Jameekka says course helped her grow in confidence

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Jameekka Galindo grew up on Lake Macquarie, "so I love the outdoors and outdoor activities." Inspired by the experience of her older sister, she began studying at Avondale the same year many of her friends began their Higher School Certificate. Now, she's on the verge of graduating from university with a Diploma of Outdoor Leadership and a wealth of life experience. "We go to some pretty intense places and our lecturer, David, challenges us to safely engage in activities that test our limits. I used to think, I can't do this, but now, with practise, I know I can. That's built self-confidence and improved my discipline—you have to think carefully about what you're doing both before and during the activity.

"We've been canyoning in the Blue Mountains, where we also did a multi-pitch abseil of 300 metres. We've kayaked out on the sea and around some of the secluded bays and coves of Sydney Harbour. I remember David dropping us off at different locations, giving us a map, a compass and a radio, and telling us he'd meet us at the destination. I kayaked across a shipping channel and past an island and thought, *What an adventure!*. We've also hiked into Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, camped overnight and hiked back. That was tough with a lot of climbing, but we kept motivating each other.

"I've just returned from helping run a resilience activity called Pinnacle Challenge for the STORMCo teams out west. [STORMCo is a service-learning adventure that presents Christian faith in action by building long-term relationships with communities.] It's been tiring but so fulfilling. We've also organised a few school camps, including one at Bungonia National Park and another at Royal National Park, where the coastal walks are beautiful and the scenery so different.

"I can't wait to work in the industry and have potential work at adventure camps near the Central Coast, Lake Macquarie or on the Mid North Coast.

"The Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership is an excellent course for those considering a gap year. It teaches you essential life skills without assuming any prior outdoor experience. It's also fun and fosters a friendly atmosphere. You create such strong connections in places you've probably never seen before.

"These past two years have been the best years of my life. I've grown so much." TEACH

Figure 1: Jameeka abseiling a rock wall

Author information
Brenton Stacey is Avondale University's Public Relations and Philanthropy Officer. He brings to the role experience as a communicator in publishing, media relations, public relations, radio and television, mostly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific and its entities.

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