

FIRST DESCENTS

# HEALTHCARE PARTNERS





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

# MISSION

## PROBLEMS

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% ↓ TO 7%

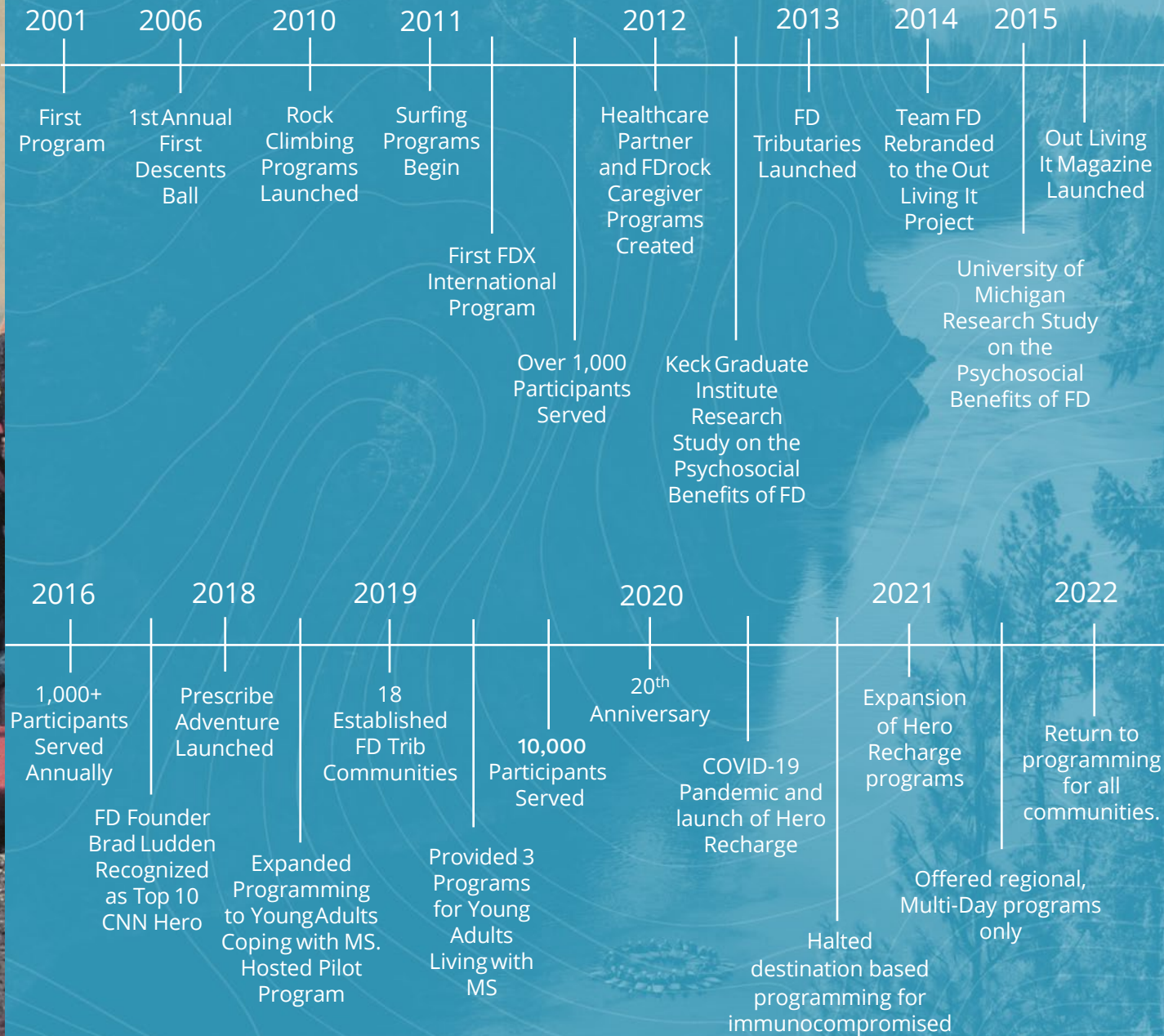
PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED FEELING DEPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER FIRST DESCENTS



# WHY IT WORKS?



# 22 YEARS OUT LIVING IT



# 22 YEARS OUT LIVING IT



# WHO WE SERVE



## YOUNG ADULTS LIVING WITH AND SURVIVING CANCER

Founded in 2001, First Descents' mission was to serve young adults impacted by cancer. Since that first whitewater kayaking program, we've provided outdoor adventures to thousands of oncology participants who have since built and maintained a thriving community of adventure and peer support.

## YOUNG ADULTS LIVING WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

In 2018, First Descents piloted our first program for young adults impacted by MS. After FD Founder Brad Ludden was recognized in 2016 as a Top 10 CNN Hero, we realized that adventure could be transformative for young adults impacted by other serious health conditions. Since 2018, we've continued to scale our programs for those living with MS year after year.

## HEALTHCARE WORKERS

In partnership with the Dunkin Joy in Childhood Foundation, First Descents launched HERO RECHARGE - outdoor adventure programs for frontline healthcare workers in 2020. Initially focused on healthcare workers fighting on the COVID-19 frontlines, First Descents plans to scale our healthcare worker programming to those who serve oncology and MS patients.



## CAREGIVERS

In an effort to better serve young adults, First Descents continues to expand programs to new communities. We know that serious health conditions impact family members and supporters, though these caregivers are often left without resources and community. Since 2013, we've offered programs to oncology caregivers. As we continue to expand our MS programs, we plan to provide outdoor adventures to MS caregivers as well.

# WHO WE SERVE



# PROGRAMMATIC OFFERINGS

OUR PROGRAM MODEL



## Core Programs

Core Programs are available to young adults (ages 18-45) impacted by cancer and multiple sclerosis, caregivers, and healthcare workers.



## Community Adventures

Part of the Out Living It Project, Community Adventures are adventure experiences created and facilitated by FD alumni and members of the FD community.



## Prescribe Adventure

Partner with FD to improve the emotional and physical health for the adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer and MS patients in your care. Whether you refer patients to our programs or want to sponsor a program, we are committed to supporting your team to address the unique needs of AYA survivors.

# PROGRAMMATIC OFFERINGS



First Descents partners with medical centers to extend our free adventure programs to more young adults in need of psychosocial support. Research shows that our Programs improve survivorship, and we're reaching more young adults through our growing network of healthcare professionals than ever before.

Prescribe Adventure is our ongoing initiative to engage healthcare professionals to empower their patients by referring them to experience community connection and life-changing adventure with FD. Below are just a few of the incredible medical centers with whom we partner.

**1,200+**  
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS  
ENGAGED THROUGH PRESCRIBE  
ADVENTURE

**525+**  
MEDICAL CENTERS AND  
HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS  
REFERRING PATIENTS



Tampa, FL



Hartford, CT



Durham, NC



Springdale, AR



Boston, MA



Tacoma, WA



Wauwatosa, WI



Los Angeles, CA



Philadelphia, PA



Chapel Hill, NC



Milwaukee, WI



Portland, OR





“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.”

- Patient Navigator

“Treatment can challenge so many aspects of one’s self-image. 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)

# TESTIMONIALS





**Extend the healing power of adventure by getting involved with First Descents. These are just a few of the options for how to share FD with your patients.**

### **Include First Descents in your Patient Care Planning**

- Include FD as an essential step in the healing journey of your patients.
- Highlight First Descents program options in your newsletter, resource folders, survivorship clinics, and support groups
- Provide free, life-changing outdoor adventures for young adults (18-45) impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions.
- Improve mental, physical, and emotional health of participants.
- Build supportive peer-to-peer relationships.

### **Share our Info with your Community**

- Schedule a zoom call with FD for patients and providers
- Highlight First Descents program options in your hospital or organization newsletter, blog, podcast, resource folders, survivorship clinics, and support groups
- Invite FD staff & alumni as event, conference, and resource fair speakers

### **Support First Descents Directly**

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Local Events & Fundraisers
- Out Living It Projects





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@first\_descents

#OutLivingIt