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Camp Ernst adds adventures

BY MARK HANSEL • MHANSEL@NKY.COM • MARCH 19, 2010

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The YMCA Camp Ernst Summer Camp in Burlington has added some new adventure experiences this year.

The resident camp, which hosts 10 weeklong sessions beginning in June, is adding the 3-mile Powerline Mountain Biking Trail and is also offering a skateboard program.

The trail, which will cost about \$50,000 to complete, is funded by a Paula Nye Memorial Bicycle-Pedestrian Education Grant from the Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission and private donations.

"We hope to instill a lifetime of appreciation and enjoyment of bicycling for the kids in the program," Bill Easley, the camp activities coordinator, said.

The seed for the bike trail was planted when Easley took a cross-country bicycling trip a few years ago.

When traveling on a national bike path through San Antonio, he noticed a bike trail running along the Guadalupe River.

"I wondered if we could do something similar here at Camp Ernst," Easley said.

When Easley returned, he began to organize traveling adventures for bicyclists at the camp and started talking to Jon Perry, executive director of the camp about the bike trail.

"Last year the kids were out in the parking lot working on skills training and one of them said, 'Let's ride up to the graveyard,'" Perry said. "All the rest of the kids got really excited and we knew then a trail was something they would use."

The "graveyard" is actually the Clore-Weaver Family Cemetery, located near the power lines that run through the camp and give the trail its name.

Since the land under the power lines could not be used for anything else, the camp got permission to begin work on the bike trail. With a lot of help from volunteers, the trail should be ready well before the first campers arrive in June.

"As someone who is not active in the biking community, I was amazed at the people who are coming out to help with this project," Perry said.

Jay Hein, owner of the Cincinnati-based engineering consulting company Mechanical Edge volunteered to design the course.

"This is my legacy project," Hein said. "A lot of the things I design are gone in 10 or 15 years, but this should last a long time."



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The bike trail, which is designed for beginner and intermediate bikers, will basically follow the power lines on the camp property and circle around the lake adjacent to Camp Ernst Road. A row of cedar shrubs between the lake and the road provides a natural shaded canopy for trail users.

There will also be a blacktop area at the beginning of the path where campers will be taught about bike safety and maintenance.

The Powerline Mountain Biking experience will be offered for three weeks this summer. Bikers will ride for 90 minutes each day and bicycles and equipment are provided.

A one-week skateboard camp at the end of June will include daily trips to Ollies World Class Indoor Skatepark Park in Florence. Participants must supply their own equipment.

The mountain biking and skateboard camp adventure experiences are offered for campers entering grades seven through nine and the cost is \$95 in addition to the regular camp fee.

The camp also offers an expanded list of adventure trips this year, including a girls-only horseback riding and spelunking trip to Mammoth Cave and coed teen trips to Greenbrier River in West Virginia.

Camp Ernst, which was founded in 1928, offers weeklong camp trips for boys and girls from age 6 through 15.

Information on all YMCA Camp Ernst Summer Camp activities is available at www.ymcacampernst.org.

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