

Sunapee students get involved in Outward Bound

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SUNAPEE — Ben Bailey, 16, a sophomore at Sunapee Middle High School looked at Hannah Baade's pictures with interest.

Baade, 18, a Sunapee graduate, has just finished a kayaking trip along the coast of Maine with Hurricane Island Outward Bound. Ben was about to leave for a sailing trip up the coast of Maine Saturday, Aug. 6, with the same group.

The two are the first students from Sunapee to participate in the program.

It all began when Randy Richards contacted Tom Coverdale at Sunapee High School, seeking the names of students who might be

up for a little adventure. Richards, a Sunapee native who was an Outward Bound instructor on the West Coast, founded the nonprofit Mountain Spirit Institute, which is focused on facilitating a connection between the self, others and the environment.

Since Outward Bound offers scholarships each year to students in participating school districts — of which there are only about five in New England — Richards was hoping Sunapee could get in on the program. Although the program usually offers only one scholarship during a district's first year, extra money made two scholarships available to Sunapee students.

Fast forward a couple of months and Baade is back from her trip and

Bailey is looking forward to his.

Baade said her 16 days were spent with students from Montana, Florida, Colorado, New York, Maine, Connecticut and New Hampshire. She said an average day consisted of waking up at 4:30 a.m., stretching and running into the water. Some students would make breakfast while others packed up gear and loaded it into the kayaks.

Students then paddled an average of six hours to reach the next island. After unpacking they set up tents and made dinner. Each evening the group would gather for an evening meeting and talk about the highs and lows of the day.

When the group finally reached Hurricane Island in Maine, where the Outward Bound base camp is set, participants learned rock climbing and took ropes courses. Finally, each participant had their "solo": 50 straight hours in the woods alone to reflect on what they had learned and experienced.

"They take your watch away," said Baade. "It's hard. I got really confused." She added that she soon couldn't tell the difference between sunrise and sunset.

Baade spent her free time taking pictures, journaling and drawing the islands she camped on. But this isn't just an adventure vacation — it's a learning experience.

Richards said Outward Bound typically puts people from diverse groups together and watches them as they start out polite, eventually get to the "storming" phase as personalities clash, and then level out and work together.

Richards, who has taught Outward Bound many times, said each group functions differently.

"It's our organization, but it's your course," said Richards.

And Baade said her group soon learned to work as a team. "I didn't think it was possible for 14



DONNA ROBERSON PHOTOS

Above, Ben Bailey, Randy Richards and Hannah Baade. Richards helped connect Bailey and Baade with Outward Bound scholarships. Below, a picture Baade drew while on her trip.



Hannah Baade shows off her pictures from the Hurricane Island Outward Bound trip she recently completed.



strangers to all get along," she said.

She said she learned not to judge people. One fellow student on the trip had perfectly manicured nails, and Baade said she didn't look like she'd be willing to get dirty. However, the girl turned out to be "one of the most motivated and dedicate people."

"Once you're out there, it's a great equalizer," Richards said.

And there were some practical lessons to be learned as well.

One night toward the end of the course, Baade said the students landed on a long beach on an island that houses Maine's only granite quarry.

Since the decision as to where to store the kayaks was left up to the students, they wisely placed them beside their instructors' kayaks and set up camp. Baade was woken in the night by a tentmate who noticed water seeping into the tent.

Because of a full moon, the tide ran higher than normal that night. The women left their tent to wake up the guys in their tent, only to find them half submerged in water and still sleeping.

"Everybody was missing shoes the next day," said Baade.

Then there's the civilization shock.

"It's an interesting experience coming back," said Baade.

When the group stopped for supplies, no one had seen a car for six days. When the supply truck pulled up, Baade could only stare.

Then there was dinner at the base

had to relearn how to use forks and cups after drinking out of water bottles for so many days.

"Many of us ended up spilling water on ourselves," said Baade.

However in the end, it was the car ride home that was the hardest to get used to.

"I thought I was going to throw up," she remembered.

Now back in Sunapee, Baade said she's got a greater sense of purpose and has learned to lighten up a bit since her trip.

Bailey, who is a Star-level Boy Scout, said he's looking forward to his 16-day sailing trip, including learning to sail a large boat — he'll be on a 33-foot pulling boat — and making new friends.

"I love being outdoors," said Bailey.

He said he's also looking forward to the rock-climbing portion of the trip and hopes the Boy Scouts have prepared him well.

Richards said he hopes his company, Mountain Spirit Institute (mountainspirit.org), will be able to facilitate more Outward Bound trips for Sunapee students in the future.

"You talk to someone from Outward Bound and their eyes light up — you instantly see it's made a difference."