

Climbers to contest gravity

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"Because it's there," that's what Edmund Hilary said when he was asked why he risked his life to climb Mount Everest.

That is only one reason why someone climbs, there are many more.

For those who want to give climbing a try, or have already been hooked on the sport, the SCSU Outdoor Endeavors program is offering the 2006 Groundhog Day Climbing Competition 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at the Mountain Dew Xtreme Climbing Wall in Halenbeck Hall.

Matt Pederson, a third-year-student, is the event coordinator. He said people become interested in climbing because it tests them in many ways.

"It's a challenge mentally and physically," Pederson said. "It's a good way to push yourself and challenge yourself. It's really rewarding too because you can see the results real fast."

Mackenzie Spore, a first-year student who works for Outdoor Endeavors, said part of the activity's appeal is the benefit it provides physically.

"For some, (it's) the adrenaline," Spore said. "Going up high, the physical act. That is, it's a strenuous physical activity. It's an exercise, it's a challenge. When you climb a rock you feel a sense of accomplishment when you finish the climb and get to the top."

Spore added that some people want to change part of their lifestyle and they see rock climbing as an answer.

Halenbeck's climbing wall opened January 2005, and since then the popularity of climbing has continued to increase.

"The demand has exceeded the projected expectations, especially during the winter," said Ivan Bartha, SCSU's coordinator for experiential education programs.

Pederson said people still show up and try the wall once without returning, but that trend is changing.

"I see more people climb who are climbing regularly instead of just one time," Pederson said. "I'm also starting a rock climbing club; that should help the growth."

Bartha said Outdoor Endeavors also offer climbing clinics, belay clinics, and the Husky Youth Climbing Club.

SCSU senior Mallory Rickbeil, the assistant coordinator for the event, said more people began to show up in the spring and they had to hire an extra person to work the wall at nights because of the demand.



Junior Matt Pederson reconfigures the climbing wall Tuesday night by adding, subtracting and moving steps around for the upcoming weekend tournament.

The competition will provide two different events: top rope climbing and boulder problems.

Top rope climbing involves being tied into a set rope on the wall with a belayer below. The belayer controls ascent and descent and keeps the climber in the safety system.

Bouldering gives climbers the chance to climb up the wall with no assistance or safety devices besides a soft pad for landing on. Bouldering is restricted to less than 12-feet high instead of the top of the wall, which is about 28-feet high. There are spotters and a crash pad below to help protect the climbing in case of a fall.

Bouldering costs less since harnesses and ropes are not needed, this has increased its popularity.

"All you need is chalk and shoes," Pederson said. "More people do it because it's a lot cheaper."

The event organizers said there are a number of reasons to participate in or watch the event.

"It's a chance to see experienced climbers compete because they're really working against themselves," Bartha said. "It's also to showcase the facilities. This is Central Minnesota's premiere climbing facility."

Bartha said the closest facility to match SCSU's is in the Twin Cities.

Rickbeil said she wants the event to increase climbing's popularity.

"I think my goal has been to get people who are new to climbing into the community and introduce them to the wall," Rickbeil said.

Rickbeil said last year's event attracted 55 climbers, and they hope to get more this year.

Bartha said they have cross-advertised with other colleges so there will also be participants from Wisconsin schools as well as from other states.

Prizes ranging from climbing gear to gift certificates will be awarded at the end of the day.

Pederson said he expects a good turnout and that any novices who attend have a good chance of getting interested in climbing.

"Hopefully they just have some fun," Pederson said. "If you have fun, you're going to come back and do it again. As long as they enjoy themselves, get some easier routes, get the feel for climbing and see what it's about."

People can register for the event until it begins. Registration and sign-in are from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information on this and other programs offered, call (320) 308-3772.

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