

THESE KIDS

ROCK

Come along with these high-climbers as they learn the ropes!

BY DEBORAH CHURCHMAN; PHOTOS BY JACKSON SMITH

Maybe you've heard about adults climbing with ropes up steep cliffs and mountains. But is rock climbing for kids too?

You betcha. Just ask Camille, Magenta, Ed, and Tyler (see photo at top right). Recently, these kids spent a day climbing the cliffs along the Potomac River near Washington, D.C. Helping them were guides from a company called SportRock.

The kids made climbing seem, well, not easy—but not impossible, either. Just look at Magenta (left). She proved that, with the right skills and equipment, kids can walk right up a cliff!

"Climbing takes more than just muscle," Magenta said. "It takes thinking and planning, too. Every time I climb, I learn something."

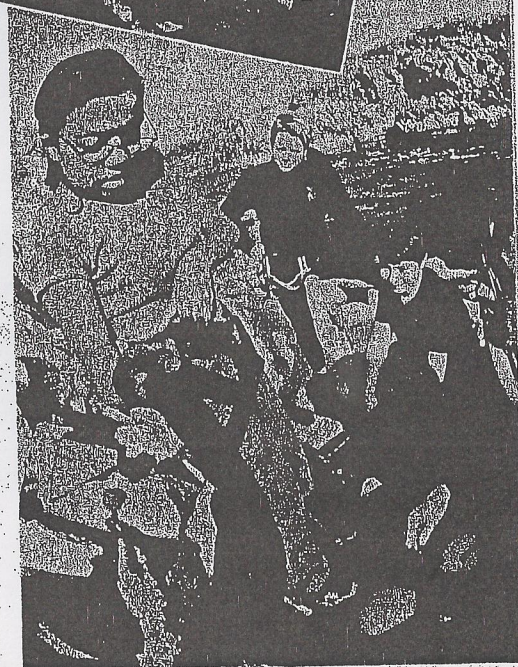
SUITING UP

The kids started by learning to put on their rope-climbing gear. First came the harness (what the rope attaches to). Like Camille in the photo at right, each kid had to practice figuring out all the harness straps. Why? Safety starts with knowing how to use your gear.

Next, the kids put on helmets to keep safe from falling rocks. Last, they put on sure-grip rock-climbing shoes. Then they were ready to go!

A WILD BEGINNING

The climb started on the riverbank at the bottom of a steep cliff. There, the kids saw all kinds of wild stuff going on. Turkey vultures soared overhead. Crows cawed. On the



High-Stepping!

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CLIMBING A CRACK

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Wedge, tuck, push. Robb, his guide, stood below and managed the rope as Ed went higher. You can make it, Ed!

TOPPING OFF

Meanwhile, Tyler took a different route up the cliff, straight up the flat wall. He tucked

his feet and l... tiny holes and leaned back a little bit—just as if he were climbing a ladder. Far down below, Robb held the end of Tyler's rope.

And there he is, almost at the top of the cliff! (below) He's grabbing the carabiner (care-uh-BEEN-er) attached to the anchor ropes. Now he'll use his leg muscles to push himself up and over. Good job, Tyler!

GOING BOULDER

While Ed and Tyler did their top-roping, Magenta tried *bouldering* (above)—climbing on big boulders. Bouldering is a good

way to practice climbing without ropes. But it isn't easy. Here, Magenta uses her hands, thighs, and feet to grip and climb an overhang. Her guide, Jennifer, is "spotting" her to make sure she doesn't get hurt.

TIME FOR EATS!

Finally, when everyone got to the top of the cliff, it was time for a BIG lunch and a look around. Then the kids got to *rappel*—go back down the cliff using the ropes. A guide managed the ropes while

the kids "walked" right down the wall.

"Wow, that was *fun*," said Tyler. "Can we do it again—please?"

TRY IT!

To go rock climbing? Some sports stores offer rock-climbing walls, courses, and camps. You can also check these Web sites:
p.away.com/gorp/publishers/ftf/cll_kids.htm
www.sportrock.com