

# "Doc" earns kudos for camp

By Anita L. Sherman

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Photos by Jamie Haverkamp

If you've lived in this area long enough and had a broken or injured bone or muscle, chances are your path may have crossed with Dr. David M. Synder, an orthopedist who for many years made his professional home at Blue Ridge Orthopedics.

**HEALTHY CHOICE (at right)** : Dr. Dave Synder, who founded Verdun Adventure Bound, was honored as the '2010 Non-Profit Organization of the Year' by the Culpeper Chamber of Commerce at their awards banquet in November. Synder is shown here as he is about to give one of his inspiring "Doc Talks" to that day's campers.



If you're a veteran, and particularly a Navy man, you may have been fortunate to hear Synder speak at a Veteran's Prayer Breakfast or other event honoring past and present serviceman. Synder can recount with confidence, serenity and grace his solo moment removing a live grenade from a soldier's shoulder.



**YOU CAN DO IT (left)** : Kettle Run freshman Randy Bardell, 15, reaches for the hands off his classmates as others lift him up a wooden Challenge Wall during an exercise at Adventure Bound on November 22.

Although technically retired from his professional and military paths, Synder has been walking a different road for several years — one that has added counselor, innovator, mentor, inspirer and close friend to countless others who fondly know him as "Doc."

On nearly 60 acres in Rixeyville, Synder founded and runs Verdun Adventure Bound where over 3,000 youth were served in 2010. From special needs groups to Boy Scout Troops and students from public, private and homeschooled settings, Doc's unique brand of programs teach interdependence and a connection to the earth. Bonding is emphasized and campers come away feeling energized.

Primarily serving the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier and Rappahannock, the reputation of Verdun is spreading. "We're getting calls from other counties as well," said Synder when he attended the annual Culpeper Chamber of Commerce banquet and awards ceremony. Synder greeted many with a warm smile and outstretched hand at the November gathering.

**UP AND OVER (right)**: Fourteen-year-old Marvin Robinson grabs hold of Chris Hamilton's hand as he is pulled over the water wheel. Hamilton, 15, and Robinson were part of a freshman group from Kettle Run High School in Warrenton. The group of students was supervised by Challenge Course Facilitator Moose Cronin.



When Hospice of the Rapidan Executive Director Kathy Clements took the stage to announce the winner of the 2010 Non-Profit Organization of the Year, Synder turned his attention to the podium.

"It's his outstanding work with youth and continuing service to this community and others that has earned Verdun Adventure Bound and Dr. Dave Synder this year's recognition," said Clements as the audience cheered and an elated Synder made his way to the front.

Synder's ease with a microphone is immediately apparent and he seizes any opportunity to spread his message of personal growth and the challenge of living fully. Synder's passion for the survival of today's teens in an often troubling world is a message that resonated with many in the room that evening.

His Verdun Adventure Bound programs emphasize critical thinking and problem solving — whether scaling a wall, flying on a zip line or planting a garden. Their latest project is an ever expanding Native American Village with focus on native arts, culture, personal responsibility and respect for all living things.

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.*

**--Excerpts from Nelson Mandela's Inauguration Speech**

"Doc Talks" energize participants to think about their personal philosophies and attitude toward life. Those messages are echoed throughout the day as challenges are presented and solutions celebrated.

Synder shared more of his thoughts. "Check out Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech," he urged those in the audience and again to that group at his table. "It's powerful."

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