

Appalachian State University, Mick Daniel from Adams State College, and Ben Ramaeker from Western Kentucky University Receive AORE Annual Awards

By Tammie Stenger-Ramsey, AORE Awards Committee Chair

Each year during the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) conference we strive to recognize those individuals and programs that have made significant contributions to the field of Outdoor Recreation and Education. These awards memorialize three leaders in the field, and recognize outstanding and noteworthy contributions to, and achievements in, the field of Outdoor Recreation and Education. This year, the top three honors given by our association went to: Appalachian State University - David J Webb Program Excellence Award; Mick Daniel – Jim Rennie Leadership Award, and Ben Ramaeker – Bill March Student Achievement Award.

The AORE would like to thank Osprey for sponsoring the Bill March Student Achievement Award and the Jim Rennie Leadership Award. Both Mick and Ben received a Raptor pack and a visor from Osprey.

We also appreciate Marmot's sponsorship of the David J Webb Program Excellence Award. This year Appalachian State University received a Centaur pack to use with their program. The recipient of this award also receives a scholarship to send a student to the AORE conference.

Because 2011 marked the 25th AORE Conference, during the awards ceremony, Tim Moore, Chair of the Association Development Committee and 1st President of AORE shared a history of the organization. The AORE recognized many volunteers of the Association including the Association Development Committee members, previous conference hosts, long standing Board of Directors members, and long standing Committee Chairs. Black Diamond provided packs and headlamps for current BOD members and committee chairs.

The Research and Publications committee recognized the Research Scholarship recipient, Erik Rabinowitz from Appalachian State and winners of the AORE Student Literary Award sponsored by The Mountaineers Books. The undergraduate literary award winner was Jamie Bernstein from Green Mountain College. The graduate literary award went to Keith Crawford from Appalachian State University. Both Jamie and Keith received a scholarship to attend the AORE conference.

AORE Executive Director, Jeannette Stawski, recognized the efforts of three members of the association for their ongoing service to the association: Tim Moore from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tammie Stenger-Ramsey from Western Kentucky University, and Mitch Hoffman from the University of Minnesota.

David J Webb Program Excellence Award Recipient – Appalachian State University

Appalachian State University has a lengthy involvement in AORE history. In 1990 ASU hosted what was then known as the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation in Boone, NC. Since that time, ASU students, staff, and faculty members have presented numerous educational sessions and research symposium presentation. They have served on multiple committees as chairs and members.

The ASU Outdoor Program's mission is "to promote discovery through student-powered adventure." Their core values include Diversity, Adventure, Education, and Development. This summer they led their first "Source to Sea" program where they paddled a single watershed from its source on Grandfather Mountain all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. Last year, the program received \$10,000 from the Polartec Challenge Grant. That money is being used to provide scholarships for ASU

students who cannot afford OP trips and services, to extend their Instructor Development Program, and expand their environmental stewardship programs.

ASU OP is dedicated to using research and assessment to continue informing and improving their student development programs by studying things like carbon footprints of outdoor trips, cultural competency of trip participants, and barriers to participation of diverse student populations on their climbing wall.

Their regular programs include day programs like kayak roll clinics, and challenge course team-building programs to overnight programs and two month-long international outdoor adventure programs. In each program, they strive to minimize their environmental impact by planting trees, minimizing waste, recycling, and purchasing carbon credits.

In addition to serving the needs of students at ASU, the Outdoor Program also serves the community of Boone, NC. One of their new initiatives is the Appalachian Adventure Achievement Award (A4) which recognizes local youth who excel in outdoor pursuits. They also host an annual climbing competition, one of the largest annual screenings of the Banff Mountain Film Festival, and the Appalachian Mountain Photography Competition.

Jim Rennie Leadership Award – Mick Daniel

Mick Daniel serves as the Director of Student Life and Recreation at Adams State College. Before stepping into that role, he served as the Outdoor Program Director there for 7 years. Throughout his career, Mick has demonstrated excellence in all of his endeavors. His career began in North Carolina where he alternated his time between attending classes at Brevard College and working as a field instructor for North Carolina Outward Bound. He later became a Wilderness Education Association National Standards Program Instructor. He attended graduate school at Oklahoma State University.

Mick is one of the most conscientious and effective field instructors in the country. He is patient and caring, while also pushing his students and participants to excel and achieve their own goals during expeditions. He has a magical way of allowing less experienced students to examine their own strengths, and grow at their own pace, all while achieving things they never thought were possible.

As a member of AORE, Mick was elected to the BOD in 2004. What makes his contribution so great, are all of the things he did behind the scenes without ever expecting any recognition and without anyone noticing. Mick became vice president during his first year on the board, and stayed there for the entire time. The VP in general is a thankless position, but Mick really had a hard task. Mick is a peace maker, and was constantly walking a balancing act to appease the membership while managing major changes in the organization. He worked closely with Boise State to minimize the damages occurring as the association searched for a new office. He balanced relationships on the BOD with the grace, by directing strategic planning and ensuring all members were heard. He was the epitome of a servant leader. He was dedicated to the association, and took on roles that vice presidents are not expected to do. He was actively involved in attempting to bring AORE and WEA closer, and was a chief administrator during the search for the current national office. In Mick's case, his leadership style was gentle, caring and inclusive. Mick was responsible for maintaining relationships and holding board members responsible for projects. In essence, Mick served as the congressional whip. He wielded the most effective and influential leadership and was absolutely invaluable to the BOD and the Association. He recruited strong BOD candidates ensuring diversity in views. As Vice President, he regularly fielded more than 10 candidates per election. His vision for AORE invoked a desire to serve that in others, and his convincing nature allows him to effectively operate as a leader.

Mick was instrumental in maintaining the grassroots vision of the AORE founders, while navigating a series of difficult situations during his term. His leadership enhanced the conferences in Idaho and North Carolina, and allowed other leaders to shine during his term.

Bill March Student Achievement Award – Ben Ramaeker

Ben Ramaeker currently is pursuing a Master's Degree in Recreation and Sport Administration at Western Kentucky University where he serves as the Challenge Course Graduate Assistant.

He began his outdoor career as a challenge course intern with the Stout Adventures program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He then became a ropes course and climbing wall facilitator at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Adventure Program. He further developed his outdoor skills and became an Outdoor Specialist at La Crosse. During the summers, he served as the Assistant Chief Interpreter at Northern Tier National High Adventure Base where he managed, supervised, and trained the guide staff. His diverse experiences in recreation include two additional internships in recreational facilities at UW- Eau Claire, and recreational programming at UW-Stout. He has worked for 6 different AORE Professionals in the past 4 years. One of his most unique professional experiences was being a Zamboni driver at the Onalaska Omni Center.

Ben has a strong history of proactively seeking professional development experiences. He has attended the AORE conference every year since 2008, paying his own way on multiple occasions. Not only did he attend AORE Conferences, but he found ways to get involved, network, and truly take advantage of all the opportunities the AORE provides it's student members including serving on the Environmental Stewardship Committee and the Student Development Committee. He has also attended the Wilderness Education Association conference and the Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association conference.

Despite attending UW-Lacrosse, Ben inquired with Tim Mertz about working on the Challenge Course at UW-Stout as an intern during the summer. Ben's professionalism, maturity, attention to detail, and charisma led him to quickly become a leader among the staff at Stout Adventures Challenge Course. At the end of the summer, Ben returned to UW-Lacrosse an excellent Challenge Course facilitator. In fact, Ryan Olson, the Challenge Course director at Lacrosse, mentioned that he was very happy with Ben's skill set and confidence on the Challenge Course shortly after Ben started working there.

Upon beginning his graduate education, Ben undertook the daunting task of being a Graduate Assistant that reports to directly to two different units and indirectly to a third at Western Kentucky University. Tammie Stenger-Ramsey mentioned that during his first month at the course he took great initiative in solving some of the facility problems going on at the course and was able to mitigate some of the tension between the different campus units overseeing the WKU Challenge Course.

During the AORE Awards Ceremony, AORE President, Tim Mertz finished his introduction of Ben by saying, "In reflecting on Ben's journey over the past few years, I look back with pride. As full time Outdoor Professionals, we have all seen students come and go. Some make an impact and others do not. I believe Ben's greatest impacts on our field are yet to come and I am excited to see what the next few years offer Ben while at WKU."

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