Course offers adventures in mid-air

By David M. Farrell
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Anyone who comes to the Adventure Education Center winds up at the end of his rope.

The center, set up in 1982 under a cooperative program sponsored by Ohio State, the Godman Guild and International Field Studies at Camp Mary Orton, near Worthington, offers an obstacle course made of ropes and cables designed to challenge anyone's athletic ability.

And the course has gained popularity ever since.

"You're 20 feet up in the trees and the first thing you learn is it's hard to do things that would normally be easy to do on the ground," said rope climber Julie Snyder.

There are two rope courses. The 20-foot course is for the beginner while the 40-foot course offers more of a challenge.

The beginner's course definitely offers strung-out exhilaration for anyone who has the nerve to try it.

It begins with a 15-foot ladder climb up a large pine tree to a platform. Next, a guide rope is attached to the waist in case of a slip.

From then on the climbers walk a thin line from tree to tree.

Climbing up ladders isn't bad, but rocking on a rope cradle 20 feet in the trees is something amusement parks don't offer.

"At first it's a little scary and then frustrating, learning to do things in a different way," said Dana Cowardin.

The tree-top journey ends with a rope slide, starting at the top of a tree and ending on the ground.

The courses are designed for persons interested in group interaction, personal growth, environmental awareness or physical development, said Gary Moore, director of the center and adjunct professor for the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.

Attendance has risen from 120 participants and six instructors in 1982, to 4,000 participants and 100 instructors, Moore said.

A $20 fee for a group of 8 to 12 is charged along with a $10 deposit. Sessions can be booked in advance.
Frank Krach is lowered from a perch Sunday in an instructors' session at the Camp Mary Orton ropes course. The technique, known as belaying, protects a climber from a long fall.
John Worthman of Dayton peers down as he travels through the ropes Sunday at Camp Mary Orton. The exercise is part of the training session for ropes course instructors.