

New Business

SLO-OP Climbing Opens New Challenges

By Camas Frank

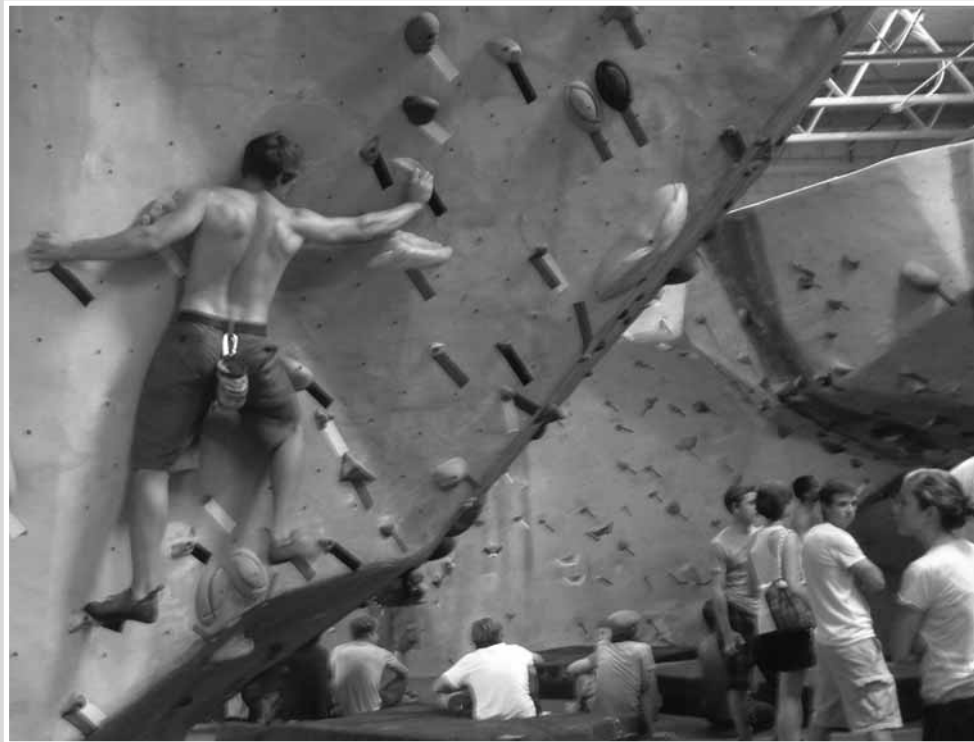
If you're the kind of person that likes to scramble up a rock face from time to time but don't have the chance to get out and find a spot every time the urge strikes, then the SLO Op blundering gym might be a life saver.

Six years after opening shop with their man-made climbing wall inside a local storage unit, the non-profit organization recently held its third grand reopening, this time in its new home at 289 Prado Rd. in San Luis Obispo. After its soft opening in September, SLO Op climbing held a public unveiling that they billed as Rocktoberfest, coupled with a bouldering competition with prizes provided by a San Luis Obispo-based clothing company Sickle, specializing in climbing and lifestyle apparel.

Despite the very public gathering, Co-executive Director of the gym, Kristin McNamara, said that the non-profit tends to stay under most people's radar.

"We kinda have a *Fight Club* thing going on. You don't talk about SLO Op," she joked. "But no, we don't do any kind of advertising really and mostly people just come in based on word of mouth."

Members of the gym pay \$30 per month for 24-hour access to the 55 routes, or problems



other out through the routes, taking turns, just having a good time."

Despite the camaraderie and well-padded floors, minor accidents can and do happen. Indeed the number of falls a climber takes in competition is calculated in their final score.

All participants sign a standard release of liability before donning

that cover varying levels of difficulty and an almost endless variety of hand and foot hold combinations. To keep things interesting, the routes' multi colored holds are periodically unbolted and reconfigured by the staff of skilled climbers, all of who volunteer in exchange for time on the wall.

"Bouldering is more than anything a very social sport," Todd Girvin, a general contractor who helped build the walls out of plywood, chicken wire and plaster. "People just show up and say, 'Alright, what's up?' and help each

their signature chalk bag and tight-toed rubber climbing shoes.

"I was trying to keep a hold and I just twisted it when I fell," Cal Poly Grad Student Rock Uik explained, holding a slice of pizza in one hand and sporting a bandage wrapped finger on the other. "I didn't do great but it was a lot of fun," he said.

SLO Op is open to non-members from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday for a daily use fee of \$10. ♦



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