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# CLIMB ON!

DON'T LET THE SUMMER HEAT KEEP YOU GROUNDED; FIND CLIMBING AND COMMUNITY AT LOCAL BOULDERING GYM

Sports have a unique way of creating community. With team sports, community comes naturally. There's always someone who will be there for you, and many times, team members become like family. Although not a team sport, with rock climbing, it's really no different.

For those unfamiliar with the sport, rock climbing really only takes a pair. With sport climbing, a type of vertical climbing that utilizes anchors, harnesses and ropes, there's a climber and a belayer. The climber climbs, and the belayer protects the climber if he falls. For bouldering, a type of low wall climbing that requires no harnesses or ropes, there's a climber and a partner who helps catch or guide the climber if he falls. So, as you can see, partnership is very important here. There is something unique about rock climbers' ability to create strong bonds and offer support even to complete strangers. The reopening of the Ozark Climbing Gym is proof of this.

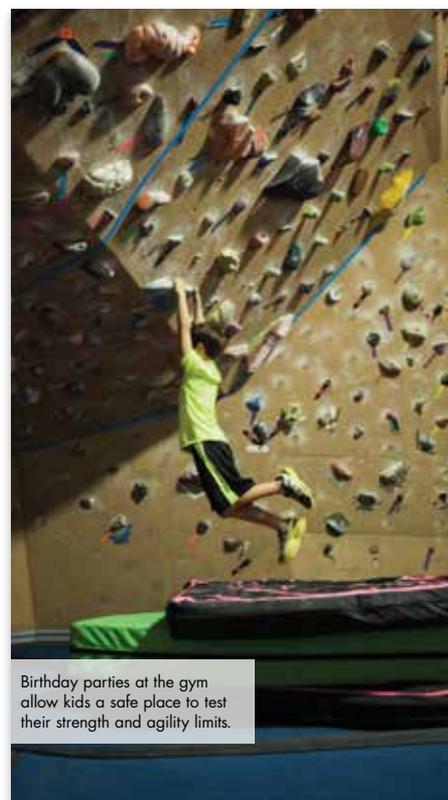


The climbing gym provides a great place to stay in shape and enjoy time with friends.

When the gym formerly known as the Ozark Bouldering Gym closed its doors in 2013, a group of eight dedicated rock climbers, most of whom had never even met, grouped together to purchase it and keep it up and running for the local rock climbing community. The new owners worked the gym for more than eight months with no pay in order to keep its doors open. Today, thanks to this loyal community, the gym is thriving, offering 2,500 square feet of upgraded bouldering terrain to visitors.

"A gym is a home away from home and a community," says Ozark Climbing Gym climber Kelsey Shumate. "It would be hard to find any other community in Fayetteville that is more open and supportive."

As the weather grows warmer, the Ozark Climbing Gym is a great place to escape the heat and to exercise indoors. Though



Birthday parties at the gym allow kids a safe place to test their strength and agility limits.



Northwest Arkansas is home to some of the best natural rock climbing spots in the state, Arkansas summers can make it tough for climbers to get outside. Vegetation overgrowth is an issue for one, and the hot summer heat can make conditions less than ideal. While outdoor area favorites such as Lincoln Lake, Horseshoe Canyon Ranch, Fern and Shepherd Springs are usually crowded with climbers in the spring and fall, conditioning and climbing indoors seems to be a more popular choice when the weather gets warm.



Indoor climbing gyms are a great option for both seasoned and new climbers alike, and are a fun place to learn, condition and exercise any time of the year. "Rock climbing is just a really wonderful activity that's a great workout and a more exciting way to exercise," says gym co-owner Jason Groves. "Not only is it a great physical workout, but it's great mental exercise as well."

Stressing the community aspect of the sport, Groves expresses what a great place rock climbing gyms can be for climbers of all ages and experience levels. "In the gym, there are people there with you the whole way to cheer you on, which is really cool," he says. "It's a nice centralized place to meet other people and to encourage and be encouraged. Our employees are great at what they do, teaching climbers and really supporting them."

In addition to regular climbing hours, the gym hosts birthday parties, special events and rock climbing competitions that attract visitors from all around the state and surrounding areas, adding to the character of the gym, and strengthening our area's climbing community.

Whether you've been climbing for years or are interested in trying something new, the Ozark Climbing Gym is a great place to get active this summer. "There is a place in climbing for most people," says Groves. "Most everyone can find something in climbing they enjoy. If you've never done it before, don't be shy. It will be a totally new experience, but we've all been there. If you treat it as a learning experience, you're sure to have fun from the get-go." ■

The Ozark Climbing Gym is located in Springdale. For more information, visit [www.ozarkclimbing.com](http://www.ozarkclimbing.com) or [www.facebook.com/ozarkclimbing](https://www.facebook.com/ozarkclimbing).



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