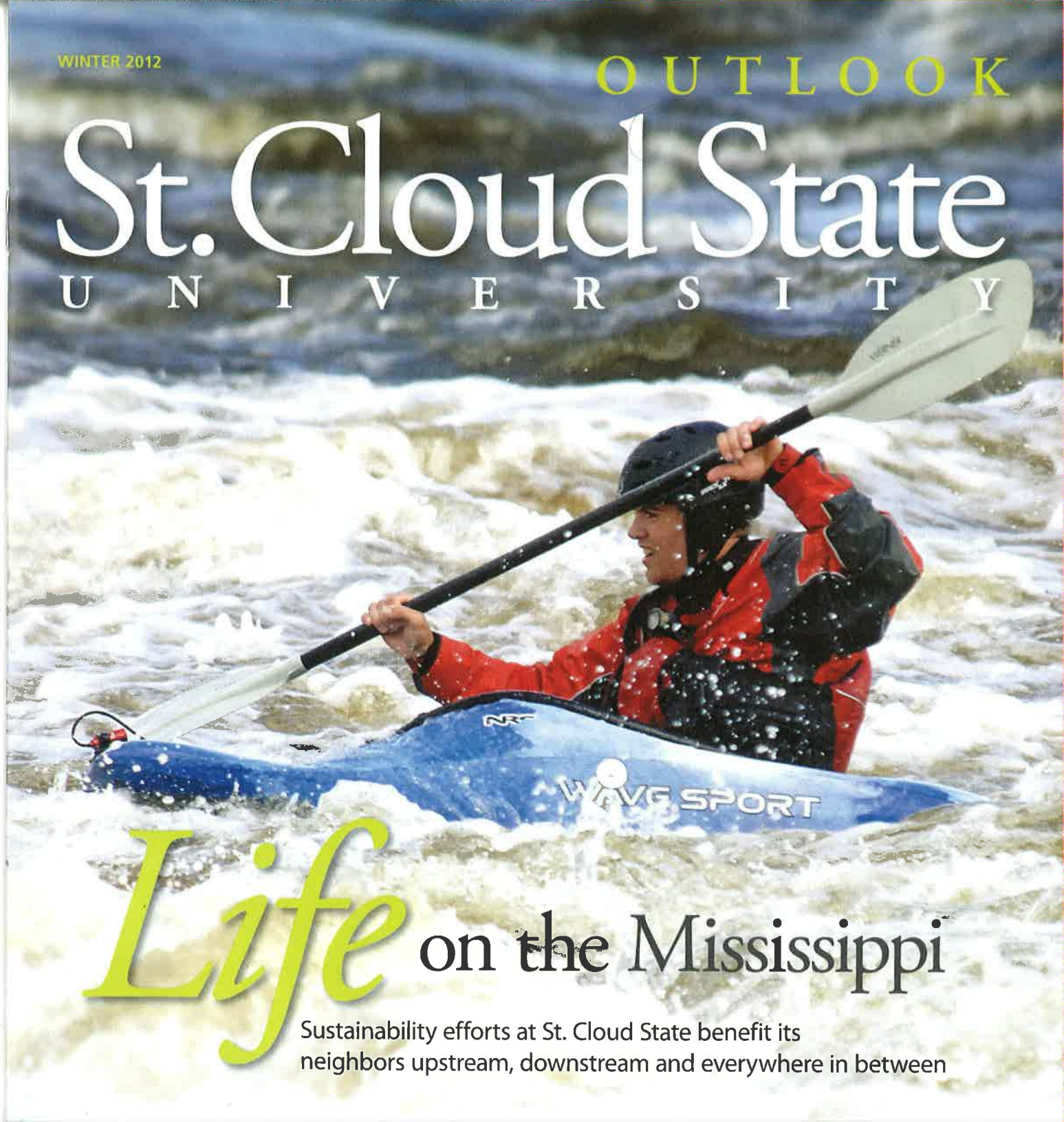


WINTER 2012

OUTLOOK

St. Cloud State

U N I V E R S I T Y



Life on the Mississippi

Sustainability efforts at St. Cloud State benefit its neighbors upstream, downstream and everywhere in between

Life on the Mississippi

When he came to St. Cloud State Ivan Bartha brought with him strong feelings of reverence and responsibility for the Mississippi River waters that flow through campus and community.

“One of the reasons I took this job is that I am really and truly captivated and fascinated by the Mississippi River,” said Bartha, who is coordinator for Experiential Programs for Campus Recreation and oversees Outdoor Endeavors at St. Cloud State.

If he had his way, Bartha’s enthusiasm for sustaining the river he is so enamored with would spill over onto others who study, live and work next to these world-famous waters.

“It is arguably our country’s most significant geographic landmark,” Bartha said. “Folks come to St. Cloud State in delegations from all over the world, and every one of those groups wants to paddle down the Mississippi while they’re here.”

A passionate advocate for recreation and development issues involving the river, Bartha is a leading force for sustainability efforts in the community and is a past board of trustees member for the Wilderness Education Association. He also is an effective mentor who utilizes innovative ways to develop in students a sense of stewardship of the waters and lands around them.

Bartha is a strong believer in the shared ownership that stewardship implies. He makes it his business to help students understand that they have a huge impact – economic and otherwise – on the community. His advocacy for sustaining the river has become a tool for teaching the importance of active learning and community engagement.

“He makes us look at everything a little differently,” senior Matthew Coleman, Elbow Lake, said of Bartha’s leadership. “I’m in criminal justice, not a biology major. When I started working at Outdoor Endeavors it was just a job. Then I started listening to Ivan talk about everything he does. That’s when I started to think about how it all fits together.”

“One of the big things we learn in criminal justice is to serve the community first,” Coleman said. He began to connect criminal justice with what he was doing at Outdoor Endeavors, a campus-based program that offers a wide variety of experiences and equipment to help students and others on campus and in the community discover their outdoor skills.

Coleman went on to take part in the Leave No Trace Master Educators program, the widely accepted outdoor ethics program used on public lands, as well as other advocacy activities that fanned his growing appreciation for the environment.

When he came to St. Cloud State in 2005, Bartha was surprised by the separation between the city and the University, and even more shocked by the lack of interest in celebrating the presence of the river. "It just blew my mind. There had been no effort to promote stewardship of our bank.

"One of the first things I did was enroll Campus Recreation in the Minnesota Adopt A River Program," Bartha said. "Given our proximity to the Mississippi River it made sense and was, and still is, the right thing to do."

Every first Saturday in October Adopt A River hosts a riverbank cleanup from the north to south ends of campus. "This year 25 students gathered 42 bags of garbage along with many pieces of steel and assorted big items like televisions and child seats. We were able to recycle close to half of what was gathered. It's kind of amazing what a few people can do."

This fall Bartha was reminded of the impact the Adopt A River program makes when he received an email from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Trails, thanking him for his report of the most recent cleanup and his dedication to Minnesota's waters.

"What started out as a little grassroots effort has not only made a difference for our campus, it also reminds us how our efforts affect everyone who lives downstream," Bartha said.

Through Bartha's leadership, Outdoor Endeavors has branched out into other activities to encourage community engagement and sustainability efforts. Since 2009 it has partnered with the St. Cloud community to operate summer paddleboat, canoe and kayak rentals at Lake George near downtown St. Cloud.

The Lake George project offers more opportunities for students to have jobs that help them relate their other learning experiences to their role in the community.

Bartha also is hopeful that St. Cloud will be included in the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures program that has been giving canoe experiences to 12,000 to 13,000 kids in the summer in the Twin Cities. Wilderness Inquiry has awarded \$453,000 to expand this program outside Minnesota's metro area.

"We were the group outside the metro that was paddle

Adopt-a-river by
the numbers
Since 2005

ST. CLOUD STATE
UNIVERSITY
—FACTS & STATS—

6,700
POUNDS OF GARBAGE
REMOVED FROM
MISSISSIPPI RIVER

281
VOLUNTEERS

1,064
DONATED
HOURS



Students gather around the campfire during their fall break backpacking experience in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness Park in Michigan.



Bartha also teaches an Honors Program course in the deep exploration of the river that he believes offers a wide range of learning opportunities. "Education is an adventure with a wide variety of outcomes," Bartha said.

"The entire course is focused on our stretch of the river," he said. He brings in elements of environmental science as well as an exploration of social issues and literature related to the river. He also has students photograph the river. The result is a gallery of images that provides visual proof of their newfound appreciation for the strength and beauty of the river.