

## OA to join Campus Life Office

Outdoor Action is coming home. After fourteen years as part of the Princeton-Blairstown Center, the Outdoor Action Program is joining the Office of the Vice President of Campus Life. OA has expanded significantly over the past fourteen years as part of Princeton-Blairstown Center and both OA and Blairstown have benefited from this long partnership.

This move is undoubtedly the most significant organizational change for OA since its founding in 1973-74. Outdoor Action's integration into the Campus Life Office reflects both the University's recognition of the important role that OA plays on campus and a desire to ensure the long-term stability of the program. As part of the process, a transition committee made up of students, faculty, alumni, and administrators, has been reviewing the key components of the Outdoor Action Program and envisioning how Outdoor Action can support the broad mission of the Office of Campus Life. Some OA committee members include **John Gager Professor emeritus, Jim Garrett '65, Glen Morris '72, Kathryn Bailey '10 and Paul Nehring '10.**

What is becoming apparent during discussions is the breadth of impact that OA has on campus. Looking at the range of programming that OA offers, from the Frosh Trip for freshmen, to leadership development, from campus community building to experiential learning, Outdoor Action's contributions extend across the campus and beyond. For example, each year before Frosh Trip, OA Leaders spend a day focusing on the diversity of the incoming class and address how, as campus leaders and role models, they can create a small group environment that values diversity and encourages the broadest level of interaction across the campus. During the year OA Leaders continue to use their talents in team building, facilitation and leadership development in a host of other campus activities. The value and reach of the OA Program are key factors in the decision to move OA to the Campus Life Office.

OA's move back into the University would not have been possible without the strong leadership and support of Vice President for Campus Life Janet Dickerson. Over her nine years at Princeton, Janet has been a wonderful advocate and supporter of Outdoor Action. She will be retiring from the University in June of 2010 and all of us wish her the very best.

## Frosh Trip sets new record and expands program offerings

Frosh Trip 2009 was the largest ever with 744 freshmen and 233 OA Leaders on 93 different trips across the Mid-Atlantic and New England states. Along with 58 Support Team members and 14 Command Center volunteers, Frosh Trip '09 involved more than 1,000 undergraduates—almost 20 percent of the entire undergraduate population—making the OA Frosh Trip the largest outdoor orientation program in the country.

One of the important goals for this year was to expand the variety of trip offerings to appeal to a more diverse student



Frosh Trip Group H4 in Harriman State Park, NY

population. For the first time in many years we offered two Biking Trips on the C&O Canal trail and initiated two Sustainable Farming Trips where students worked on local New Jersey farms. The farming trips were a continued expansion of OA's Sustainability Initiative, funded through a grant from the High Meadows Foundation. Both of these new trip initiatives were extremely successful and illustrate how important it is for OA to be able to provide a broad range of program activities in the future so we can attract a truly representative group of incoming freshmen each year. A quote from a student on this year's trip encapsulates the impact OA has on freshmen:

*My OA experience was a very important step in my transition into Princeton, as I was able to conquer my nervousness about going to college on many levels. I became confident that I would be able to make friends, I learned more about Princeton from my leaders' first-hand experiences, and I knew that if I could survive in the woods for a week I could survive anything that Princeton could possibly throw at me!*

## Building a sustainable Outdoor Action Program

With Outdoor Action's move into the Office of Campus Life, the University hopes to expand the range of Outdoor Action activities during the academic year and develop partnerships between OA and various programs and departments on campus. This is both a huge opportunity for the program and a significant challenge.

Your Friends of OA dues have been critical over the last twenty years for supporting OA's annual operating budget. I want to thank all of the OA Alumni and parents who have supported OA particularly in these challenging economic times.

Our long-term goal is to build an endowment fund for Outdoor Action to provide permanent funding for a rich set of leadership development and outdoor activities for the entire campus community throughout the academic year. OA and future generations of Princetonians need your support as we take this next important step and become part of the Office of Campus Life.



Rick Curtis '79

Director, Outdoor Action

# OA Leaders Reflect

## Paul Nehring '10

By day two of my OA trip I had already been through a lot—I had suffered hypothermia, been comforted after undergoing a bout of homesickness, and gotten lost and then found after a group search effort—and it looked like things would only get worse. But not only was I having a great time, it was one of the best trips I had ever been on! How could this possibly be? It turns out this was no normal OA trip but an OA Leader Training Trip. As one of two Leader Trainers, I was tasked with simulating and then debriefing various medical and interpersonal scenarios so that trainees serving as the “Leaders of the Day” could respond as they would on an actual OA Frosh Trip. However, Leader Trainers do more than run and debrief simulations: they role model and teach a breadth of technical, group dynamic and leadership skills.

But the most valuable lessons I learned from my own training and leading—the ones that will continue to serve me long after Princeton—go far beyond lighting a camp stove or navigating with a compass. I now have a framework to lead (and follow), to teach, to adapt, and, most importantly, to thrive in almost any imaginable setting. When I was able to quickly adapt



Group VA72 in the Shenandoahs

my leadership style during my public service internship it was because of OA; when I turned interpersonal conflicts into teachable moments as the moderator of a Sustained Dialogue discussion on race it was because of OA; when my leader radar helped me navigate through my work with HIV positive youth it was be-

cause of OA. My time with OA has given me experience and depth, a cachet integral to good leadership. I have gained a depth of character and skills that can only come from intensive leadership experience. I have lead peers. I have given and received positive and constructive feedback. I have listened deeply, a skill that one of my first OA co-leaders **Jen Albinson '05** considered a part of being a “thoughtful and complete communicator.” (I am still striving for that.)

I felt I was a competent leader before OA. But I realize now that I wasn’t even aware of the things I didn’t know. And that might be the most instructive skill that OA teaches: self-awareness and reflection. These life lessons will continue to pay dividends well after my time at Princeton has faded. It seems obvious now but many of the most rewarding and enduring parts of my Princeton Experience took place not at Princeton but on the spiderweb trails of Harriman State Park, the ridges of the Delaware Water Gap and the mountains of Shenandoah National Park. OA has given me the opportunity to experience real leadership. And you just can’t simulate that.

~Paul Nehring, a senior from Bismarck, North Dakota was a Frosh Trip Coordinator during the summer of 2007. He is a Leader Trainer and has led four Frosh Trips.

## Mary Reid Munford '10

I did not participate in Outdoor Action’s Frosh Trip as a freshman, and I didn’t immediately train to be a leader. But as soon as I heard stories from my sophomore friends who had just led their first OA trips, I knew I had to get involved. I loved the outdoors, I enjoyed being in a leadership position; what was I waiting for? I became a leader, and soon after, applied and was accepted as a Leader Trainer.

Learning how to lead is relatively straightforward; learning how to teach someone else is a bit more challenging. A good Leader Trainer must be able to facilitate self-reflection and growth among trainees. I began teaching classes, and I co-led a leader training trip in the spring. I had to step back and let trainees make mistakes while making sure they



never lost confidence in themselves. Furthermore, I tried to transform those mistakes into positive teachable moments. I learned a lot about subtle leadership and asking the right questions. I have also learned a huge amount from the other Leader Trainers. We are a diverse group from all corners of the university. Most of us are deeply involved in other activities; we are sports captains, discussion group leaders, EMTs, and eating club officers, among other things. Everyone has a different style and set of experiences to bring to the table, and they have all helped me shape my own approach.

This past summer, I was one of four Frosh Trip Coordinators. I had seen the leadership side, the training side, and now I immersed myself in the logistical side. I never knew how difficult it would be to ensure there was enough equipment, to coordinate service projects, to redo faulty routes and water drops, and a million other little things. But when we all returned from our trips, I looked around the dreary, wet stadium as everyone was returning their gear. I saw all of the leaders and their smiling freshmen, and I felt an unparalleled sense of accomplishment and excitement. I can’t wait to help some of those freshmen become our next batch of new leaders!

~Mary Reid Munford, a senior from Jackson, Mississippi was a Frosh Trip Coordinator during the summer of 2009. She is a Leader Trainer.



Group MA60 in the Berkshires



## OA trains first Bridge Year students

The very first group of Bridge Year students arrived on campus in late August. This new program allows a select number of Princeton students to delay the start of their freshman year in order to engage in nine months of University-sponsored service at one of four international locations. Over the next nine months, small groups of five students will volunteer with local service organizations, learn a new language and immerse themselves in the local society through homestays with local families, cultural enrichment activities and in-country travel. Outdoor Action was invited to be part of the training process for this first cohort of Bridge Year Students. Led by OA Director **Rick Curtis '79**, Bridge Year students used adventure activities to build teamwork and identify personal and group goals for their time abroad.



Bridge Year students in training with Rick Curtis '79

## OA helps Class of '72 climb Mt. Princeton

At 14,197 feet, Mt. Princeton, located in the Collegiate Range of central Colorado is one of the state's fifty-eight peaks over 14,000 feet (fourteeners). On July 17, 2009, exactly one hundred and thirty-two years to the day since the first recorded climb by William Libbey '77 back in 1877, a group of intrepid members of the Class of '72 took to the trail on an extremely challenging hike. There have been numerous climbs of Mt. Princeton over the years, but this was the first official class reunion hike of the mountain. Working with **Glen 'Merc' Morris '72** and **Bob Wright '72**, Outdoor Action provided planning and logistical support throughout the year-and-a-half long planning process for the climb and OA Director Rick Curtis '79 was on hand to assist the class during the climb. Over seventy members of the class and their friends and family members gathered at the Mt. Princeton Hot Springs Lodge for five days of outdoor adventures including hiking, rafting, and the climb of Mt. Princeton. As fourteeners go, Mt. Princeton is one of the harder climbs. Starting from the trailhead at 8,900 feet the route is 6.1 miles oneway and 5,400 vertical feet up. Fueled by a beautiful day, class camaraderie, and lots of granola bars, 57 climbers started off in the predawn hours. With everyone identifying safety and their



Class of '72 on top of Mt. Princeton

## How has OA influenced your professional life?

We know the impact Outdoor Action has on campus. I'd like to hear about how your OA experience has impacted you *after* leaving Princeton, through your career, volunteer service, etc. Please email me your stories at [rcurtis@princeton.edu](mailto:rcurtis@princeton.edu).

personal goal for the day, thirty-six reached the summit, eleven reached the summit ridge at 13,000+ feet, and ten reached 12,800 feet. It was an absolutely wonderful class event which we hope will be emulated by other classes. We are extremely grateful to the Class of '72 for including OA in their event and for a generous gift they made to Outdoor Action.

## Class of 1984 remembers Joe Palmer '84

This year the Class of 1984 returned to Princeton for their 25th Reunion. One of their memorable Reunions events was to gather in memory of Joe Palmer '84. Joe was a passionate rock climber who passed away in 1985. Joe's friends and classmates from the Class of '84 including **John McNerney '84**, **Steve Ban '84**, and others, gathered at the OA Climbing Wall to dedicate a plaque in memory of Joe. Friends relived stories of Joe and his many adventures on and off campus. Members of the class wrote messages for Joe's family in a bound journal. While Joe's parents, Ed and Connie Palmer, were not able to attend the event they are extremely grateful to the Class of '84 and Outdoor Action for honoring Joe.



Friends gather to remember Joe Palmer '84 at the OA Climbing Wall

## Support the OA Climbing Program through the Joe Palmer '84 Memorial Fund

A number Joe's friends in the Class of '84 and Joe's family have instituted a special fund in memory of Joe to support the climbing program at Princeton. Our long term goal is to build an endowed fund in Joe's name to generate \$25,000 in annual funds to ensure that this wonderful resource remains free to all students and to support new initiatives like Peak Potential Princeton. Please visit the new Wall on your next trip to campus and watch for our special Wall events at Alumni Day and Reunions. For more information and photos of the Climbing Wall go to [www.princeton.edu/~oa/climb](http://www.princeton.edu/~oa/climb) and for information on how to make a donation to the Joe Palmer '84 Fund contact OA Director, Rick Curtis ([rcurtis@princeton.edu](mailto:rcurtis@princeton.edu) or Laurie Russen in the Development Office ([lrussen@princeton.edu](mailto:lrussen@princeton.edu)))

## Explorations from around the world at Reunions

People who were on campus for Reunions had the unique opportunity to hear about expeditions from around the globe from two of Princeton's pre-eminent explorers. **Jeremy Hubball '69**, co-founder and director of The Children's Initiative and avid climber, presented a wonderful talk: **Climbing Mount Everest: Takes You 'Into Thin Air.'** Jeremy's talk explored why people climb mountains, providing observations from his early climbing days to his experience as a member of the 1994 Sagarmatha Environmental Everest Expedition that successfully summited Mount Everest and initiated the first major environmental clean-up of the mountain. Jeremy also offered his perspective on the Everest tragedy of 1996 in which his friend and expedition leader, Scott Fischer, lost his life.

Since 1976, as Fellow of The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, **Bob Peck '74** has led a life many people only



Jeremy Hubball '69 on the Khumbu Icefall

dream about—traveling the globe with some of the world's most knowledgeable scientists in the Academy's continuing effort to better understand the mysteries of life on earth. Along the way, he has had a remarkable series of adventures. As a naturalist, writer, photographer, and historian,



Bob Peck '74 & golden eagle in Mongolia

Bob has chronicled research expeditions for the Academy from the Andes to the Amazon and from the Himalayas to the Mongolian steppes. In his presentation, **To The Ends of the Earth for Science: A Life in Exploration**, Bob shared his sometimes hilarious, sometimes terrifying, but always fascinating tales of adventure around the globe.

## In Memoriam

**John Danielson '58** passed away this April 2009. John was the first executive director of the Princeton-Blairstown Center in the 1970s and played an integral role in the founding of OA. John served as a member of the Friends of OA Board, as a mentor and advisor to the program, and was a dear friend. Please visit: [www.celebratejoindanielson.com](http://www.celebratejoindanielson.com)

**John Mislow, MD, PhD, '92** died in a mountain climbing accident on Mt. McKinley in Alaska in June 2009. A former Leader trainer John was skilled surgeon, scientist and teacher. John will be remembered for his love and enthusiasm for family, friends, and the outdoors. Information about memorials to John are online at:

[web.me.com/wchutkow/John\\_Mislow\\_Memorial/Home.html](http://web.me.com/wchutkow/John_Mislow_Memorial/Home.html)

## Notes from the Trailhead

Send us your latest stories on the enclosed membership form.

**David E. Irving '58** spent 10 days biking in South Africa, starting in Capetown and riding east. "This was our major physical test this year...plus my 80 senior softball games."

**Elizabeth Haase Meyers '85** reports that 15 year-old daughter, Rennie, completed a two-week trip in the Rockies.

**Kari Lister van Zee, Ph.D. '87 and Pieter J. van Zee '87** enjoyed cross country skiing at Odell Lake, Oregon. They have passed on the OA torch to daughter, Erynne, age 13, who backpacked 30 miles in the Opal Creek wilderness.

**Alex Dent '93** stated that activities are day trips to the Shenandoah's and the National Zoo "but we hope to get Neko, our one-year old, on the trail very soon."

**Keith Jackson, Ph.D. '94 and Stacy Jackson '94** moved to Berkeley, CA. Stacy completed her master's degree in climate change mitigation from UC Berkeley. She published two pieces that may be of interest to OA alums and both can be found on [www.stacycjackson.com](http://www.stacycjackson.com).

**Victoria McMillian '95** is working as the department head of the Sustainability Studies Dept. at the White Mountain School. She loves the school, the job and all the Nordic skiing, trail running, etc. at her back door. "Loved hearing about the work you've done on the OA Sustainability Curriculum for the Frosh Trips."

**Alyssa Nelson, Ph.D. '95** has a new job working as co-director for an experiential education program, Youth In Focus. She finished a PhD in Geography at UC Davis where she met OA Leader Carl Boettiger '07.

**Holly Haefele, D.V.M. '96** married Roy McClements while on a mountain biking trip in Moab, UT, in November '08. The small ceremony at Delicate Arch was complete with hiking boots and backpacks.

**Denise Bressler '97** and her husband traveled to Tasmania last year for amazing hiking and headed to the White Mountains, NH for winter camping.

**Alana Benjamin '02** wed Tim Corner, whom she met in the Galapagos. They then headed to Malawi, Africa where Alana will be working as a doctor and Tim will teach.

**Nicole "Chinook" McLean '02** has been busy flying helicopter tours in the Canadian Rockies. She and roommate/co-leader Liz Bernier were to embark upon a camping road trip from Alberta to California, but left out the trowel. "Perhaps we're just not as hardcore as we used to be..."

**Laura Dannen '03 and Greg Redman '07** climbed limestone karsts in Krabi, Thailand this year. Bats included.

**Brent Scharshmidt '05** headed back to Thailand for six months of health work and is now in his first year of medical school at the University of California, San Francisco.

**For more Notes from the Trailhead, visit:**  
[www.princeton.edu/~oa/alumni/ttrails/trailhead.shtml](http://www.princeton.edu/~oa/alumni/ttrails/trailhead.shtml)