FIRST DESCENTS ANNUAL REPORT

O L R M S L O N

FIRST DESCENTS PROVIDES LIFE-CHANGING **OUTDOOR ADVENTURES** FOR YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18-39) MPACTED **BY CANCER AND OTHER** SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITIONS.

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adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions. 2019 represents another banner year for the FD community. With more participants served and demand for programs higher than ever, we have a lot to celebrate. While this report highlights these exciting milestones, it would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the extraordinary times we find ourselves navigating in 2020. As we planned for our biggest year to date and kicked off FD's 20th anniversary, we were no sooner met with a global crisis that sadly prompted a substantial number of program and event cancellations. It has forced us to evaluate how best to continue serving our constituents with safety and confidence.

Expand Programs

In 2019, we grew oncology programming by serving 1,677 of participants, a 22% increase in comparison to the year before. We committed to growing programming for young adults (YAs) impacted by cancer, and to extending FD's offerings to more populations in need. Like those navigating cancer, we know YAs with other serious health challenges are historically underserved. We believe they can benefit from our experiences and our community. After successfully hosting a pilot program for young adults living with multiple sclerosis in 2018, we have added this new demographic as a priority population and provided three programs serving 33 participants living with MS this past year.

Build Community

Research shows that peer support fosters long-term benefits for our participants, which is why First Descents remains committed to building community both at the local level and more globally. In 2019, we expanded local programming by offering single-day, multi-day, and monthly meetups for over 20 communities throughout the country. As we look to the future, we will continue to address barriers to entry for participants and ensure that more young adults have a community they can tap into for ongoing healing and support.

Prescribe Adventure

Last year, we launched Prescribe Adventure in an effort to introduce First Descents to patients closer to the time of their diagnoses. In 2019, we grew partnerships to over 800 healthcare professionals representing over 400 medical centers and hospitals nationwide. The support from our friends in the healthcare industry validates our shared belief in the healing power of adventure and community.

As we navigate the uncharted waters of 2020, we're reminded that adventure teaches us the power of adaptability and resilience. Through it all we continue to ask ourselves: how can we increase our impact and better support the First Descents community? The answer is simple. We hold true to the Out Living It spirit and rally support from our strongest ambassadors to unite behind our shared vision. Thank you for your continued belief in the mission of First Descents. Onward, to many adventures together in the future.

Ryan O'Donoghue, Executive Director

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT LETTER



I was 22 years old when my doctor found a mass the size of a grapefruit in my belly. At the time, I had just graduated college and was living in Arizona working my first job. I'll never forget sitting in that doctor's office by myself, thousands of miles away from close friends and family, when the doctor pulled up the images from the scan. She began to point out different organs to me. This is your rectum, these are your ovaries, this is your bladder and this is the mass. It was this huge thing wedged between all my organs and more than double the size of any of them.

What followed was a whirlwind of surgeries, treatments that tried to tame my tumor, and learning to manage my chronic cancer.

Now, it's been ten years of living with this extremely rare pelvic sarcoma called Aggressive Angiomyxoma. So rare, that there are only about 350 reported cases in the world. Going through cancer in my twenties was isolating. I didn't have anyone to turn to. There were no support groups for my cancer, no message boards. What I needed were people who could really understand what I was going through. Then, I discovered First Descents.

In the summer of 2015, I found myself in Estes Park, Colorado, rock climbing with a group of young adult cancer survivors. Immediately, we were able to trade cancer and surgery stories, and bond over how hard it was to go through this as a young adult. There were plenty of tears that week, but even more laughs.

I was pushed further than I thought I was capable of. On the last day of the program, we climbed a multi-pitch route. After the second pitch, I was hanging off the side of a cliff, and I started to panic. But with the help of my new First Descents community, I found a strength deep down in me that I didn't know I had, and climbed all the way to the top. In that moment, I was pushing myself to places I'd never thought I could go while living with cancer. THAT is the power of First Descents. THAT is the confidence that First Descents instilled in me. THAT is Out Living It.

Because of First Descents, and the community it has connected me to, fear no longer holds me back. Now, when I see the edge of my comfort zone, I move toward it - and then beyond it. I take a leap of faith, and drop into the rappel.

Becky "Totes" Sail

SPOTE CH

As donors, volunteers, and foundation partners, we've seen the unparalleled impact of FD. When it comes down to it, there's nothing more healing than being empowered to challenge your limits in the outdoors with the support of a community who "gets it"... These aren't just adventure programs, they're the spaces of healing and connection that sustain spirits and prevent social isolation among young adults during their journey with cancer.

> Joe & Sandy Samberg, SOUL RYEDERS

We are deeply committed to serving the cancer community in New York. That's why 13 years ago Sandy founded SOUL RYEDERS (SR), a non-profit organization that supports and connects patients, survivors and families impacted by all types of cancer – regardless of age, gender, race, treatment stage, or needs. In addition, SR provides grants to fund meaningful work at other local cancer support organizations. Joe has become increasingly engaged in SR over the years, including his role as an active participant on the Grant Committee. This is passionate and personal work for both of us, and we are always looking to build relationships with new partners who embrace common values.

We were introduced to First Descents this year through our close friends and SR community members, Jennifer and Danielle. Eleven months after being diagnosed with cancer in 2017, Danielle decided to join First Descents on an ice climbing program in Ouray, Colorado. She left the experience with a rejuvenated spirit and profound connections to other young adults like her. Upon returning to New York, she connected with her FD local adventure community and her "week-long" program never really stopped. Wherever she went, or whatever she went through, her FD family was rallying around her. In 2019, she nominated her mother Jennifer to attend FD's "Rock" program for caregivers, thereby giving her the opportunity to have a similar transformational experience and meet other individuals supporting a loved one with a cancer diagnosis.

Danielle and Jennifer shared their powerful stories with our SR Grant Committee, igniting our excitement and desire to bring First Descents' healing experiences to our New York community. We couldn't have been more thrilled to wind down 2019 by awarding FD a \$10,000 grant to expand their oncology programming in the New York area. Together, we will build a partnership that complements SR wellness programs and creates more opportunities for peer support for our clients and caregivers.

Looking ahead, we're dedicated to continue supporting First Descents both personally and professionally. As donors, volunteers, and foundation partners, we've seen the unparalleled impact of FD. When it comes down to it, there's nothing more healing than being empowered to challenge your limits in the outdoors with the support of a community who "gets it". We can't wait to see our dollars be put to good use in New York in the coming years. These aren't just adventure programs, they're the spaces of healing and connection that sustain spirits and prevent social isolation among young adults during their journey with cancer.

- Joe & Sandy Samberg, SOUL RYEDERS





PROBLEM

Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in adolescents and young adults (AYAs).

MS is the most common neuroinflammatory disease affecting young adults.

Cancer, MS, and all serious health conditions present unique challenges and obstacles to young adults.

OBSTACLES

80,000+ adolescents & young adults are diagnosed with cancer each year

Minimal peer support

Rare and aggressive tumor biology

Lack of participation in clinical trials

Disrupts normative milestones of adulthood

Higher rate of depression and psychosocial distress in young adults impacted by MS and cancer

FD PROGRAM OUTCOMES

100%

OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTED INCREASED ABILITY TO COPE WITH CANCER AND ITS EFFECTS

81% REPORTED INCREASED SELF-EFFICACY

99%

OF PARTICIPANTS WANT TO STAY INVOLVED

17% U TO 7%

PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED FEELING DEPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER FIRST DESCENTS

LEARN MORE





AT A GLANCE

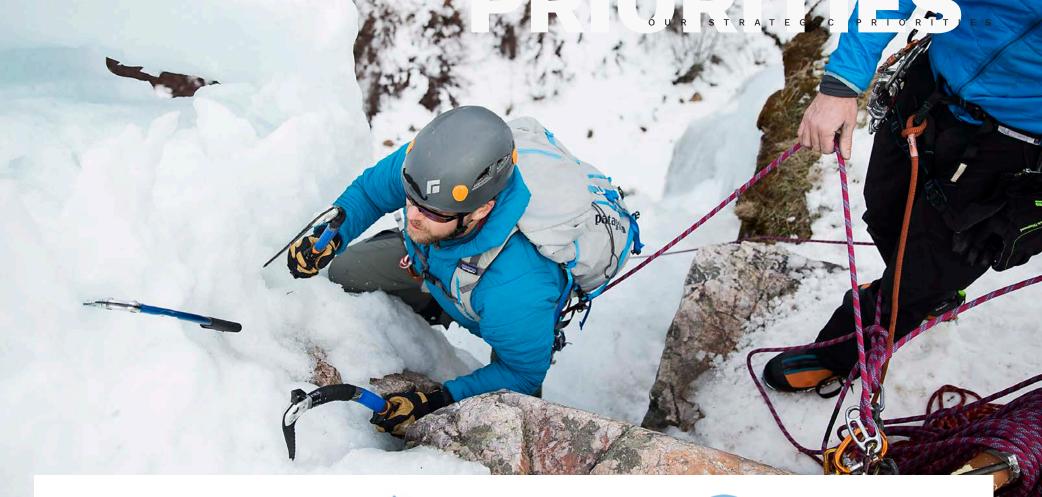
RIZZO

OUR HIGHLIGHTS 1,710 UNIQUE EXPERIENCES PROVIDED

166 TOTAL PROGRAMS

\$3.94M

2,444 PARTICIPANT INQUIRIES



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.

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.

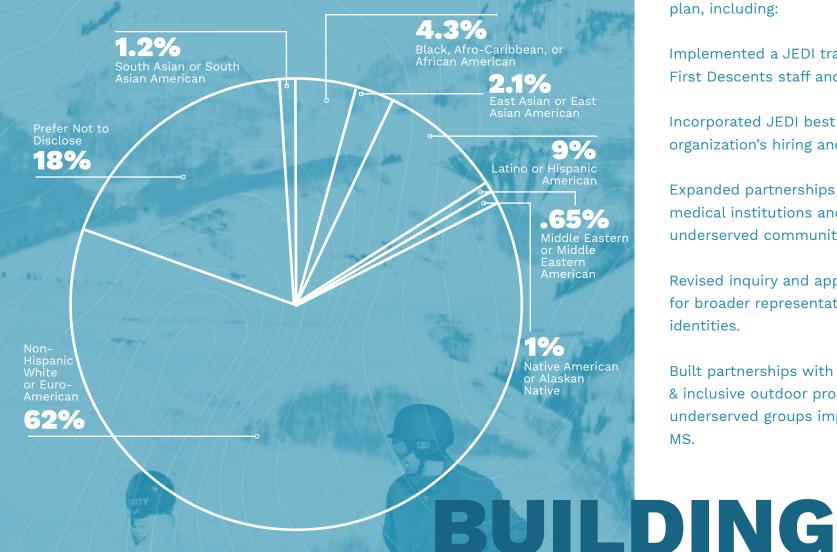


Hospitals often lack age-appropriate psychosocial survivorship programs for young adults. FD will build upon its network of healthcare professionals to reach more young adults earlier in the treatment process.



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Over the past two decades, First Descents has served over 10,000 participants. As we work to better serve the entire young adult oncology and MS communities, First Descents created a JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Committee to help reach traditionally underserved communities. We redesigned our inquiry process to allow for broader representation of racial and gender identities from the first touch point with First Descents. The chart below highlights the ethnic background of 1,886 participant inquiries from the launch of our new program application on April 18, 2019 to December 31, 2019.



In 2018, First Descents created a dedicated internal JEDI Committee to guide the organization's efforts to reach more Black, Indigenous, People of Color and LGBTQIA+ communities. Thoughout 2019, we built upon this foundation while executing a long-term plan, including:

Implemented a JEDI training component for all First Descents staff and field staff.

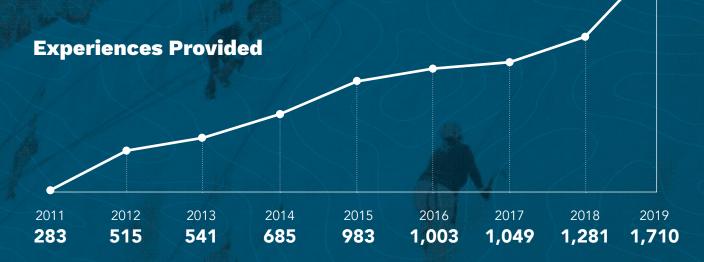
Incorporated JEDI best practices as part of the organization's hiring and interviewing process.

Expanded partnerships with healthcare centers, medical institutions and providers that care for underserved communities.

Revised inquiry and application process to allow for broader representation of racial and gender identities.

Built partnerships with field leaders in adaptive & inclusive outdoor programming to reach underserved groups impacted by cancer and MS.

our growing impact







"Eating and sharing healthy meals has become a cornerstone of FD programs. Our ultimate goal is to educate and to inspire healthy eating to improve health outcomes. On programs, professionally trained chefs prepare healthy meals, focused on fresh whole foods so that everyone is nourished, energized and able to make the most of their program experience and beyond. For us, this is an opportunity to share the healing power of food and have participants observe how this affects their bodies."

Mia "Veggetti" Lewis, FD Chef Manager

At First Descents, 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 experiences the fuel for every great FD adventure, nourishing food.

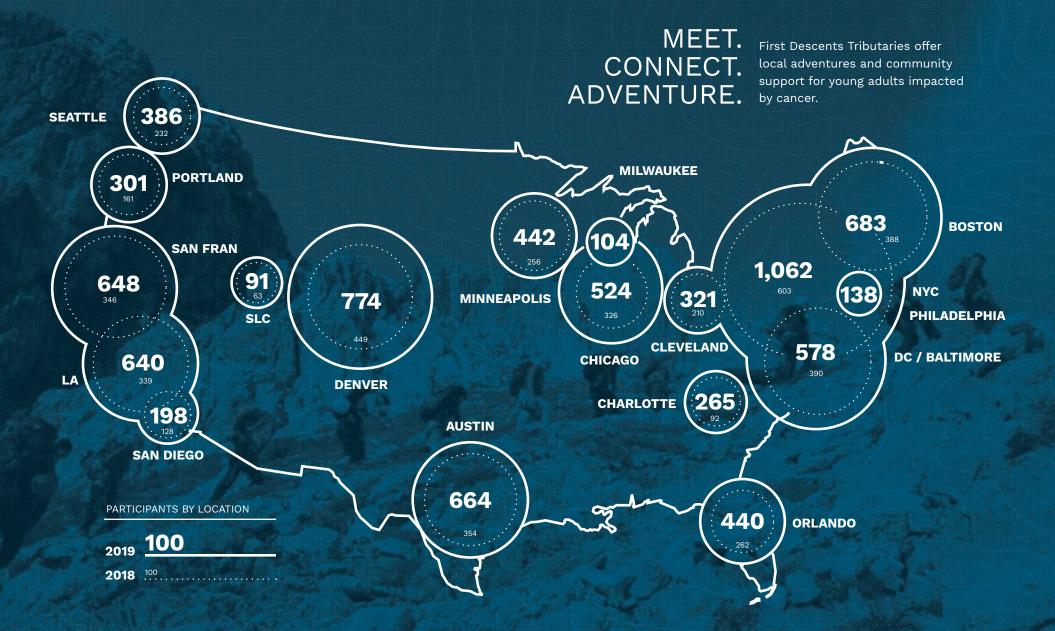


PROGRAM CHEFS

RECIPES

NUTRITION

FD TRIBUTARIES



FD TRIBUTARIES

First Descents partners with medical centers to provide opportunities for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions to attend outdoor programs. Prescribe Adventure engages healthcare professionals to empower young adults to connect with their peers through community and adventure. Research shows that our programming improves survivorship, and we're reaching more young adults through our growing network of healthcare professionals than ever before. Below are just a few of the incredible medical centers with whom we partner.





Denver, CO



Hartford, CT



Durham, NC



Springdale, AR



Portland, OR

Chapel Hill, NC



Boston, MA



Tacoma, WA



Wauwatosa, WI

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center Keck Medicine of USC Los Angeles, CA





Hackensack, NJ

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED THROUGH PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

400+

800+

MEDICAL CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS REFERRING PATIENTS

2,444

PRESCR

20+ HEALTHCARE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

P F E S C R I E E A D V E N T U R E

50/51 NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE DESIGNATED COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTERS PRESCRIBING ADVENTURE

In 2019, First Descents continued building integrated partnerships with leading hospitals and medical centers across the nation to reach patients earlier in their treatment journey. A few highlights include:

- First Descents Executive Director Ryan O'Donoghue's keynote address at the Midwest Young Adult Cancer Conference
- Nationwide features in healthcare publications, newsletters, and podcasts, including <u>Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center</u>, Tufts Medical Center, UCHealth/University of Colorado Cancer Center, UCLA Health, Cancer Support Community, RealTalk MS, Can Do Multiple Sclerosis, and more!
- Partner programs and collaborations with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Connecticut Children's, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Duke Cancer Institute, Gilda's Club Chicago, UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, and USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

"Treatment can challenge so many aspects of one's selfimage. I've had people living with metastatic disease come back from a trip and say they were reminded what their body could do, what they could accomplish despite their disease. This provides hope, some relief and a piece of their identity that gets lost. This isn't something I can process with someone. They have to experience this on a physical level."

- Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Clinical Social Worker

"As an oncology nurse, I meet people in the midst of their worst days. I don't have the privilege of knowing who they were before they heard the words "you have cancer" and their lives were changed forever. First Descents reassures me that those terrible days won't define their future, and that beyond that diagnosis - beyond all of the tests, procedures, and treatments — there is still an entire world of adventure waiting for them. The continued support of the First Descents family reminds me that, if you're willing to look for it, something really beautiful can come out of even the worst of circumstances."

- FD Medical Volunteer (RN)

OUT LIVING IT PROJECT

"Although the physical experience and adventure has made a phenomenal impact on my self confidence and acceptance of my own health adversity, the biggest impact on my life has been the people. The stories. I still keep in touch with many of my fellow First Descents alumni. It's an incredible support network, and by raising as much money as I can through the Out Living It Project, I can ensure that many more young people can benefit."



Will "Dr. Glaucomflecken" Flanary, FD Participant and OLIP Fundraiser

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 \$5.44M across 7,955 projects with 22,646 supporters.

5,348

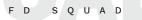
SUPPORTERS

\$643,302

RAISED

PROJECTS

53



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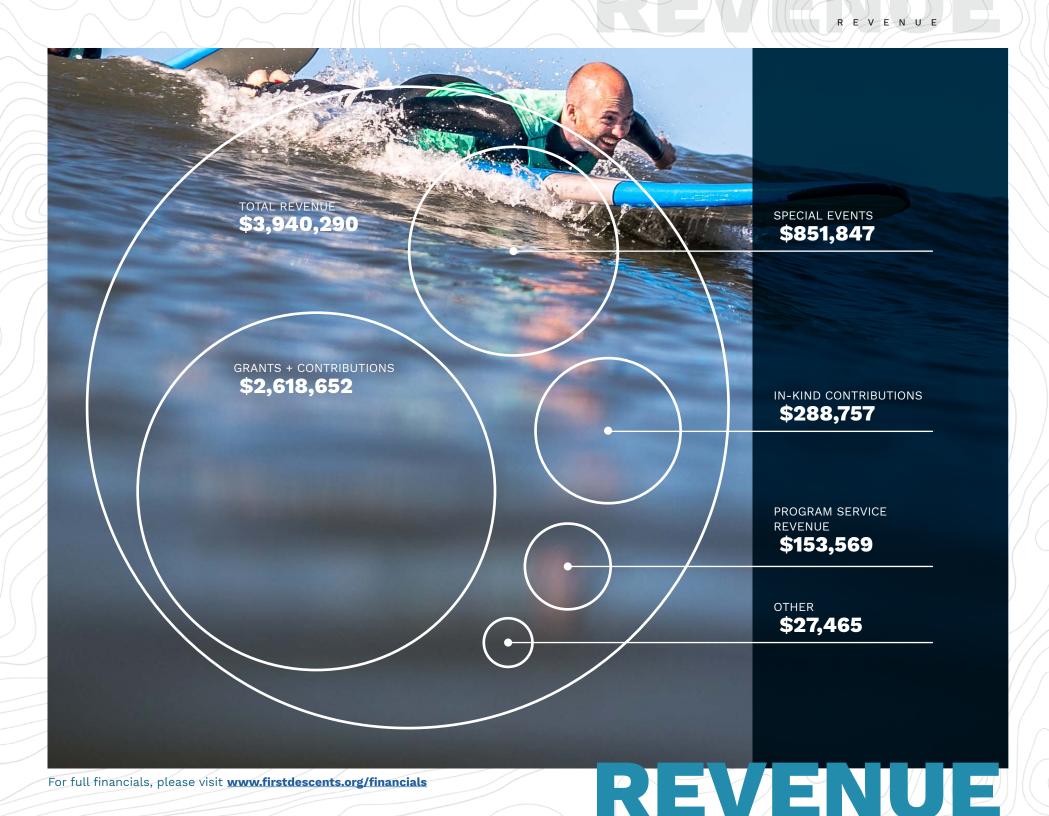


FINANCIALS

In 2019, our generous community generated more than \$3.94 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

7%

19%



74% of 2019 expenses were allocated to programs, providing 1,710 unique adventure experiences

PROGRAMS **\$2,599,158**

DEVELOPMENT **\$648,863**

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION **\$248,146**

EXPENSES

GIVING SOU ETES

G



Always Keep Pedaling Foundation Amy "Wildflower" Lin Anonymous Brent & Lisa Goldstein Cathleen "Chunks" Robinson Chad McWhinney David and Iris Gordon Debbie & Rob King-Ford Eva Ho Grady Durham James and Crystal Dean Jennifer Feikin Jeremy & Sandra Shevlin Joel & Tiffany Appel Josh and Jennifer Behr The Kantor Family Katherine & Doug Milham Katie and Tom Morgan Kip Cross and Jessica Martin Kirk MacKenzie Michael & Violet Gross **Mindy Boyum** Nancy Oaks **Prather's Market Rich & Diane Easton** Rise Above It (RAI) Wacky Warriors

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Chad McWhinney Joel Appel Kirk MacKenzie Rise Above It (RAI)

\$100,000 +

Genentech WilmerHale Chad McWhinney VF Foundation Michael & Violet Gross

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Ritz Carlton Bachelor Gulch Whitney Kroenke & Nyck Silverstein Haymakers For Hope, Inc. Velocity Global INDUSTRY Nancy Oaks The Offield Family Foundation Bob & Amy Martin

\$25,000 - \$49,999

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\$10,000 - \$24,999

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\$5,000 - \$9,999

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\$2,500 - \$4,999

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