



**FIRST  
DESCENTS**

*out living it*

**PRESS KIT  
2013**



# MISSION STATEMENT

Santa Barbara, California



First Descents offers young adult cancer fighters and survivors a free outdoor adventure experience designed to empower them to climb, paddle and surf beyond their diagnosis, defy their cancer, reclaim their lives and connect with others doing the same.

**A**t First Descents, we define our lives by the depth of our friendships, the adventures we live and the moments of laughter, peace, fear and humility we experience. We don't remember new cars or hours in the office and minutes on the treadmill. What we do remember are the important things, the defining things; brilliant sunsets, big rapids, glassy waves and endless rock faces. We're fueled by the feeling of standing up on a surfboard for the first time, paddling through whitewater and topping out on a climb, always surrounded by friends who feel more like family. These are the moments that define First Descents and the paradigms our programs seek. In 2013, First Descents will host nearly fifty programs across the United States, as well as international adventures including Patagonia and Bali.

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AS IRONIC AS IT SOUNDS, I FEEL SO FORTUNATE TO HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER AS A YOUNG ADULT BECAUSE IT MEANS I GET TO BE PART OF FD.

-2011 FIRST DESCENTS ALUMNAS

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# BRAD LUDDEN

Founder, CEO



First Descents founder Brad Ludden was born in Wyoming and raised in Northwest Montana. He spent his days in the outdoors with his family hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, skiing and, of course, kayaking. Of all his passions, kayaking caught his eye the most.

His parents gave him his first kayak when he was nine and at age 12 he was traveling and competing internationally. By 18 he had kayaked in over 20 countries and found his true passion within the sport, first descents. A first descent is the first time a person successfully kayaks a river or section of river that has never been done. Through his first descents he found immense challenge, adventure, community and personal growth.

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**KAYAKING A RIVER FOR YOUR FIRST TIME CREATES COMMUNITY, CONFIDENCE, IDENTITY AND STRENGTH; ALL THINGS THAT EMPOWER YOUNG ADULTS WITH CANCER TO LIVE BEYOND THEIR DIAGNOSIS.**

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Cancer went from being just some random word to something very personal when he was 12 and his aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 38. After watching her endure cancer and seeing how little support there was available to her, Brad started volunteering for a local pediatric oncology program by teaching the participants how to kayak. He fell in love with it and decided it was time to do more so at 18, he started working on an organization that would soon become "First Descents". Its goal: to help young adults like his aunt by giving them the life changing experience of kayaking.

"Kayaking a river for your first time creates community, confidence, identity and strength; all things that empower young adults with cancer to live beyond their diagnosis," says Brad. "Even though thousands of people have been down the rivers they're kayaking at camp, it's still the first time they've been down it and that's the magic of FD!"

# PROGRAM LEVELS

Santa Barbara, California



## FD1

The original First Descents experience. A week-long adventure program centered around whitewater kayaking, rock climbing and surfing. Young adult fighters and survivors will be able to push their limits, connect with their peers, and experience the healing properties of the outdoors. FD1 level programs are for all first-time participants.



## FD2

The next step in the journey as a survivor and an outdoorsman (woman!). A new location, a heightened adventure, and the same FD magic. These week-long adventure programs will be centered around whitewater kayaking, rock climbing, and surfing for 201. The FD2 experience is designed to allow returning campers to create new goals, and continue reaching – both physically and emotionally.



## FDX

The ultimate adventure experience, FDX is about pursuing life-long adventure, connecting with fellow cancer survivors and continuing to live the spirit of FD. First Descents alum will have the opportunity to select an FDX trip and fund-raise to secure a spot on that expedition. FDX programs are owned by the participants; redefining their own limits and seeking their own adventure.



# PROGRAM LEVELS

Main Salmon River, Idaho



## FDi

FDi is a two-day adventure weekend, in partnership with cancer centers nationwide. This is an opportunity for young adult fighters who might not be able to attend a full-length program due to health reasons, treatment schedules, family and job commitments, or just general hesitation. FDi programs will be offered in locations near partnering centers.



## FDRock

FDRock is for the caregivers who have been FD participants' Rock through diagnosis, treatment, recovery and survivorship. First Descents alumni are given the opportunity to nominate their Rocks to attend an FD experience of their own.

Mount McKinley, Alaska



# TEAM FIRST DESCENTS

Mount Hood, Oregon

Team First Descents is a lifestyle of living with a fever for passion, happiness and DOING. Being a Team First Descents athlete is about even more than the accomplishment of running a marathon or doing a million lunges in a year. It's about Mile 26.3—the fears you've overcome, the lifestyle changes you've made, the FD family members you've gotten to know, and honoring the First Descents culture of challenge, passionate living and rad experience for the rest of your life.

There is absolutely no barrier to entry to becoming a Team First Descents athlete! You can choose to either commit to an entry and fundraising minimum in a Team First Descents 'Core Event' (see list below) OR you can complete a different event or your own challenge as a Team First Descents athlete. Your fundraising efforts will change the life of a young adult cancer fighter or survivor and embracing challenge will change your life. Find power you didn't know you had. Become a source of inspiration and a force for extreme happy change in your life and the lives of others. Join Team First Descents and get #OutLivingIt!

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AS A PAST PARTICIPANT RAISING MONEY TO HELP ANOTHER YOUNG ADULT WITH CANCER WAS ALL I EVER NEEDED, HOWEVER AS I WALKED OVER THE 5K FINISH LINE MY SPIRIT WAS FILLED WITH AN ADDITIONAL BOOST OF ENERGY AND BETTER OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

-2011 FIRST DESCENTS ALUMNA

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# GETTING INVOLVED

Santa Barbara, California

There are many ways for anyone to get involved with First Descents. Here are just a few:

1. Refer a young adult who is fighting and surviving cancer to First Descents to be a program participant.
2. Sponsor an adventure therapy program for one of First Descents' program participants.
3. Become a part of Team First Descents by picking a challenge and setting a fundraising goal.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Mount McKinley, Alaska



## **When was First Descents established?**

FD was established in 2001, with ten young adults surviving cancer in kayaks on the rivers of Colorado.

## **Who is eligible to attend a First Descents program?**

Any young adult (ages 18 – 39) who has had or is currently fighting cancer is eligible to participate in FD programs. The young adult population is recognized as an underserved demographic in the cancer world. First Descents now offers programs for caregivers of young adult cancer fighters, as well as fighters and survivors age 40 – 49 (FD40+)

## **What does it cost to attend a First Descent program?**

First Descents programs are free to all participants who are accepted. A limited number of travel scholarships are also available. First Descents makes every effort to not let monetary obstacles prevent people from participating in our programs.

## **What kind of experience is required for participation?**

Participants need zero experience to attend an FD program. The majority of FD participants are new to the sports.

## **What kind of medical support is available?**

There are emergency medical providers onsite at each program. First Descents also has a team of volunteer medical professionals who review applications, and communicate with participants' medical teams, ensuring a safe and successful experience.

## **Can I, as a media representative, attend an FD program?**

We encourage media to make an appointment through First Descents. We are happy to take you on the river, rock or surf for the day.

## **How many programs are there?**

In 2013, First Descents will host nearly fifty programs across the United States, as well as international adventures including Patagonia and Bali.

## **What kinds of programs are available?**

First Descents now offers kayaking, surfing and rock climbing programs.



# PRESS RELEASES

Moab, Utah



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Hilary Hutcheson, PR Director  
hilary@outsidemedias.com



## **First Descents Appoints New Directors**

*The young adult cancer non-profit announces Nina Sharma, Director of Development and Chris Sizemore, Director of Operations*

**Denver, CO—December 11, 2012—**First Descents, a non-profit providing outdoor adventure programs for young adults with cancer is starting off the new year with new leadership at the Director level. Nina Sharma joins the team as Director of Development and Chris Sizemore is the new Director of Operations.

Sharma is responsible for overseeing all aspects of fundraising, including individual and major gifts, corporations, foundations, Team First Descents and planned giving. She will manage all stewardship and cultivation of new and existing donors. And she's in charge of developing the organization's next long-term fundraising strategy. Sharma comes to First Descents with many years of non-profit development experience, most recently working as the Director of Major Gifts at Millennium Promise, a non-profit organization empowering communities across sub-Saharan Africa.

***"As a new Colorado resident, I am so excited for the opportunity to work at First Descents," says Sharma. "I was attracted to First Descents not only for its unique approach to serving the YA cancer community, but for its dedicated family of supporters, athletes, staff, and alumni. I am thrilled to be a part of this growing team and look forward to helping the organization increase its funding to ultimately serve more and more young adults with cancer."***

Sizemore is the former Executive Director at Volunteer Kalamazoo and comes equipped with a wealth of non-profit leadership experience. At First Descents he'll be responsible for leading the executive management team and strengthening the performance culture among the staff and volunteers.

***"This position combines the passion I have for helping others with my love for the outdoors," says Sizemore. "It doesn't get any better than that when you walk into work every day and are able to make a difference with amazing young adult cancer survivors and fighters."***

***Of the new hires, First Descents Founder and CEO Brad Ludden says, "The passion and commitment of all those who have touched First Descents since it was just an idea in 1999 to this present day never ceases to amaze me. In keeping in line with those values and that tradition, we're excited to bring both Chris and Nina in. Their experience in the world of non-profit and passion for this cause will no doubt take this organization to the next level. I'm honored to work alongside of them as they help us grow First Descents and change the lives of more and more young adults with cancer through outdoor adventures."***

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Contact: Hilary Hutcheson, PR Director  
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## **First Descents Announces Global Programming for 2013**

*The young adult cancer non-profit increases its focus on alumni support to strengthen outdoor adventures in local communities*

**Denver, CO—December 11, 2012—**First Descents, a non-profit providing outdoor adventure programs for young adults with cancer announces its program schedule for the 2013 season. The Denver-based organization offers week-long surfing, kayaking and rock climbing programs to adults surviving and fighting cancer. In 2013, First Descents will get more detail-oriented by increasing its focus on alumni support to make the experience more prevalent in local communities.

“After significant growth the past couple of years, we’re using 2013 as an opportunity to enhance and refine our programs,” says Whitney Lange, Director of Programs for First Descents. “We are going to focus on creating local, sustainable communities of support for alumni. This focus of bringing First Descents “home” for each of our participants is probably our most exciting initiative this coming year.”

Though First Descents will continue searching for ideal paddling, climbing and surfing locations for future expansion, the focus for 2013 is building better systems of local support for alumni. This will include local meet-ups, regional weekend adventures and evening activities.

Another one of the localizing measures includes a new lineup of FDi programming. FDi is a weekend introduction to First Descents, rather than a week-long excursion. It’s set near urban areas and hosted in collaboration with medical centers across the country. FDi is the perfect adventure for those who want to experience First Descents but are unable to attend an FD1 program due to health, treatment schedules or family and work obligations. For 2013, FDi programs will be held in partnership with Seattle Children’s Hospital, Winship Cancer Institute, MD Anderson and other cancer centers nationwide.

Also in 2013, First Descents will offer its most epic trip to date--a multi-sport [program in Patagonia](#) March 6-14. “We’re partnering with Bio Bio Expeditions, and we’re going to start in Argentina and float the Futaleufu River to Chile,” says Lange. The Patagonia trip will be First Descents’ third international program. In 2012, First Descents held programs in Costa Rica and Peru. Lange says, “From kayaking on the Rogue River in Oregon to surfing in North Carolina to climbing in Moab, we have programs in every region of the United States. And we have FDMobile, our mobile adventure unit that drives around the country bringing the spirit of FD to local communities. So, we’re thrilled to have the opportunity to dial in our focus in 2013 to strengthen the offerings we have and make them even more powerful for our participants, staff and volunteers.”

Program space is limited, for more information on all locations, dates and to apply for First Descents’ programs visit [www.firstdescents.org/programs](http://www.firstdescents.org/programs). Members of the media interested in participating in a First Descents program, please contact Hilary Hutcheson at [Hilary@outsidemedias.com](mailto:Hilary@outsidemedias.com).

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Team First Descents announces schedule of core events for 2013

*Fundraisers can set their sights on completing a group or solo challenge in the name of young adults with cancer*

**Denver, CO—February 11, 2013** - [First Descents](#), a Denver-based non-profit providing free outdoor adventures to young adults fighting and surviving cancer, is inviting the public to participate in Team First Descents events for 2013.

Team First Descents is a global effort of athletes and cancer survivors at all levels of competition who share the goal of supporting First Descents and the young adult cancer community. Team First Descents participants choose an activity that represents a challenge to him or her, train for it, set a fundraising goal and complete that challenge. The challenge can be something solo, like climbing a mountain, or it could be part of a major group event like the Boston Marathon.

For those wanting to be part of a pre-scheduled group challenge, First Descents has secured entries to a full calendar of Team First Descents Core Events, including stand-up paddleboarding, triathlons, marathons, cyclo-cross and more. First Descents has reserved spots in the following events for which the public can fundraise and register by emailing [TeamFirstDescents@FirstDescents.org](mailto:TeamFirstDescents@FirstDescents.org).

March 2 – Team First Descents Climb-a-thon | Nationwide  
March 3 – Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon | San Francisco, CA  
March 9 – Pink Vail | Vail, CO  
March 22-23 – Devil Dash Sin City | Las Vegas, NV  
March 29-30 – Elk Mountains Grand Traverse | Crested Butte, CO  
April 15 – Boston Marathon | Boston, MA \*all spots sold out  
April 27 – Nashville Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & ½ Marathon | Nashville, TN  
April 27 – Ice Breaker SUP Classic | Longmont, CO  
May 5 – TD Bank Bike Tour | New York, NY  
June 2 – San Diego Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & ½ Marathon | San Diego, CA  
June 22 – Seattle Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & 1/2 Marathon | Seattle, WA  
June 23 – Ironman Coeur d’Alene | Coeur d’Alene, ID  
July 13-14 – Triple Bypass | Evergreen and Avon, CO  
July 28 – Ironman Lake Placid | Lake Placid, NY  
August 3 – Copper Triangle | Copper Mountain, CO  
August 10 – Leadville Trail 100 Mountain Bike Race | Leadville, CO  
August 10 – Epic Shore to Shore | Flathead Lake, MT  
August 17-18 – Tour de Hunter Bike Ride | Steamboat, CO  
September 14 – Devil Dash Colorado | Lyons, CO  
September 15 – Philadelphia Rock ‘n’ Roll ½ Marathon | Philadelphia, PA  
October 13 – Chicago Marathon | Chicago, IL  
October 20 – Denver Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & ½ Marathon | Denver, CO  
October 26 – Crosstoberfest Idaho | Hailey, ID  
October 27 – Marine Corps Marathon | Washington D.C.  
November 3 – ING New York City Marathon | New York, NY  
December 1 – Las Vegas Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & ½ Marathon | Las Vegas, NV

“It’s a great opportunity for anyone wanting to achieve a goal for a meaningful cause,” says Erin Kelly, Team First Descents Coordinator. “We secure the entries to some of the nation’s most exciting events and offer them to anyone willing to accept the challenge.”

Team First Descents has raised a total of \$2 million. The goal for 2013 is to raise \$950,000. More than 350 people have completed a personal challenge through Team First Descents since 2010.

Last year’s top fundraiser through Team First Descents was by Brent Goldstein, who raised \$96,783.00. He took on the challenge of Leadville 100.

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# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

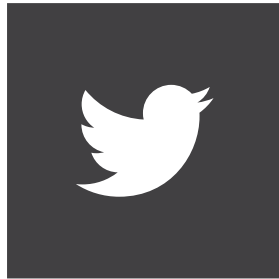
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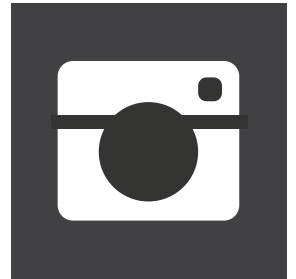
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