

PARALLEL LINES

The Newsletter of the Association for Challenge Course Technology, Inc.

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Inside

<i>From the Board Chair</i>	2
<i>From the Executive Director:</i>	3
<i>United We Stand</i>	
<i>FAQ from the Installation</i>	4
<i>Standards Committee</i>	
<i>Belay Post Blues from "Things</i>	5
<i>We Learned the Hard Way"</i>	
<i>Facilitator's Toolbox: Notes</i>	6
<i>from "Live" in Atlanta</i>	
<i>Builder's Toolbox: The Angle-</i>	8
<i>It's Got to Be the Angle</i>	
<i>Out on a on Limb</i>	11
<i>Poetry Works!</i>	12
<i>New Membership Benefit-</i>	
<i>Medical Insurance</i>	13
<i>Why Certification? A</i>	14
<i>Perspective Exercise</i>	
<i>Help Wanted</i>	14
<i>Research Corner: What Is</i>	15
<i>It That You Want to Evaluate</i>	
<i>in Your Program?</i>	

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Atlanta Conference a Great Success

by Cynthia Paris, Conference Committee

Our 20th Annual ACCT International Challenge Course Conference and Symposium in Atlanta was a great success! A big THANK YOU to all of our sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, and volunteers! Industry professionals who traveled early in the week were welcomed with southeastern snow and sleet, unusual for the area. By the time the conference started, most airports were clear, and Atlanta was ready for us!

We were pleased to register over 600 people this year, all adding to the depth of knowledge apparent during the conference. During arrival, the excitement built as each person rode the escalator up to the mezzanine level, where much of the action took place. Everywhere groups of people talked, debated, and shared ideas as the conference began.

Wednesday night kicked off with an early arrival reception and welcome social. The penthouse level, with wall-to-wall windows, gave breathtaking, panoramic views of Atlanta. Of course, a little rain added some challenge to the view—yet challenges are what we love, right?! Our hotel staff were surprised and impressed, as usual, to have such a friendly, casual, and fun-loving group! We were soon rewarded with excellent service and delicious food throughout the week.

(see Atlanta on page 10)

Welcome Our New Executive Director!

by Michelle Hepler

Chances are if you attended the conference in Atlanta, Georgia, back in February, you had the pleasure of meeting ACCT's newest staff member. I know his goal was to meet as many people as possible (and even remember their names!). If you were not there, please let me take this opportunity to introduce you to James Borishade, Executive Director of ACCT!

James comes to us with several years of association and nonprofit management, and we can already see that reflected in his work. His energy, enthusiasm, and professionalism, along with a constant smile, will certainly expand our association's horizon. I suggest you take the time to give him a call, get to know him, and welcome him yourself! I sure did, and it certainly has been a pleasure!

You can contact James by e-mail at james@acctinfo.org, or by phone at +1-800-991-0286 ext 915.



Photo by Chris Kelly

From the Board Chair

by Erik Marter

I have never seen an iceberg, though I intend to one day. I have a very vivid memory of watching an old-school National Geographic show as a child and seeing footage of divers voyaging beneath the waters to film the unseen world of the iceberg. I had heard about icebergs and the behemoth that took down the unsinkable Titanic. I was astounded at two things in the film—first, as you might imagine, the cold and the immensity of the diver’s suit; and second, which is the thing that has really stuck with me, is the amazing beauty and character that the iceberg hides from the rest of us. Few people have ever or will ever get to see the awe-inspiring world of shapes, colors, and life that lie beneath the seemingly plain ice.

As I understand it, a typical iceberg hides over 90 percent of itself from the rest of us (well, those of us on the surface anyway). I think that icebergs share this statistic with many of the humans that we all interact with on a regular basis. They hide the greater part of who they are behind masks of confidence, power, humor, weakness, self doubt, and so on. Many times you can see it in the makeup they use, the clothes they wear, the cars they drive, the work they do, or the place where they live.

At the Atlanta airport on my way home from the ACCT conference last month, I was thinking about all of the Super Bowls I have missed when someone who attended the conference sat next to me and started to share how happy he was to be a part of such an amazing organization and a group of people who were so real and honest with each other. We had a wonderful conversation about the conference and shared some good stories about our own experiences, our lives, and our work.

I am not really sure when we humans started to hide our true selves or why we do it, but I must say I have found that when people I know are willing to share themselves—their whole selves—they come together. There is a quote that has stuck with me through the year. “We reach one

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ACCT thanks *Jennifer Fox Marter* for two years of dedicated service as the chair of the Conference Committee. Now, ACCT welcomes the newly-elected Conference Committee Chair, *Cynthia Paris* of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Cynthia officially served on the committee for one year and was on the Service Crew for seven, helping with countless tasks at the conference. Cynthia and the committee are well into making plans for the next conference in Minneapolis.
.....

another through our shared vulnerabilities.” It is not easy being open and honest with others because it leaves us in a place where they can take advantage of us or hurt us. It is not easy letting people see our true selves as we are usually afraid that we, our true selves, won’t stack up against others. In other words, we are afraid to take the masks off because we have a fear that we are inadequate or not as good as those around us.

The costs are immense. We struggle so hard not to be seen that when it comes to being real, we aren’t sure who we really are. When it comes time to make difficult decisions in our lives, we aren’t sure what to do as we aren’t sure what our true values and beliefs are. We spend so much energy putting up the façade that we have little energy left for the things that really matter in life, like making true connections with others and understanding our own path. It is a human need to be loved, to have positive interactions, and to have true friends. The only way to truly connect with another is to take off the mask and show the beauty of the iceberg that lies beneath the surface.

As I was heading home looking out the window (no icebergs to report), I found myself smiling at the thought of so many people in our industry so dedicated to helping others discover for themselves what they hide beneath the surface—helping people learn how to appropriately share the parts of themselves that they have kept hidden for so long and working to create spaces where people can shed the masks and get down to the work at hand in order to move ourselves, our families, our communities, our society, and our planet forward together.

I thank you all for doing the work you do and encourage you to continue to identify and remove your own masks as you travel your path so that you can see others for who they are while letting others see the true and honest you.



Photo by Crt Kelly

At the conference in Atlanta, a group has another problem to work out!

From the Executive Director United We Stand

by James Borishade

To those of you I have not yet had the pleasure to meet, my name is James Borishade, Executive Director of ACCT. I bring with me more than ten years experience in nonprofit management including eight years at the senior executive level. I continue to be inspired by ACCT—particularly its people—and I have already noticed how passionate our industry is about helping people. I come to you bearing that same passion.

Throughout my career I have dedicated my life to helping people improve the quality of their lives. I see the Executive Director position as a position of service—service to every level of ACCT membership, service to our board, and service to our industry. I consider it an honor and a privilege to represent such an auspicious group of individuals and businesses. It is my sincere belief that with every phone call, I represent you; in every meeting, I represent you; and with every document that goes out of the ACCT office, I represent you!

Over the last two-and-a-half months since becoming the Executive Director, I have spent several hours reflecting on how to best represent every member of ACCT. I have met with various ACCT members to learn where we are now, the best way to position our association for long-term success, and the most effective way to reach our important long-term goals, which, among other things, include providing high-quality benefits to all ACCT members.

I am thrilled to report that ACCT is currently in a great place both financially and structurally due largely to the hard work of our former Executive Director, Ms. Dresser, the Board of Directors, the Trustee Board, committees and task forces, and the countless volunteers who have dedicated their lives to getting us to this point. In order to expand on our position over the next 18 months, we will focus on a narrow set of organizational priorities. These priorities include

- expanding upon the success of the international ACCT brand;
- building an interim strategic plan for the upcoming fiscal year;
- growing our infrastructure.

I hope you agree that these activities represent priorities that will enable ACCT to move significantly closer to the day when the words challenge course, ropes course, canopy tours, and zip line are synonymous with the name ACCT! While this might seem like a great deal of work,

I am confident that we have the team and the resources necessary to reach our goals.

To determine which priority to tackle first, I am leaning on the feedback that I've received from every level of ACCT membership. The response has been overwhelming saying that we must focus a significant portion of our attention and resources on expanding upon the success of the ACCT brand. Our first step in expanding our brand will be to create a clear and concise set of core values.

As we forge ahead, a number of people will be instrumental in our success. I'd like to take a moment to introduce you to just a few of them. Our committees and their chairs are vital to our continued success. In their own words, they will share their current agendas for the remainder of this fiscal year. Here are a few words from our committee chairs:

Canopy/Zip Line Tour Committee—Victor Gallo

The canopy and zip line tour industry has seen an incredible growth worldwide, and this was reflected in the last conference. The pre-conference presentation and workshops were filled to capacity, and new tour operators have a lot of enthusiasm. We are trying to keep up by working on more inclusive standards and spreading our knowledge base to all interested parties to promote safety and quality.

Conference Committee—Jennifer Fox Marter

Our 2010 conference in Atlanta was a great success with over 600 attendees, five sponsors, and a full exhibit hall. We are already planning for our 2011 conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition, we will be visiting Boston in April to select a site for the 2012 conference.

Ethics Committee—Charlie Williams

The Ethics Committee is currently working on the final drafts of a code of ethics for the association. A draft will soon be available for the PVM community for final input before it is forwarded to the Board of Directors for approval. Once approved by the board, the Ethics Committee will work on a plan to “unveil” the code of ethics to the membership of the association.

Government Relations Committee—Greg Allen

We continue to advocate protecting the integrity of ACCT, its standards, and our unique challenge course industry. We will do this by educating,

(see United on page 13)

FAQ from the Installations Standards Committee

Please send any questions that you would like to have answered in this format to the Installation Standards Committee, c/o Rich Klajnscek, Chair; rich@seafoxconsulting.com

Why does the strength of guys (especially critical guys) only need to be two times the expected load? Isn't this a step backwards from previous versions of the installation standards?

The short answer to this question is that we don't see it as a step backwards but simply a new way of looking at the design of courses. The approach we took in the Seventh Edition of the Installation Standards is to apply the same logic to all systems and components on the challenge course element or zip line and to have the standards that apply mainly to strength and quality requirements rather than specific designs.

Before getting to the guy standard, let's first have a look at a couple of related standards. The Personal Protection Anchor strength standard (C3.1) states that the anchor shall be capable of supporting at least two times the expected load with no deformation or displacement in the anchor or its components. On the other hand, if you read Standard C1.1, you see that the belay cable system strength shall be at least five times the expected load—similar to what it has been since the standards were first written. Remember that the expected load is to be determined by a Qualified Person—that's somebody who

really knows how to figure out what the loads are.

Using this information as background to the discussion about guy cables, there appears to be a question about whether the guy system strength should be five times the expected load or somewhat less (such as two times the expected load—more on that later). Even though we didn't say this in the standard, the decision actually depends on the support structure for the element. The assumption that we made when we wrote the standard was that the pole or column is assumed to be self-supported—such as a typical wood or steel utility pole sunk into the ground or bolted to a foundation. In this case, the guy cables can be considered as a secondary support for the belay cable and therefore the climber. This does not mean that the guy is unimportant; it simply has a more indirect function in supporting a challenge course participant. A guy for self-supported poles exists in order to prevent the pole from flexing too much, which would either overload the pole in bending or cause the belay cable (including a zip line cable) from sagging too much. On the other hand, if the poles were hinged at the ground and not self-supporting, then the guys serve a much more important function. In the first case, it can be argued that the guys are not as critical as the life support cable (the belay cable),

whereas in the second case the guys are certainly as critical as the life support cable and therefore should be designed to be five times the expected load.

Obviously, the standard is written for the self-supported case—the vast majority of pole courses. With this decision made, we then reasoned that if a standard of two times the expected load is good enough for Personal Protection Anchors that directly keep climbers safely suspended in the air, then it logically should be good enough for guy cable systems (including anchors and other components) which perform an indirect function. Remember that there shall be no deformation or displacement in any of the components when this load is applied.

Technical Bulletins are issued periodically by e-mail to our members and then posted on our website. These may be recalls of equipment or information about usage of specific pieces of equipment. Please make sure we have your correct e-mail address so that you can receive these e-mails directly.

Belay Post Blues

An article in the series, "Things We Learned the Hard Way"

by Adam Bondeson

Once upon a summer at Camp Greenwoods, a staff was setting up the Leap of Faith element. The rope ran through a belay post, up to the cable, and down to the participant. Several elements were in the area. Ben was running the Leap today. Several other staff were setting up their elements nearby. The course manager walked through and was talking with the staff as they set up.

Belay-slave Ben went through the motions, checked the harness, checked the clip-in and rope, and saw the helmet was on correctly. Ben walked back to the belay post and responded when the climber called out, "On belay."

Once the belay was on, the climber started to ascend the pole. As the climber was passing the tenth staple, Ben noticed that it was pretty easy to pull the rope. Ben continued to keep an eye on his climber, coaching him when needed and providing some support with the rope to help him stand up.

At this point Ben looked down, stretching his neck, which would be staring up for most of the day at climbers. When he glanced at the belay post, something struck him as odd. He noticed three holes in the post, and only one had the rope through it. Ben started to process what he saw and realized that the rope had only been passed through one hole of the three when the element was set up.

Ben's mind raced, "What would happen?" Ben calmly asked his participant to take a break and then wrapped the rope around the post several times before asking his supervisor to come over. When Rowan heard Ben ask for some help, he assumed that Ben needed a hand talking

a stuck participant through the element. Much to his surprise, Rowan saw that the element was not strung right. Once he realized what had happened, Rowan stepped in and put a belay device on the rope while Ben fed it correctly through the belay post. The two staff worked calmly and all the while talked to the participants around them. At the end of it, both staff stood there realizing that they had just barely missed a major accident. The participants kept climbing and having fun as Ben and Rowan caught their breath!

Both staff in this story had been trained on the element but only Ben had checked the setup that day. After talking about the near miss, they decided that although they knew what to look for, they did not have a written or systematic way of looking at the element before it was used. Secondly, Rowan, as the course manager for the day, had not performed a double check of all the elements before the day began. Fortunately the staff continued to be observant and noticed before it was too late that something was not right with the element. Both staff also stayed very calm through the near miss and did not add to what was already an out-of-control situation with hysterics.

Many facilities have written procedures or mnemonics to help remind staff what to check before an element is opened for the day. After this incident the camp put several measures into place to ensure that double checks were being done. Procedures were written out more clearly as well as a system to ensure that the challenge course manager was checking the setup of the challenge course facilitators. There are never too many double checks on a system.

If you have any comment on this situation or would like to share a near miss for others to learn from, please feel free to contact Adam at bikerb@verizon.net.

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Facilitator's Toolbox

by Jennifer Stanchfield

Facilitator's Toolbox Live: Notes from Our Workshop in Atlanta

Thank you to those of you who participated in this year's "Facilitator's Toolbox Live" workshop at ACCT's 20th Annual International Challenge Course Symposium and Conference in Atlanta. I appreciated everyone's enthusiasm and willingness to share and play during one of the last workshops of the weekend.

The session began with some effective ways to start off a program with style. Our group discussed the importance of choosing the right introductory activities to set a positive tone from the very start of a group's experience together. Below are some ideas we explored in our workshop.

As the group gathered to start the workshop, I facilitated one of my favorite introductory activities using quotes. I printed up a selection onto bookmarks of about 20 different quotes containing themes around teaching, leadership, and group facilitation. As participants entered the room, they were asked to choose a quote that was meaningful to them. They were asked to share their quote with a partner along with their goal for the workshop. This partnered dialogue can lead right into a second, partnered, introductory activity such as the Concentric Circles. (See previous Toolbox article, "Mix It Up" in Fall 2008.)

We talked about how quotes can be used not only as an introduction and/or conversation starter, but also as a way to "frame" an experience or "plant seeds" to frontload a topic the group will be exploring. Later on they can be used for reflection. I offered the group the opportunity to keep their quotes as a memento of the conference or workshop. Mementos can be a great way to help connect learning experiences to real life and future learning. We also discussed how starting introductory dialogue with partners at the beginning of a program allows group members to become comfortable sharing one-on-one at their own pace before joining a larger group-sharing activity.

Anthony Curtis of Adventureworks joined in and presented one of his favorite icebreaking activities, which he calls "Incorporations."

In this large group icebreaker, groups of 15–100 (or more) form and re-form quickly according to the facilitator's various instructions.

Anthony instructs the group, "We will be forming and re-forming groups quickly. To do this, it's important to hear what's next, so whether you have completed the last task or not, when you hear me yell, 'Stop!' (or blow the whistle, horn, etc.), please freeze where you are. Let's practice. Quick get in groups of 3 and only 3. Go... (7 seconds)...Stop!"

Possible groupings

- Get into groups of 5.
- Get into groups 4, 5, or 6 with the same color clothing.
- Get into groups of 3 with the same first letter of their first name.
- Find everybody with the same number of children as you.
- Find everybody who used the same brand toothpaste as you this morning.
- Find everybody with the same birthday month as you.
- Find everybody with the same last digit in his or her home phone as you.
- Find 2 people who have been to the same foreign country as you.
- Find all the people with the same number of siblings as you.

• More difficult—Facilitator stands in the center of the space and points out cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west. Then instructs, "If this is the state we are in now, find everybody born in the same state (or country as you) and position yourself accordingly in relation to where I'm standing. Go."

Original Source: *Playfair* by Matt Weinstein (From The M.A.P. Manual 2009, Adventure-Designs.com, Adventureworks.com)

During our session we also explored some variations on old favorites such as the well-known and favorite icebreaker, "Have You Ever?" (Rohnke & Butler, 1995). We focused on using it for processing/reflection and as a get-to-know-you activity. We discussed ways to make it more empowering for participants and some variations to mix it up.

(continued on next page)

**HELP
WANTED**

If you are interested in serving on an ACCT committee, you can find an application in the Leadership section of the ACCT website on the committee page or e-mail James Borishade (james@acctinfo.org) for an application. Openings are available for the **Membership Committee** and the **Research Advisory Committee**.

In the traditional version of this activity, the facilitator places a spot marker for every person in a circle on the floor. One person stands in the middle or on the Have-You-Ever? spot. That person asks a question such as Have you ever flown a kite? Anyone who has flown a kite leaves his/her spot and tries to find a new one. Someone new ends up in the middle and asks another question, sharing something about herself and looking for commonalities with other group members.

To add more opportunity for choice and control for participants, provide a buzzword such as “bananas” in case they can’t think of something to say when they end up in the middle. This allows them an out. Or don’t have a middle spot at all—have a “blank spot” or alternative color spot for the question-asking spot. Sometimes with elementary groups, they hover around the middle, hoping to end up there rather than running to a spot. You can manage this by setting up a rule that you can only be in the middle twice before you choose someone new to be in the middle if you end up there.

We talked about using this as a reflection or academic review activity and changing it to “Anyone Who?”—anyone who had fun today... anyone who tried something new”... and so forth. Or anyone who knows the capital of Canada... or anyone who knows the freezing temperature of water, and so on. (Stanchfield, 2007)

We discussed how you might facilitate this in different ways for academic review—maybe with prepared questions in the middle. The person in the middle could share the answer, or they could ask for input from others who moved. Have students help you design the game in

a way that works best for their group. Remember, even if participants are not talking during reflection, they could be listening/reviewing/processing information, so ideally those not in the middle are learning, too!

Other Variations of “Have You Ever?”

Chris Poole and Andy LaPointe recently shared with me some versions they and their students came up with to mix up “Have You Ever?” They suggest taking spots away so that multiple participants end up in the middle and have to confer on the questions to ask. I have been amazed at how much groups enjoy this variation. Chris and Andy’s students also have the person in the middle not only ask the question but throw out a movement/way to travel through the circle such as a slow walk, heel-toe, a crab walk, skip, and so on.

These are just a few of the ideas and insights shared during our workshop. Thanks again to all who participated. Join us for next year’s workshop at the annual ACCT conference in Minneapolis, or send your facilitation ideas in for the next Toolbox article to Jen Stanchfield at jen@experientialtools.com.

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- The M.A.P. Manual 2009, Adventure-Designs/Adventureworks
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At the conference in Atlanta . . .



. . . so many talents



Photos by Brenda Reed

. . . so many victories



. . . so many smiles



Builder's Toolbox

by Adam Bondeson

The Angle—It's Got to Be the Angle!

Installing and working on challenge courses used to be a pretty simple enterprise—climb the tree, sling some cable around it, and clamp it off. In the last 10 to 15 years, design and installation have become more complicated and more high tech with cordless tools, steel structures, digital calipers, and on and on. The newer technology has had profound effects on both designs and the speed we can install courses. I am always on the lookout for the high tech tools that make our lives a little easier, but every now and then I come across a simple (and inexpensive) tool that I am surprised no one has thought of using before.

Recently I was walking through a home improvement store picking up house materials and geeking on tools. The Tri-Vise Plate Vise pictured here jumped out at me. No really—one had been left leaning on the box, and it fell over on my foot. At first I looked at it and thought it was not worth the money. Once I realized how simple and effective it was, I was sold. The need is pretty simple—as builders and installers we need to cut boards and posts and,

in some cases, metal. (If you are an OSHA inspector, please avert your eyes.) The old-fashioned framer way was to scribe a line and balance the board on your boot and cut. This allowed the cut to be clean and the board to drop away. The other option was to walk back to your truck or shop and throw it in a vise, if you had one.



The concept of the Tri-Vise Plate Vise is to use leverage created by the plate to hold the material solid. By bracing the material and then stepping down on it, you have a rock-solid base and a lot of control over your material, even round pipe. The Vise has several cutouts to hold material of many shapes and sizes from as small as a half-inch conduit and pipe to as large as 4x4 wood posts. The slots are clearly labeled for type and size leaving the guesswork out. If you take two vises and put a piece of pipe between them, you have a very stable setup to spool cable. This is particularly handy for small- to mid-size spools of cable.

The Tri-Vise Plate Vise is available at Lowe's and other hardware stores for about \$18. This is a good deal for such a useful and simple tool.

ACCT Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tours Standards

the ACCT office. Contact the ACCT office to order more than 5 copies.

*Checks, money orders, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and purchase orders (U.S. only) are accepted. A copy of the purchase order must accompany any order.

The Seventh Edition of the ACCT Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tour Standards is available from the ACCT Membership Office. Individual copies are \$60 US, plus shipping. Discounts are available for multiple copies. Order online or use the order form which is posted online and available from

ACCT Membership**Associate Membership**

This level is open to all interested individuals and organizations. Associate Membership benefits include a copy of the ACCT Challenge Course and Canopy/Zip Line Tour Standards at the time of joining; a subscription to our newsletter, *Parallel Lines*, that is published three times a year; a discount for the annual ACCT conference; and access to the ACCT-sponsored insurance company coverage for challenge course programs. *Membership period:* 1 year
Annual Membership dues: \$75 USD

Institutional Membership

This level is open to any interested organization. Institutional membership benefits include four copies of the Standards at the time of joining; four copies of *Parallel Lines*; and discounted rates for four employees to attend the annual conference.

Membership period: 1 year
Annual Membership dues: \$250 USD

Professional Vendor Member (PVM)

Professional Vendor Members are challenge course service providers who have successfully completed the ACCT PVM accreditation process, accumulated the required number of days of experience, and who provide challenge course and/or canopy/zip line tour installation and inspections, and/or practitioner training and certification services. Contact the Professional Services manager for additional information. *Membership period:* 1 year
Annual Membership dues: \$1,500 USD

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Atlanta

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A special thank you to our conference sponsors: Hibbs-Hallmark & Company; International Safety Components, Ltd. (ISC); Next Element Consulting, LLC; Preferred Safety Products; and Stratus Insurance Services, Inc. We appreciate your support!

Pre-conferences started Thursday and were filled with participants ready to engage, absorb, discuss, and learn. Topics ranged from “Zip Line Industry Data and Future Trends” with Rachel and Matt DeSpain to Reb Gregg and Robert Monaghan’s “Learning to Love Insurance and the Law.” In all, we had eight pre-conferences (which included “First Aid for the Challenge Course Professional” on Tuesday and Wednesday) with over 150 attendees—already a big group, and our main conference hadn’t officially started yet! Requests and plans for next year were already being discussed as the pre-conferences came to a close.



Photo by Cris Kelly

Six, seven, eight—which is it? Who cares? I’m just having fun!

Conference workshops started Friday and continued on Saturday with Extended Learning Workshops on Sunday. This year industry professionals, vendors, and peers presented 75 workshops. Sessions in Facilitation & Programming, Industry Business, Operations & Management, and Technical Topics were well attended. Some rooms were quiet with a classroom-style learning environment while other rooms had participants engaged in an active style of learning with lots of movement and activities. Some struck a balance of PowerPoint slides, interaction, and group discussion. Of course, in our industry we love to support each other, so some workshops encouraged loud cheering and even singing! Again, the hotel staff weren’t too sure what to think when we suggested they not schedule a quiet business meeting next door to *that* workshop! Soon they understood!

During the workshop breaks, people continued discussion into the halls while grabbing a cup of cof-



Photos by Cris Kelly

John Lawrence and Mike Fischesser, the keynote speakers at the conference who have long-time histories with ropes courses, were entertaining and informative.

fee. Often deep conversations occurred, ending so they could dash to another workshop. Thank you presenters for sharing your great ideas and research!

Early in the week, committee members, PVMs, and board members began arriving to meet, to plan, and to work on set-up details. This group continues to hope for more of you to become a member of a committee or for you to send in requests and ideas for improvement. They want you to get involved; you matter to the association. Let your voice be heard!

Vendors filled the Exhibit Hall this year showcasing cutting-edge products and keeping us informed of updates and trends. Thank you again exhibitors for your participation!

Our nightly all-conference reception took place in the Exhibit Hall. Attendees could enjoy delicious food and beverages, all complimentary, while browsing booths. Lively discussion and networking kept the hall packed right up until closing.

The Builders’ Olympics was an exciting team building and competitive event once again. Cable whipping, a classic, is an ever-pleasing crowd favorite. All of us were on our feet with cheers as Jim Liggett amazed us all with his



Photo by Janice Grueby

One jumbled mess of cord to untangle in the Builders’ Olympics.

dynamic skill! The Splice Girls, however, are sure Michelle Cummings is getting closer to taking the lead with her sassy howl and whip spin!

Our keynote speakers were Mike Fischesser and John Lawrence. They gave lively talks about the history of challenge courses and even the history of our own first ropes course symposiums. The group at ACCT enjoyed learning about the early days along with nods towards the future!

At our closing ceremonies and awards banquet, Dan Pervorse was awarded the Critical Link Award. His growing family was there to see him recognized. Thank you, Dan, for your countless hours and dedication of service to ACCT and the industry!

We were all sad to say farewell to our Executive Director, Sylvia Dresser. She handed over the directorship to James Borishade, who was warmly welcomed at his first ACCT conference! He showed enthusiasm and desire to keep the association moving forward.

Next year on February 3–6, 2011, we head north to the hip city of Minneapolis, Minnesota USA. A snowy winter is easy to navigate in this city as covered, elevated walkways connect miles and miles of the downtown buildings. The city is known for having a friendly, Midwestern feel and also for being trendy with great theatre, art, and music scenes. Our hotel is located downtown amidst the “gerbil trail” walkways and is convenient to restaurants, shops, and clubs. Mark your calendar now! This will be a conference you won’t want to miss!

Thanks to our Conference Committee and the ACCT staff for the hard work on the Atlanta conference. As we are finishing the wrap-up of this conference, the work has already begun on our Minneapolis event! Looking forward to seeing you, our members, next year!

Out on a Limb

by Tom Leahy

I need more training.

After 33 years in this field, that might be hard for some to believe. But, as a Certification Trainer/Tester (CTT), I need to receive 80 hours of additional training every three years to requalify as a CTT and to be reaccredited as a PVM. Though I have attended workshops at conferences and delivered many workshops, I have not received the required additional training for my upcoming re-review in 2010. And now everyone knows!

As I was beginning my challenge course career, I was a canoe guide in New England and took up whitewater kayaking. I thought I might benefit from formal kayak training. I read the descriptions for the beginner and advanced courses and knew I would learn from both. Something about the beginner course kept calling me, but it challenged my ego. After much contemplation, I swallowed my pride and took the beginner course.

What I learned surprised me. With the direction of a skilled trainer, I cleaned up my skills and learned some new techniques. In a few short days, I went from a somewhat intuitive (okay—lucky!) kayaker to a much more conscious paddler. During the course, there was hardly a mention of the famous Eskimo roll. But after the course while fooling around, I did my first successful roll! What I learned is that with a foundation of solid training from a master, I was able to take the next step easily. My view of formal training changed profoundly, and my competence as a paddler increased significantly.

As many of you know, I spent the past seven years involved on several

ACCT committees regarding facilitator operations and certification. In that time, we logged a few hundred hours of dialogue on these subjects and concluded that a competent challenge course facilitator needs formal training, good mentoring, and lots of experience. We reasoned that training should be an ongoing effort to strengthen one’s skills and grow one’s capabilities. Moreover, we created the Certification Trainer/Tester concept and agreed these people had an even greater responsibility to seek additional training in order to expand their competency. I am now accountable for the requirements that our committee created.

So, I’ve been asking myself—what kind of training will benefit me (and my participants) at this stage of my career? In the course of writing this article, I’ve considered a few options, from shadowing my peers to training each other on our individual advanced material to exploring advanced facilitation training from related fields of practice. That said, I believe I’ve arrived at a solution!

During the ACCT conference in Atlanta, I sat in on a few workshops where the material was not only relevant to the work I do but it promises to take my facilitation to a higher level. These workshops continually had me on the edge of my seat with their content and powerful delivery. So now I am looking for a hole in my schedule to quench my thirst for information. I am also in discussion with my peers about training.

In conclusion, I am resolved to not waiting until just before my next re-review to get my required training hours, and I’m already thinking about and looking for other trainers and content that will challenge and engage me.

Poetry Works!

by Faith Evans and David Markwardt

“Invictus” (Latin for “unconquered”) is a short poem written in 1875 by the English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903). The poem appears in the recent film, *Invictus*, directed by Clint Eastwood, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon. The film is a look at the life of Nelson Mandela after the fall of apartheid in South Africa, during his term as president, when he campaigned to host the 1995 Rugby World Cup event as an opportunity to unite his countrymen. The title comes from the fact that Mandela had the poem written on a scrap of paper in his prison cell while he was incarcerated. In the movie, Mandela gives the “Invictus” poem to his national rugby team’s captain, Francois Pienaar, before the start of the Rugby World Cup.

The real story of the poem began when, at the age of 12, Henley became a victim of tuberculosis of the bone. A few years later the disease progressed to his foot, and physicians announced that the only way to save his life was to amputate directly below the knee. It was amputated before Henley reached the age of 20. In 1867 he successfully passed the Oxford local examination as a senior student. Later, in 1875, he wrote the “Invictus” poem from a hospital bed. Despite his disability, he survived with one foot intact and led an active life until his death at the age of 53.

We may not have been imprisoned like Mandela or have lost a foot like Henley, but all of us have had or will have tragedies and will experience suffering in life. These come with the territory of being human. We will experience isolation, abandonment, sadness, illness, and aging. There is nothing we can do to stop these things from unfolding.

But we have infinite choice about how to respond. The freedom to choose is in our control. We can respond with courage, resilience, and fortitude. No one is fated to remain in suffering. Our response is what gives meaning, texture, and vitality to life, and a life well responded to gives courage to others.

Participants come to challenge courses carrying varying degrees of suffering and hurt with them. A powerful challenge course experience can be a life changer, provid-

ing a more life-affirming perspective on one’s troubles. Challenge course staff who read the poem, “Invictus,” to a group could express the call for courageous action and subsequent reflection. In what ways are you “the captain of your soul”?

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

– William Ernest Henley

Questions to consider:

- What do you notice in the poem?
- What do you sense the poem is trying to tell you?
- Where does the poem intersect with your life?
- How does the poem’s message relate to being on a challenge course?

Faith Evans is the owner of PlayFully, Inc. (faithevans@aol.com); and David Markwardt is the Teamwork in Action Director at Santa Fe Community College (davidmarkwardt@comcast.net).

New Membership Benefit—Medical Insurance



ACCT members now have access to a Limited Benefit Health Care Plan through Homeland HealthCare Partners. Homeland HealthCare can provide members living in the United States with insurance plans designed to offset the day-to-day costs of wellness and medical care for those without access to traditional coverage and families who would like to supplement high-deductible coverage. For information about the plans available through ACCT and to enroll in a plan, visit www.homeland4one.com/ACCT.

United

(continued from page 3)

monitoring, assessing, and acting on governmental influences to our industry.

Installations Standards Committee— Rich Klajnscek

The Installations Standards Committee is in a place of transition at the moment. With the Seventh Edition of the Installation and Inspection Standards in use for over a year now, we are pleased with how it has been accepted and applied. Now that there is a Consensus Committee, we will be serving a new role in standards development for the association. In short, our focus will be much more on answering to the new committee and simply researching and writing the standards. The Consensus Committee will take on the task of building consensus across a wide range of users and viewpoints.

In many ways, we will be better at what we do because of the reduced scope and less distraction. We will be serving a more specialized and technical role than in the past. We have “lost” two of our members to the Consensus Committee—John Lazarus and Chuck Treadway. Although we will miss them and the work that they contributed to standards writing, we are sure that we will be hearing a lot from them! We await the tasks that are given to us by this group before we decide on the makeup of our committee. We will likely be looking for at least one new member with a particular skill set in the near future. Thanks for your support.

Membership Committee—Niels Damman

We received 393 responses to our ACCT Membership Survey, which was made available to both members and non-members. Thank you to all who responded. We are currently compiling all the answers and will update you of the results when they become available.

Operations/Certification Standards Committee—Scott Andrews

The Operations/Certification Standards Committee continues to gather information from members of the challenge course community about the effectiveness of the Certification Standards. Comments and questions can be addressed to the committee through the chair of the committee.

Public Relations/Marketing Committee—Lindsay James

The PR/Marketing Committee launched the ACCT Facebook page a couple of months ago. We are currently working on a new media kit.

Review Committee—MB Buckner and Kennerly de Forest

The Review Committee expresses our appreciation and gratitude to the entire PVM community. Every 2009 annual report was received on time and so a hearty thank you to each and every one. In addition, 2009 proved to be a very demanding year for re-reviews, and we would like to voice our appreciation to the more than 28 reviewers, 15 PVMs, and applicants whose cooperation made this review season so successful. The year 2010 promises to be equally challenging, and we look forward to your continued support.

I am also pleased to announce that ACCT and AEE are currently working on an action plan to strengthen our partnership and collaboration. The goal of this partnership is to provide stronger benefits and resources to our members. Stay tuned for more information!

In the upcoming weeks, I will provide additional details about the current status and future work related to each of our key priorities. I plan to spend the remainder of our fiscal year engaging our committees and listening to the voices of our members and key people in our industry as we begin working toward all of our organizational priorities. I stand united with each of you as we continue our work to ensure that excellence is the minimum standard of our industry.

Why Certification? A Perspective Exercise

by Scott Andrews

Lately, I have been reflecting on practitioner certification from three different viewpoints. I have been looking at certification from the perspective of a practitioner who works for many courses, as a manager of a challenge course, and as the chair of the Operations and Certification Standards Committee. I guess this is a ground-to-sky view. Let me start with the sky view.

When the Certification Standards Committee started its work six years ago, we had a clear charge and some directives. We were told to create a certification structure based on the existing operational standards for the entire industry that would be transferable and would raise the standard of practice. We were directed to leave the operational standards unchanged. In hindsight, this last part is more important than it seemed at first. By being required to keep the operational standards as they were, we were forced to address just practitioners. That is the key part.

I have come to see the ACCT standards as a *whole* working together to support all of the parts of the challenge course and canopy/zip line tour industry. The installation and inspection standards address the physical plant at a site. The operations standards describe the minimum practices of organizations that run the physical plant. Certification addresses the skills of the practitioner on whatever physical site they are working. Each of these is a leg of a stool, and the seat of the stool is good challenge course practice. Each of these legs is important. Without any one leg, it is difficult to be truly respected by other industries and educators.

As a manager of a challenge course, I often need to find and train new staff. It is always a challenge to know in what way someone is qualified when they walk in off the street and say, "Hi, I am a facilitator!" My usual response is to ask them to document what they have done and where they were trained. This starts a training process, which is, at best (I am sorry to say), a little clumsy. Often it seems that no matter what the documentation, I find that when I start the training, I assume they either know too much or too little.

Certification has made this process a little simpler and a little cleaner. Now when new staff members apply and tell me that they have a Level I or a Level II or a CCM (Challenge Course Manager) certification, I have a level of confidence about what skills they have. It is not perfect, and I still need to ensure they have the right skills for my program. However, I understand that they have a good foundation. I am not left hoping that whoever trained them gave them more than a two-hour training. With the Level II or CCM, I know that they have a body of experience and skills. I know someone has critically observed them, and as professionals, the applicants care enough about what they do to obtain validation of their skills. This does not mean I am going to turn them loose on my course right away. It does

mean that it is much easier to start the conversation about what they need to know to work on my course.

Now down to the level of the dirt on my boots. I am certified as a Level II and a Challenge Course Manager. I did not get these for a job or because someone said I had to. I did the work to get the certifications because it is an endorsement to the community that I am serious about what I do. I have also found that the process of getting certified gave me a new perspective on my skills. I had both more skills than I thought and found areas where I can continue to learn. Certification is not the end of the journey but the launching pad to learn much more.

Maybe it is because I am a bit driven, but certification has pushed me to learn more about my craft and to reach out to others who can teach me. I know that when I have to go back for my Level II recertification in one year, I will have the training under my belt to pass the test. Overall, it has been a good experience.

From up in the sky to having our boots in the dirt, certification offers us as an industry an opportunity. I challenge each of you to look and ask, "How can certification make my program or me better at what we do?"



News Feed

The Association for Challenge Course Technology is now on Facebook. Share and connect with others in the challenge course and canopy/zip line industry.

www.facebook.com/acctinfo

Become a fan!

What Is It That You Want to Evaluate in Your Program?

by Liz Speelman & Lee Gillis, both of Georgia College and State University



Everyone keeps telling you that you should do “evaluation” on your program. We’ve even been telling you that you should do evaluation. Sounds easy enough, but what do you do to get started?

In a previous article I (Liz) talked about the need to create a culture of assessment at your program before you start doing evaluation. It’s important to know *what* you are doing before you can determine if you are doing it well. Once you have created a process for collecting data with your participants and the activities that you are doing, you and your staff will be in a better position to measure outcomes of your program.

A crucial step in starting evaluation at your facility is deciding *what* it is that you want to know about the programs you deliver. As an industry, we claim that challenge course programs impact a myriad of outcomes for our participants, ranging from team building and team effectiveness to group cohesion and self-efficacy to improved positive attitudes. Give us a couple of hours today, and we can create tomorrow’s leaders, right?

As a facilitator, you probably have some gut instincts about changes you have observed with participants on your course. These make for great stories and testimonials in your marketing materials. Those stories or anecdotal information provide a great place to start looking for ideas about the outcomes participants take from your program. Are your participants talking predominantly about the impact the program had on the group as a whole, or are they focused on their personal change? Other questions you might consider are

1. Do you have a primary client group that could give you a consistent source of data collection? This may not give you all the answers, but it’s a great place to start.
2. Does your organization have a general or specific mission that might guide you in collecting data to see how well you are meeting that mission with your use of the challenge course?
3. What are the claims you present to potential clients about what will happen to them as a result of being on your course?

As we continued to work with the data from the challenge course meta-analysis (Gillis & Speelman,

2008), we noticed that there were higher effects related to group outcomes (cohesion, group effectiveness, interpersonal skills) in *school-based* groups. Conversely, *therapeutic* groups showed higher effects for individual outcomes (self-efficacy, self-concept). Generally speaking, when a school group comes to a program, as facilitators we focus on the fact that they are a specific group—for example a fifth grade, a science club, and so forth. It makes sense then that we may facilitate in a manner that focuses on the relationships *within* the *group*. With a therapeutic group, the change that is intended (or being funded) is typically about the individual “client.”

Who are your clients? Do you facilitate them as the *group* that they are associated with or do you focus on the *individual* needs of each participant? This is not a question of the quality of your facilitation, but it will have an impact on some of the outcomes you may choose to evaluate with your participants.

Knowing *what* you do is the first step to evaluation. Knowing *why* you do what you do is the next (now-what) step. What is it that you are hoping to accomplish? Take a closer look at what it is that you say you are doing. What is it that you’d like to know more about with regards to your program’s impact? By choosing just one of the potential outcomes of your challenge course programs, you may put yourself in a position to look for an instrument that you can use at your facility. Defining what you are interested in learning about *your* program may allow you to be open to how similar programs are evaluating what they are doing—and allow you to determine if their methods might work for your program.

The time you take to prepare for your programs can often make the difference between a good and a great program. Taking the time to match the right evaluation of your program’s outcomes and the impact of your program on your clients is just as important. Essentially, it is impossible to evaluate something when you don’t know what it is that you want to be evaluated!

Gillis, H.L. & Speelman, E. (2008). Are Challenge (Ropes) Courses an Effective Tool? A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(2), 111-135.

Announcements

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Calendar of Events

Date	Event
July 15, 2010	Parallel Lines Summer Issue deadline
August 2, 2010	Board Meeting–Salt Lake City, Utah
August 15, 2010	Parallel Lines Summer Issue published
February 3–6, 2011	ACCT Conference–Minneapolis, Minnesota

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