

BREAKING OUT

County offers thrills, spills and chills

New Recreation Department guide details outdoor classes, trips and opportunities

by Mike Foley

STAFF WRITER
foley@greenvillenews.com

For two years, Travelers Rest resident Kimberly Grissop drove her son to Spartanburg to take classes in mountain biking, rock climbing and kayaking.

Now, those outdoors activities are in her backyard.

Greenville County has always had avid kayakers, hikers, cyclists, climbers and more. We're also home to perfect outdoor recreation places, instructors and places to buy equipment. But none of it as readily available in the location.

Enter Christine Boush, newspaperwoman from Spartanburg turned outdoor enthusiast. After she met Gene Smith, the executive director of the Greenville Recreation District, she was soon hired as a consultant to try and bring the mountains to the masses.

"The cool thing about this program is that it answers the question: 'What's out there?'" Boush said. "It's really bringing a lot of diverse groups together." Because many outdoor enthusiasts – and even those who want to try something new – don't



Christine Boush

Kimberly Grissop drops off Wilma's Ledge, a 6-foot, Class IV+ drop, with a strong recirculating hole at the bottom along the Cheoah River near Robbinsville, N.C.

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE

The 15-page Greenville County Recreation Department's "Outdoor Program Schedule" can be downloaded at: <http://gcrd.org/OutdoorProgramSchedule.pdf>

specialize in one sport, they may know about kayaking but not spelunking. Now a new guide puts all of that information in one place.

After surveying more than 600 Greenville County residents in April, Boush discovered what type of trips, instruction and opportunities people

wanted.

"And if we couldn't find it available here, we created it," she said. The effort was exhausting, and exhaustive.

The 15-page guide describes more than 30 outdoor recreation offerings as diverse as tranquil yoga and as adrenalin-pumping mountain boarding. There are trips and classes for youngsters, and the young-at-heart.

Grissop, for one, is thrilled for her 12-year-old son, Jackson.

"He's played soccer and football and other team sports," she said. "And

those are great. But when he's 25, he won't do those anymore. I wanted him to get introduced to sports he can do for a lifetime."

Greenville County isn't alone in reaching out to the great outdoors, said Smith. Charleston and Rock Hill created similar programs and found widespread enthusiasm from residents.

"One theory going around is kids don't have many opportunities to spend time in the woods," he said. "It's still recreation, and it's still fun. We have an amazing amount of resources to do these things within 35-40 min-

utes of Greenville."

This year is a trial run to see if the outdoor activities find a foothold with residents. If so, the opportunities could expand in the years to come, Smith said. "My gut feeling is, this is really going to take off," he said. "People are really receptive to it so far."

Grissop looks forward to spending more time on the water with her son after he takes a weeklong whitewater kayaking class this summer.

■ Staff writer Mike Foley can be reached at 864-298-4744.