

## Delta State opens top notch outdoor rec lab

Mark H. Stowers 11:26 a.m. CT Feb. 10, 2017



Did you ever go to camp? Lake Stephens, Tallaha, Soaring Hawk, Kick A Poo, Kanakuk, Windy Gap (or insert your favorite camp here)? Camps are worldwide, fun and a great part of being a kid and actually an adult. In my teens, I spent time at church and Boy Scout Camp and would later work at each and during my final year of university training I had the privilege to take a couple of Camp Leadership classes. We learned how to canoe (in a swimming pool but Shannon Aker actually showed us how to tip a canoe) we tied knots, sang songs and went over the elementary levels of being a camp leader.

But there are places that help train folks more in-depth. At Delta State University in Cleveland, they've had an Outdoor Recreation Leadership program for several years and now is the only recreation education program at any four-year university "giving you credit to hike, bike, sail, paddle or rock climb."

The program is in the College of Education and Human Sciences HPER Division. In addition to the classroom training, students get to put their newfound education to work immediately helping

with the annual OKRA Summer Day Camp and Delta Down and Dirty Youth Obstacle and Challenge Run each fall.

Seasoned campers understand the priority of “using what you have to create what you need” and under the leadership of program director Todd Davis, they’ve done just that. By repurposing an old locker room, the Outdoor Recreation Program has a home to house their tools and toys. The Dave Heflin Outdoor Recreation Laboratory ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Saturday February 11 at 11:00 a.m.

“This is an official classroom and official laboratory,” Davis said. “It will be used for Outdoor Rec classes and service to the community to use for Boy Scouts and Girl Scout training. It’s a repurposed room. It used to be a locker room in the gym area from the 1970s when we used to have PE classes.”

The former shower/bathroom/locker room is about 60-feet by 40-feet with drop ceilings that have been raised to the rafters. It features a rock wall on one side and plenty of space to educate and store materials.

“It’s a training facility for outdoor rec. There’s an area to set up tents, there’s a map board with an HD Screen and other technology. The bathroom was converted into a big sink and cleaning wash room with a washer and dryer and deep sinks. And there’s a food storage area. We changed the shower area into a big storage area with hooks to hang sleeping bags and backpacks and parts and pieces. It’s a total transferable room. The lab tables are all on wheels so we can move them out of the way when its packing time. It’s great. We can create the space we need.”

One of Davis’ friends donated wood from an old barn near Jackson that has now been repurposed for tabletops and other surfaces. The shiny new lab space brings together the “scattered program” under one roof.

“We had to go to different locations to do our experiential portion of class. We had to go to an old climbing tower by the football field to do our rope climbing and knot tying. Then we’d have to find space somewhere or use the racquetball courts to do our tent set ups. Now we have space for it. We have everything in one spot.”

Davis, an Idaho native and former Coast Guard Swimmer, came to the Delta to lead the program under the Dave Heflin Professorship that was created in 2008. The program is sponsored under six different giving levels from \$100 up to \$5,00 and beyond. Davis’ dream was to get a room like this created for the program and to honor his mentor Heflin who will be on hand for the ribbon cutting. To learn more about the program, click [here](#).

“My position was funded by the Dave Heflin Professorship. It’s an honor for me to have this position. The vision for this was to not only sustain the professorship but to house memorabilia and honor Dave,” Davis said. “This really does fit Dave to a T. He would have repurposed this and salvaged things to create this.”

The campus wide event is bringing back former students as far as West Virginia, Tennessee and beyond to help cut the ribbon and open the lab officially. There will be a pulled pork sandwich bar with all the fixings as well as guest speakers. Following the ribbon cutting there will be tours provided by students and staff.

The event is free to the public and all are invited to partake. Set your GPS to

1003 West Sunflower Road in Cleveland. For more information, call (662) 846-4570.

Outdoor recreation across the state, country and beyond has been and will continue to be impacted positively for many generations – all from Delta State University's Dave Heflin Outdoor Recreation Laboratory. Go check it out!