

4-H Venturers Wilderness Program, 2007
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2007 Accomplishment Report and Success Story

4-H Venturers - - AWESOME!

The Kansas 4-H Venturers Program provides unique opportunities for teens and adults who are interested in and who have a passion for outdoor adventure experiences, including backpacking, canoeing and rafting. Since its inception in 1997, the Ventures Program is known for its emphasis on leadership development, youth and adult partnerships and low impact camping techniques in wilderness settings.

In 2007 the Kansas Venturers rafted the Green River. Twenty four adventuresome souls launched at Flaming Gorge Reservoir near Green River, Wyoming and floated to Split Mountain take-out near Jensen, Utah. It was approximately an 80 mile trip thru the corners of three States. Of these 24 people, 15 were teenagers or in their 20's, 6 were 4-H adults and volunteers and 4 were experienced rafters that were willing to go on the trip and share the fun with the 4-Her's. (One 4-Her reluctantly had to stay home due to illness)

Trip plans began in October 2006 when it was decided that the Venturers wanted to go rafting in 2007. Plans were confirmed in February when we received our river permit from the National Park Service to raft the Green River in June.

Once on the trip, some things are predictable...such as getting up, breaking down camp, loading gear and equipment and getting on to the next camp. We had many good hours of floating the river and some really good whitewater. Many of the teens got to give leadership to getting down the river by being boat captains. They were in charge of choosing which route to take down the river and then communicating that to the rest of their crew. Being a boat captain is a good way to gain skills in leadership, build self confidence, and practice communication skills.

Then there are some things that are not predictable...such as gale force winds that can help a person to reach deep inside themselves for creative ways to work together and not "lose your cool".

The afternoon before we were to take off of the river, we experienced some winds that were a real challenge. We learned from our experience. We learned that it helps to get up early in the morning and get some miles behind you early, because winds that can be a real challenge, usually do happen in the afternoons. One paddler said it this way **"Paddling into gale force winds does seem hopeless at times, but can be overcome with perseverance, team work and you know that there will be a hot dinner when you arrive in camp."** Another adult camper observed **"I learned that rowing into gale force winds is futile, exhausting, unpredictable, and not very fun. On the flip-side, it provided a unique team building and leadership experience including character development and true grit."**

It is my observation that once an individual or group has experienced something like this they are stronger for it....they have a new sense of confidence and they have become stronger as a team. Plus they have an overwhelming feeling of success from having overcome the obstacle.

One 4-Her sums up the Venturer Experience like this: **“I think the State 4-H Venturer trips are awesome. It is like an extreme county camp trip. You get to meet 4-Her’s throughout the state and become one big family with them. You experience camping on a whole new level. On these trips you improve your leadership and teamwork skills. I love the Venturers program and I think it would be great for all 4-Her’s.”**

An adult sponsor adds this: **“I learned no matter what you read in the paper or hear on the news, there are still a lot of great kids out there. I was impressed at how well the kids would work together to get things done and how they would pitch in to help....”**

When given the opportunity by her folks to vacation next summer in Puerto Rico or go on the Venturers Backpack trip, one 4-Her voted wholeheartedly to go backpacking with the 4-H Venturers!