopefully a lot of learning and laughing.

Throughout it all, the easy times and the hard ones, there's an outdoor leader acting in service to others.

- Teaching and reinforcing skills.
- Ensuring that people are comfortable and safe.
- Someone to draw inspiration from.
- Someone to emulate.

I believe that our leaders are the glue that holds our outdoor community together and serves as the inspiration for students in our courses.

And it's not cheap Elmer's craft glue. It's the tough stuff. It's gorilla glue. Glue that gets hold of you and won't easily let go. Like the memories of a good outdoor adventure, it endures.

Students observe our experienced leaders in action and say:

"I want to be like her".

"I want to be like him".

"I want to be like Daniel".

We're here today because the Outdoor Pursuits Program has been honored with a leadership award born from a tragic event.

An award that commemorates two fallen members of our outdoor community: Ellis Heyer and Collin LaMore - outstanding students who embraced the natural world with reverence and delightful enthusiasm.

From the bottom of my heart, our hearts, we thank the Heyer and LaMore families for their vision, inspiration, and determination to create a legacy for Ellis and Collin, an award that honors the best that the OPP has, and will have to offer, for years to come. The names Heyer and LaMore are, and will always be, intimately connected to this program that we love. We are deeply honored.

It's exciting to think ahead about the fact that our award recipients, once they leave the University will carry the recognition of their hard work and dedication to our program into their futures. Some day their kids may ask them "Who were Ellis Heyer and Collin LaMore"? And their story will be told.

It's the intent that this award will be presented to a worthy candidate (or candidates) on an annual basis by the OPP faculty. The award will be presented to:

- A leader who demonstrates superior leadership performance by seeking out leadership opportunities and striving to develop outdoor skills and leadership potential; by motivating and taking care of others, serving as a role model; by setting a good example; assisting in promoting the educational mission of the OPP and promoting and upholding Program safety, performance and risk management policies.

- Someone who embraces the roles of teacher and facilitator, and strives to enhance teaching and facilitation skills; someone who is committed to teaching and guiding others in formal and informal settings.
- Someone who is a steward and advocate for nature. An individual who is passionate about the outdoors and demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that our students minimize impacts on the land; someone who consistently trains others in the best practices of the Leave No Trace philosophy.
- Someone who is of strong character – who demonstrates dependability, trustworthiness, honesty, humility; respects others and is in turn respected by teachers and fellow leaders in training; takes responsibilities seriously; demonstrates compassion for others, is helpful, encouraging and supportive; takes the initiative and goes beyond what is required.

Dan and I are so very fortunate to have dedicated, hard working leaders in training that are not only great students, but are wonderful human beings. Many of them are here today, and each, in their own way are meritorious. Dan and I recognize that making choices for this award will be difficult because of the quality of our student leaders. This year, one person stood out for us – Daniel Tewksbury.

It's been a joy watching Dan work hard to develop into a strong, confident and outstanding outdoor leader – to become an inspiration for others and an advocate for our program. And he's such a nice guy to boot – caring, humble, hard working, always there when we needed a helping hand or a chore that needed attending to.

But, Dan, I have one beef with you that I need to get off my chest – just when you reach the point where we can hand off major responsibilities and work into your capable hands you have the gaul to graduate on us.. so selfish.

I'm sure that Dan would be the first to acknowledge that this is a family award, so would Dan's family please stand as we present the award.

Dan, it's with great pleasure that we present to you the "Ellis Heyer/Collin LaMore Leadership Award".

Respectfully,

Michael Strong, Director OPP