

Good morning this is another edition of public affairs. This is Marshall Smith and I am here with Leeann Lonsdorf of the Living and Learning Center here at UW-Platteville. And what's the full name of the Living & Learning Center?

It's the Cooper Living & Learning Center.

Ok. So where is the Living & Learning Center?

It is, it's located out at the University's farm, Pioneer Farm. Which is about seven miles southeast of the University- the main campus. And it's on College Farm Road which when you head south out of town it's off of 80/81. There's a nice sign on that highway saying UW-Platteville Farm and it's got a little arrow pointing to the left. It says College Farm Rd so just head down there a little ways.

What is done at the LLC, what types of, what do you, what happens down there?

We are mainly a retreat center. Retreat kind of conference center. We host groups wishing to stay out mostly for overnight lodging spending the night kind of team building group exercises. We get a lot of church groups and family reunions and obviously the University uses it a lot also they're one of the main audiences that we have. And other events that go on out there are people who just want to have a meeting they can come out there and they hold their meetings during the day. They don't have to spend the night or anything. We also do conferences kind of a mix between meetings and those people attending meetings needing overnight someplace to stay.

Ok.

So it's kind of three different areas that we do out there.

Is it, I went to the website and found some interesting information that really kind of confused me a little bit. Not in a bad way but just kind of like that's interesting, that's an interesting choice. But could you potentially just kind of use it as a hotel? If you so wished? Because I noticed it said on the website people can stay there if the hotels are filled in Platteville. I was like well it's similar to a hotel but like can parents stay there during graduation? Like...

That's a, that's a very good question and we don't want to compete with the hotels we're not a hotel but we do have the facilities for people to come and stay if they need a place to stay. Obviously the area the hotels in the area fill up you know months in advance when it's graduation weekend. We do offer that service you know people that wanna come and stay there. It's not we don't offer everything that a hotel offers. We don't have a TV in the bedroom that's pretty much kind of the only thing and bathrooms are shared. There's six bathrooms out there for every two rooms. Every two bedrooms shares a bathroom. We also we have the past academic year we had three faculty who stayed out there all year long. You know one would stay Monday and Wednesday nights, another one would stay Tuesday Thursday nights, and that was just another option for them instead of having to pay to stay at a hotel which is a little bit more than what we charge. They're able to stay at the Living & Learning Center. We do have a separate rate for University students, staff and faculty.

Is that rate extended to anybody? Cuz I had a thought. I had heard in the past that guest lecturers and special presenters who are all escaping me except for the gentlemen who came on behalf of Ben and Jerry's ice cream. Do they stay at the Living & Learning Center? Or are they put up in a hotel or it's whatever their preference is.

Sometimes. I guess it would be up to their preference I know as someone as a special guest being brought into the campus they probably might want to be treated to a more luxurious accommodations and we just have you know the basic accommodations the bed and linens and stuff.

Right.

There have been people who the University has brought in. We had a visiting faculty member from I wanna say somewhere in Europe he came from. And he stayed out there for about a month and he was not – it was during the winter – and he was not used to winter weather and it was a brutal Wisconsin winter weather was going on and he didn't have the

clothes for it he had to go out and buy a jacket and stuff. It's interesting and he didn't speak very much English and stuff but we were able to communicate and the faculty member who we were working with was very gracious and willing to help out wherever it was needed.

Well good. Good. Glad you're able to extend that courtesy to people especially visiting professors who just don't happen to speak the language and we being American don't speak theirs. But so who is the biggest, is there a specialty like, I was going on the impression that it was, that it's that it was adjacent to the farm.

Muh.

Ok, um so is there a special like but now I'm getting the idea that you don't have to be an ag major to use it.

No

Or anything like that.

No

Ok

I'm not sure about the location of why they chose that particular spot to build the Cooper Living & Learning Center but we are located out at the farm. And it's not, the sole purpose is not just for agriculture faculty, staff, students to use or any type of sole ag group it's for anyone and everyone who wants to use it the general public any other type of special interest groups or any other kinds of majors biology. We just had the School of Education out there this past week they had their first Middle Level Summit which they hope to do every year. And I guess we're located out at the farm and we the facility is actually funded through housing, housing operations and then it's managed and supervised through University Centers which is a department on campus that mainly oversees all of the auxiliary facilities on campus like the student center and Glenview commons and so we're an auxiliary facility we're not an academic building.

Oh that makes sense.

Yeah cuz we raise money and eventually hopefully raise enough to support ourselves someday. Being tangible on the web that's how a lot of people have found us. Mostly through search engines they'll type in retreat centers or special events or conferences in Wisconsin and we're actually listed with a retreat on-line listing service. It's allaboutretreas.com and we're like the only retreat center listed on there. We actually get a lot of phone calls, it's in the Midwest, we get a lot of phone calls from like the Chicago area and a lot of the bigger areas and they're willing to travel that far to come out and you know not being on the main campus at the university those who haven't been out at the university farm it's it's a campus within itself out there with all the buildings that have gone up within the past couple of years. It's a, you don't feel left alone or anything out there people are coming and going all the time. So it's really grown, I think maybe a couple years ago it would have been lonely but you know everybody they're willing to come out to make the trip to see what it looks like. They're astonished when they get out there and they see oh my gosh you know this is out here, and it's out at a farm and you know our farm is not a normal farm the University farm it's one of the most state of the art facilities I would say in Wisconsin.

And I know that they've got all of those other events out there. I remember reading in the newspaper the Platteville in the Exponent they had noted something about the Pioneer Farm and how it's really on the cutting edge of milking, which to me sounds extremely dry and not that interesting but I'm sure for people who are interested in it that's an amazing feat. And it's really awesome that people would come out all the way from Chicago to come here to uh to be able to get as far away from the city as they can to kind of commune with themselves and with everyone in the group and really bond more so than they potentially could than if they just stayed at a Holiday Inn Express.

We get to work with a lot of different colleges who I'm not familiar with, they'll call up and I know last year we had a writing center from one of the colleges I want to say it was Coe College C-O-E and I can't remember where they're from at this time I'll say Illinois .

I got no idea but sure.

But it's just these colleges come up and I look them up to see where they're from who they are and they just want to come out to a secluded location and work on their things and get their stuff done and they're set.

Do you have any, are things kind of going along, like how long have you been the head of the Living & Learning Center?

I manage the Cooper Living & Learning Center, I've been there since February of 2004. So it's almost four years. Is that right? Yeah. Four years.

Ok. And so with that with those four years have things kind of moved right along as planned? Like are you excited about the development do you have any new special developments that are in the works that aren't mentioned yet that you'd like to make note of or no or is there any?

I think always more use is the continual goal to get more people to use it and looking at different avenues in marketing, advertising and public relations researching those and how we can reach out to more audiences more of the campus community and even the city in town here, the, to raise more awareness about what is out there and what's available to them.

Do you have any, on your at your facility that you'd like to add to it that you think would be a good addition to it?

Well, I kind of don't get that say.

If you had that say what would you add what would do to improve it?

I know something when we get initial phone calls one of the things that commonly gets asked is do you know do you have a pool? So that would be very nice. I think it would entice some more people. I know that it would get a lot more maybe of the younger camps out there maybe but you know a pool it would be something that would be a recreational activity. The focus of the Living & Learning Center is not solely recreational, groups are there to learn and to use what they've learned when they leave. And I guess a pool kind of doesn't fit in with that focus but it would be a nice luxury. That's what it would be. It'd be a nice luxury to have. Maybe a Jacuzzi or hot tub.

What about anything any self learning improvement you could add?

That's, the self learning with the groups that come in, that's mainly the event organizer who kind of coordinates what they want their group to get out of what they're doing there. We kind of just provide the place for them to do that.

Ok. So like more rooms would be a positive thing.

Definitely. Yeah.

We get requests for larger groups. We have, it's a forty-bed facility. Some of the larger church groups that we get they'll bring between fifty and seventy people in, our max capacity is 72 out there, there's only forty beds and they're more than happy to bring their sleeping bags and camp out on the floor and stuff so it would be nice to have those extra rooms. I'm not sure how that would work with the structure of the facility.

Ok. Yeah, you don't want to become a hotel on a farm that'd be weird. Weird. Differences between the groups. Do you want to step up on a soap box and praise your facility at all?

Yeah, it's a great facility! I keep it nice and clean. I have wonderful student staff. They help run the front desk, answer the phone, taking reservations, giving tours to anybody who stops by, and showing them around the building. It's spectacular out there. It's still it looks brand new, people always ask when we opened or how old is this. It's only been a couple of years but I like to keep things nice and new and in place and so hopefully that will make it look the way impeccability if

that's a word, it's very nice, nice and clean, just a lot of the comments that we get on the evaluations are this is a great facility and I think a lot of it is word of mouth to people who tell others about how great it is and spectacular. So the main thing is keeping it clean I would say, that's a huge positive image, and that's my main focus, to make sure it's nice and clean when people come and see it and use it, they tell their friends and that's even better.

Do you have to be in some sort of a business or accounting major in order to work there? Or is there no major requirement to work there.

No. Any major can apply, anyone who wants to get the experience and working with events and working with the public.

If you had limitless resources and no overhead person to say no you can't do this, no restrictions, what you would do to improve Platteville the campus.

To improve the campus...I would, something when I was a student, when I was here, I'm not a huge fan of the winter weather, something that would be tremendously helpful during winter would be underground tunnels.

Ok. That's a new one. I'll admit I haven't heard that one. That's a good one. That's a good addition. Ok. Sure. So, what about the city of Platteville as a whole?

If I had endless resources? I guess something I know I work a little bit with the Chamber or am familiar with them. The city's kind of, I don't know, what they're looking to do, I know they're looking for avenues on what they can do to bring more attention to Platteville I think it is. I think one of the things that would be really cool is to build a man-made lake. Somewhere near the city.

Like at the quarry?

Something, yeah. You know, you'd have a beach to go to, I don't know how big it would be but, you can go boating and fishing...

Hike around it.

Oh yeah, it'd be beautiful.

People could actually ice fish or skate.

Oh yes.

And stuff like that.

An indoor ice rink would be something that would be cool.

That would be a neat addition too.

Yep. I was from a city, I was a big figure skater back in the day. So yeah, those two things – big lake and an indoor ice rink.

What, how old is the Living and Learning Center?

It, we opened our doors in May of 2004.

Ok.

So it'll be four years this coming May.

So you've been with it the whole time pretty much?

Yup.

So this coming May, May of next year.

Yep.

That'll be...

May of 2008.

Ok. So yeah. That is that is pretty new. That's pretty, well it's kind of both new and it's both old. There are things on the campus that are far newer than four years old and there are things on campus that are infinitely older than four years old. So namely the majority of the campus. So that is a very impressive thing to do.

Can we go back to the question you asked to that question you asked to get on my soap box?

Oh sure yeah.

Can you go back?

I can just shoot it up now and I can just cut and paste and put it in there.

Ok. I guess one of the things that really stands out at the facility also is the setting that's out there, the country setting. You know in the summer it's gorgeous you can see the M from where we are and the cows are out there grazing, it's just, it's a very relaxing, country, homey-type feeling. It's very warm and welcoming and people notice that right away as they come out there it's, they say oh my gosh, I actually live out at the facility, I have an apartment as the on-site manager, and people are like oh my gosh you must love it out here. It's very nice, it's very quiet and relaxing. It's another big part of why the larger groups that come from the big cities want to come out there and use it.

Do you ever have any comments about the smell from the farm at all? In that vicinity?

No I haven't heard any.

I've got no issues with it. I just remember I went out there once with some of the people in my fraternity to do early morning early morning milkings for funsies, you know, kind of thing. Just as a service to the fraternity just for fun. And I loved the heck out of it, we didn't even get to milk the cows because they were doing iodine they were doing iodine testing of the machinery and stuff but it was still just funner than heck to go out there and be out there in the early morning and just the sites of the sun coming up around there, and it is absolutely spectacular in the mornings. And I'm sure at night to see it go down is amazing to be able to go outside and look up and see a million stars in the sky. And I mean you can see some, I'm from Madison so I can see none in Madison and coming to Platteville I can see about two hundred in a given moment but out there you can just see infinite stars. So that would be so much fun.

And there is actually quite a range of wildlife out there. You see deer, there's a lot of little critters that run around too.

Less squirrels than there are on campus?

Oh yes, we do have a couple squirrels, we've got one big one out there I think you know he's pretty at home. But you know we've got possums and foxes, I've seen an eagle out there too flying around and there's a hawk and so it's the farm actually has a look out tower in the middle of their fields out there and you can go out there and kind of look around at the wildlife that comes by.

What are the groups that come out there?

Some of the groups, if my memory doesn't fail me here, some of the groups we've had family reunions, we had actually a staff on campus here who held her family reunion out there and they just loved it, they come and go and the Heartland Festival is going on at that time and they come to campus to do that. And it's kind of like fancy camping for families out there for the large families that come out. The only thing different is that you're not in a tent or a camper or anything and so it's really nice and let's see, we always have an annual event we always have at the end of June is the PreVet camp which brings in about forty, forty campers high-school aged who come out and the first year they had it out there they didn't require everyone to stay out at the Cooper Living and Learning Center. And those that did there's only a handful maybe seven of them, but they built great friendships, they became very close and I recommended that all of them should stay out there and they just, you know, from what I see, they have a great time. We have volleyball, horseshoes out there, we've got a campfire pit there's all of those settings that welcome the social interaction between everyone. They just have a good time throw off their shoes and roast marshmallows. Some of the other groups that we have, let's see, who we had, from campus we have housing comes out they do their RD training they also bring out the RA's for RA training just to see the farm to bring more exposure to those who are working on campus, who, what the farm is and kind of what it looks like then actually in August we get a lot of the campus that uses the facility. We get booked up very fast with retreats for departments and student organizations. The Chancellor was actually out there the other week with his cabinet members and they kind of go over their goals for the year and get set for school to begin. And then let's see we have Chemistry and engineering who use it so it's just a wide range of student departments that use it. And I can't think of anyone else at this time.

Ok. So for any group that wants to use it what is your phone number so that they can contact, what is the contact, what are some of the ways they can contact you?

Well they can they can call the facility our number is 608-342-1296 and um it's the direct line for the facility and we also have email which is LLC@uwplatt.edu and our webpage which where we have the information about what the facility has to offer, what kind of services we have, the layout of the facility, pictures, what our prices are, those are all on our webpage, it's www.uwplatt.edu and don't know if it's a back slash or a forward slash

It'd be a back.

Back slash LLC. You can also go to the UW-Platteville website and under resources it'd be under "C" for Cooper Living & Learning Center. Or it'd be under "L" too for just Living and Learning Center also. But uh I think that's it for contact information.

Ok. You guys, are you open all year round? Or...

We are open when the University is open.

Does that include the summer school like the main summer school session?

Yep. We're closed on holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years.

No drunken New Years parties down at the Living and Learning Center? That's not acceptable?

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe for the right price.

That's true. But I gotta say when I was looking at the costs there the prices are very cheap they're not bad at all.

They're very reasonable.

They're very – they're almost better than reasonable they're very excellent prices. For overnight, I think it was for an overnight \$35?

Yep.

That's wonderful.

It's set up that way so that it's affordable for students to use. Obviously the University with budget restraints everybody has, the departments and stuff, it's feasible for them to use, and when their organizing camps and stuff they don't have to charge an outrageous amount to campers to come and use it they can focus more of their budget on other services such as providing the food or materials for the kids.

The education and stuff like that. Those incentives.

Yep.

Is there any, I don't recall seeing this, but is there a different price allocated for student groups than for student organization, faculty than for non? Is there any deviation there?

There's three categories. One of them is for guests who are under the age of 18. Kind of a youth camp fee tier and then there's adults which is 18 and older there's a fee tier, and then there's the University – that's the third category then. There's three separate price ranges then.

And as a group what would make it classify as a University, like a University group, like if half the people who were attending were from the University or...

Well it'd be if you had half and half, I guess from there it would be who's paying for it, that's ultimately how it goes with the UWP classification, if it's coming out of a University account number the ten-digit codes that we have or if it's a student organization the student is paying out of their own pocket or I know some organizations have a bank setup off campus they have a checking account and stuff. So that's how it goes with trying to determine who gets the UWP rate.

Ok. Any last minute thoughts that you wanna say?

Come out and use it or come out and see for yourself just what a great facility that the University has provided for anybody to come out and use, get the experience out at the University farm. It's wonderful out there it's very relaxing and I encourage anybody to come out and check it out for themselves.

Ok. Well thank you Leeann.

Thank you.

That was Leeann Lonsdorf for the Cooper Living and Learning Center and this is Marshall Smith and this has been another edition of public affairs here at WSUP.