Learning the Ropes

In the latter part of the 1990s, Don Soderquist, then chief operating officer of Wal-Mart, was distressed by the lack of ethics he saw in corporate America. At the urging of those around him, including members of the John Brown University board of which he was a member at the time, he decided to start an organization for the promotion of ethical business practices. This was the beginning of the Soderquist Business Center. The main goal of the Soderquist Center is to teach ethics through experiential learning. 

One unique way in which the Soderquist Center accomplishes this goal is through the experience offered through its ropes course facility at BaseCamp.

BaseCamp was built in 1999 on the campus of JBU. The ropes course is divided into two parts: low ropes, 18 to 20 inches off the ground and high ropes: up to 50 feet off the ground. The courses can be completed solo or in teams. Through their time on the course, participants learn trust, problem solving and communication.

Many different groups have taken advantage of the BaseCamp experience including corporations, non-profits, at risk students, high school students, and college students from JBU and the University of Arkansas.

The Soderquist Business Center and JBU have a longstanding relationship. “They have an agreement to provide services to each other,” Gary Swyers, senior program manager for the Soderquist Center, explains. Soderquist staff frequently work with the Leadership Scholars Institute program and different departments and divisions in the school. They also offer Resident Life staff training at the beginning of every school year. JBU students who have spent time at BaseCamp speak highly of their experience. Junior Hannah Shelburne is employed at BaseCamp as a belay tech, helping participants put on their harnesses and get onto the ropes course. Shelburne says she appreciates the unique element of the facility being “aimed at adults”. Her favorite part is “seeing them get out of their comfort zone and grow through that.”

Resident Assistant Kristin Pankey recalls her time at BaseCamp during training for the Resident Life staff at the beginning of the fall semester. “The individual staff initiatives were helpful for Mayfield. We got to see how each of us functions under pressure, also how we communicate with each other as a whole team.” Pankey also says that the larger Resident Life team benefited from completing the tasks together, “It was good to see that each of us plays a role, that requires a lot of give and take, patience and understanding.” During their training, the staff participated in activities such as the trust fall, which requires a member of the team to fall backwards into their teammates’ arms from a height of six to seven feet off the ground.

Adding to the challenge of the initiatives, if a member of the team made a mistake, they had to do things such speak in a Russian accent or shout out facts about their home state every thirty seconds for the remainder of the activity. Since its beginnings, BaseCamp has provided a unique atmosphere for the Soderquist’s clients and University students and staff. Through the hands-on experience participants gain valuable knowledge about themselves and others and grow in character traits that help them succeed in life.

Milestones

December 9, 1999
JBU hosts the Siloam Springs Memorial Hospital Foundation second annual telethon. The event raised over $55,000 for new hospital equipment and renovations

December 4, 1981
The men’s soccer received a bye which allowed them to skip the NCCAA regional tournament and go straight to the national tournament.

December 2, 1950
The John Brown University Cathedral Choir participates in its sixth Mutual broadcast, a radio program featuring outstanding choirs from around the country.
**ECHOES OF THE PAST**

Rolls Add Flavor to Campus Life, Students Consume Them in Quantity

January 31, 1972

John Brown University’s Hall of Fame will soon be adding 3 new members to its roster. Thursday night at 8:00 in the Mayfield rec room, surrounded by pitchers of ice water, encouraging friends and 120 buttered rolls, 3 men ate, stuffed and swooned their way to fame. Rich Allen, instigator of the contest, Dan Capehart and Tim Pruitt were the contestants in this buttery bout.

The crowd supervised closely for cheating as each of the Olympians dug into his first 20 Parker House rolls. (Boy, will the Pillsbury Doughboy be burned about that!) Preparations for the undertaking included Capehart skipping lunch and dinner, Allen skipping dinner and Pruitt enjoying his regular three meals a day. At one point, while casually chewing on a roll, Pruitt commented he was just doing it for fun. To this, Allen quipped, “Well, what do you think I’m doing it for, my health?”

Nine o’clock came and the count stood as follows: Allen-25 rolls down, Capehart-24 rolls down and Pruitt-37 rolls down. And so the evening “rolled” on. The crowd was growing nauseous when Allen broke the spell by verbally composing his next letter home: “Dear Mom, I’ve just come into a lot of “dough”!

One might think it dull to sit and eat rolls to the point of bursting, but the contestants thought otherwise. How could you be bored when you never whether you would be eating a rare, medium or well done roll from one bite to the next? (Many thanks go to Sherry Brewer for her kitchen finesse.)

The contest came to a premature close due to the lack of rolls. Pruitt, former winner of watermelon and chewing gum contests, stood victorious- the proud masticator of 45 rolls. Allen was second with 40 rolls down and Capehart plodded about with 31 rolls rumbling in his innards. (Mathematicians in the reading audience will kindly disregard the final statistics as compared to the beginning ones!)

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**Insights**

*Works from John Brown, Sr.*

What the immediate future has in store none of us can know. One thing sure, everyone of us should push the battle for God and Christ and righteousness until the final culmination comes to pass. The same admonition that Christ gave to his disciples just before the ascension (Acts 1:7) is just as applicable today as then——“It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father hath put in His power,” and thank God the command there given is just as binding today as then (Acts 1:8) “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Oh children of the King everywhere, our business is to push the battle; and let me assure you that if our Lord delays His coming and there is yet to come a mighty revival that is to sweep the nations and turn them back from the abyss, that revival will come because God’s people found their way back to the old place of petition and intercession.”

Excerpt from “Upon This Rock”