FIRST DESCENTS
ANNUAL REPORT
2018
FIRST DESCENTS PROVIDES LIFE-CHANGING OUTDOOR ADVENTURES FOR YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18-39) IMPACTED BY CANCER.
For eighteen years, First Descents has provided life-changing outdoor adventures to young adults impacted by cancer. After hundreds of programs and thousands of participants served, we’ve seen first-hand that adventure and community are profoundly healing. For the past two decades, I’ve witnessed the First Descents tribe face life threatening illnesses in the prime of their lives, and time and time again choose to Out Live It.

Now, we find ourselves entering a new era. With proven research and countless testimonials, First Descents has shown that social support and physical challenge are not additive, but essential. Adventure and community do not mean “cancer camp” and First Descents isn’t a “cancer perk” but rather an integral part of the healing process. With that in mind, we launched Prescribe Adventure in order to reach young adults impacted by cancer sooner in their cancer journey.

In 2018, we enlisted hundreds of healthcare professionals and partners to help spread the healing power of adventure to their patients. We grew our local adventure communities and expanded our programs to reach more people. We proved more than ever before that adventure has the capacity to empower and transform.

With each new rapid conquered, rock wall climbed, and wave surfed, we learned that we can’t stop here. We knew that the healing power of adventure was not unique to cancer, but could equally impact young adults coping with other serious health conditions. So, in 2018, with the support of our partners at Velocity Global, we piloted the first FD program for young adults impacted by multiple sclerosis. Next year, we will provide three more.

To say we’ve been paddling hard would be an understatement, but we know that the support of our partners and the spirit of our tribe will continue to propel us through the exciting rapids ahead. Here’s to another year of wild, bold, beautiful adventures. Here’s to Out Living It.

Brad Ludden, Founder
Regardless of your involvement, chances are you are here because you believe in the impact of First Descents (FD). With the renewed vision to become the global leader in adventure-based healing, we are passionately focused on three top priorities:

**Expand Programs**
Looking ahead to 2019, FD has ambitious program growth goals for oncology programs, we will offer more programs for those living with multiple sclerosis, and we will continue to explore other affected populations who can benefit from our mission.

**Build Communities**
Our research shows how positive outcomes are better sustained through continued adventure and peer support in local communities. A commitment to long-term community building sets FD apart, broadens reach and deepens the impact of our work. We are strengthening FD communities by making adventure more accessible, and enabling supportive peer relationships as an ongoing part of the healing process.

**Prescribe Adventure**
Launched this past spring, FD’s Prescribe Adventure campaign is transforming survivorship care by introducing First Descents to patients closer to the time of their diagnosis. Prescribe Adventure has allowed FD to partner with a growing number of healthcare professionals and hospitals, and together we are integrating First Descents as an important part of long-term care planning.

While our strategic priorities guide our actions, FD’s ability to accelerate impact hinges on mobilizing support from those who feel as strongly as we do about the healing power of adventure.

As our strongest ambassadors, we’re asking you to get behind our work in a big way. How can you and those you know contribute to our shared vision?

Ryan O’Donoghue, Executive Director
“In the spring of my final year of training to be a pediatric kidney doctor, my whole life took a turn. I was diagnosed with chronic leiomyosarcoma, a rare smooth muscle tumor. Two years later, I signed up for my First Descents program and soon I was in Bryson City, North Carolina with a group of people in the same situation as me, with their lives turned upside down by a life threatening, career changing, relationship challenging diagnosis.

My new First Descents family understood me on a different level. We could commiserate over breakfast and tell stories about surgeries and the horrendous effects of chemo. We could laugh together, inherently understanding each other’s pain, disappointment, and fear.

But maybe the most important thing about my First Descents program was it inspired me to dig deeper within myself. Suddenly all the adventures that life had in store for me, adventures I thought were no longer possible after cancer, were laid ahead of me again. FD broadened my horizons, and rather than focusing on my fears, I was empowered to see all of the things I could still do with my body. I was officially Out Living it!

As a doctor and as a patient, I’ve experienced the value of First Descents. I know that adventure and community are essential to the healing process. I would love to see the medical system go beyond treating my sickness, and start healing my soul. My hope is for a future where every young adult cancer patient gets a written prescription for First Descents, because nothing is more healing than Out Living it!”

Jennifer “Galaxy Girl” Jackson
Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in adolescents and young adults (AYAs) and continues to be one of the fastest growing and most underserved oncology demographics.

**PROBLEM**

- Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in adolescents and young adults (AYAs) and continues to be one of the fastest growing and most underserved oncology demographics.

**OBSTACLES**

- 70,000 adolescents & young adults are diagnosed annually
- Poor improvement in five-year survival rates
- Minimal peer support
- Rare and aggressive tumor biology
- Lack of participation in clinical trials
- Disrupts normative milestones of adulthood

**FD PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

- 100% OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTED INCREASED ABILITY TO COPE WITH CANCER AND ITS EFFECTS
- 81% REPORTED INCREASED SELF-EFFICACY
- 61% REPORTED INCREASED SOCIAL SUPPORT
- 17% TO 7% PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED FEELING DEPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER FIRST DESCENTS
OUR HIGHLIGHTS

1,281
UNIQUE EXPERIENCES PROVIDED

118
TOTAL PROGRAMS

$3.9M
FUNDS RAISED

7,035
TOTAL PROGRAM DAYS

1,780
PARTICIPANT INQUIRIES
**Build Community**
Young adults coping with health conditions often experience feelings of isolation and alienation. FD will strengthen local adventure communities and nurture supportive peer relationships that provide ongoing healing.

**Prescribe Adventure**
Hospitals lack age-appropriate psychosocial survivorship programs for young adults. FD will build upon its network of healthcare professionals to reach more young adults earlier in the treatment process.

**Expand Programs**
With more than 640,000 young adult cancer survivors living in the U.S., First Descents (FD) will expand programs to improve survivorship and quality of life. Further, FD will explore and develop programs for young adults coping with other health conditions.
In 2018, First Descents made the exciting announcement that we would begin exploring program development for other serious health conditions that primarily impact young adults. In August of 2018, First Descents hosted 14 young adults living with multiple sclerosis (MS) for a week of whitewater kayaking, connection, and incredible adventure in Tarkio, Montana. This exciting milestone represents the first time FD has delivered programming for young adults impacted by other medical conditions beyond oncology and highlights the limitless potential of the healing power of adventure! Shoutout to Velocity Global, National MS Society and CanDo MS for making this program possible!

“We are incredibly proud of our participation in the highly successful First Descents MS pilot program. Our team supports and volunteers with First Descents on numerous occasions and in many ways, but it is particularly rewarding to help the organization bring these transformative experiences to young adults coping with MS. We are dedicated to further scaling these programs to reach more individuals living with MS in the years to come.”

Ben Wright, CEO, Velocity Global
Sharing healthy meals has become a tradition of the FD experience. During programs, participants are given the opportunity to enjoy a healthy diet focusing on fresh whole foods. We do not promote any singular “diet”. Our menus emphasize delicious and satisfying ways to get more plants to the center of the plate, including a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds. We also include quality organic animal protein as an option. Seated around the table or campfire, mealtimes are when our community celebrates the healing powers of nourishing food, the fuel for every great FD adventure.

**AT A GLANCE**

16,260

PARTICIPANT MEALS PROVIDED

29

PROGRAMS CHEFS

202

GROCERY TRIPS
OUR GROWING IMPACT

Experiences Provided

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Programs Administered

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First Descents Tributaries offer local adventures and community support for young adults impacted by cancer.
In 2018, we launched Prescribe Adventure to engage healthcare professionals and empower young adults to connect with their peers through community and adventure. Research shows that our programming improves survivorship, and we’re reaching young adults earlier in their treatment processes through our growing network of healthcare professionals and medical centers.

1,780 PARTICIPANT INQUIRIES

50% INCREASE FROM 2017

300+ HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED THROUGH PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

175+ MEDICAL CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS REFERRING PATIENTS

“I can only imagine the challenges that come with having cancer as a young adult – the loss of control, the hours spent in clinics and hospitals rather than with friends and family, the persistent cancer-related symptoms that limit normal abilities and activities. This adventure provided the opportunity for young adults with cancer to be in control, experience the rejuvenating power of nature, and test their inner and outer strength. The program also gave participants the unique support and encouragement that only comes from other cancer survivors.”

- PhD, RN
First Descents partners with medical centers to provide opportunities for young adults impacted by cancer to attend a First Descents program in close proximity to their treatment facility. In 2018, First Descents designed custom programs for 10 medical centers to help Prescribe Adventure to their AYA patients.

“First Descents provides a unique, empowering opportunity for young adults with cancer to feel like themselves again, often for the first time since diagnosis. They are given a safe, welcoming space to not only be active and feel like a normal young adult again, but also to connect with their peers who simply “get it” and can relate on a different level than other friends or family. First Descents is truly a gift to young adults facing the physical and emotional challenges of cancer. As someone who works closely with young adults in an academic medical institution, the relief and comfort of knowing FD exists is felt not only by patients, but also those who care for them.”

- Dana Farber, Patient Navigator
The Out Living It Project is FD’s grassroots fundraising platform that combines adventure, creativity and philanthropy. Launch your own unique fundraiser or join an existing project to raise funds and awareness for First Descents. To date, The Out Living It Project has raised $5.54M across 7,791 projects with 22,752 supporters.
Where We Were

- First Descents, Established 2001
- Out Living It | Hosted First Program for 15 young adults with cancer
- Build Community | Launched Local Adventure Communities in 2013
- CNN Heroes | Brad Ludden Recognized as 2016 Top 10 CNN Hero

Where We Are

- Expand Programs | Piloted First Program for Young Adults with MS
- Launched Prescribe Adventure | Enlisted 300+ Healthcare Professionals and 175+ Medical Centers to Extend the Healing Power of Adventure to their Patients
- Build Community | FDTRib Communities Established in 16 Cities
- Corporate Partnerships | New Partnership with REI Outdoor School to improve access to programming nationwide
- Participant Inquiries | 50% Increase to 1,780 New Participant Inquiries

Where We Are Going (2019)

- Expand Programs | Provide over 1,500 experiences for young adults impacted by cancer
- MS Programs | 3 adventure programs for young adults with MS
- Build Community | FDTRib Communities in 18 cities and 9 pilot cities
- Prescribe Adventure | A network of 600+ Healthcare Professionals and 300+ Medical Centers & Hospitals
- Participant Inquiries | 2,500 new participant inquiries
Board of Directors
Founder Brad “Man Salmon” Ludden
Chairman Brent “Sunday” Goldstein
Vice-Chair and Secretary Debbie King “Zipper” Ford
Treasurer Michael “Volcano” Kantor
Medical Director Larry “Larry Boy” Smith
Josh “Bear” Behr
Alix “Snooki” Berglund
Brad “Uncle Brad” Reiss
Dr. Brandon Hayes-Lattin
Jeremy Shevlin
Joel “Fuji” Appel
Kip “Wombat” Cross
Tanum Davis “UniKitty” Bohen
Honorary Director – Rochelle “Hefty” Shoretz

Staff
Founder Brad “Man Salmon” Ludden
Executive Director Ryan “Wolf” O’Donoghue
Chief of Staff Melissa “Master Splinter” Markle
Global Experience Developer Willie “Sweet D” Kern
Healthcare Partnerships & Recruitment Manager John “Fever Dog” Scheid
Director of Programs Mackenzie “Spudz” McGrath
Senior Programs Manager Paul “Crash” Kelly
Senior Manager Andy “Panda” Frame
Program Manager Brooke “Noodles” Barry
Program Coordinator Riley “Chum” Schumm
Program Coordinator Jason “Buck” Eshleman
Director of Advancement Ray “Fridge” Shedd
Senior Marketing Manager Becca “Turtle” Rohrer
Marketing Coordinator Anna “006” Kenyon
Development Coordinator Andrew “Tops” Coulter
Development Officer Emma “Piano Pat” Burick
Director of Finance and Operations Adam “Toby” Schuster
Finance and Operations Manager Ella “Lady Smith” Kerr
In 2018, our generous community generated more than $3.9 million representing a banner fundraising year.

In recognition of our financial transparency, Guidestar awarded FD with its coveted platinum ranking.
For full financials, please visit www.firstdescents.org/financials
69% of 2018 expenses were allocated to programs, providing 1,281 unique adventure experiences.

For full financials, please visit www.firstdescents.org/financials
$100,000 +
- Genentech
- Wend Collective

$50,000 — $99,999
- BBVA Compass
- Haymakers For Hope, Inc.
- Michael Gross Family Foundation
- NVIDIA Foundation
- WilmerHale

$25,000 — $49,999
- Chad McWhinney
- Dale Katechis
- DaVita University
- Elbaz Family Foundation
- Gilead Kite Pharma
- Grady & Lori Durham
- Joel & Tiffany Appel
- Jon & Mindy Gray Family Foundation
- Kirk MacKenzie Charitable Gift Fund
- Lyndon Rive
- Pete Rive & Natasha Dvorak
- Scott Lynes
- Tanum Davis & Sean Bohen
- The Anschutz Foundation
- The Offield Family Foundation
- The Tappan Foundation
- Wacky Warriors

$10,000 — $24,999
- Aetna, Inc.
- Amanda Precourt and Andrew Jensdottor
- Brent & Lisa Goldstein
- Chuck Ludden
- Colin Fryer
- Company of Motion LLC (Fluidstance)
- Dear Jack Foundation
- Erika and Matt Fitzgerald
- George Karl Foundation
- Hans & Alix Berglund
- James Wallace
- Kimbal & Christiana Musk
- Kyle & Lisa Wynja
- Mellam Family Foundation
- Nancy Lazkani
- Omnicell
- Prather’s Market
- Ritz Carlton Bachelor Gulch
- RK Foundation
- Scott & Michelle Brooks
- The Behr Team
- The Precourt Foundation
- TIC Denver
- Triford Foundation
- Vail Valley Surgery Center, LLC
- Velocity Global

$5,000 — $9,999
- Amanda Lofland & Ryan Scheeler
- Amy Lin
- Association of Corporate Counsel Colorado Chapter
- Ben & Shirley Eisler
- Beverage Distributors Company, LLC
- Chad Cooley
- Clif Bar Family Foundation
- COGO Labs, INC
- Community Foundation Boulder County
- Connecticut Children’s Hospital
- Crawford Family Foundation
- Dana Farber Cancer Institute
- David Gordon
- Debbie King Ford & Rob Ford
- Duke University Health System
- Emmett Foundation
- Enel Green Power North America
- Epperson Family Foundation
- Fifth Generation Inc.
- FishPond USA
- Gary Muskett
- Guaranty Bank and Trust Company
- Harmon Foundation, Inc.
- Harold Zirkin
- Hogan Lovells
- Howard Postal
- James and Carolyn Brett Charitable Foundation
- Jeffrey Hoffman
- Jeremy & Sandra Shevlin
- John Kirk & Cathleen Robinson
- Kendra Scott Jewelry
- Lawrence and Kimberly Weinberg Fund
- Mark Devlin
- Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital
- Medidata Solutions
- Mindy Boyum
- Neil & Marcy Cohen
- Sage Hospitality Resources
- Sam & Peggy Grossman Family Foundation
- Samantha Gautier Foundation
- Samit Family Foundation
- Servpro of Greater Boulder LLC
- Southern Glazers
- Stanchina Family Foundation
- The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- The Howard Family Fund
- The Kane Family
- Thomas Oldre
- Tim and Diane Parks
- Tina Cochran
- Tom & Angela Civik
- Town of Avon
- Travis Stork
- William Newton & Anne French
- Woodruff Family Foundation
$2,500 — $4,999
Ace Adventure Rafting
Alejandro de Castro
Allen Lund Company
Alyssa Snyder
Anne Greer
Beyond Boundaries
Big Red F Restaurant Group
Bill Milton
Boa Technology
Boettcher Foundation
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Crestone Capital Advisors
David Ruf
Diana Price Fish Fund of the Denver Foundation
Dirk Sorenson
Doug and Melissa Bonnette
E.H. and M.E. Bowerman Advised Fund
EarthRoamer
Eva Ho
Frederick & the Medical College of Wisconsin
Google, Inc.
Heather Koll
Helene & Andrew Glick
Howard Chai
James & Crystal Dean
Jeffrey Anderson
Jennifer Franz
Joan and Gene Mensching
John Kirk
Jordan Staab
Kate Svitak Memorial Foundation
Kristin L. Gardner Foundation
Meaghan Horton
Michael & Heidi Brodsky
Michael Staffieri
Mile High Station
Moffitt Cancer Center
Nancy and Harry Toll
Nancy E. Barton Foundation
Patrick Rimron
QuietKat
Renee Noland
Rob and Nancy Samit
Rob Mahan Foundation
Robert Graham Designs LLC
Robert Heidkamp
Rod & Linda Gray
Sarah Metz Krissoff And Austin Krissoff
Scott McGuire
SMITH
State of Colorado
The Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation
The Westin Riverfront Resort
Tim Train Landres
Tin Cup Whiskey
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
Vail Resorts
Wendy Rambo

$1,000 — $2,499
Aaron Carlson
Albert Small
AmazonSmile
Amy Dickstein
Andrew & Molly Snyder
Andrew Magalang
Ann Horak
Anne Pert
Arlene and Paul Norman Charitable Fund
ASLAN Fund
Bailey Family Foundation
Barry & Marilyn Goodman
Bear & Carrie Pratt
Benjamin Hartman
Betsy Grossman
Bill & Sarah Ross
Bonfire Brewing
Brad & Kammi Reiss
Brad and Sharon Fuller
Brad Ludden
Brady & Kristen Dolsen
Bruce & Ellen Winston
Bryan Fitzgerald
Cancer Treatment Centers of America
Carrie Accardi
Caryn Roach
Chad Braun
Charles Gravely
Charles Schwab
Christine Ardez
Cindy VanDermee
Craig Justice
Craig Sylvester
Cunitz Family Charitable Fund
Curt Silbert
Dagger Kayak
Dan & Caroline Patten
Daniel Magdalena
Daniel and Michelle Murphy
Daniel Chapman
Daniel Kaufman
Darrell Young
David AltoBello
David Corkery
David Smith
Dean 'O'S Casino
Doris Plume
Dorothy Williams
DRTDA/ Bighorn Toyota
Edward Quinn
Emily Merola
Eric Fretz
Faith Goldstein
Fifty-Nine 22 MLK
Franklin Paulson
Frederick Arzt
Gavin Baker
Gayle Strong
George Billings
Gilson Snow
Wendy Rambo
Greg Carlin
Gregory Cowan
Guys Who Give
Hilary Kwan
Holly Osborn
Icelantic Skis
Imprint Events Colorado, LLC
Intel Corporation
Island Oceanfront Properties
Jack Singleton
James & Lois Benfield
James Patrick Griffith Foundation
Jamie Loggains
Jan Serota
Janet Harvey
Janet Krull
Jason Minard
Jen West & Andy Buettner
Jennifer Mills
Jesse Bernal
Jessica Meng
Jim & Carolyn Badenhausen
JJ Johns
Johanna Dolan
John Miner
John Ridyard
Jolie Deutschman
Jon Goldstein
Jon Steinman
Joseph Neumeyer
Justin Conigliaro
Karen R. Chakmakian Charitable Fund
Karin Smith
Katherine Milham
Kathryn & Nick Raffensperger
Kelly & Jamie Malin
Ken Evers
Kenneth Collins
Kevin Zimmerman
Kings River Land & Cattle Co.
Klavs Miller
Kristen Nelson
Laura Burnett-Kurie
Linda Iverson
Lorri Goldberg
Lynn Parker
M. Robert Burman and Carol W. Burman Family Foundation Fund
Marcia Donziger
Mark Kogod
Mary Ellen and Paul Monzella
Matthew Kannenberg
McNicholas Family
Meghan Newcomer
Melissa Chen
Melissa Lawrence & Shawn Madden
Melissa Peters
Michael & Suzanne Frame
Michael Kross
Michael McHugh
Michael Postal
Michael Potts
Misiu Hoffman
Neil Markus Foundation
Neil Newton
Oliver Stanton Foundation
Optimum Events
Optiver US LLC
Paul Borgman
Paul Johnson
Phyllis Johnson
Powder Days Foundation
Rachel Mueller
Raymond Liberatore
Resilience Patient Project Inc
Rick Schoen
Ritz-Carlton Chicago
RJ & ML Badenhausen Charitable Fund
Robert Keats
Ryan Drant
Ryan Long
Shinesty
Shyla McKee
Sidney Weeter
Spencer Holst
Spencer Kimball
Stacy Fousek
Stephanie Lindquist
Stephanie Wall
Stephen Huskins
Stephen Papermaster
Stephen Rader
Steven Curwin
Stio
Surfing For Life Foundation
Tami Yinger
Tara Picklo
Telluride Ski Resorts
Terri and Jeffrey Kominers
The Hamilton Group Trust
The Shubert Organization, Inc.
Timothy Gathman
Tito’s Handmade Vodka
Todd Heustess
Union College Women’s Rugby Team
Valerie London
Verl Allen
Victor and Janice Rosenberg
Virginia Koslow-DiMola
William Phillips
William Yinger