Kyle Rauch Joins the Outdoor U Staff

Saint John's Outdoor University is an organization that has attracted, by luck or design (or both), many of the most driven and passionate individuals around – from our students to our volunteers to our professional staff. This aspect has helped us survive – and thrive – during the last several months when we found ourselves with a vacant assistant director position and a plate full of educational classes, land maintenance and stewardship projects, and a national outdoor competition to dominate. Now we are thrilled to announce that Kyle Rauch will be filling this vacancy and bringing his unique passion for environmental stewardship and outdoor leadership to Outdoor U.

Kyle is coming to us from Tennessee where he has been working as a recreation specialist and program manager for the Fort Campbell MWR-Outdoor Recreation program for the U.S. department of defense. He has been coordinating, planning and facilitating outdoor recreation and adventure programs, including rock climbing, ropes courses, hiking, paddling, mountain biking, youth activities and interpretive classes for both military and civilian communities around Fort Campbell. Kyle also has experience in environmental education, teaching classes to a variety of audiences on ecology, geology, natural resources and more at both Northern Illinois University – Lorado Taft Field Campus and Pennsylvania State Parks.

Additional interests in stewardship and citizen science developed in his previous roles as a trail crew leader for the Student Conservation Association and a citizen science research assistant and teacher/naturalist at the Great Smokey Mountains Institute. Kyle has a B.A. in geography and environmental planning from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

Kyle’s position is the environmental education coordinator for CSB/SJU and community programming at Outdoor U, a position painted with a broad brush for the variety it encompasses. From planning community events like Collegeville Colors and the Maple Syrup Festivals, to mentoring facilitators taking a group on a wilderness trip, to training Outdoor Leadership Center student staff on educating others about safe and enjoyable use of a variety of outdoor equipment, Kyle is an educator and mentor with extensive experience that will be able to facilitate the diversity of roles in his position well.

The simplest way to describe Kyle’s personal drive is to use his own words, “This is the world we live in; let’s learn about it.” The most poignant
aspect of Kyle's character that stood out to me at our first meeting was his sincere curiosity about both the natural world and the different people that inhabit and impact it. He is a man that is apt at conveying his personal connection to the outdoors and encouraging others to do the same. He strives to dispel the growing disconnect between humanity and nature by sharing his experiences and passing his extensive knowledge on to all those he meets. He truly embodies the values of Saint John’s Outdoor University.

Kyle claims that one of his biggest motivations for his environmental interests occurred when he climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine, a mountain even Henry David Thoreau failed to climb (granted Kyle would tell you that Thoreau tried it at a more challenging time of year, but who’s counting). This was one of his first major day hikes that took him above the tree line. This hike proved inspirational to 20-year-old Kyle because it allowed him to really see why people pursue outdoor adventure. These days, Kyle has become the master of day hikes but still loves to explore the world anew with each trip.

As a student facilitator for the Peer Resource Program and an Outdoor U student employee, I was innately curious as to what Kyle’s motivations were for coming to the frozen-tundra of central Minnesota and also what his goals were for his new position. It is precisely the marriage of both outdoor recreation and environmental education that initially piqued his interest. When taking an adventurous group rock-climbing, he wants to be able to tell them about the geology of the rock formations they’re climbing on, potentially opening their eyes to a new connection to the activity – and vice versa.

Kyle has also expressed great interest in the natural history of our area. The sheer variety of possible experiences (i.e. cross-country skiing and maple syrup) and the cherished local history were large draws along with the rich outdoor culture of the area. Kyle, along with his wife and two young children, find community involvement to be integral to their lifestyle. They are a family of park explorers, canoeists, and self-proclaimed car-camping experts.

Kyle’s goals for his new position are well-founded and have me looking forward to his presence even more. Kyle is also passionate about introducing various forms of citizen-science so that all community members can help to study, observe and preserve the Abbey Arboretum for future generations. As a PRP facilitator, I am personally thrilled to have Kyle as our new mentor and organization head. His experience as an educator and his array of hard skills will be a profound resource as we plan wilderness trips, adventure-oriented campus events, and continue facilitating challenge courses for the community. Kyle is looking to inspire creativity and bring a fresh perspective to our programming. Kyle’s position with us college students is twofold in nature; he must assume the roles of both mentor and teacher to all of us. These roles will come naturally to Kyle as he integrates into our family of facilitators.

We are very pleased to introduce Kyle to our team. We look forward to learning from him and teaching him all we have to share. Stop by the Outdoor U offices to introduce yourself to our newest member! We would love to meet you.

JENNY KUTTER

Jenny Kutter is the Outdoor U department coordinator. The story goes that the first time her parents put her in a canoe as a two-year-old, it became the only place she wanted to be this whole vacation (yet she wonders where her three-year-old gets her strong opinions).
3. Outdoor Champions.

There is no better way to celebrate an Outdoor Championship in Minnesota than to do it on a 0°F afternoon in Feb. More than 200 people came out to see the new outdoor gear, play winter games, take a horse-drawn wagon tour of the Sisters’ woods and just plain revel in our victory as the most outdoorsy campus in the USA! Photo by Katherine MaGuire.

4. TriApple On...it’s Hard Core.

The 20th Annual Fruit at the Finish Triathlon is scheduled for Saturday, April 25 - another annual rite of spring, hosted by the Outdoor Leadership Center and Peer Resource Program. A team of Saint John’s Abbey monks is looking to three-peat their domination of the event. Sign up now to participate as an individual or in a team of three! Outdoor U Photo.

5. BEST SNOWSHOE EVER!

Viewers of WCCO television in Minnesota voted Saint John’s Abbey Arboretum as the best place to snowshoe in Minnesota. While this winter’s snowfall has left avid snowshoers wanting for more, those new to snowshoes and those new to the beauty and spirituality of the Abbey Arboretum landscape both had reasons to celebrate the new designation along with the rest of us. Photo by Jenny Kutter.

6. A KIDS-EYE VIEW.

The Outdoor U prep winter exploration class is becoming a fan favorite of our naturalist staff. Building and naming their “snow buddies” (when we have snow!), finding a never-ending supply of “reindeer” tracks everywhere and generally reminding all of us to continue to see the magic of winter in February is the gift we got from the 350 preschoolers who visited us this winter. Photo by Sarah Gainey.

7. A BIRDS-EYE VIEW.

Red-winged blackbirds and Sandhill cranes are returning, Black-capped chickadees are calling, and as we approach peak bird migration in Minnesota, the landscape feels as though it is awakening from a winter slumber. May 16 is the day our birding guides take groups out into the Abbey Arboretum to see (and hear) what they can find. Some years the morning bird count has included more than 120 species! Photo by Jan Gembol (Green heron).

8. Travel On.

A cornerstone of the Peer Resource Program is the wilderness trips offered to CSB/SJU students. Our PRP facilitators have planned and led trips to the Superior Hiking Trail (pictured), the Florida Everglades, the Great Smokey Mountains, and the Guadalupe Mountains this year, helping others get outside and explore! Photo by Tanner Rayman.


High school seniors around the country are now finalizing their journeys to college and beyond. As students choose to attend CSB or SJU, they can also choose to spend the week before orientation floating in the Boundary Waters or rock climbing on the North Shore - a great way to be Collegebound. Outdoor U Photo.
The Maple Syrup Crystal Ball

Ella Gray

Every year our core crew of maple syrupers, the ones who are out at the sugar shack day after day after day, do their best to predict the year’s maple syrup production. Lucky for them, there are others interested in being able to accurately predict maple syrup yields, including a group of biologists from Tufts University who are studying natural phenomena that may account for the variation in syrup production from year to year.

Maple syrup is made from the sap of the sugar maple tree. Trees are tapped to collect sap (2.5% sugar) that is then boiled down, evaporating enough water for the finished syrup to reach the proper sugar concentration (60% sugar). Sap is traditionally collected in spring when daily temperature fluctuations near freezing cause the sap to flow. Spring is also a time when the trees are converting starch to sugar, giving us a sweeter sap that makes more syrup.

Since the amount of sap collected has a big impact on how much syrup gets produced in a given year, a lot of attention has been paid to factors affecting sap flow (such as temperature) and ways to increase the amount of sap collected from the trees (including vacuum pumping systems). Consequently, there is a wealth of data linking environmental phenomena that may account for the variation in syrup production. Although temperature accounts for only about 10% of variation in syrup production, scientists have been making maple syrup at a prep school since he was a student at the prep school more than a half-century ago and has a wealth of (scientifically unproven) observations that may explain what weather and seed production cannot. A good snow pack could make the difference between a productive season and one that warms up too quickly, a good sap run comes whenever there is less help or less free time (like Holy Week), and sugar maples seem to know when the ice goes out on Lake Sagatagan. We can’t tell you how many gallons of maple syrup we’ll make this year, but we can tell you it will be another great season out at the sugar shack!

Ella Gray is the Outdoor U environmental education fellow. Prior to this winter, she admits to knowing only that maple syrup comes from the sap of maple trees. Now she’s ready to fill her tool bag.

Get Involved

SAINT JOHN’S OUTDOOR UNIVERSITY

MINNESOTA NATURAL HISTORY

LECTURE SERIES

Free - Students (any age) & Outdoor U members
$5 - Nonmembers, nonstudents

Tues, Mar 17
Shoreline Restoration. Gregg Berg
Mon, Apr 20
Hibernation, Clark Cotton

Interested in learning more about Minnesota’s natural world? Join us each month during the school year for a lecture and discussion on a variety of natural history topics. Lectures take place indoors. Check our website to see past topics or for updates to the 2013-14 lecture schedule.

MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVALS

Outdoor U Members: Adult - $6 ($3 pre-reg.) | Youth/Child - FREE
Nonmembers: Adult - $11 ($6 pre-reg.) | Nonmember Youth (ages 4-17) - $6 ($3 pre-reg.) Nonmember Child - FREE

Join us for what has become our most popular event of the year! Sap collecting, syrup cooking, horse-drawn rides, demonstrations, and hot maple syrup sundae await the whole family during this fun-filled event! Saint John’s Maple Syrup parties each at the festivals – for scouts, 4H, birthday parties, clubs, or anybody who likes to collect patches! Pre-registration prices available through noon on the Friday before each festival.

FRUIT AT THE FINISH TRIATHLON

“TriAppleOn - It’s Hard Core” 2015
$15 - CSB/SJU students/faculty/staff: Early registration through Apr 5
$30 - CSB/SJU students/faculty/staff: Late registration Apr 6 - 18
$25 - Community participants: Registration through Apr 18

Compete individually or in teams of three in the annual fruit-themed triathlon. Swim 0.75K, run 6K, and bike 23K in this event hosted by the Peer Resource Program, Outdoor Leaders Center, and Outdoor U. Participants receive a t-shirt with this year’s fruit-based slogan and logo.

ANNUAL PLANT & GARDEN TOOL SALE

Saturday, May 9
8:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m. or until sold out
Welcome spring by stockpiling at our annual plant and garden tool sale. Outdoor U members receive 50% off on all items. Memberships are available for purchase or renewal on the day of the sale.

SPRING BIRDING DAY

Saturday, May 16
5:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m., OR 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Optional FREE tour of surrounding area at 1:30 p.m.
Pre-registration preferred.

Spend a morning with Saint John’s Outdoor U, hiking through the Abbey Arboretum with birders during peak migration. Early risers will be stunned by the abundance of birds active early in the day. Coffee and rolls will be served at 8:00 a.m., lunch and completion of the bird lists at 12:00 p.m. An optional tour of birding sites in the surrounding areas will begin at 1:30 p.m.

Vision of Spring

Saint John’s Outdoor University Staff:

NATHAN KROLL
Saint John’s Outdoor U Director
Abbot Attantain Land Manager
SARAH GAINLEY
Assistant Director
Env. Education Coordinator
KYLE RAUCH
Assistant Director
Env. Education Coordinator
JENNY KLETT
Field Coordinator
ESSENTIAL SEASON
ELLA GRAY
Environmental Education Fellow
DAN VOLGE
Abbey Arboretum Forest Technician

Student Staff:

1 OFFICE ASSISTANT
2 LAND LABORERS
7 NATURALIST AIDES
10 NATURALIST AIDES
14 OLC STAFF
38 PRP FACILITATORS

Education Advisory Council:

JOSH RAPP
Elizabeth Crone of Tufts University

MINNESOTA NATURAL HISTORY

� Lectures take place indoors.
� Lectures take place outdoors.

Minnesota Natural History

Lecture Series

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In This Issue...

• Kyle Rauch Joins the Outdoor U Staff..... p. 1-2

• In Pursuit Of........................................... p. 3

• Snapshots.............................................. p. 4-5

• The Maple Syrup Crystal Ball.................. p. 6

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Saint John's Maple Syrup Festivals

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Published Quarterly
Spring 2015
The Program
Saint John’s University

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Saint John’s University
COLLEGEVILLE, MN 56321-3000

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The Maple Syrup Crystal Ball
Snapshots
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