

# Course gives opportunity to overcome differences

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Chrisp was doing a trust fall. One person stands in the middle of a circle and then slowly falls into the arms of group members who control the fall and pass the person around the circle.

The trust fall is one of the opening activities groups go through to build teamwork and trust as part of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Adventure Ropes Challenge course.

The course, at Camp Easter Seals in Milford, is a series of activities both on the ground and 25 feet in the air designed to improve teamwork, cooperation and self-confidence.

Course facilitators provide the challenges, and the groups, usually of 10 to 50 people, must figure out how to meet them, Outdoor Adventures director Jim Fullerton said.

"They learn that the greater the challenge, the greater support they need to succeed," Fullerton said.

**"**You can learn a lot from failure. Here the process is more important than the objective."**"**

**JAMES BALL**  
interim ropes course director

The course teaches groups to work together outside in different settings than they are used to, Fullerton said.

Before the trust fall, everyone had to learn how to spot and focus on a person. To teach focus, facilitators used an activity called mirroring, where students mimicked everything their partner did.

Interim ropes course director James Ball established one rule for the activity.

"Follow their movements exactly,

but please, no Macarena," Ball said.

One of the other events the group of students faced Sunday was the amoeba electric fence.

They moved all 13 people in their group across a 3½ foot tall 'electric' fence, made of nylon rope, before an imaginary band of vicious pygmies caught up with them.

"The 'pygmies' just give us the time factor to move the group across the obstacle," Ball said.

But as they moved across the fence everyone stayed in contact with two other people in the group and everyone else had to be connected.

The group had five minutes to complete the task before the pretend pygmies reached them.

"To get everyone over the fence we had to work together and trust each other," Chrisp said.

The group spent the rest of the afternoon working through other events such as moonball, lapsit, the balance beam and sleeping giant. Each one presented a different obstacle the group had to work together to overcome.

Participants learn many lessons on the course, Ball said.

"You can learn a lot from failure," Ball said. "Here the process is more important than the objective."

In addition to the low course, there is a series of events 25 feet in the air that are geared more toward personal growth.

Balance beams and steel cables that span from tree to tree. Each span between the trees requires a different technique to cross.

The high elements push people to their limits physically to challenge them, Mahler said.

"When you're challenged in a class you can just slack off and not do it," Mahler said. "But on the (high) course you can't procrastinate because it is in your face."

At the end of any session at the Adventure Ropes Challenge course, the whole group comes together to discuss what they learned.

The honors students agreed that communication and working together were important lessons.

"I learned that although Mike doesn't like my sweater we can still get along," junior honors board member Dan Augustyn said.

The course is operated by facilitators, UNL students trained to conduct the events.

Each of the facilitators has taken a course to learn the theory behind the team building activities.

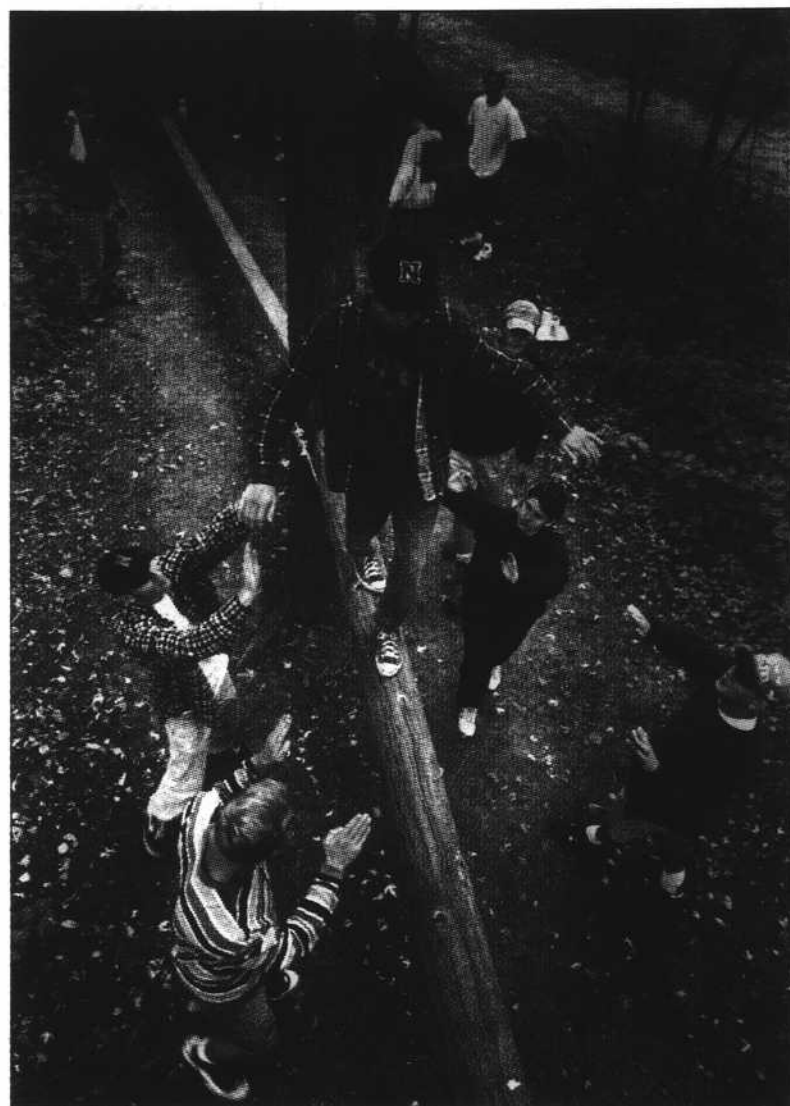
After completing the training, students can work as facilitators at the course as long as they are students, Fullerton said.

Facilitator Jay Mahler, a junior in general studies, said his job is rewarding because he can watch groups grow through the events.

"I like to see people learn that their way isn't always right," Mahler said. "If they can learn to appreciate diversity here, they can take that with them."

Groups interested in participating in or being a facilitator for the Adventure Ropes Challenge course program should contact Outdoor Adventures. The course is open, weather permitting, during the school year and summer.

"The Adventure Challenge will move you from your current comfort zone through a groan zone to a new growth zone," facilitator Amanda Stone said.



TOP: MIKE MCQUISTAN, a UNL junior, is pushed among friends and helping hands in an exercise of trust.

ABOVE: JOSH PINKELMAN, a freshman mechanical engineering major, walks over a balance beam as teammates walk along beside him.

## Some challenge experience available back on campus

By JOSH FUNK  
Assignment Reporter

Thanks to Student Involvement and the Group Challenge Experience, events like the amoeba electric fence can be set up in the comfort of your own meeting room.

The Group Challenge Experience was developed in conjunction with the Adventure Ropes Challenge course in Milford. The Group Challenge offers groups the chance to build teamwork, understanding and cooperation without the travel.

"We bring some of the team elements of a ropes course into an area where groups can do them," University Program Council staff member Brian Kennedy said.

The activities are all run by facilitators, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln students trained to work with the groups.

The Group Challenge can be done with any size group for almost any length of time depending on what members want to work on, facilitator Amanda Stone said.

"We can work on anything from icebreakers to serious team building with a group," Stone said.

Groups start off with get acquainted activities where they learn about each other's personalities.

Then groups move on to problem solving and team building activities.

Events such as the trust fall or amoeba electric fence require the group to work together.

"We teach them how to overcome obstacles and communicate better," Stone said.

Facilitators explain the elements and set the rules for the groups. Sometimes the rules change in the middle of an activity.

"The rules always change in life," facilitator and interim ropes course director James Ball said. "You just have to adjust and keep going."

After each element, the groups discuss what they learned during the session.

"We want them to learn that every idea is good," Kennedy said. "They need to learn how to recognize what works and support it."

Both the ropes course and the group programs use the same theory to address problems with working together.

Ropes courses and similar activities are gaining popularity across the country, Ball said.

"These courses were originally developed as part of military training to prepare men for survival situations," Ball said. "But now they are widely used to build teamwork for any group."

The experience is different for every group, Outdoor Adventures director Jim Fullerton said.

"We provide the challenges and they get whatever they need to out of the experience," Fullerton said.

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