

# Orienteering workshop attracts outdoorsmen

By CHLOE WERTZ

A little rain didn't stop first-time orienteers from enjoying the beginners workshop, hosted by Forbes State Forest, on Saturday, July 30.

Donna Stolz of Shaler heard about the orienteering workshop on Meetup.com.

"I've know about orienteering for a long time and I've been wanting to try it," she said. "This was my first opportunity."

Kathy of Apollo wanted to learn more about using a compass.

"I started backpacking about a year ago and I love it, but I'm clueless about directions and navigation. I thought this workshop could help me."

Orienteering is a sport that involves navigation with a map and compass in a forested area such as Forbes to a series of destinations. The orienteer is provided with a map and clues as to where the checkpoints- known as controls- are located. The sport originates from early 20th century Sweden. It was used as a navigation drill for military troops and eventually became a popular recreational activity throughout Europe. It is referred to as "The Thinking Sport."

Orienteering is a sport that "offers physical and mental aspects to participants," according to Western Pennsylvania Orienteering Club President Jim Wolfe, who ran Saturday's event.

"Orienteering is for anyone," he said. "Many play competitively and try to finish a course as quickly as possible by running. Others like to take their time and will walk an entire course. We've had participants at events as young as 10 years old and as old as 90. It's a lifelong sport, similar to bowling or golf."

The sport is also inexpensive to play.

"All you need is a good compass," Wolfe added.

Wolfe, who has been orienteering for 38 years, founded the club in 2003 after Indiana University of Pennsylvania Orienteering Club disbanded. The primary goal of the club is to provide local and public orienteering events for people to learn about the sport. They provide instruction to school students, scouts, outdoor groups and college students.

"Most of the events we host are filled with non-members," Wolfe said. "We use events and beginners workshops as a means of promotion to get people more interested."

For the beginners workshop at Forbes, Wolfe set up one course for participants. He provided participants with a map and compass and explained how to read the map, locate controls and use the compass. At an event, Wolfe and other club members will set up three to five courses at a park, catering to different levels of experience and attracting a variety of participants: WPOC members, Boy Scouts and girl Scouts, families, college students, hunters, runners, hikers and more.

Alex Jakub of Latrobe visits Forbes occasionally to hike on the trails. She enjoyed changing up her hiking routine with the orienteering workshop.

"I enjoyed going out in the forest and finding the flags [controls] off the path," she said.

To learn more about the WPOC and their upcoming events, visit [www.wpoc.net](http://www.wpoc.net).

To learn more about upcoming events at Forbes, contact Rachael Mahony, Environmental Education Specialist, at [mahony@pa.gov](mailto:mahony@pa.gov), call 724-259-2201 or visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us).