



How SOLAR Works: an Overview of the Club

SOLAR is a loosely formed volunteer organization made up of people who enjoy the outdoors. In general, activity organizers and class instructors are members just like you. They are not trained professionals, but rather volunteers who share their knowledge and experience. As a club, we do not sponsor, approve, or have the resources to “qualify” activities and classes offered through the club. The club’s role is simply to get people who want to offer something together with people who want to do or learn something. If a person seems to have a reasonable plan, the Steering Committee will generally allow him or her to present an activity or a class. As somebody wanting to participate in a particular activity or class, it is imperative that you are comfortable with the person running it, the plans, requirements, abilities needed, etc.

The actual requirements for running a class through SOLAR are very simple. Basically, the leader or organizer should present a plan to the Education Chairperson. If the leader or organizer appears to know what (s)he is talking about, and the plan seems financially sound and likely to appeal to SOLAR members, the class will generally be presented to the club. (Occasionally the Education Chairperson may expect the leader or organizer to have other certifications such as Wilderness First Aid and/or CPR, depending on the class.) SOLAR may or may not look into claims of experience or background made by a potential class leader or organizer.

Most of the classes offered through SOLAR are run by volunteers who are donating their time and knowledge in hopes of sharing those skills with others who may enjoy them. A few classes are offered by certified instructors and may provide actual certifications from organizations such as the American Red Cross. These are exceptions rather than the norm.

Activities work similarly. If a member wants to coordinate an

activity, (s)he can present a plan to the Activities Chairperson. If it is something that is likely to be of interest to members and/or broadly falls into “enjoying the outdoors”, it will generally be presented to the club. We really don’t look into how qualified or experienced the leader is.

If it appears that an activity or class may be outside of SOLAR’s comfort zone, the Steering Committee may decide it should not be formally presented to members. If somebody approaches the Activities Chairperson with a plan to visit the zoo, it will probably be presented. If that same person wants to go to the zoo to hand-feed the tigers, that would probably fall outside of the club’s comfort zone and be turned down.

The SOLAR Yahoo! Group gives members a way to communicate between meetings and find other people to do things with. If a member wants to hike, sell their used gear, meet for dinner or feed the tigers without presenting at a SOLAR meeting, the Yahoo! Group is the place to advertise. The group has some basic guidelines -- e.g., political, religious, and inflammatory posts may not belong there and may be blocked by the group’s moderators. If a member posts that (s)he wants to get a group to go to the zoo to break into the tiger enclosure and feed them bits of steak, nobody will block it. Just because it’s on the Yahoo! Group does not mean it’s a good idea! You are responsible for yourself. Don’t blindly follow anyone to feed the tigers!

The bottom line is that SOLAR is what our members make it. SOLAR gives members access to affordable and unique opportunities. Once again, as somebody wanting to participate it is imperative that you are comfortable with the person running the class or activity, the plans, requirements, abilities needed, etc. If you really like to read policies, we have them. Look for guidelines on organizing and/or participating in activities and classes on our website (www.solaroutdoors.org).