



**BENCHMARK**

**NEWS**

February 2007

## Leadership & Clear Communication BENCHMARK Can Help



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*James,*

*Thank you for help with my management team. I appreciate your focus on leadership and clear communication, as they are things that we most constantly evaluate ourselves on, and also improve upon. We all benefited from the activities and discussions during and after the activities. My team has made several references back to that afternoon and the concepts that they came away with. I may look to you for future sessions with other members of my team.*

*Thank you for your time and assistance.*

*Jason King*



Last fall, nine SunTrust Bank branch managers and their area manager met with BENCHMARK at Warner Park in Nashville, TN to actively improve their leadership skills of listening thoroughly, clarifying expectations and communicating clearly.

Because BENCHMARK designs unique experiences for church groups, other non-profits, and corporate teams... we can tailor an event to meet the needs of your specific group. BENCHMARK can help your team move toward greater effectiveness in just an afternoon.



Jason King, Group Vice President / Area Manager of SunTrust Bank, Nashville wrote. We share this letter with his permission.



**BENCHMARK**  
Adventure Ministries, Inc.™



# Lessons from the Trail

Impressions from our 2006 Chuck Wilson Memorial and Discovery Funding Hikers

Each fall we plan two hikes which raise funds for the benefit of BENCHMARK. The 12th Annual Chuck Wilson Memorial Backpack for BENCHMARK, our more difficult hike, fielded four hikers. The 7th Annual Discovery Hike, in early November had eight hikers. These hikes raised \$5024, for which we are grateful. In addition to raising funds for BENCHMARK, the hikers themselves benefit from the experience in many ways. Here's how they responded after the hikes....

## Chuck Wilson Memorial Backpack for BENCHMARK



"... it is a sense of accomplishment, and also knowing that I am doing something that most people I associate with would never even attempt." **Andrew Ammons**—10 Year Funding Hiker

"I am physically in better shape than I was 10 years ago. Mentally I am able to focus on the task at hand and know that I can do it

because I have decided to do so." **Barbara Evans**—9 Year Funding Hiker

**Kinley Winchester**—9 Year Funding Hiker (Look for Kinley's comments on page 3)

## Discovery Hike

"This was a good experience for my daughter and I." **Andrew Ammons**, experienced hiker with his 14 year old first time backpacking daughter Margaret

"I came to the Discovery Hike to get a taste of what my father so deeply enjoyed, and to financially support BENCHMARK. The results of my personal experience have caused me to think about my ambitions. I try to do it all and do it well. But there are times when it's not for me to do. I need to be able to let go easier, not quit, but to back off when I should."

**Tia Dunaway**, first-time backpacker



"No one would be surprised to find a sense of serenity in the midst of such beautiful scenery, but I

discovered that serenity is tested through unexpected circumstances. This hike was an opportunity to test leadership skills and serve people in unexpected ways."

**Keith Fletcher**, 6 Year Funding Hiker



"Because of the nature of the trip I was able to spend a lot of time thinking about several areas of my life and I know now what I need to do to move forward. We all have a goal or destination that we are headed for, but make sure that you don't miss the enjoyment of the journey."

**Chris Willhite**, veteran backpacker, first Discovery Hike



"I know more now than ever how beautiful God's creation is and to be thankful even in harsh situa-

tions because the Lord is so good to us. Why take things for granted when there is no need to? **Jacob Buentello**, 18 year old first-time backpacker

"... I was able to experience once again the renewing benefits of being removed from my daily responsibilities and routine – things that have a tendency to distract me from simply reflecting upon who I am and what I am here for. I am grateful for Benchmark and its desire to meet such a need in the lives of people like me who end up growing in ways never anticipated."

**Jon Mandeville**, college teacher, dad of 1 year



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# Is It Worth It?

by Kinley Winchester  
Funding Hiker



Why do I keep coming back? Sleeping on a wooden shelf or the rocky ground, eating and drinking from an aluminum cup, smelling the iodine of treated water, tripping on roots, stubbing toes on rocks, aching calves on the uphill climb, unzipping sleeping bags in the morning and the rush of cool air, the lifting of the pack and cinching straps ...

It could be just for the walk in the woods. I have always enjoyed the adventure along a trail that has been cut through God's nature. It makes me feel a little closer to the Creator. The sounds, smells, and majestic views remind me of a loving God that made all these things for His glory and my pleasure.

It could be the companionship of those who hike with me. The chats (between breaths) are nice. The talks of life, parenting, work, marriage, and spiritual matters are calming to the soul. The time away from normal everyday pressures and schedules give way to these discussions. The solitary trek that ends with a glance up to see a friend waiting by the trail, ready to walk the next mile alongside me is a reminder to keep them close because we should never journey through life alone.

How has my life changed the last 10 years, 9 trips, that I have spent hiking the Appalachian Trail with BENCHMARK? That is a tough question to answer. It is hard to know how certain events in life affect you later on. In some ways I am more thoughtful, more reflective. Recalling the time spent walking along in silence helps

when the noises of life are hard to shut out. Finding that quiet spot in nature and just sitting, thinking and listening to "nothing" brings a comfort that can't be explained.

One life lesson I have thought about several times while hiking is the lesson of a balanced life. Many times while plodding along, I find myself watching the ground pass beneath my feet. Although the rocks and roots at times require a careful eye and watchful step, to stare at the ground all day only leads to missing so many other wondrous things: the bird on the limb singing his tune, the

squirrel jumping just far enough away to feel safe, the blue sky peeking between the fall leaves, the towering trees that seem to stretch to heaven, or the mountain view that is always just within sight. Of course if I kept my gaze to the sky for too long, I would end up tripping over the jutting root or teetering rock underfoot. There must always be a balance between time spent looking for trouble and thinking on the hardships of life, and the time spent gazing at the stars or into the expectant future.

Have the trips been worth it? You bet. The efforts expended and the sacrifices made only last for a short time, but the rewards can be for a lifetime. ▲

Climb  
Rappel  
Challenge Yourself  
Learn



Youth from Belle Meade United Methodist Church, Nashville, climb Jaws Block at Cherokee Rock Village, Sand Rock, AL.

Belle Meade UMC Youth await their turn to climb

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND  
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
FOR MORE EFFECTIVE  
KINGDOM  
INVOLVEMENT





# CANOE & FISH THE BOUNDARY WATERS

AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

JULY 25-31, 2007 • AUGUST 22-28, 2007



BENCHMARK Adventure Ministries is planning two 5 day / 4 night wilderness experiences in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) near Ely, Minnesota. This pristine wilderness area is known for great canoeing, fishing and quiet solitude. This trip is planned for **men** only, post-college age and older.

If you or someone you know could use time away to consider life and to return with a fresh perspective on it, this may be just the trip for you.

**This trip includes:** Complete outfitting for the trip from arrival at the outfitters on Wednesday afternoon till departure on Tuesday morning, including 2 nights

bunkhouse lodging. Ground transportation costs for the group from Minneapolis, MN to Ely, MN and back to Minneapolis / St. Paul. **Note:** Participants agree to complete the Bible study and read a 100-200 page book selected as essential components of this trip.

## General Trip Schedule

**Wednesday:** Travel day and overnight stay at outfitters

**Thursday – Monday:** Fishing and paddling in the BWCAW

**Tuesday:** Travel day, flights scheduled after noon

**Trip Rate: \$825.00 per person, not including airfare**

**Contact BENCHMARK for more detailed information.**

## In the Future

These events are planned with organizations with whom we collaborate. BENCHMARK contracts with organizations to provide a side of ministry most organizations can not do themselves. We can help you plan an event just for your group. Let us add some adventure.

**January 20** ~ Brentwood United Methodist 6th Grade

Confirmation Retreat, 103 students, 26 mentors, 13 groups

**January 28, February 8 and 25** ~ Uruguay Team Mission Trip Preparation

**March 2** ~ Whitesburg Baptist Church Outdoor Expo

**March 30-April 1** ~ RecLab Free Wilderness Drawing Trip

**April 20-22** ~ OA Retreat, College Mission Program Training,

**May 4-6** ~ Trinity Free Will Baptist Youth Wilderness Trip of Greenville, NC

**May 11-12** ~ Belle Meade United Methodist Church Female Climb and Rite of Passage, of Nashville, TN

**June 4-11** ~ E-Team Leaders Training & Missions Trip Prep

**June 11-14** ~ Kazakhstan Team Missions Trip Preparation

**July 9-10** ~ Bulgaria Team Missions Trip Preparation

**July 25-31** ~ Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Men's Canoe & Fish

**August 22-28** ~ Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Men's Canoe & Fish

**October 18-21** ~ 13th Annual Chuck Wilson Memorial Backpack for BENCHMARK Fall Funding Hike, longer, harder

**November 2-4** ~ Discovery Hike & 8th Entry Level Funding Hike

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