

What to do when you can't canoe . . . but want to



If you've always wanted to go canoeing, but can't tell the difference between an oar and a lacrosse stick . . . take heart, you've got a friend that you maynot have

known anything about.

Tucked in a hard-to-find corner of the Erb Memorial Union, the University Outdoor Program coordinated 17,000 user-days worth of outdoor fun last year.

"A lot of people are afraid they have to be skilled to go on our trips," chuckles Bruce Mason, Outdoor Program director. "But that's not always true. We try to make it as easy as possible by gearing the trips toward people who haven't done anything like this before."

Mason, director for the last four years, is quick to point out that the Outdoor Program is mainly designed to be a

resource center for University students and faculty.

"We are here to provide the resources to assist community members in any project related to the outdoors," Mason says, adding that the program isn't limited to only University faculty and students.

"The majority of people who use our resources want to go on their own trip," Mason says. "We're here to give them enough skills to go on that outdoor trip."

The program is set up on a co-operative basis, which means there are no membership fees or officers, and anyone can participate to any degree they want.

The idea behind the Outdoor Program is for a group of community members to come up with a destination point and funding, says Mason, and for the program staff to provide any resources the group needs — such as maps, lists of

camping sites, or food-planning guides.

Or, if just one or two people have a trip in mind, they can fill out a trip sheet and post it in the Outdoor Program office along with other upcoming excursions that are planned. Hopefully, enough people will sign-up for the trip for it to become a reality.

Participants generally have to help pay for gas (if they don't have a car) and any equipment they will need to rent, but those are the only prerequisites, says Mason.

"If it's non-competitive, self-propelled and outdoors-oriented, we will help," Mason says, pointing out that the program helped out on skiing, hiking, climbing, canoeing, rafting, and bicycling trips last year.

Staff members often initiate trips, but there are no "official" Outdoor Program trips, says Mason.

Outdoor trips aren't the only thing the Outdoor Program lends a hand to, ac-

ording to Mason. The program also sponsors more than 100 free on-campus events each year, ranging from slideshows to equipment presentations, and offers a wealth of resource information covering outdoor-related activities.

There are equipment catalogs, topographic sheets covering Oregon and parts of the rest of the world, menu-planning and food-shopping guides, a used-equipment board, and areas where you can find out the latest on whitewater canoeing, cycling or environmental projects.

The Center, located at the southeast corner of the EMU next to the food service loading docks, is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. every day of the week. Staff members are available if you need help from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

By John Healy

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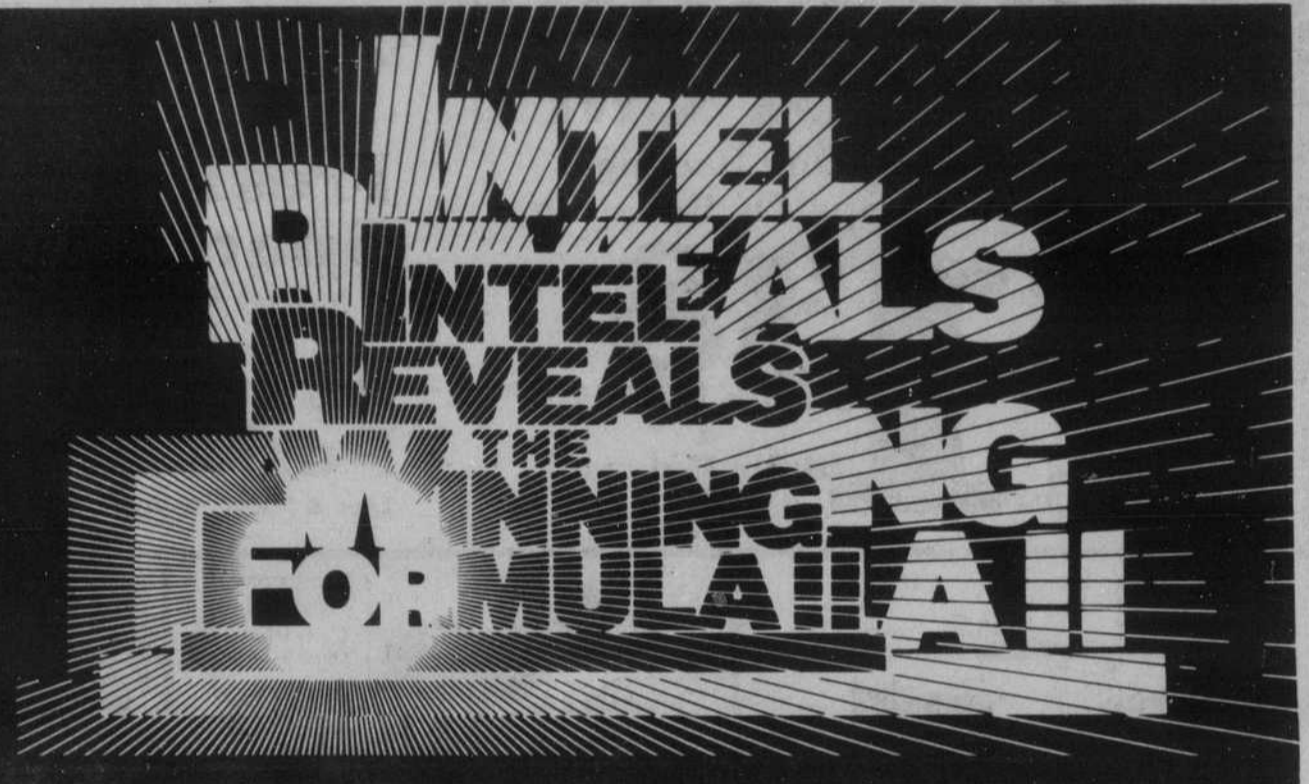
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