


9-28-2016

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Recommended Citation

Weinstein, Mark D., "Cardboard Canoes Hit the Water for Homecoming Weekend" (2016). *News Releases*. 328.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/news_releases/328

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2016

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Cardboard Canoes Hit the Water for Homecoming Weekend

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – The air might be turning colder, but for Cedarville University students competing in the annual cardboard canoe challenge, swimming is still a distinct possibility.

In what has become a popular homecoming weekend tradition, the 22nd annual cardboard canoe race brings the campus community together to watch how students navigate Cedar Lake in their cardboard canoes. The event this year will be held on Friday, Sept. 30, at 3 p.m.

Contestants are given a 40-foot-by-44-inch roll of cardboard and 100 meters of 48-millimeter-wide packing tape to create a canoe able to carry two people across the lake. Following the race, the 16 fastest teams that cross successfully are invited to enter a demolition derby on the lake.

“The process of building and racing the canoes helps engineering students apply the design concepts they’ve learned in their first month of classes in a practical way,” said Dr. Robert Chasnov, dean of the school of engineering and computer science.

Last year 24 of the 32 engineering teams that competed crossed the lake successfully.

“For engineering students, the purpose of the cardboard canoe challenge is to practice the scientific method of building, testing and implementing a design,” said Ryan Merk, a freshman mechanical engineering student from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Although the event centers around the engineering program, students from other academic disciplines can compete in a separate race.

“We enjoy competing with and against other departments, and there’s a friendly competitiveness to the challenge,” said Josh Michael, director of library public services. The library has won multiple department titles.

For Merk, the canoe project is laying the groundwork for future engineering projects. “This project is teaching me how to work with a team to create a common design, and I look forward to contributing to one of Cedarville’s award-winning engineering competition teams.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.