

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah — Nature center bringing in more treetops adventure with a new sky-flying tour

Written by Christopher Nagy Daily Press & Argus
Jan. 30

livingstondaily.com



Emily Mack of Garden Gate Montessori School rides the zip line at the Howell Conference and Nature Center. The nature center is expanding its zip-line offerings this spring. / GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

AT A GLANCE

The Howell Conference and Nature Center is six miles south of Interstate 96 at 1005 Triangle Lake Road in Marion Township. The facility is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and offers a variety of upcoming programs, attractions and events, including the Wild Wonders Wildlife Park. For more information on the programs and activities at the nature center, visit <http://www.howellnaturecenter.org>.

Lovers of outdoor adventure in the spring and summer months may feel beaten down, holed up and held hostage as winter continues to slowly drag its feet.

However, Dick Grant has a message for you: Fear not, ye hibernating heroes!

Hang in there because the cure for what ails you is only a few short months away, according to the executive director of the Howell Conference and Nature Center.

The facility at 1005 Triangle Lake Road in Marion Township is building upon its two existing zip lines with the addition of up to five more lines to create a seven-line zip tour that is scheduled to launch this spring.

“This is something that’s been on the books for about a year or so,” Grant said. “Something that’s a new era or a new part of the industry is something called zip tours or canopy tours.”

Basically, it’s a series of zip lines that takes sky-flying swashbucklers from point A to point B, from point B to point C, from point C to Point D, and so on, he explained. The result creates a circuit that brings the adventurer back to the point where he or she started the tour.

“Many times, they’ll go across rivers or lakes or ravines, depending on what kind of land you have,” Grant said.

Canopy tours are a series of zip lines generally connected by aerial bridges to platforms where the “tourist” is harnessed to the steel cable without interruption.

The Howell Conference and Nature Center will have a zip tour, which will be a series of zip lines where the participants disconnect from the cable to walk on the ground several dozen yards from line to line.

“And perhaps there’s some interpretive programming along the way,” Grant said. “This is something that’s going to be in an area of the nature center that is more forested.”

A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS OF CREATION

Zip lines have enjoyed years of growing popularity in the United States.

“They’ve really been a popular item for probably the last 10 years for our company,” said Billy Simpson, a lead builder and inspector for Universal Ropes Course Builders Inc.

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