

The mission of the Clark County Parks & Recreation's Challenge Course Program is to safely provide an experiential opportunity for any individual or group to broaden their perspective of themselves, the environment, and those around them.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Challenge Course programs are a part of the larger field of adventure education through which people are motivated to venture out into unfamiliar and challenging territories of life experiences. Growth takes place when people become willing to face the unknown...make an effort to accomplish the new, the unknown and sometimes difficult.

Certain important goals at the very heart of adventure programming tie all of the varied activities together. These goals relate to growth in both individuals and groups.

A basic goal is to affect the individual's level of confidence, self-awareness and personal insights. Each participant is asked to attempt a series of activities involving various physical and emotional risks. As they deal with the successes, failures, inner feelings, and self-image, an altered sense of self begins to develop. These programs are designed to offer a high degree of challenge for the individual, to expand their personal perceived limits and go beyond the area of pure excitement.

Participants are challenged in a non-competitive, non-judgmental environment to take risks as they face unique, unfamiliar experiences. The intended growth in the individual is not only emotional, but also physical. As the participant deals with activities requiring balance and coordination and improves in these areas, they gain a feeling of personal accomplishment, which often spills over into other areas of life.

A second goal is to aid the participants in learning to function meaningfully and productively in a group setting. As the group plans and works to complete an assigned task, its success or failure depends not only on the effort and contribution of individual members but also on the ability of group members to work together in a cooperative, mutually supportive atmosphere. Ultimately though, success is measured not so much by how much the group is able to accomplish, as it is by the dynamics of what happens to individuals within the group as they work together in the effort to succeed.

The third goal is to increase the level of understanding and appreciation for the natural environment around us. Too often we are too busy to experience or enjoy the rain, wind, sun, dirt, cold, spring, fall, winter... As we get caught up in our work-a-day world, the weather in all of its various moods is seldom more than an added inconvenience. Since Adventure Programs typically occur in the outdoors, they provide the perfect setting to allow participants to become increasingly comfortable with the world around them. A final and important goal is to instill a feeling of fun in learning. These activities are serious business. They require careful attention to detail by the facilitators and can be stressful and at times painful to participants. They should also perceive the experience as fun. Laughter, words of encouragement and shouts of congratulations and applause should be heard often as participants struggle and achieve. Challenge Courses, for the most part, utilize structures (components) constructed of rope, steel, cable and wood. The environment for these Challenge Course programs is a series of components, usually installed in a wooded area at ground level or up off the ground in trees or on utility pole structures. The components are walls, beams, cable and rope traverses, nets, bridges, ladders, platforms, etc.

With group initiatives, usually a small group of 8-12 participants is asked to achieve a common goal together. Even though individual participants are asked to achieve an aspect of an initiative, it is the group that carries the end responsibility for success.

Speed or individual excellence is not the goal. Success is determined not by how well individuals or groups perform, but rather by the extent to which they are willing to try something new and work together to accomplish the task. As group members interact in a supportive, caring manner in their attempt to solve a group initiative or offer moral support to a fellow member facing an individual initiative, team building, individual growth and camaraderie take place.

Risk taking is a key factor in these programs, for it is from risk taking that the greatest personal benefit and growth are derived. As the individual participant voluntarily takes greater and greater risks, dealing positively with the fear associated with facing an unknown experience, a feeling of increased self-confidence can be gained along with a new or increased potential to try greater challenges.

### **HIGH COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**Giant's Ladder** - The Giant's Ladder is a vertically oriented log ladder suspended from an overhead cable. A separate belay cable is suspended above the uppermost log.

The task is for two climbers to work together to climb to the top of the ladder.

**Cat Walk** - The Cat Walk is a horizontally positioned log or pole suspended between two poles. The belay cable is positioned above the log, parallel to the ground, and at a height of nine to ten feet above the log.

The task is to traverse the log with no hand support.

**High "V"** - Two cables are suspended between three poles in a V-formation with the apex of the V at the "access" pole. An overhead belay cable runs parallel to the ground and out of the participant's reach.

The task is for a pair of climbers to traverse the cables as far as possible using only each other for support. This is the high-course version of the traditional team challenge course Wild Woozy.

**The Vines** - The Vines involves a single, tensioned foot cable with a series of ropes suspended from an overhead cable, positioned just beyond the average person's reach. The task is to walk across the foot cable using the various support ropes (vines) for aid.

**The Leap of Faith** - This element involves climbing to a pole and jumping/diving out. A separate belay cable is suspended above the participant cable. The belay rope runs through a shear reduction device affixed to the belay cable and down to the just right decender.

**Giant Swing** - The Giant Swing is a swing in which the participant is suspended between two cables, which act like the ropes to a swing.

The task is for the group to pull the participant up in the air where the participant can pull a release and begin swinging back and forth suspended from the two side cables which are both attached to a seat and chest harness with a carabineer.

**The Climbing Wall** - The Climbing Wall is a vertical wall with randomly spaced foot and hand holds. A separate belay cable is suspended above the top platform. The task is to climb the wall using the available foot and hand holds.

**Islands** - Islands is a series of various sized platforms or islands hanging from a cable between two utility poles.

The task is for the participant to traverse from "island" to "island" to get from one utility pole to the other.

**Pipe Dreams** - Pipe Dreams is a two-person activity comprised of a lower and upper cable with pipes placed vertically between the two cables. The element is stretched between two utility poles.

Two people standing on the lower cable may use only the pipes and each other to traverse the element from pole to pole. Participants may not use the upper cable to aid in accomplishing their task.

