



UNH Senior's Internship Brings Outdoor Recreation To Army Base

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UNH outdoor education student Charlie Manganiello, top left, leads soldiers and their families on a snowshoeing trip in the Colorado Rockies. Manganiello is an intern at U.S. Army base Fort Carson in Colorado, where he leads outdoor recreation trips.

Caption: Courtesy of Charlie Manganiello.

DURHAM, N.H. – As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wage on and stress levels on military bases dominate headlines, a University of New Hampshire student is doing his part to bring a some much-needed outdoor fun to one military community. Senior Charlie Manganiello arranges rock climbing, skiing and mountain biking trips for soldiers, officers and their families as an intern at the Fort Carson Army base in

Colorado.

Manganiello, a major in the outdoor education option of kinesiology and resident of Bristol, is an intern in Fort Carson's Adventure Programs & Education, or APE, a program of the United States armed services' Family, Morale, Welfare & Recreation branch. Only a few bases – those in locations rich with outdoor recreation amenities – have APE.

"We're here to provide a healthy alternative activity on the base," says Manganiello. "Our goal is to help educate these people to do these outdoor activities and do them safely."

The rewards of leading military personnel on trips in the spectacular Colorado Rockies have gone beyond the obvious, Manganiello says. He's seen first-hand the positive impact outdoor recreation can have on a population that experiences daily stress and loss. One of his "repeat" customers is a former soldier who works at the base hospital; his wife, an officer, was killed in action two years ago. "Through our program, he is able to keep his kids active in the outdoors and able to bond with them through our various activities," Manganiello says.

"These recreational programs become even more important as we have more and more people coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan," says Laurie Gullion, clinical assistant professor of outdoor education and internship coordinator. All outdoor education students must complete a two-credit internship to graduate.

Manganiello, an avid skier and rock climber who hiked the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail in 2008, is comfortable leading and teaching outdoors skills. This internship, he says, has boosted his administrative abilities as well. "There's a lot of work inside before you can get out and have fun," he says. Manganiello has also developed curriculum and policy for the program, which Gullion notes has helped him grow from being an instructor to being a manager.

With clients ranging in age from 19-year-old enlisted soldiers to 50-year-old officers or retirees, Manganiello, who is 23, has been challenged to work with adults rather than children.

Kids, he says, are more likely to follow without question. "And you can't feed adults PB and J and ramen noodles," he adds.

Manganiello had no previous experience with the military until this three-month internship. He is paid a princely \$600 per month and lives in a decommissioned FEMA trailer on base. As a civilian employee of the Department of Defense, he doesn't wear a uniform and admits that he and his colleagues "are the grungiest people on base."

Manganiello, who will graduate in December, credits his time at Fort Carson with diversifying his career goals. "I'm interested in working with the military again," he says. "This is an amazing program, and therapeutic programs like these are the new wave of the military."

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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Photographs available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2009/nov/24intern.jpg

Caption: UNH outdoor education student Charlie Manganiello, top left, leads soldiers and their families on a snowshoeing trip in the Colorado Rockies. Manganiello is an intern at U.S. Army base Fort Carson in Colorado, where he leads outdoor recreation trips.

Caption: Courtesy of Charlie Manganiello.

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2009/nov/23manganiello_02.jpg

Caption: UNH outdoor education student Charlie Manganiello (left) helps a military employee practice a different kind of shooting in the Colorado Rockies, as an intern leading outdoors trips at Fort Carson.

Caption: Courtesy of Charlie Manganiello.