

For Immediate Release
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24 Rappel Teams Selected For Bridge Day Rappel

The rappel lottery was held Friday, June 23, at Bridge Walk in Lansing, West Virginia.

Twenty-four teams were selected for this year's 2017 Bridge Day Rappel:

| Anchor | Team | Leader | From |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Canadian Fire | Tony Macdonald | Canada |
| 2 | Extreme Rappels 1 | Michael Phelps | CA, NC, NV, OH, PA |
| 3 | Chattanooga Grotto | Patrick Wilson | GA, NC, TN |
| 4 | The TAG Team | Darien Dopp | AL, GA, TN, TX, VA |
| 5 | Born Rescue Riggers | Russ Born | OH |
| 6 | OHKY | Greg Matulionis | OH, KY |
| 7 | Monongahela Grotto | Brian Masney | NC, OH, PA, WV |
| 8 | A Frayed Knot | Don Straw | PA |
| 9 | Audacious Abseilers | Robert Vocke | DC, MD, MI, VA, WA, WV |
| 10 | E.T.X.A. Grotto | Tilman McDonald | GA, TN |
| 11 | Safety Team | Glen Kuehner | AL, FL, MD, NC, OH, PA |
| 12 | Extreme Rappels 3 | Andrew Rentzel | MD, NC, PA, TN, VA |
| 13 | Tha Black Swamp Brigade | Ken Adams | OH |
| 14 | Highline Team | Larry Smith | KY, NC, OH, WV |
| 15 | S B Rescue Group | Jon Tobin | FL, GA, MI, OH, PA, WV |
| 16 | VBATS 2 | Harold Calvert | AL, DC, NC, TN |
| 17 | VBATS1 | Mike "TinY" Manke | MD, PA, TN, VA, UT |
| 18 | Rope Smokers and Slow Pokers | George Stampelis | MI, PA, Puerto Rico, VA, WA |
| 19 | Northern y-knots | Scott Young | Canada |
| 20 | High-Hangin' Hoosiers | Dean Wiseman | IN |
| 21 | Vertically Inclined | Neil Gregory | MD, NC, PA |
| 22 | Ohio/Mississippi/South Carolina/SRT | Carl W. Swanigan | MS, OH |
| 23 | Team Poseidon | Ryan Rodd | GA, MD, VA |
| 24 | Extreme Rappels 2 | John Cadle | NC, OH |

Bridge Day is held annually on the third Saturday in October to commemorate the October 1977 completion of the New River Gorge Bridge. The New River Gorge Bridge is the 3rd longest single arch bridge in the world. The Bridge is the 3rd highest bridge in the United States and the 13th highest bridge in the world. The New River Gorge Bridge is 876'

above the New River, the 2nd oldest river in the world. Bridge Day is one of the top 100 festivals in North America, and West Virginia's largest one day festival. Saturday, October 21, 2017 will be the 38th Bridge Day. It has been estimated that Bridge Day brings \$1,000,000 into the southern West Virginia economy each year.

The rappel teams will rappel distances between seven hundred and eight hundred and fifty feet depending on their respective anchor on the catwalk of the New River Gorge Bridge. Anchors 1 and 2 have the farthest rappel. Two additional ropes are designated as ascending Ropes giving more rappellers the opportunity to ascend or climb the rope. Dr. Peter Hertl of Raleigh, North Carolina supervises the ascending ropes.

This year's rappellers are from 19 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and Puerto Rica. Glen Kuehner, from Florida, will return as the Bridge Day Rappel Safety Officer. This will be his sixth year as the leader of the Safety Team.

Benjy Simpson and his son, Benjy III, and their adventure company, Passages To Adventure, have been coordinating the Bridge Day rappel since 1992; 26 years. During that time, there have been 14,210 New River Gorge Bridge rappels with 1,994 high lines. The rappeller's age range has been from 14 to 81.

The Bridge Day High Line was first done in 1994. It started again in 2001 and has been done every Bridge Day since; 16 total years. The High Line gives the general public the opportunity to be a Bridge Day participant. Both rappelling and BASE jumping require equipment, training, and experience. No experience is required for the high line. The age range for the high line has been from 8 to 76. There are limited spaces available for the High Line. The high line is \$155 per person plus tax, \$164.30. The price includes a shuttle back to the top of the Bridge. Register on line at www.bridgedayrappel.com.

West Virginian Larry Smith and his team will be rigging the High Line. Smith has been helping with the High Line for thirteen years; ten years as the team leader.

Bridge Walk will be offering shortened catwalk tours during Bridge Day. The Bridge Walk guests meet on the north end of the Bridge. After safety instructions, putting on a harness, and attaching to the safety system, the guests walk to the center of the Bridge and watch BASE jumpers glide and/or fall beneath them. Many guests bring cameras and take panoramic photos of the beautiful fall vista of the New River Gorge as well as the BASE jumpers. Reservations can be made by calling Bridge Walk 304 574-1300. The cost is \$84 plus tax. There were 123 Bridge Day Walkers last year.

As it has been done every year since 9/11, Bridge Day will begin and end with the raising and lowering of the American and West Virginia flags. Each year two rappellers have ascended a rope with the American flag between the two climbers and the West Virginia flag below the second climber. At 3 pm, after the last BASE jumper has left the New River Gorge Bridge, two rappellers rappel with the two flags. Extreme Rappels, Michael Phelps, from Ohio, and Todd Handley, of Parkersburg, West Virginia, have been coordinating the flags since 2001; fifteen years. The best location to see both the raising and lowering of our flags is from below the Bridge.

For information about the New River Gorge Bridge Day Rappel, the high line, Bridge Walk, and Bridge Day, please go to:

www.bridgedayrappel.com (rappel and high line) 304 574-1037

www.facebook.com/bridgedayrappel

www.bridgewalk.com 304 574-1300

www.facebook.com/newrivergorgebridgewalk

www.officialbridgeday.com.

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