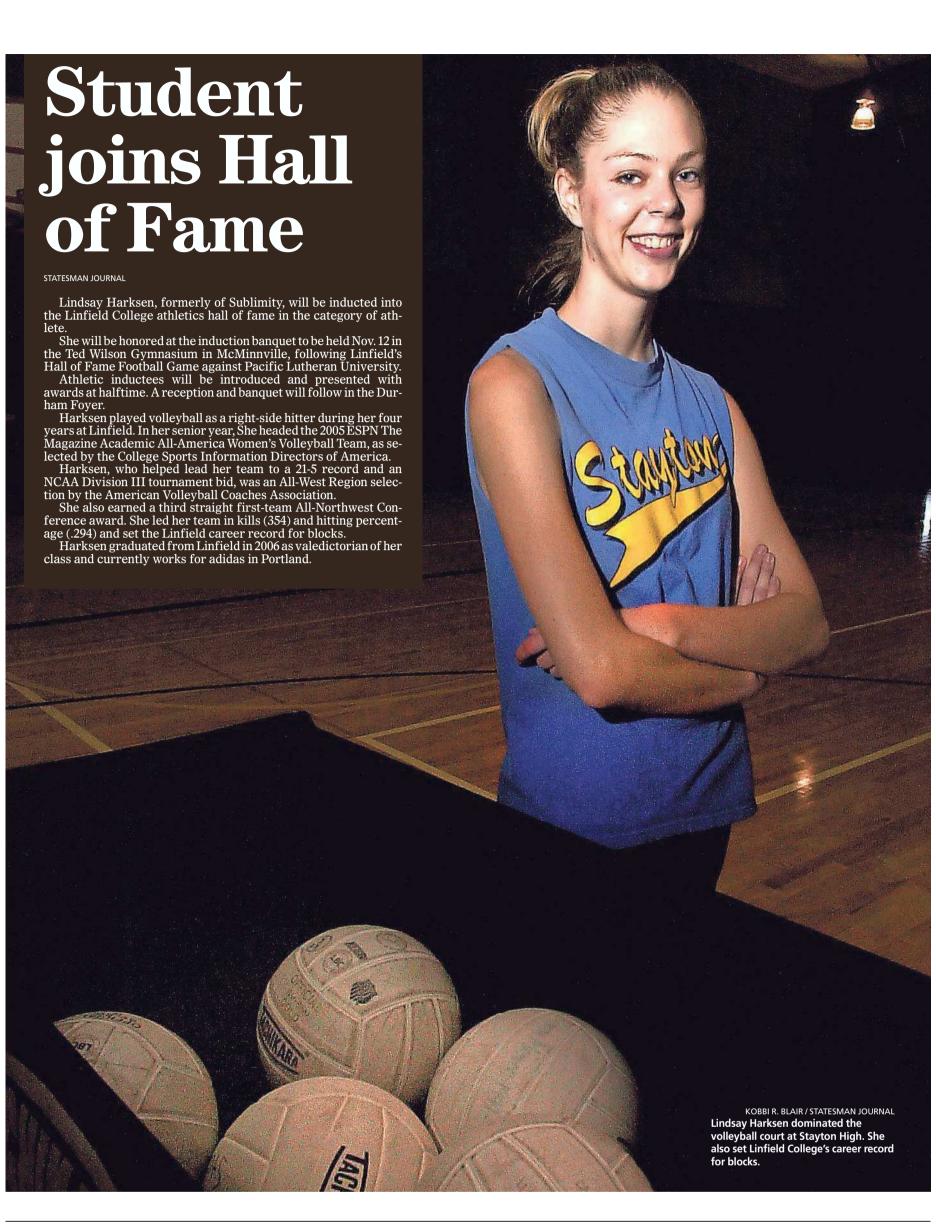
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Adventure camping offers exciting activities

STATESMAN JOURNAL

I heard about it on Facebook: a campground with not just tent and RV sites but yurts, tepees and cabin tents surrounded with zip lines, rope courses, paintball, a rock wall and other activities. All less than an hour from Salem.

As someone who loves a little adventure. I made reservations.

Camp Dakota, on the outskirts of Scotts Mills near Silverton, has been around for 19 years. It has 45 acres, mostly forested, though I was glad we were in a yurt in the back portion, which is more private than sites 1 to 19 in the front. Our yurt was one of the smaller ones, sleeping six with two bunk beds that feature a queen bed on the bottom and a twin on top. Visitors bring their own bedding. Our yurt had a table, wood stove and a barbecue on the deck. It also had electricity, which I took advantage of to cook breakfast on my griddle. Outside was a fire pit and picnic table.

We had reserved two nights — a Thursday and Friday - because the yurts were mostly full on weekends. Surprisingly, the camp was pretty empty un-

til Friday evening.

Camp Dakota has plenty of packages to choose from. Ours got us two nights in the yurt for \$225. If that sounds expensive, it did come with an activity package that included a plethora of activities we could do for free (rock wall, disc golf, tomahawk throwing and paintball, though you had to buy paintballs) and discounts for other adventures (zip lines and ropes course), plus \$60 to use toward



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Yurts at Camp Dakota in Scotts Mills feature bunk beds, a wood stove and a gas grill.

activities. Let's just say even with the discounts, you could spend a lot; we ended up racking up \$200 to do the five elements on the middle ropes course and the six-line zip line course for four, plus enough paintballs to keep two 12-yearold boys shooting for four hours.

Of course the more expensive stuff were the boys' favorites. The zip lines, ropes course and paintball made both of their top three. But the free stuff was fun

The 18-hole disc golf was a nice course looping around the outside perimeter of the camp. Curving through the trees and bushes, across a pond that housed some noisy frogs and up and down hills and around corners, you could rarely see the end target at the beginning of each hole. The course also made a good nearly 2mile walk for the dog each morning.

While walking around camp, I had spotted a volleyball net next to a horseshoe game. Luckily I had brought badminton rackets and a birdie, giving us another free activity.

We saved paintball until our last day. Even after you check out, you can still participate in activities. In fact, it seemed many people had only come up Saturday to play paintball. There were around 50 people playing, from ad-

Camp Dakota

Season: Open year round, with weekends mostly booked for overnight stays this summer but lots of openings mid week and some spots still open for Labor Day weekend

Information and reservations: campdakota.com or 503-873-7432

vanced adults in ghillie suits to preteens out there for the first time. (Lesson my son learned: Don't wear a bright blue sweatshirt paintballing.)

We had previously done a ropes course at Tree to Tree near Forest Grove, which gives you a set number of hours to play vs. just going through the course once like Camp Dakota allows. I like the idea of a set time better. I wish I'd been able to do Camp Dakota's course over and over to try to better my time or do tricks the second time through. But I wasn't willing to pay up for a do over.

Camp Dakota's course also is smaller than Tree to Tree, but Dakota's advanced course does have some cool stuff: Ride a wheelbarrow across a tightwire and scale netting to get to the end, and the only way back to the ground on the advanced level is a bungee jump.

After three days, we were pooped, but it had been constant fun. It took those three days to experience everything. It wasn't as cheap as your usual camping, but we did a lot of firsts from paintball to tomahawks. I think if we came again, we'd skip the more expensive zip lines and ropes course and stick to paintball.