ORIENTEERING FOR EVERYONE

It was a grand April weekend for the 1988 annual Kansas Association of Teachers Science (KATS) Camp at Rock Springs Ranch. A number of participants from across the state had just spend four hours of strenuous physical and mental exercise running all over the ranch near Junction City. They were all excited about what they had just experienced. They had just been exposed to a new "sport" called orienteering.

Orienteering is a thinking sport that requires a basic knowledge of map skills, compass use, and topography linked with physical exercise to reach a series of natural or man made check points. The person, or team, which covers the course within the allowed time and reaches the most check points is victorious. The sport originated in European nations where it is very popular. Numerous weekend meets, offering competition from novice to professional, are common in Europe. It has grown into a popular family weekend adventure. Orienteering, recently introduced to the United States, is growing in popularity across the nation. This summer the national orienteering meet is to be held in Colorado.

The participants at KATS were excited about their experience and could see the value of orienteering as a teaching tool. Its multidisciplinary applications included science, geography, and physical fitness. Later that year a couple of orienteering participants, Sam Wine and Karen Engle, designed a local orienteering site. Sam Wine teaches physical science at Madison High School while Karen Engle is the resources for expanded learning teacher in Madison and several surrounding districts associated with the Flint Hills Cooperative. With little effort they had a complete orienteering site where they held their first invitational event in September 1988.

Two basic problems had to be overcome for a functional site. They needed the location itself and the necessary equipment to hold a meet. They discovered that both were fairly easy to surmount meaning anyone can organize their own orienteering course.

The site needs to be easily accessible, offer a varied vegetation and topography, and have boundaries that can be readily located. The local Madison City Lake was an ideal site with public land, access roads, toilets, shelters, and ideal topography. The City of Madison was very open to the idea of more and varied use of the lake. They were granted use of the land for orienteering. The city even mowed lanes and helped build bridges over small creeks to create "trails" through dense brush. They also helped pay for the printing of a map of the area.

A topographic map of the area was necessary so they contacted the Kansas Geological Survey office in Lawrence to find the availability of maps for their area. Unfortunately, the lake was built after the last topographic map of the area was made. Checking with the local university (Emporia State University) produced a graduate student, Marc Duncan, who was
willing to help survey the lake and create a topographic map of the area. An educational experience for the students developed as they helped Marc Duncan in making the map. By late May the site had been surveyed, a map produced, and efforts could be turned to the purchase of equipment.

In late May, Sam and Karen were preparing a proposal to purchase equipment through the local BOE when they received (as every school in Kansas did) a letter about a possible grant available from the Kansas Educational Excellence Program backed by Southwestern Bell Foundation and administered by THE CONFIDENCE IN KANSAS PUBLIC EDUCATION TASK FORCE. This task force was supporting up to $500.00 in grant money per application to institute new and innovative ways to teach. The application form was of reasonable length (one page front and back) and easy to complete. The form can easily be filled out in an afternoon. They proposed a three part budget on the grant application requesting the maximum amount allowed. First was $54.50 for teaching materials, including an instruction tape and books on orienteering. Next was equipment which included control markers, stands, and punches. This equipment allowed them to have 40 check points at a cost of $318.50. Finally, the balance of the money was to print a three color map of the Madison City Lake. A map can be seen on page 14.

Notification over summer vacation that the grant had been approved allowed them to order the materials from Orienteering Unlimited, Inc. of Somers, New York. The owner, Ed Hicks, is a teacher who operates the business on the side. He had discovered orienteering several years ago. He was a great help in ordering the proper materials and promoting the sport.

By the start of school in September 1988, Madison was preparing for their first meet. Before winter weather three invitational events with over 175 participating students from 11 different school districts were held. The response was overwhelming. The students had an enjoyable time while learning how to read and interpret maps, find directions, and exercise their minds and body.

Anyone can organize and hold an orienteering experience for their students with little expense and effort. One can make markers and control sites out of readily available materials. An easy course can be plotted on the school grounds. The Science Education Center on the Emporia State University Campus has commercially produced controls and all the necessary materials available for loan. A number of people across the state, who are orienteering enthusiasts, are willing to give up their time to help promote the sport in Kansas. If more information on orienteering is wanted, the following persons can help:
Organized Madison site and have materials they can loan

Has materials for loan

Sells all the necessary materials. Write for a current catalog

Australian who has been to meets all over the world

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