

reach for the SUMMIT

BY JOHN ROSS

Starting Friday afternoon, thousands of adventurers, athletes and outfitters will travel from across the country for an annual exposition dedicated to enjoying the great outdoors.

The two-day event will offer gear demos, more than 40 educational sessions and 75 exhibition booths staffed by Orvis, the American Hiking Society and others. Some will compete in bouldering competitions or an indoor triathlon. Arctic explorer Ann Bancroft will speak twice.

It's known as the Adventure Summit, and it happens in Dayton, a city well on its way to becoming the outdoor capital of the Midwest.

If you don't think of Montgomery County as an adventure hub, think again.

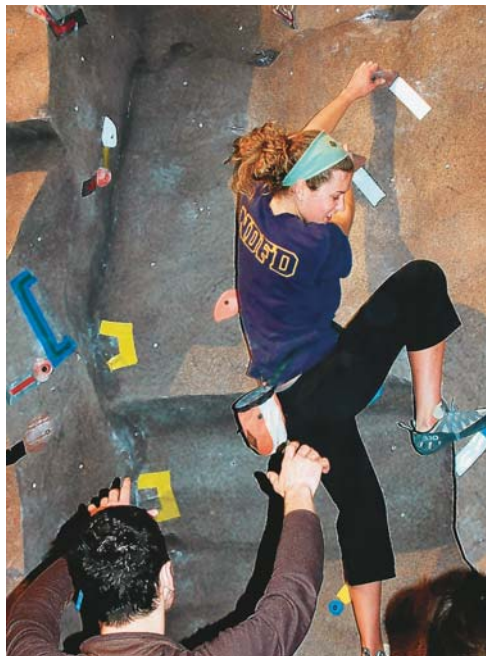
"Our events are all about reaching the community — to have people come out and touch it, feel it," said Greg Brumitt, director of recreation for Five Rivers Outdoors, an initiative of the city's park system. "We are starting to see regional and national publications start to talk about Dayton as more than an old GM town."

In three short years, Five Rivers has transformed the home of the Wright brothers into a place to hike switchbacks, paddle rushing rivers and ride over rock gardens.

The organization has opened the Twin Valley Backpack Trail, an 18-mile mountain-bike trail system and, last summer, an 18-hole disc golf course. Permits are pending to transform parts of the Mad River into a bona-fide whitewater park.

In addition to outreach initiatives for biking and paddling, Five Rivers hosts three annual events growing by leaps and bounds: GearFest, Paddle in the Park and Adventure Summit, now in its fourth year.

As trails are laid, rivers improved and people motivated into healthier lifestyles, a crucial goal of Five Rivers is connecting the dots between people and facilities, Brumitt added. The annual summit is one way



those in the region can discover what's nearby, learn basic skills needed to tackle it and meet likeminded folks.

"You can come to the event as a pure novice and be inspired," said Tom Helbig, who organizes Five Rivers events. "You can learn about a big-time expedition or local kayaking hotspots and everything in between."

More than 5,500 attended last year, and the event's rapid growth shows how far the organization has come in such a short time.

"Without tooting our horn too much, the event tends to draw the crowds and excitement that it does because there aren't events of this size in our region," Helbig said. "Hopefully, over time, outdoor adventure will become something this part of Ohio is known for."

THE ADVENTURE SUMMIT

When: Friday-Saturday, Feb. 20-21

Where: Wright State University, Dayton

Web: theadventuresummit.com



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FIVE RIVERS OUTDOORS

OUTDOOR ITINERARY

The Adventure Summit will showcase the great activities available in Dayton's Five Rivers Metroparks. With an expo, numerous hands-on activities and guest speakers from across the globe, the two-day event will offer plenty to do, see and buy. Here are five things not to miss.

FEATURED PRESENTATION: ANN BANCROFT

8 p.m. Friday

The first woman to cross the ice to the North and South Poles will speak on outdoor issues. She'll also lead a breakfast roundtable about women in the outdoors at 8:30 a.m. Saturday.

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

11:15 a.m. Saturday

Outdoorsman Jeff Alt will share do's, don'ts and life lessons learned on his 2,160-mile hike of the famous path. He's the author of acclaimed book *A Walk for Sunshine*.

BIKE TRAILS BONANZA

12:30 p.m. Saturday

Seasoned cyclist Brian Butcher will present an overview of the 150 miles of bike trails in the Miami River Valley.

BACK POCKET RESCUE SKILLS

2:50 p.m. Saturday

Mount Everest veteran and noted adventurer Andy Politz will share tips for mountain side rescue that experts and novice climbers can use.

FREESTYLE KAYAK DEMO

4 p.m., Saturday

Expect loops, cartwheels, split wheels, stalls and rolls from expert whitewater paddlers. Related kayak events will run throughout the summit.