

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ROCK CLIMBING

Are you looking for ways to enhance unity among your team members or increase feelings of trust among your players? Or, are you interested in providing training for your group's leadership core? Well, look no further, for traverse and vertical climbing walls are excellent "hosts" for these important team-building activities.

Through a variety of challenge activities and climbing wall initiatives, individuals and teams have:

- Learned to work cooperatively
- Gained in trust of self and others
- Increased their self-confidence and willingness to take positive risks
- Developed their leadership skills
- Enhanced their interpersonal communication skills (listening, speaking, and writing)
- Increased their creative problem solving skills

In essence, challenge activities such as wall climbing provide opportunities for leadership development that can't be replicated in the traditional settings. For example, when you're on the wall you sometimes can't see where the next hand hold is and you learn to ask for help to meet the challenge. Team members observing you can see the holds that you can't see and can coach you from the ground through successful navigation of these "blind spots." By learning to trust each other and by working together, you begin to develop the skills that are integral to successful team functioning. This transfer of learning moves beyond the team and has additional applications at home, in school and in the community.

Many leadership-training participants want to continue climbing and the opportunity to use these "graduates" as peer teachers/mentors is highly recommended. As your "experienced participants" become "peer teachers" they feel proud and respected as people, but also as leaders. What a powerful experience this is. Teach a student a skill, and then have them teach this skill to another person. This is the true meaning of self-esteem enhancement! It also is an initiative that encourages the growth of the "whole person;" namely, the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual.

Schools, camps and other youth serving organizations that have used climbing walls as leadership-training sites have consistently reported "rave reviews" on exit evaluations from program participants. With thoughtful planning and guided implementation, you can provide similar "journeys to adventure" that yield outstanding results.

*"Dream it! Believe It! Achieve It!"*  
(Author unknown)