



The Fuzzy Cheesecake

"FOP: The Harvard of First-Year Outdoor Orientation Programs"

Vol. 4: December MMVI

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Welcome to the fourth annual Fuzzy Cheesecake, the only publication compiled by FOP's current Steering Committee, designed to share the spirit of FOP with the entire family. Delivery is free, but subscriptions can be purchased NPR style - through your voluntary donations.

On Alumni Networks

By Lacey Whitmire

(FOP leader '03-'05, Summer Staff '04-'05, Base Camp '05-'06)

When asked to write an "alumnae" article for the Fuzzy Cheesecake, I thought—wow, it's neat there is an article targeted just to the alumnae audience. Then I realized—that wasn't it at all. It's not the audience, it's the author! I am an alum! And what a realization that is.

I thought I would write a few things about my experience being a recently graduated FOP leader, and how the FOP network and FOP skills have continued to impact my daily existence in a positive way.

1) Wear your FOP t-shirt.

I recently spent a weekend with friends in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. I don't really know that many people, save Robert Koenig, from that area. So when walking down the street and getting odd looks from a cyclist, I thought I was being stalked by a rather creepy Chapel Hillian. Then the man smiled and said, "Hello! Were you a FOP leader?" I said, "Yes, I was!" I realized I was wearing my shirt—dusty rose—from 2001. "My name is (and here I have forgotten his name, but he works for a small biotech in the Research Triangle area), and I was a FOP leader!" We chatted for several minutes, and then parted ways. Now, I've got a contact and a helpful face whenever I'm in the Research Triangle area, other than the Koenigs. The FOP t-shirt is a powerful message when worn, wherever you go. How often do your sartorial choices give way to new friendships?

2) You've got skills, and you know how to use them.

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FOP in the Family

By Ellen Fifer

Mother of Leader Katie Fifer '08 and FOPper Emily Fifer '10

My daughter Katie calls and asks me to write about my experiences with FOP.

"But I don't have any," I protest.

"They must think I have told you things," Katie replies. "Things" I wonder. "What things?" But then I recall the occasions I've observed over the years. My introduction began with the humorous image Katie presented arriving in front of her dorm after her trip freshman year: she was wearing navy nylon basketball shorts over grey thermal underwear. She had on several layers of shirts, a hat, and a backpack. She said, "This is all that's left that isn't wet or dirty."

I have two children at Harvard who participated in FOP their freshman year: Katie, now a junior, and Emily, a freshman. They both loved the challenge of the outdoors and bonding with a group of

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From the Dean's Desk

A note from Tom Dingman,
Dean of Freshmen at Harvard College

I get asked from time to time about programs in the college that seem to be particularly effective, and my reply always includes the Freshman Outdoor Program. Why am I such an admirer of FOP? That's easy: it provides a fabulous introduction to the College and to one's peers for those starting their undergraduate careers; and it teaches our upperclassmen, who are selected in rigorous competition to serve as leaders, a great deal about responsibility and taking charge.

Anyone who has been in the Yard on the Saturday of move-in weekend and witnessed the return of the groups from the wilderness understands the bonding that has occurred and the emerging self confidence in individuals. It is worth a trip back for alums or a pop into the office for current faculty and staff members just to see the spirit and the energy. This year members of the Class of 2010 looked a bit scared on the Sunday of Labor Day Weekend before getting assigned to groups and picking up their gear (of course, the soggy weather didn't help). These same folks were hardly recognizable upon their return six days later. And what is nice is to hear participants—

all cleaned up, registered, enrolled in classes, and committed to different extracurricular pursuits—still talking about the impact of their FOP leaders and the chance

"[FOP] provides a fabulous introduction to the College and to one's peers for those starting their undergraduate careers"

to continue to benefit from their advice and their friendship. The stories, of course, include accounts of beautiful scenery, challenging natural obstacles, and feats requiring both strength and "smarts". But it seems to me it's the relationships that add most significantly to the transformative quality of the trips. I love the fact that our new freshmen meet some of our finest returning students so early, and I love the fact that the latter have these rare opportunities outside of the classroom to learn about leading, about being sensitive to individual and group needs, and about making judgments often under pressure and with the stakes relatively high.

The appointment of Jess Ross as permanent director of the Freshman Outdoor Program is a great outcome for the College. We had over 40 candidates



apply, and involved 15 or more staff members and students in winnowing down the pool. In the end, there was general consensus (that's a significant word for FOP) that we'd be in a strong position in converting Jess's appointment from "interim" to "regular". Over the last year, Jess has worked extremely well with both administrators and undergraduates, and impressed all of us with her dedication, enthusiasm, and high regard for standards. I look forward very much to my continued association with Jess and to seeing what Jess and the new Student Steering Committee identify as priorities for their labors. FOP is doing a lot of things with remarkable success now. But it has never been an organization to stand still or become complacent. That is one reason it has the national reputation that it has.

This spring, become a Wilderness First Responder!
Course given March 24-April 1 @ Harvard. E-mail fop@fas or call 617.495.7935. All are welcome!

How Candy Bars and Hot Water Bottles Can Go a Long Way

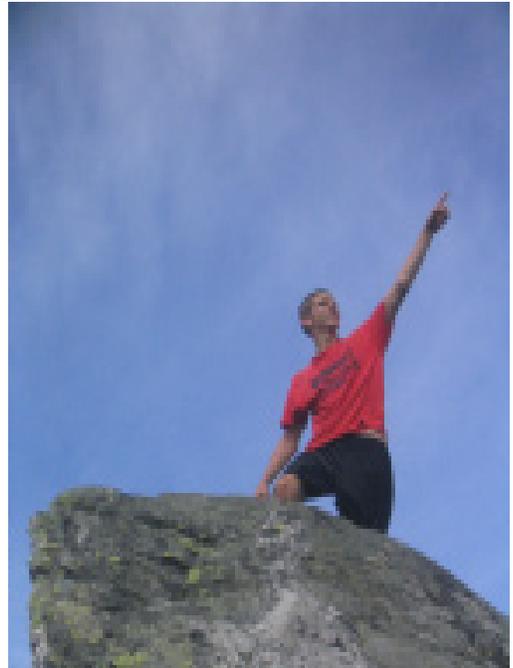
By Jessica Ross, Director

Two years ago, my father and I embarked on a backpacking trip for National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) alums in the Wind Rivers of Wyoming. We were in the midst of introductions among our course mates, and my Dad's turn came around. He stated his name and told a story about his involvement with NOLS as a teenager in the 1960's. He explained how he and my Mom spent much of their free time out on backpacking trips, until they became the parents of a daughter who hated hiking. I proceeded to introduce myself as that daughter who hated hiking...until I went to college and found FOP. Yes, it's true. My parents used to bribe me up mountains with candy bars. You can imagine their surprise when I walked back on campus the fall of my freshman year, smiling ear-to-ear, pronouncing how much fun I had on FOP!

This spring, I had the opportunity to lead a weekend trip for Leader Interns. The trip is a part of a larger training program specifically aimed at supporting leader trainees who are excited about leading FOP trips but who come to the program with minimal outdoors experience. I recall one evening on the Intern Trip when it was particularly cold outside. At approximately 3 AM, I decided it was time to wake up and make myself a hot water

bottle to put in my sleeping bag with me. While I was up, I thought, "Hey! I bet everyone would like a hot water bottle!" So I set about, boiling water and waking up sleepy, confused interns and passing hot water bottles to each of them. My favorite comment I received that night was from my co-leader, Teddy Chestnut, '06, who may or may not recall sitting up for a moment in his sleeping bag, saying, "You're like an angel in the night!" and then immediately crashing back into a deep sleep.

Two months later, one of those interns, Patrick Ziemnik, '09, came up to me and told me that he was so thankful for that water bottle that he had done a similar favor for his Training Trip in June. I was flattered that he had chosen to model my leadership and invigorated by the realization that, as a program, we are invested in real learning. Somehow, Patrick had not only learned from something I had done two months ago, he had transferred it to another experience in his life. Perhaps somewhere down the line, his fellow trainees will make a cup of hot chocolate for a roommate who is up late writing a paper at school.



My point is that I'm excited to direct this organization because think we're doing something real here. And the great part is, the research says we're accomplishing something significant as well. Brent Bell, the former FOP Director, wrote his dissertation on the effect of all of Harvard's orientation programs on students' social support networks throughout their four years at the university. What he found was that students who have gone on FOP trips are more likely than any other student at Harvard to have strong social support networks for the rest of college. Candy bars and hot water bottles aside, we are collectively and positively impacting students' lives.



"Alumni" continued from page 1

There is not a job I have interviewed for, a day I have worked, or a person I have met that has not led me to use my FOP skills in some very important way. FOP training and the experiences gained by being a FOP leader teach you crucial techniques that enhance your ability to operate and succeed in any work environment.

By learning how to manage a group and interact with people you've known only a short while in order to accomplish something important (scared freshman, roughly 8 hours, need to build a rain-proof shelter out of duct-taped tarps), FOP leaders are much more likely to succeed in the "Real World" as leaders, managers, facilitators, and coordinators of any sort—whether in the classroom, the boardroom, the laboratory, the cubicle, or what have you.

So I urge the parents reading this article to remember the valuable lessons—life lessons—that your children have gained from participating in FOP or leading FOP trips: they know how to listen, teach, manage, and lead in ways most young 20-somethings don't.

3) Lean on me, when you're not strong (or going abroad, or searching for a job, or ...)

No one told me that post-Har-

vard (and therefore, post-FOP) life would be easy. No one told me anything about it at all, really. And that's why I've been thankful for the FOP network. When I wanted to go into management consulting, there were FOP leaders there (Bet you were surprised, huh! We don't all move to Montana to plant organic alfalfa!). When I wanted to stop management consulting and go to Bolivia, there were FOP leaders there, too. And if one of the FOP community hasn't gone and done whatever it is you are interested in doing, the beauty of the network is that the relevant person is probably just a phone call or email away from the network.

I hope everyone touched by FOP is having a wonderful close to 2006, and I do hope you all remember my key take-aways (which I would have put in PowerPoint form, but it wasn't allowed!):

-Take pride in the program by wearing your FOP t-shirts- you may make a new friend!

-Take confidence in the skills you or your child has gained from being a part of FOP—they are very applicable to later life!

-Take a moment to call or email an old FOP contact—they may be the perfect contact for the next opportunity or adventure that awaits you!

Until the next time I see you on the trail, be well!

Greetings from SC '07

Winsie Carroll, Jay Costa,
Jessie Daigneault, Abby
Darby, Max Huber, Ken Saa-
thoff, Lauren Schwartze, and
Jackie Stenson

Less than five days after FOP Steering Committee '07 was selected at the beginning of October, we were busy at work. Even in those first days, we found ourselves turning to big picture conversations – sharing goals for ourselves and FOP. We recognize that the program now in our hands is remarkably well-established and finely-honed and we have a great respect for the work done and the visions promoted by members of Steering Committees past. Thus, our SC will not be about making new

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FOP 2006: By the Numbers

292 FOPpers

71 Leaders

41 New leaders trained

8 Participants in the Intern
Program

34 Trips (total) in **3** states

2 Observant Trips

6 Switch Trips

4 Service Trips

2 In-Site Trips

273 lbs. of pasta eaten

1170 T. of brown sugar
used

My FOP '06

By Madeline Haas, '10

Standing before a group of quirky freshmen are the modern day, college student versions of the SNL cheerleaders Cheri O'Teri and Will Ferrell: "We weren't sure if we'd feel comfortable sharing this with you on the first night, but you seem like the right kind of group..." they say. After a moment's hesitation they begin, and though it's not what we'd expected, nothing could have prepared us for this: "I'm proud, I'm strong, I'm ready for whatever comes along!" The FOP self-esteem song, complete with gestures.

From the start, my FOP group was a musical one. From FOP songs we branched out to pop songs, Disney classics, and African spirituals. Between the two musical encyclopedias behind me, an a capella expert in the lead, and the Broadway musical junkies in between, we were never at a loss for a radio. On our longest night, as we ascended

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"Family," continued from page 1

friends before the school year began. Heading off to college can be a time of anxiety, but FOP was a great way for them to adjust without the pressure of classes.

The camaraderie that develops during the FOP trips cannot be overstated. As I helped Emily move in on Labor Day weekend, she kept bumping into fellow hikers—in the Coop, in CVS, and as we walked across the square. They happily traded accounts of the foibles of unpacking. For Katie, the friendships have been lasting. For the past two years, Katie has been a leader of the trips and has become close to other leaders. I met Amelia, Jackie, and Jessie skiing in Utah last winter. They share Katie's enthusiasm for snowboarding, snowball fights, and teasing. But they also wear self-assurance comfortably, are smart and articulate. This fall as Emily's leader, Amelia took Emily under her wing.

In October, I happened to be visiting the night of the FOP slideshow. Students streamed

Did you know...
that from 1984-1988 FOP offered biking trips?

into the Science Center auditorium, talking and laughing. The buzz was palpable. The different FOP groups found each other and sat together. The groups were numbered, and as their photos appeared in the slide show, each group cheered. Katie's group, number 8, roared at their first slide—six canoes rafted together, sailing under the power of their tarps held aloft by canoe paddles. In another slide, the campers were dark figures in the night who had drawn the number 8 in the air with their head lamps, photographed with a slow shutter speed. When the show was over, her group crowded around Katie. She was no longer the little freshman I remembered from three years ago, but a poised young woman.

FOP allows hikers to store one small suitcase in the office while they are away; hikers reclaim their suitcase before they head off to their dorm. Before Emily left home, Katie called and told her to be sure to pack soap and shampoo in the suitcase. "I didn't have any for that first shower after I got back freshman year." Katie's advice is evidence FOP teaches skills for life; at least she has learned to plan ahead.

Katie calls me on her cell phone as she walks across campus. After a brief conversation she says, "Gotta go, Mom. I'm at Annenberg. I'm going to have dinner with my FOPpers." So even though the year is in full swing, the friendships established during those first few fun days of autumn hiking remain.



FOP's Foods: The Dessert Edition

Fantastic Fare for the Front-Country or the Back-Country

Chewy Fudge Cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. cocoa mix
- 5 Tbs. margarine
- 3 Tbs. powdered milk
- 3 Tbs. water
- 1.5 c. oatmeal
- ¼ c. nuts

Mix sugar, margarine, cocoa, powdered milk, and water in pan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and boil for 3 minutes stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in remaining ingredients. Drop by spoonfuls onto a flat surface. Let sit for about 10 minutes.

Powerhouse Cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. margarine
- 3 Tbs. powdered milk
- 4 Tbs. water
- 1 c. oatmeal
- 1 c. peanut butter
- ½ c. nuts
- ¼ c. chocolate

Mix sugar, margarine, powdered milk, and water in a pan and bring to boil. Reduce heat and boil for 3 minutes stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in remaining ingredients. Drop by spoonfuls onto a flat surface. Let sit for about 10 minutes.

Inuit Cookies (no cooking required!)

Ingredients:

- 1 c. oatmeal
- 6 Tbs. margarine
- 6 Tbs. brown sugar
- 3 Tbs. cocoa mix
- ½ Tbs. water

Mix ingredients and form into walnut-sized balls.

optional: Roll cookies in mixture of 1 Tbs. powdered milk and 1 Tbs. brown sugar.



"My FOP," continued from page 5

ever-patient leaders flat-out refused to humor our complaints. Instead, he reverted to song, forcing his impossibly high spirits on our self-pity.

Coming through that night in song—to a delicious dinner of never-better *Grandma's* oatmeal raisin cookies—solidified the group that had been developing. For two days we'd been curiously gobbling up each other's stories, which were beginning to meld into one new experience, a framework for how we would view Harvard. We'd enjoyed the trees and the picnics. But that night, we proved ourselves in a new, joint experience. And we learned that beyond the grades and try-outs, a different kind of self-esteem (cue music) exists at Harvard, the kind built from pitching a tarp in the dark while getting thoroughly soaked in the rain.

The next morning, when we could see where we'd landed, we summited our most impressive peak in fairy tale-fine weather. Inspired by the panoramic view, we took fake prom pictures on a boulder, marching around in our spandex and fleece and munching on Nutella and pita.

When not singing, or dancing, or posing for pictures, we talked. In hours of conversation, we pushed beyond our awesome but intimidating "qualifications" and backgrounds to become people with goofy, or serious, but real, personalities. I began the week describing myself in terms of what I'd done, and ended—with fuzzy cheesecake—with others describing me as who I *am*.

“SC,” continued from page 4

FOP program, *per se*; rather, we are committed to re-examining and sprucing up some of the existing “paths” in order to make FOP stronger overall.

We hope to expand and strengthen FOP by deepening the bonds and widening the scope of this already vibrant and tight-knit community. Expanding the Leader Intern program and the FOP In-Site program, both relatively new aspects of FOP, top our list as methods of achieving this goal. The Leader Intern program encourages a broader array of students to be leaders by offering those with less outdoor experience the opportunity to increase technical skill and comfort with life in the woods. Additionally, we look forward to facilitating the growth of the In-Site program, through which first-year students can enjoy the social benefits of FOP while camping at sites with some front-country amenities. To us, the social benefits of participat-



ing in FOP are indispensable and we are dedicated to giving these benefits to as many first-year students as possible.

We are truly fortunate to have so many thoughtful and enthusiastic members of our leader community and we look forward to training more leaders this spring. One facet of leader training we are particularly excited about is increasing the focus on good judgment. To us, good judgment is the extremely valu-

able ability to apply what one has learned to tough situations, and, while we put a lot of effort into selecting leaders who already possess good judgment, we hope to further define and foster a sense of FOP-style good judgment. We expect this to result in our leaders feeling even more competent and well-prepared as they head out on their FOP trips come fall.

We are incredibly excited for the events and the opportunities of the new year. Our Steering Committee is wholly committed to both orienting and supporting incoming first-years and training and supporting our leaders. We as SC '07 are thrilled to be able to use FOP's many resources as well as our time, energy, and undying dedication in order to accomplish this goal and to help make FOP the best program that it can be.



'03 Grad Named Director of FOP

(The Harvard Crimson: November 02, 2006)

By Carolyn F. Gaebler

Jessica L. Ross '03 will blaze the trail for future generations of freshmen as the new director of the First-Year Outdoor Program (FOP), the Freshmen Dean's Office (FDO) announced Tuesday.

Ross has served as FOP's interim director since last September, when former FOP director Brent J. Bell left for a professorship at the University of New Hampshire.

Ross has had a long history with the program, which runs six-day pre-orientation camping trips in New England for incoming freshmen each September. After participating in FOP as a freshman in 1999, Ross went on to become a FOP trip leader as well as a member of the steering committee—which coordinates leader selection, leader training, and trip planning. After graduating, Ross remained involved in planning the pre-orientation camping trips for incoming freshmen.

"I still remember my parents telling me how big a smile I had on my face coming back from my FOP trip," Ross said. "I am really excited about seeing more smiles come back."

Ross was one of forty can-

didates vying for the position, according to Gretchen M. Gingo, department administrator for the FDO. A search advisory committee, consisting of administrators and the 2006 FOP steering committee, screened applicants and conducted interviews, Gingo said.

Dean of Freshmen Thomas A. Dingman '67 approved Ross as the search committee's top choice.

"Under Jess's leadership, FOP should continue to be the envy of institutions across the country, concerned with providing a real wilderness and community-building experience for first-year students and a chance for upperclassmen to take significant responsibility," Dingman said in a press release.

Gingo said Ross' enthusiasm, outdoor experience, and skills as a mentor were qualities that impressed the committee.

FOP leaders also expressed their excitement about Ross' new post.

Andrew J. Bestwick '07, member of the 2005 FOP steering committee praised Ross' legacy in the program.

"There is this sense of lineage in the program. Everybody is trained by an older leader, and

if you work out our ancestry, pretty much everyone in the program can trace their lineage back to Jess Ross," Bestwick said.

Steering committee member for the past two years Jessica L. Daigneault '08 said she expects Ross will continue to do a fantastic job.

"Now that it is a permanent position, I think there is room for her to own it, which will be great for her and great for the program," Daigneault said.

As an undergraduate in Currier House, Ross also participated in intramural crew, taught swim lessons, and sang with the Kuumba Singers of Harvard College.

After graduation, she traveled to South America on a National Outdoor Leadership School trip, according to the FDO. Ross also worked at two outdoor education centers and taught "science and adventure" in a start-up school before returning to the College, Gingo said.

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