



Guide Marie Stringer teaches Rob Gibson how it's done from a safe height.

Canopy tours in nearby Lula for nature lovers, adventurers

by Rod Gibson
Special to the White County News

Swinging among the treetops for three hours and crossing suspension bridges might seem a recipe for terror to a 71-year-old who has a fear of heights.

However, I had a blast and would do it again in a heartbeat.

Recently, my wife Kathy and I, along with several other relatives, joined in at a "zipline" place called North Georgia Canopy Tours, which opened last spring in Lula, about 35 minutes from Cleveland.

Ziplines are becoming increasingly popular and popping up all over the country.

At the Lula location, there are two-hour and three-hour tours. The two-hour tour costs \$69 and the three-hour is \$89.

The three-hour tour consists of 12 ziplines to which you are attached by a special harness, clip and two safety lines. The ziplines, a half-inch steel wire, range up to 70 feet high and more than 700 feet long. You whip across them at speeds from 25 to 30 mph.

Riders are asked to arrive a half-hour early so they can participate in a training session in which they are close enough to the ground to just about stand. They learn how to slide and stop — always a nice option rather than slamming into a tree trunk.

Instructors teach students a number of techniques, including how to put on the emergency brake by using both hands to hold the wire.

It seemed a nice touch that they played Native American drums just as I was ready to take off on the first line — until I realized there were no drums... just the beating of my heart.

Halfway through the tour, I'd even take a hand-off to wave and was enjoying the sights. Others closed their eyes on a ride.

As soon as a rider lands on the platform, a long safety line is taken from the cable and attached to a wire on the platform so that even if one were to step off, he wouldn't get hurt. The guides are obsessive about safety lines.

Amazingly, my usual height-related panic was not a companion. Instead, exhilaration became my co-pilot and I became to feel like Tarzan.

I was relieved to discover there were wires above the suspension bridges to which my safety harness was clipped, as well as two sturdy wire handrails. Marie, the guide, walked backward and coaxed me to the other side.

It's not for everybody. Those who weigh more than 250 pounds are not allowed. Neither are those who are younger than 10 and weigh less than 70 pounds. There is some hiking up moderate hills and steps to climb for two towers.

Thank heavens the rappelling came toward the end, when the faith in the guides has become almost a religious experience. Otherwise, I don't think I would have been able to lean out in space holding a rope, step off the



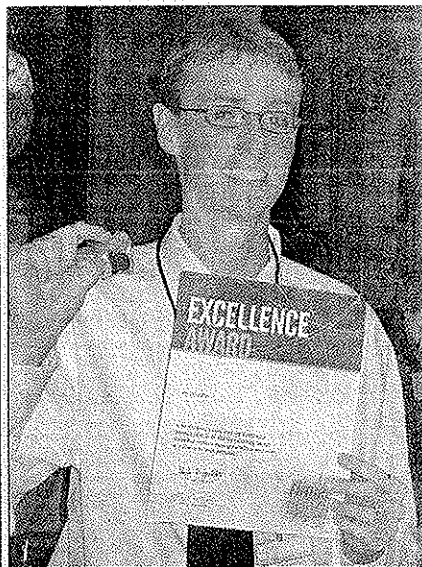
A group crosses one of the two suspension bridges.

platform, turn myself around and lower myself to the ground via the rope.

I probably still will never ride a Ferris wheel or an open ski-lift chair, but I may take on a roller-coaster after this.

After all: "Me Tarzan!" For more information about North Georgia Canopy Tours, call 770-869-7272.

Rod Gibson is a retired news reporter now living in Cleveland who worked for major newspapers in the U.S., including the Chicago Tribune and The Miami Herald.



White County High School student Cody Goss placed in the top 10 of the pathophysiology competition at the National HOSA Conference.

Goss places in top 10 at national health competition

White County High School student Cody Goss recently returned from Orlando, Fla., and the National HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America) Conference as a top-10 winner in pathophysiology.

More than 10,000 high school students across the United States spent June 22-26 competing in various healthcare science categories showcasing their skills

and knowledge of the medical field.

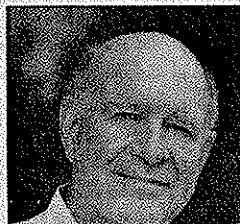
Cody, son of Tracy and Renee Goss, won first place at the Georgia HOSA competition in March, earning him the right to compete at the national level.

The pathophysiology competition tested students' knowledge of all disease processes, symptoms and types of treatment of the body systems.

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Farewell & Thank You



Chestatee Regional Hospital announces the retirement of Dr. David Conaway.