

THE AXE AND SAW

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Grove City College Outing Club

www.gccoc.org

Julianna Jacobs, Lily Widmyer

A Message from the Secretaries:

And just like that, it's time to trim the Christmas tree and get together with family and friends for the Christmas season, with memories of finals and studies in the rearview mirror! As the semester closes, we would love to share our Outing Club stories with you.

This semester has been filled with stargazing, spelunking, and shifts working concession at the college football games (hats off to our Vice President, Erien Schwabb, for managing concessions this semester)! In addition to awesome efforts put forth by our VP, our President Sam Rees led us fearlessly, tackling the task of Pig Roast. Thanks to all the alumni who made it out to the cabin for Pig Roast this fall!

Us Outing Clubbers have had a blast amidst all the festivities and adventures this semester, making sure to never let college interfere with our education. We hope that you enjoy this latest edition of the Axe and Saw, and we sincerely wish you and yours a very blessed and Merry Christmas.

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Letter From the President:

Sam Rees '26, Entrepreneurship

I guess this is my farewell address. I would like to say it feels like just yesterday that I was elected from my treasurer position, but it actually feels like forever ago. I think too many people these days have never learned to make things last. I hear all the time from other students, especially other seniors saying, "Wow summer went by so fast, wow the semester felt so quick, wow I feel like this class just started." If this is you, I've gotta say, you're doing it wrong. One thing I've learned in the past couple of years is to take it all in. Make each day count and make all parts of life memorable and you can make a year feel like an eternity.

The Outing Club is a great group to do this with. It's a place where you can slow down and adventure at the same time. Good friends, good food (mostly), and good air make for a long healthy life, in time as well as in perspective. So, look at life with ambition and wonder. Climb that next hill and cross that next river. That is the Outing Club way. I'll see you all for one more semester, it has been an honor serving.

Cabin News:

Mark Place '77, Alumni Cabin Manager

Summer Alumni, friends, and family outing

Once again, a small but mighty crew tackled some interesting projects in addition to the usual yard and drain work, maintenance

work on the water, mowers, and chainsaws etc.

In addition to dropping and stacking multiple widow makers and a couple of standing dead for later retrieval, a completely new roof was designed and built under the leadership of ace carpenter Matt. While the rest of the Men's outhouse is suspect the roof should be good for a few decades.

Unfortunately, the kitchen was found in desperate need of a 4 day deep clean. The grill was also found to be frankly a mess. The arrival of several active club officers allowed for a great conversation on the Cabin Ready program, and a follow-up visit to a club meeting early in the semester by past president Mark Fair and me to participate in a roundtable on cabin TLC.

All in all, a great outing. Special thanks to Sue Knechtel for again keeping us well fed and hydrated and the willing hands that joined together.

Hope you will join us in 2026!

Pump talk: Just a reminder that the pump and line to the spring is/should be drained from Thanksgiving until the frost is out of the ground in the Spring. You can haul water from the spring for small groups or close the valve under the sink, prime the pump and after about 100 strokes and fill up pots or jugs for a larger group. Please immediately reopen the valve under the sink to allow the line to drain again. If the pump is extremely hard to pump, please do not force it and let me know so it does not get damaged again. The pump is very costly.

Lights: There were some complaints about the gas light mantles flaring and sooting up. The lights are designed to operate with the valve 100% open. After some testing the suspicion was that the natural gas regulator might need adjusted as getting gas at the cabin is much different than a typical urban gas system. Our gas provider responded promptly and while the pressure met the applicable standards, replaced the entire regulator. We tested several lights with the new regulator and they performed great with no flaring. If flaring is observed, please let me know.

Mowing: Thanks to Dr. Dave Gordon long “alleged faculty advisor” for again handling the majority of the mowing this year. A mowed yard is an important part of our visual security system as folks know someone visits regularly.

An Illusion of the Cave (Spelunking in Laurel Caverns):

Cade Voller '25.5, Cabin Manager

I had been wanting to take the club down to Laurel Caverns since the previous year. Being the largest cave in Pennsylvania, it is also the largest bat hibernaculum in the north-eastern US. That means they close the cave during the bat hibernation season and only open the cave once the bats have left. This semester, I acted quickly to get us in before closing time, and a group of 9 students (and 1 friend from home) ended up day-tripping down to Laurel Caverns on Labor Day.

We donned our headlights and hard hats and descended into the cave like true spelunkers. Our guide, Roland, told us about the rock formations around us, imparting his wealth of knowledge about how the cave was formed. He asked us if we’d noticed that it was difficult to tell how much time had passed since we’d left Earth’s surface. He explained that time was an illusion of the cave. Later, we made our way into a sloped passageway with a ramp. He produced a marble, placed it on the ramp, and it proceeded to roll UP the ramp! Roland explained that the slope of the hill was another illusion of the cave. As we continued to navigate the cave, it became apparent that the cave was our only reality, and anything we believed to await us outside the cave (school, our families, etc.) was simply an illusion of the cave. We never made it out of that cave, but I write this in hopes that someone will come to rescue us...although I fear my audience is but an illusion of the cave.



Cade Voller in green shirt fifth from left, and his spelunking adventurers!

New Member Outing

Isaac Eide '28

This year's New Member Outing was a great start to the semester and an excellent introduction to Outing Club for all. The weather was perfect, allowing for all sorts of activities throughout the afternoon. Many enjoyed hammocking, climbing trees, and chasing frogs that littered the creek from the spring box.

Towards evening as the temperature began to drop a large group formed on the porch where Sage and Erien brought along their guitars and played songs for us while people would join in with singing and chatting. Dinner was a giant batch of spaghetti and meatballs with garlic bread and vegetables. Despite only being on campus for a few weeks many of us were very grateful for a meal that was not boiled or cooked without flavor as the cafeteria meals seem to be.

After the meal a bonfire was lit and everyone enjoyed smores and good company accompanied by more singing, laughter, and a few stories as well. After a while Sam and I grabbed the kerosene lanterns for the night hike to the overlook.

The trail had several fallen trees which gave us some parkour to go with our hike and led to some club bonding, with those there helping each other over the logs. When we finally reached the overlook, we got to enjoy God's beautiful creation even more than we already were with a wide view of the stars above and the lights of Kennerdell below.

By the end of the night, everyone was tired in the best way, and more than a few people

said they were excited to pursue membership. Overall, it was simple, genuine fun—and a great start to a new year.

Fall Break Trip

Sam Rees '26

It took a while to drive all the way to the Black Forest in Germany, but we made it okay, if not a bit waterlogged. I was worried after a grueling climb the first day, but as we wore on the terrain got easier and the weather warmer. Our group, consisting of Cade Voller, John Remaniak, Connor Stoltzfus, Dr. Stauff, and I, spent the first night in a valley of golden leafed trees. It was a beautiful spot, though it took a spell to warm up in the morning with those mountains blocking the sun.

On our second day we went through some very beautiful pine forests. Much debate was had on if we should camp there in the glen rather than having a shorter trek the next day. We ended up continuing on, and on the 3rd day we had a great time collecting Tea Berries. The most amazing part of the trip was frankly our member John, he was in the middle of a religious fast at the time, and as such managed to complete the whole trip, carrying a heavy pack, over bad terrain, leading the group fast, while eating nothing but a few loaves of bread he had brought.

Pig Roast

Bryan Wasnesky '28

The Grove City Outing Club welcomed alumni, students, and friends back to the

cabin this fall for our annual Pig Roast, one of our long-standing traditions to celebrate fellowship, outdoors adventure, and the decades old community of the club.

The weekend was packed with work, preparing the pig and chickens on the spits and the 26 hours during which the pig itself was roasted. Challenges with temperature arose as usual, but when it came time to feast, everyone pulled through. Held outdoors as always, the event truly brought together several generations of people for a day of food, conversation, and shared stories. By the time the meal was finished, there was minimal meat remaining, though Sage, the now Vice President of the club, took the liberty of running around with the pig head which eventually ended up on its own stake in the ground.

Beyond just the food, Pig Roast serves as a proper snapshot of the club's enduring mission. Alumni reflecting on past trips, leadership experiences, run-ins with campo, and the formative role the club played in their experience at the college. Active members shared how those same values continue to shape trips, training, and weekly meetings. As always, active members loved hearing the wild stories from even just a few years ago, and of course the saga's Tom always seems to have read for us.

The Outing Club would like to express gratitude for the hundreds of alumni, families, and others who turned out and supported this event. Things like Pig Roast notably reinforce and rekindle the continuity of the club across the decades, and help to remind students that they are part of

something bigger than a single semester, year, or even college experience.

As the roast wound down, conversations lingered around the fire, effectively highlighting what Pig Roast represents: a tradition grounded in the spirit of the club — community in outdoor experience (and not burning down the cabin). Thank you again to all alumni, families, and friends that came out to support and enjoy Pig Roast, we look forward to seeing you again next year!

Halloween Party

Gabe Rogers '28

We walked down the dark path with a mist in the air, dimly lit with our LED headlamps low on battery. I knocked on the door of the cabin but no one answered, thankfully one of us had a key and we entered. The cabin was weirdly warm, as if someone had been there recently, but we found no one. There were a bunch of pumpkins bought a day before so we started carving while we waited for the rest to arrive. I carved a pumpkin with a horrified face, while Tim was somehow able to carve away so much of his pumpkin that the stem was practically floating over the base. When the others finally arrived, Sam said, "What happened to mine?" He had carved a pumpkin for practice the day before, but it was gone. After looking around the cabin, we saw a faint orange glow out of one of the windows. Running out to investigate, we saw his pumpkin up in flames atop the shoulders of the headless horseman. His pumpkin head snapped around like an owl to see us, before riding off into the night. We

stood in silence for a while before bursting out in laughter. His face was a crudely carved Little Caesars logo. Sam said, "Remind me not to carve pumpkins when I'm hungry."

Camping and Stargazing

Carolyn Krenzel '26

We set out on a sunny autumn afternoon, following the twists and turns of Pennsylvania roads around hills of red, orange, and yellow. The best part of the drive up to Cherry Springs State Park wasn't the view, but the fresh breeze billowing through the car windows. The air even smelled different, something about the outdoor air is just better than on campus. We made a brief stop before entering the campground for Cade and his posse to find a geocache. We talked briefly with the rangers to find our permits for the campsite and they warned us that drinking and doing drugs was not allowed, us, Grove City students, our reputation precedes us! After setting up the tents and starting a fire for dinner the rangers came by again and warned us about a bear that visits the campsite every night.

As we cooked dinner the stars peaked out through the trees, and I have never seen stars as well as I did that night. After eating a delicious dinner of hot dogs and mountain pies we set up the telescope in the stargazing field. We got some great pictures of the craters on the moon and we even spied the rings of Saturn, which was amazing! We stayed out there till around 1 AM and the telescope fogged up from dew. As we walked back to our tents we heard a low

growling, it got louder as we approached, it was coming from inside one of the tents! Luckily that wasn't one of our tents, it was a neighbor snoring, and we slept without event. We had to wake up early to pack up the campsite but the stargazing that night will forever remain in my dreams.

Big Concrete Tube

Connor Stoltzfus '28

After our 3-hour drive on the road, we finally made it to our destination, another road but in worse condition. The abandoned PA turnpike has two tunnels along it, the one by where we parked is a mile long and the other is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long.

When we got to the entrance, we climbed up 3 stories to the ventilation area. It was cool, and while graffiti kinda sucks, old metal fans covered in random bright colors did look really cool. So, we climbed around there looking for geocaches and stuff.

We went into the ventilation tunnel that spans above the entire main tunnel and pondered into the abyss as to whether we should walk through the whole way up there. It was a couple feet taller than myself, so Cade and I decided to walk through it. We very quickly realized that the ceiling was slowly sloping down towards us, which was concerning.

Not too much further, it stopped sloping but the height of the tunnel was a little more than 5ft, which sucked, because the two of us were a bit taller than that. So we walked in a hunched stupor for about a mile, but it was cool. Overall it was fun, we

unfortunately didn't have a very large group going so I'll probably try to plan a repeat trip again some time in the future. Expect another article in a year or two!

Caving in Harlansburg, 23 Years Later

Cade Voller '25.5, Cabin Manager

December 7, 2025. 10 club members traveled out to Harlansburg for some spelunking action. It was a frigid winter day – bitterly cold and very cloudy. We arrived at the mouth of the cave around 2 pm. Staying in one large group, we moved at a decent pace through the cave, led by our fearless guide, Aron. Everyone had a great time- especially those of us who had been caving previously. We managed to escape with no flashlight casualties, thankfully. The mud was plentiful and everyone exited the cave nice and brown. Fortunately, there were no mishaps - only minor scratches and head bonks. This trip will be made again!

You thought that was the end of the story...not yet! Let's go back to Aron for a minute. Aron is the Preserve Manager of the Harlansburg Cave. He works with the Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy, a group that strives to acquire and preserve caves. MAKC purchased Harlansburg Cave in 2002 and gated it in 2003 to protect it from vandals. I believe that the last time the Outing Club went through the cave was back in September 2002. I found a story about it in the Fall 2002 edition of the *Axe and Saw*, which is where I got the inspiration for the trip. I implore you to go find that edition on the website and read the story that Ben Grubb '04 wrote about it. It

was a joy to continue the tradition after more than 20 years. That is all. Signing off!



A very muddy group of Outing Clubbers after spelunking in Harlansburg!

That's all folks! Thanks for reading this edition of the *Axe and Saw*, and have a very Merry Christmas!