



Hats Off to High Adventure Club

Outdoor trips bring fathers and daughters closer together

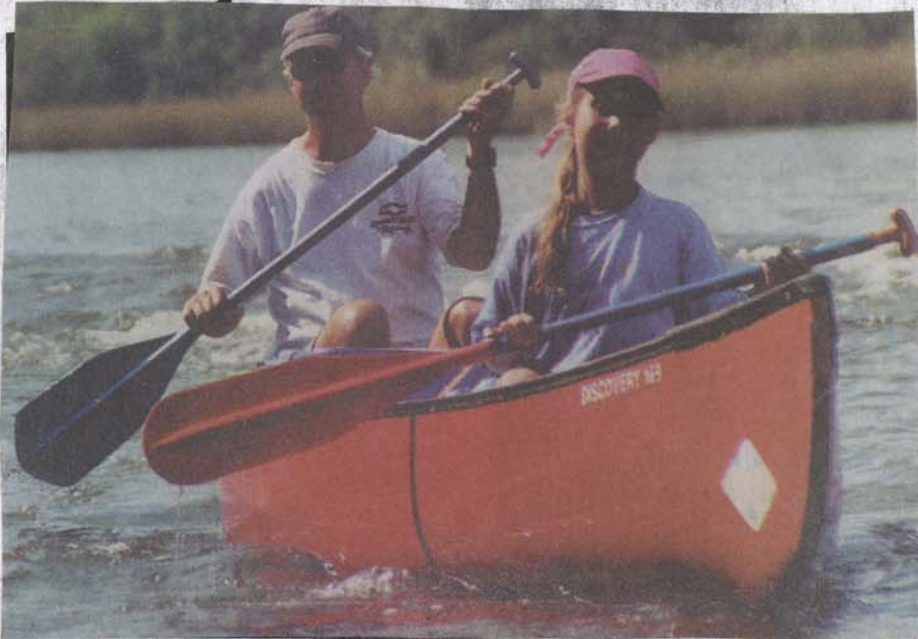
By Kim Sykes
Special Contributor

Local dads and daughters are choosing unique hats to don.

Not cowboy hats or berets, rather HATS of a different kind — as in High Adventure Treks for Dads and Daughters.

The organization offers adventure experiences for fifth- through ninth-grade girls and their dads, while emphasizing relationship building.

Lake Highlands resident Kipp Murray founded HATS after a Scouting trip to New Mexico with his son during the summer of 1996, when he realized there was no structured activity like this to enjoy with his, then sixth-grade daughter.



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UP RIVER: Jack Lovette and his daughter, Meredith Lovette, learn teamwork during a canoe trip.

Longtime friend and neighbor David Kent was one of the first to join.

"HATS teaches the girls a sense of self reliance and accomplishment," Mr. Kent said. "Now my daughter is a

sophomore at Baylor University, and when she needs a pep talk, I say, think back to HATS."

Nearly 10 years later, HATS is still going strong, with 121 participating pairs

last year alone. The dad-and-daughter teams — and they must be teams — can join any one of the four different high adventures offered:

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Family

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canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and hiking treks, culminating in a backpacking trip in Colorado.

More importantly, the activities provide a forum for quality father and daughter time, with an emphasis on communication.

Each weekend event ends with a "breakout" session, where groups discuss how the adventure skill they gained can be applied as a life lesson.

"HATS significantly increased the time I get to spend one on one with my daughter and allows me to stay in communication with her. As girls get older, these lines (of communication) can be damaged, and this helps keep them open," Lake Highlands resident Jack Baines said.

Canoeing participants learn to tie knots to secure the boats. In the breakout session, knot-tying is a metaphor to demonstrate the importance of building strong bonds and reliable ties with those one can trust.

Likewise, on the rock climbing weekend, one of the

exercises is a "trust fall," where girls climb up a rock and fall from 5 feet off the ground into the group's arms.

This demonstrates the need for building a strong support network "because you will fall and will need your friends to catch you," Mr. Murray said.

In a similar fashion, the message at the end of the mountain biking adventure is learning to balance the different demands of life.

After backpacking, the groups figure out what emotional baggage to unload to make the proverbial trek through life a little lighter and easier.

"We're trying to teach the girls lessons about peer pressure and that they can think for themselves and don't need to always follow the group. If they have self esteem and a strong self image, they don't need to go down a wrong path," Mr. Murray said.

John Parrish and his eighth-grade daughter Karen joined HATS two years ago.

Mr. Parrish, a University Park resident and trained rock climber, now volunteers as a leader on the rock-climbing expeditions.

"This is the age when par-

ent and child communication can become strained, as daughters are trying to step out on their own. Dads are usually busy working, and the girls have their own life. Pretty soon they don't have anything to talk about. This gives them a common experience," Mr. Parrish said.

Thirteen-year-old Katie Ball of Lake Highlands agreed.

"It's special to me because my dad is busy with work all the time, and he takes time off work to spend time and bond with me," she said.

Preston Hollow resident Vance Sparks recently signed up for the canoe adventure with his 11-year-old, Elizabeth.

"This is a way for dads and daughters to be together and learn what each other's strengths are," Mr. Sparks said. "Lizzie is very excited about it and has gotten a few of her friends to join too."

Membership costs \$100 per pair, and participants pay their own additional expenses for the adventures. All of the activities take place within two hours of Dallas except for the Colorado trip, which is a one-day drive.

For information, go to www.highadventuretreks.org.