



Focus on SOLAR: School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation

Are you an outdoors novice, looking to get out in the wild and explore, but don't know how to get started? Or maybe you're an experienced rock climber, looking for a partner to help you eventually scale Mt. Everest?

You may want to check out [SOLAR: School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation](#). Don't let the name intimidate you. While learning is a big component of SOLAR, it's really a club focused on the enjoyment of nature and outdoor activities.

Heather Hall, member and public relations chair for SOLAR, joined the 31-year old organization several years ago after a backpacking friend moved away. She was interested in meeting people who enjoy the outdoors and in learning new activities.

She was pleasantly surprised at the range of possibilities. SOLAR's programs are member-driven, and with over 300 members there is plenty to choose from. Backpacking, biking, skiing, bird watching - even dog sledding and yes, rock climbing, make up just part of SOLAR's activity list. "You'll find something for everyone," says Hall.

Meetings and classes take place in Southeast Michigan, with activities and trips in Michigan and beyond. Trips this past year included a caving expedition to Kentucky, a Michigan canoe trip on the Manistee River, and a "kids-only" Jordan River excursion (each participating family included a child 17 or younger).

There are weekly hikes and even an occasional "Play Hooky from Work Day" (shh!). Experienced club members teach newcomers the ropes for everything from car camping to kayaking to advanced search and rescue, and everything in between.

Hall has found that one of the best aspects of SOLAR is the diverse community. People of all ages and all walks of life are members. "There are single people, married people, families - it's really interesting to meet people from all different kinds of backgrounds," Hall says. She adds, "When you're in the woods, it doesn't matter what your background is."

SOLAR meets the first Tuesday of every month at Colony Hall (21780 Evergreen) in Southfield, between 8 Mile and 9 Mile roads. Non-members are welcome to learn more about SOLAR. There is no charge to attend monthly meetings.

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