

## TAKE AN ADVENTURE WITH CONOCO KAYAK, LLC

by Becky Muth

**A**fter 40+ inches of snow in February and over two weeks' worth of consecutive rainy days in May, there's no time like the present to enjoy the outdoors. Conoco Kayak, LLC in Greencastle, Pennsylvania offers a different perspective on outdoor activity - paddling creeks and rivers throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Conoco Kayak, LLC kicked things off on January 1, 2016 by launching their Facebook page. Just four months later they opened for the season, offering routes exploring the Conococheague, Antietam, and Licking Creeks and the Potomac and Juniata Rivers.

### A COLLEGE DEGREE, A CAREER, AND A BUSINESS BY AGE 25

Joshua Martin, owner of Conoco Kayak, LLC says when he was growing up his friends and family spent a lot of time enjoying the local creeks. Annual family reunions eventually turned into kayaking trips.

"My sisters bought kayaks first, and then I had to get my own," he shares. "I'm a huge outdoors person, always have been. Once I got a kayak, I was out there all the time."

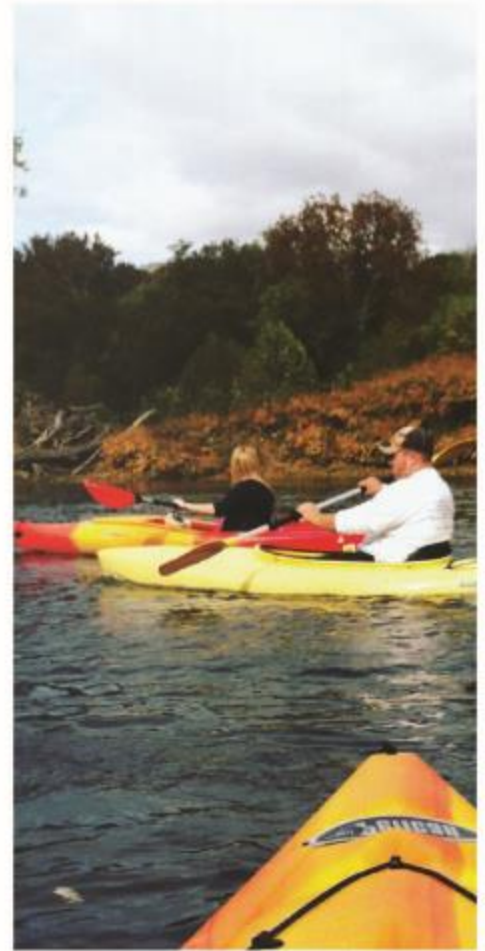
Five years ago, at age 20, Martin took a job at a regional bank. Deep down he always dreamed of operating a local business and, after graduating from college with a degree in business, started his nest egg and laid the groundwork.

Why kayaking tours? Martin explains, "It was about three years ago that I realized kayaking was a big deal. So many people have landscaping, painting, car shops, but nobody around Greencastle is doing this." He performed heavy research on the popular pastime before launching the business, studying how kayaking tours take place both in the United States and on an international scale.

Kayaking is more than a trendy way to kill an afternoon, however. *TIME* magazine named kayaking the fastest-growing sport in North America. In the last decade, the number of kayakers more than doubled from 3.5 million to 8 million in the United States alone. Kayakers enjoy the sport from the frigid waters surrounding Alaska, to the Zambezi River which winds through the tropical safaris of Africa, and everywhere in between.

Although earning his college degree taught him about managing a business, there were things it didn't teach, like registering his kayaking company as a boat livery or, his biggest challenge, finding the right transportation to carry kayakers and equipment between the parking area and the drop off or pick up sites along their route.

Martin required a vehicle that allowed him to transport groups without requiring a commercial driver's license, also known as a CDL. Careful research resulted in his purchase of a previously owned bus and trailer, as well as new kayaks bought at a discount from a sporting good store that was going out of business.





## SAFETY IS A PRIORITY AT CONOCO KAYAK, LLC

Martin regularly kayaks each of the routes, inspecting the water depths and the areas where kayakers will enter or exit the waterways. The routes, appropriate for teenage and adult kayakers, follow flatwater creeks or rivers with sparse amounts of low rapids.

During the ticket-buying process, prospective kayakers note if they've kayaked before. Martin uses this information and communicates with them in email to ensure the route they choose is the best one based on their level of kayaking skills.

"Some routes are great for beginners, but some are better for people with a little experience," Martin points out. Due to insurance reasons, kayakers must be at least 12 years old.

Marin and his staff are certified in first aid through the American Red Cross in Hagerstown, Maryland to help them prepare for any situation that might arise during a tour.

## KAYAKING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE NATURE FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

"One of my favorite spots is the Conococheague Creek flow under Interstate 70. I've driven over that bridge so many times, but it looks so massive up there in the air. Going down below it is like a different world," Martin explains. Many of the kayaking routes offer a new perspective on the architecture of area bridges you wouldn't get by driving over them.

Kayaking also gives you a chance to see wildlife in its natural environment. Each tour is a unique experience because nature is always in flux. Seasonal changes, weather patterns, and other factors affect which animals you may encounter.

"Right now snapping turtles are out," Martin recollects about a recent outing. "They're huge snapping turtles, but they're docile because



they're just coming out of hibernation."

Besides snapping turtles, animals you may glimpse on your Conoco Kayak, LLC tour might include painted and box turtles, foxes, minks, and river otters. Birdwatchers might spot species like blue heron, woodpeckers, Canadian geese, and bald eagles.

Martin describes one eagle's nest on the Conococheague Creek, "It's made of sticks - not small branches, big sticks. It's on the Greencastle route. There's just something about seeing eagles in the wild. Last year they had babies, and some people got pictures. All the people in the creek haven't scared them off yet."

### THE MANY BENEFITS OF KAYAKING FOR TEENS AND ADULTS

In a world where people spend most time connected to technology, kayaking offers a chance to reconnect with nature. Group tours allow socialization in ways social media could never provide.

"Kayaking takes you to a different world. It gives you a change of scenery still close to home. There's nothing better than going down the creek on a sunny day," Martin expresses. The benefits of kayaking go beyond a change of scenery, however.

The frequent paddling is equivalent to low-impact, aerobic exercise. You can burn 350 calories per hour through light paddling alone! Rotating your torso as you paddle helps eliminate unwanted features like love handles or a spare tire while building strength in your arms, shoulders, back, chest, and legs.

The constant movement is great for your heart and easier on your knees and ankles than walking or running. Being outdoors provides your lungs with fresh, clean air and your skin with natural Vitamin D from the sun.

Guided tours with Conoco Kayak,



LLC are perfect for family reunions, birthday parties, and other events. A tour is also the perfect corporate team building activity. Because kayakers should always use the buddy system, group kayaking turns a simple paddling trip into the development of skills required to work as a cohesive unit.

### SCHEDULING YOUR CONOCO KAYAK, LLC TOUR

Guided kayak tours are affordable, costing less than the price of tickets and snacks for an afternoon at the movie theater. The ticket price includes transportation and all of the equipment, such as kayaks, paddles, life jackets, and safety whistles.

While all ticket sales are final, Martin refunds pre-purchased tickets for cancellations due to inclement weather. Ticket sales are limited for each event so it's a good idea to purchase tickets in advance for everyone in your group.



The picture on Conoco Kayak, LLC's Facebook page states: Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere... and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself. What will you find during your guided kayak tour? Visit their website [conocokayak.com](http://conocokayak.com) or Facebook page, or call 717-977-9536 for more information and reserve your ticket.