

Transcript Episode 9: Rental Manager Heidi Killion

Hello and welcome to the Above the Rest podcast, a podcast all about the 10th Force Support Squadron at the Air Force Academy. I'm your host, Taylor Burnfield, and for this episode, I spoke to Heidi Killion, who is the rental manager at Outdoor Recreation. She shared with us all of the rental opportunities available to the military population as well as exciting programs offered through Outdoor Adventure, Farish Recreation Area, and the Equestrian Center. Thank you for listening and hope you enjoy the show.

Thank you so much for coming up to the studio today.

Thanks for having me, Taylor. We got a great outdoor rec program.

And how long have you been with 10 FSS? Uh, I've worked for Outdoor Wreck for about 10 years and before that I was in sports and fitness. Um, and I'm just so proud of the way Outdoor Wreck like contributes to the mission and the things we have to offer. So, I love being here. So, I learn something new every day.

And so, you mentioned you've been with Outdoor Rec for 10 years. What got you involved in that career field?

Um, just the incredible beauty of Colorado. I think it started when I was here and um yeah, we just uh are very fortunate to live in this beautiful place and so the way outdoor wreck makes it accessible I think was my my hook.

Yeah. Were you in the military? >> No, my husband was in for 30 years though and I think the Air Force is so advanced in uh providing quality of life programs for their military members, taking care of their veterans and retirees. And this outdoor rec program is just one example of how um how we maintain our our troops. So, uh I don't know if Chuck would have stayed in as long if it wasn't such a great family, you know, with it's a good community.

And so, you work in rentals for outdoor rec. So, I'm the outdoor rec rental rental manager, but I started as a wreck. And um what we like to do with the rental program is just to make adventures easy. Um, so if you're looking to make the most of Colorado Springs, if you're here for two years or if you decide to retire here, um, our rental program, we have incredible high-quality products that you can use. Um, and you can either use it to make adventuring in Colorado easy or you can use it to have a graduation party or a, you know, a blowout

birthday party. Um because in Colorado any anytime you're trying to do outdoor gear can be expensive and trying something new can feel intimidating and um sometimes you don't want to commit to hundreds or thousands of dollars of uh uh rental equipment or gear and Outdoor Recre uh we try to make adventure accessible. We keep it affordable and we help build confidence while you're exploring. So, we have um we have an adventure program uh office that does everything from beginning trips to high-end adventures. Um and if you need to rent gear in order to participate in those programs, you can. So, um you can rent camping gear, tents, sleeping pads, cooking equipment, lanterns, and it's perfect for beginners who want a hassle-free trip or if you want to try our good backpacks and see if that's something that you're ready to buy. Um, we have camper trailers, which is a big big bonus in the in the summer. They're pullbehind trailers and they're great for families or first-time campers or if you're taking a longer trip. We've had people go to Glacier National Park with the trip. Uh, you don't have to own it or store it or maintain it. You just rent it and go. Um, and we have good training. So, we've got staff that are um highly qualified, certified in the the programs that they need to be certified in. Um, and also they have great experience in the outdoors. So, they like to share that experience. We can also do something as easy as your backyard or event equipment with tables, chairs, canopies, um, coolers, grills, and bounce houses. So, it can be a squadron event or a birthday party or people often come to us for their neighborhood block parties, which we're really thankful that that's all coming back. The sense of community. Um, and you can rent uh bikes from us, uh, stand up paddle boards, kayaks, sand sleds, which, uh, you just have to appreciate how unique we are being so close to Rocky Mountain National Park and the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Um, and we are we live on this great, you know, our our our home base is such an incredible campus with, you know, 30 miles of trails just on campus. Um, and uh, the Falcon Trail and Santa Fe Trail. Um, and so in addition, we just have great local parks. You know, you can you can rent our stuff and go up to Mueller State Park or um we're really fortunate with our adventure or our outdoor rec programs that we have an off-site recreation area called Ferish and it's just outside of Woodland Park, a 45-minute drive. Um, but it's just for DoD ID card holders, civilians, retirees, uh, veterans, and it has wonderful accommodations like condos, tent camping, a few RV sites, but lakes to fish in that are stocked by natural resources. Uh, on the 24th of May, they're having their kickoff, and it's there's going to be a band and food. Um, and it's in conjunction with the um, Farish Trail Run, which you can sign up for. Um, it's going to be, oh, I guess it's Saturday, May 23rd. Sorry, I misspoke. But there's a 5K, a 10K, and a half marathon up at

Farish. Super fun prizes, and you can go online to register for that. Um, but during the year, Ferish is a great place to be. And we do a really fun fall vulks march up there. So, you can see the aspens, and you're looking right at the back of Pikes Peak. So, it's extraordinary benefit to our military community. Um, of course, locally, we've got Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Um, and these are all pretty low threat. The these are things that are within an hour. You know, Pike National Forest has camping and backcountry experiences. 11mi State Park is great for kayaking, paddle boarding, and fishing. A lot of people go to Pueblo for the same reason, and they'll take our camper down there and just have basically a station, you know, so we feel really good about that.

Do you all have any specials coming up right now for rentals or anything else with Outdoor Recre?

Um, so right now we're in our transition period, so everything we have is a special. Um, but our retail area is is transitioning to summer and so they've got some quality gear that you can purchase. Um, fishing equipment. Um, we are starting to take reservations for the campers. Active duty can reserve 90 days in advance. All other ID card holders can reserve 60 days in advance. Um, we have some outstanding adventure programs that are coming up. Rock climbing, whitewater rafting, mountain biking. Um and uh so yeah, there are several ways to keep in keep in touch with the things that are happening. We've got uh USAFA outdoor wreck uh Facebook and Instagram. We have outdoor adventure program Facebook and Instagram and we have the USAFA support web page and that's how you can find more about us. But we are right off Community Center Drive. We're kind of tucked away. We're the best kept secret. uh right across from the gas station basically in the same complex as the bowling alley and the chapel. Um so come and see us. We're open Saturdays. So even if last minute you want to grab a paddle board and head up to even Palmer Lake or um we're there for you. So 8 to 3. We're just closing up on our winter and I just wanted to mention that we have an a huge winter um over 1500 pieces of winter equipment uh including um uh you skis, snowboards, but also snowshoes and um the trekking uh spikes that you can use, trekking poles. Um so just keep this in mind as you make that transition. This year it was a little bit easier than others where we're already into spring and summer, but um yeah, we just want we want to make sure that you um come to us, think of us first for quality equipment, affordable pricing, access to these incredible locations, and and opportunities to learn new skills. I think that's that's something in a very nice uh less threatening environment where you you know we drive, we have the equipment, we

take good care of you, and it takes the stress out of planning and it replaces it with excitement, which I love. Um and we understand that it's difficult now to make choices with finances and um making experiences count. And so we want to we want to we want to earn your trust. So come and see us and rent gear. um and uh try something new, explore Colorado. We have information tickets and tours which is also part of outdoor wreck and they have um discounted tickets for instate adventures out outofstate adventures like Disney and Universal um but tickets to local attractions like the museum the parolympic museum um and they we are I interestingly uh already selling tickets for season passes for next year's winter so we're always hopeful.

Yeah. So, do you know if people sign up for some of the adventure programs through Outdoor Wreck, are they able to rent equipment to take on those trips?

Yep, absolutely. And we have discounted rates if they're doing a a mountain biking trip. The mountain bikes are are discounted. Um, and I think you went on a mountain biking trip, didn't you? You went Veil to Keystone, which >> Yeah, that was a couple years ago.

Okay. Yeah. So those programs and you can call and get a little bit more information about about how challenging it is, but yeah, using our equipment is great and our guides are good and well trained. So we're really proud of what we can offer.

Yeah. Yeah, it's awesome. Um, you kind of covered everything already, but how can people, you mentioned it a little bit with the website and the social media, but how can people get more information about what you all offer as far as rentals or trips or events you have coming up? Yeah. So really um those social media outlets are the best uh or actually the best is to come in. Come in and see us and talk to us. We we love to let you know what's going on. The marketing puts out an adventure guide um and also their blast magazine which helps with everything. Um so we're we we're also trying to partnership with with the other uh support book uh organizations on base. So, for example, we're working with the library this summer because their summer reading program is plant a seed read and outdoor recreation has garden um beds, raised garden beds for rent in each of the housing developments. So, those are up for rent right now. Um and they're really fun. They're filled with soil. Um they're gated, so you don't have to worry so much about bear and deer. Um, so that'll be a really nice partnership with the library to um work those raised beds and um squadrons can get a raised bed and go down there and dig in the dirt for a little bit and um hopefully come up with some

carrots at the end. Um we're also having Bulks March which is a tradition traditionally a German event where it's a nice hike. So, it's a 5K and a 10K hike. And we're doing that in conjunction with the spring carnival. And the spring carnival that's on the 2nd of May. And that also happens to be um the derby, the Kentucky Derby. So, this year it's going to be a fun spring carnival with Derby Days as the theme. And our Vulks march will kick off uh at 9:00 and then we'll be able to finish and the carnival will be going on at 11:00. Our horses from the equestrian center are going to be out there. They're going to have food trucks and um contests and prizes and lots of fun for the kids.

Yeah. And does outdoor rec have any other involvement with the spring derby besides volksmarch?

Um we are providing equipment. So tables, chairs, canopies, um our utility trailers, that kind of thing. Yeah. Help and set up. I wanted to touch briefly on our equestrian center again. Uh they're having summer camps, so you can call and get some dates. Registration opened uh a or opens April 14th. Um so you can go down there. We also have um many mini ponies down there and some goats. And so it's an it's a really unique part of Yusafa that people should take advantage of. And um I kind of wanted to say so my son-in-law graduated from the academy a few years ago and he didn't really explore the opportunity of outdoor wreck until a couple years in and it was a real game changer when he did it. Um, outdoor wreck really um provides a lot of mindfulness, resiliency, confidence, and um, you know, just just knowing that you can get out and even just take a hike and um, and the opportunities that we have that we can provide um, for socialization, that kind of thing. Um, it's it's it's really lovely. So, we really want to support the cadets and the prep school kids, you know, as they're um working hard um to be a part of the the bigger Air Force Space Force. So, so that's really wonderful. Um and then there are a couple of other things that we're trying this year. We're doing Mount Everest challenge where you hike or run the elevation of Mount Everest, which is 29,032 feet. Uh you register online and there'll be prizes for the people who complete it. and we're doing weekly guided walks. So, that'll be really nice. And they'll publish the walk and the meeting site and take people up and hopefully get everyone to that pinnacle. Uh, so that's specialty finishing mug for that. Um, yeah. So, and we welcome opportunities to just uh work with the community. So, we're doing some programs with um like Wounded Warriors and a couple of other local organizations that reach out to veterans and military families.

Are all your programs available to cadets? Can cadets also participate?

Right. Yep. Cadets prep school. Um there's some just some limitations on veterans uh with our tickets because that's imposed by the the ticketing organization. But otherwise, yeah, we welcome cadets and the uh adventure programmers can also set up special programs for cadetses or people if you have people coming in for the um in the summer, they can do a special whitewater rafting trip or a special intro to climbing trip. Um, yeah, we really want to work with everybody to get them just a taste of it because because once you start with outdoor rec you really uh outdoor recreation opportunities here, you just keep at it recognizing how important it is to your psyche.

And so, well, thank you so much, Heidi. I think we covered everything.

Okay. Thanks.

Really appreciate you coming up here today.

Thanks for having me. It's my pleasure.

Thank you again for listening and be sure to stay up-to-date on everything happening at the support squadron on our website usafasupport.com and our various social media profiles on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.