

2021



FIRST DESCENTS

ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION

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

MISSION

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



In my early 30s, I started to notice my peripheral vision was off, so I called my eye doctor who asked me to come in the following morning. It was then that I was diagnosed with ocular melanoma, a rare form of melanoma that affects 6 in a million people.

What followed was a week of radiation therapy resulting in the loss of vision in my left eye, but I learned that I was Stage 1A with less than 2% chance of my disease spreading and I only needed bi-annual liver scans, so I returned to my normal life.

My first ultrasound came back clean but after my second scan, I learned I had a dozen suspicious lesions on my liver and likely my cancer had metastasized. Soon after, it was confirmed that I had developed stage 4, metastatic, incurable ocular melanoma. At the time, there was only one FDA approved drug for my cancer with less than 15% survival rate. My best hope was clinical trials. We weren't thinking of "survival" – we were looking for something to prolong my life.

The next several years would consist of 4 clinical trials with a myriad of side effects, two liver embolizations, and several major operations.

The physical toll settled and the emotional trauma rolled in. Few people truly understood what it was like to fight cancer, particularly one that is incurable with a high fatality rate. I was craving connection – just one person that would understand. This is when I learned about First Descents.

I joined the First Descents' Denver community for a night of camping in August 2016. The next day, I climbed a 14,000' mountain with this community. Every participant was so positive and alive. I was witnessing the Out Living It mantra firsthand and I felt I belonged to this group of strangers-turned-family. It was such a relief. It was on that mountain that I released cancer fighting Katie and all the burdens she was carrying and "Emoji" was born.

August 2017, I found myself dipping my toes in the Clark Fork River on a First Descents kayaking program. I was in no way prepared for the intense physical and emotional journey I would experience. As we kayaked each day and sat by the campfire each evening, there were admissions of our darkest hours and validation for the fears, anxieties, anger, and sadness that comes with cancer. There were tears but even more laughter.

June 2020, my story took a huge turn. After years of tumor stabilization and in the midst of the pandemic, scans revealed my tumors had nearly doubled in size. I enrolled in my fourth clinical trial which involved a 21-day stay in Pittsburgh that included 7 days of chemo and a 20-minute TIL infusion.

Scans showed that my tumors were shrinking, some were disappearing, but one was growing and it was determined by my doctors to operate to remove the remaining tumor.

On September 17, 2020, I underwent a major operation to remove half my liver. I woke up to hear the words I never thought I'd hear, "Your cancer is gone – you have no evidence of disease."

Cancer takes away so much, but cancer has also given me so much: deepened relationships, new friends, and my FD family.

Cancer has taught me to say yes. I've done more in the past eight years than I might have in my lifetime thanks to First Descents. They pushed me to my limit, time and time again. First Descents helped me look to the future: worry less about death and more about what's next; to scale that rock, to make that leap off that cliff, to ski that mountain, to kayak that rapid, to take in the mountain views, to share my story. To Out Live It.

Katie "Emoji" Doble, First Descents Oncology Participant



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



As we rang in 2021, the world continued to reel from the impacts of the global pandemic. After launching programming for healthcare workers on the frontlines of the greatest public health crisis of our lifetimes in 2020, we refocused our energy on safely serving our oncology and multiple sclerosis (MS) communities.

In an effort to host the safest experiences possible, we made the decision to provide shorter, 3-day programs instead of our standard week-long adventures. As a result, we provided 66 programs serving 583 participants across the

four communities we serve: Oncology, Multiple Sclerosis, Caregivers, and Healthcare Workers. It's been inspiring to witness how adventure, connection, and shared experiences have created opportunities to heal during these uniquely challenging times.

First Descents also doubled down on its commitment to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI). We operate at the confluence of two industries with historical and significant inequities: healthcare advocacy and outdoor recreation. By

expanding and systematizing the roles of our internal JEDI committee and our JEDI Advisory Council, we now review all ongoing organizational initiatives and policies through an equity lens that helps to identify blindspots and challenge our implicit biases. We've re-evaluated practices and policies within the workplace, across our partnerships, and through the life cycle of our program design, recruitment, and delivery to put inclusivity at the center of our work.

Most importantly, diverse representation increased

across our programming leading to our most diverse program season in FD's history. In 2021, 41% of participants self-identified their ethnicity as something other than "Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American" representing an increase from 32% of participants in 2019. While we recognize we're taking early steps on a much longer journey, we are dedicated to building and maintaining a culture of inclusion that empowers everyone within our community.

As we continue to navigate a new post-pandemic normal,

we turn to our greatest teachers and strongest ambassadors as our north star: our community. These past few years have reminded us of the power and resilience of those we serve, and the constant undertow of the Out Living It spirit. Please join me in celebrating the courageous members of our community who inspire us each and every day.

Thank you for your support of our life-giving work. Onward, to many more adventures.

Ryan "Wolf" O'Donoghue
First Descents CEO

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% ↓ TO 7%

PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED FEELING DEPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER FIRST DESCENTS

[LEARN MORE](#)



WHY IT WORKS?

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

583

PARTICIPANTS SERVED

66

TOTAL PROGRAMS

1,994

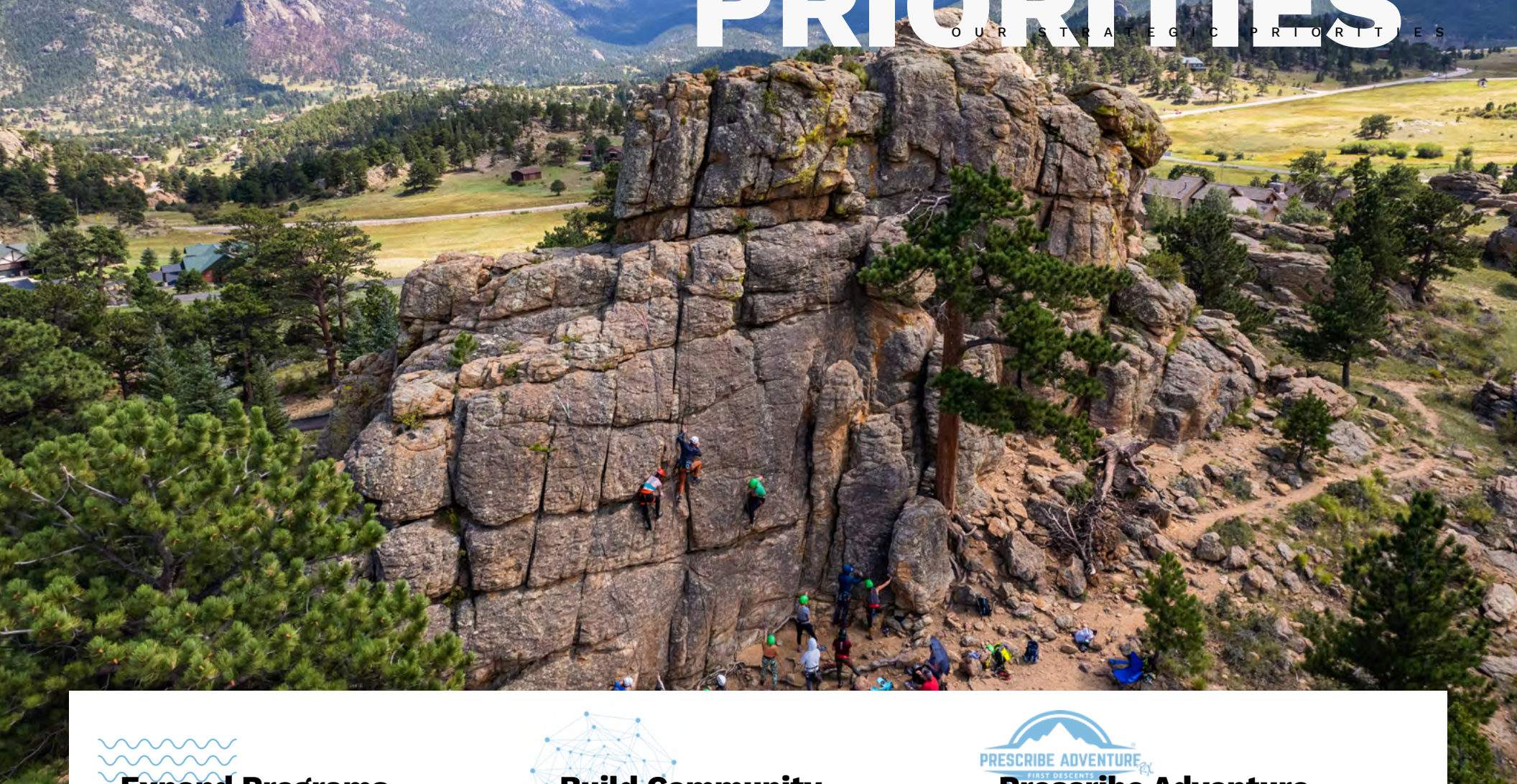
PARTICIPANT INQUIRIES

\$4.63M

FUNDS RAISED



OUR HIGHLIGHTS



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

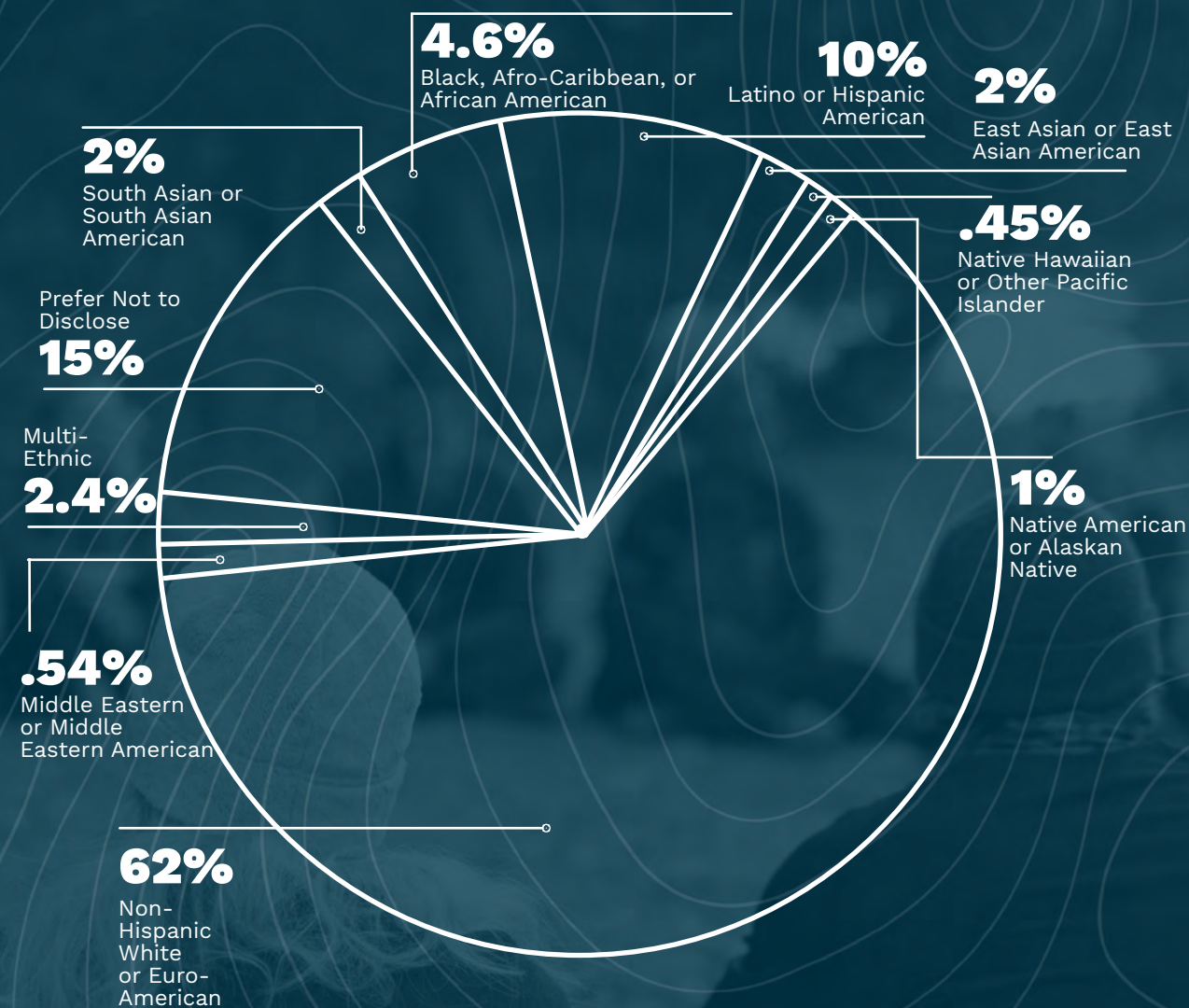
Young adults coping with health conditions often experience feelings of isolation and alienation. FD will strengthen local adventure communities and nurture supportive peer relationships that provide ongoing healing.



Prescribe Adventure

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.

In 2021, First Descents continued working to reach those traditionally underserved within the young adult oncology and MS communities as well as healthcare workers and caregivers. The chart below highlights the ethnic background of 1,994 participant inquiries from 2021.



In 2021, First Descents expanded and systematized the role of the JEDI Advisory Council to further support our commitment to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI). Our JEDI AC now reviews all organizational initiatives to identify biases, shortcomings and areas for improvement. With their support, our language is stronger, our policies more equitable, and our commitment more action-oriented. At the same time, First Descents developed policies and trainings to advance our internal JEDI goals, including the following milestones:

In 2021, FD expanded our travel scholarship grant with a goal of further reducing barriers to attending destination-based programs. Travel scholarships are available to every participant who applies, with no proof of financial need required.

FD completely overhauled its hiring and onboarding processes to reduce biases and recruit candidates of color. Our new hiring system includes a new implicit bias training required for all staff, identical interview questions for all candidates, along with a scorecard system to evaluate each interview without bias, posting position openings on job boards dedicated to diverse hirings, and contracting an HR consultant and recruiter to reduce workplace cultural bias.

In 2021, FD required all staff and board members to take part in Camber Outdoors' "Building Blocks of DEI" series, and made additional training available to all staff, board, lead staff and contract staff.



First Descents partners with medical centers and healthcare organizations nationwide to provide opportunities for young adult patients, caregivers and providers to attend our outdoor programs. Through the Prescribe Adventure campaign, FD engages healthcare partners and equips them with the resources they need to empower young adults to connect with their peers through community and adventure. Research shows that our programming improves psychosocial outcomes including body image, self compassion and self esteem, as well as reduced alienation, depression, and fatigue among FD participants.

1,045+

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED
THROUGH PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

520+

MEDICAL CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE
ORGANIZATIONS REFERRING PATIENTS

PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

In 2021, First Descents continued building integrated partnerships with leading hospitals and medical centers, specifically focusing on building partnerships with leading multiple sclerosis institutions in order to expand our offerings for the MS community. A few highlights include:

- Established accessible program locations by teaming up with world-class lodging partners and outfitters in Santa Cruz, Estes Park and Rogue River which are best suited to serve the MS population for years to come.
- Partnered with CanDO MS who were instrumental in supporting program recruitment. CanDo MS will continue to enroll MS constituents via newsletters, social media, and more.
- FD became an official service provider of the National MS Society. FD is now socialized with all young adult constituents who contact the NMSS support line and patient navigators are trained to share information about FD programs.
- FD attended and exhibited at both the 2021 Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) Annual Meeting and the 2021 CMSC Patient Program, “More About MS”

“First Descents isn’t taking people kayaking. FD is allowing them to connect with other people who have Multiple Sclerosis and it all happens organically. And they aren’t talking about MS and illness, they are talking about the adventure they want to do together when they return home. It is a powerful community. These types of programs are life changing.”

- **Kathy Costello**, Vice President of Programs, CanDo MS



The **Out Living It Project (OLIP)** is where adventure, creativity, and philanthropy collide. Out Living It Project participants can launch their own unique fundraiser or join an existing project or race to raise funds and awareness for First Descents.

In 2021, Team FD athletes competed in renowned races including the Leadville 100 MTB Race, Leadville 100 Run, TransRockies Run, and the NYC Marathon. **To date, the Out Living It Project Give Back Adventures have raised \$6.2M across 8,374 projects with 27,392 supporters.**

\$472,987
RAISED

2,379
SUPPORTERS

181
PROJECTS

[LEARN MORE](#)



OUT LIVING IT PROJECT

When I earned my first finisher's buckle at the Leadville 100 mountain bike race in 2007, I never imagined that I would still be doing the race 15 years later. As a First Descents Board Member and veteran FD Program volunteer, I have experienced firsthand the impact of adventure and peer connection on the lives of young adults with cancer and multiple sclerosis. The Out Living It Project has given me the platform to raise over \$1.5Million for FD over these 15 years. It is extremely gratifying for me and my donors to know that we have so directly impacted the lives of countless participants. Though the pandemic paused our efforts, it is great to be Out Living It again!



- **Brent Goldstein**, First Descents Board Member



Board of Directors

Founder Brad “Man Salmon” Ludden

Chairperson Debbie “Zipper” King Ford

Vice Chair Dr. Brandon Hayes-Lattin

Secretary Alix “Snooki” Berglund

Treasurer Michael “Volcano” Kantor

Medical Director Larry “Larry Boy” Smith

Ben Davis

Brent “Sunday” Goldstein

Jean Smart

Joel “Fuji” Appel

Julie Wright

Kip “Wombat” Cross

Michael Gross

Susan “Hawk” Rafferty

Tanum “UniKitty” Davis Bohen

Advisory Josh “Bear” Behr

Honorary Director Brad “Uncle B” Reiss

Director, In Memoriam Rochelle “Hefty” Shoretz

Staff

Founder Brad “Man Salmon” Ludden

CEO Ryan “Wolf” O’Donoghue

Director of Programs Mackenzie “Spudz” McGrath

Senior Programs Manager Paul “Crash” Kelly

Program Manager Angelina “Katniss” Mangiardi

Program Coordinator Riley “Chum” Schumm

Program Coordinator Kate “Lil Mo” Medici

Program Coordinator Sophie “Bubbles” Ohaus

Director of Advancement Ray “Cheddar Bunny” Shedd

Senior Marketing Manager Becca “Turtle” Rohrer

Marketing Coordinator Anna “006” Kenyon

Marketing & Events Coordinator Anna “Whiplash” Wallace

Development Officer Emma “Piano Pat” Burick

Development Coordinator Andrew “Tops” Coulter

Director of Finance and Operations Adam “Toby” Schuster

Finance & Operations Manager Keith “Focus” Feikema

Global Experience Developer Willie “Sweet D” Kern

FINANCIALS

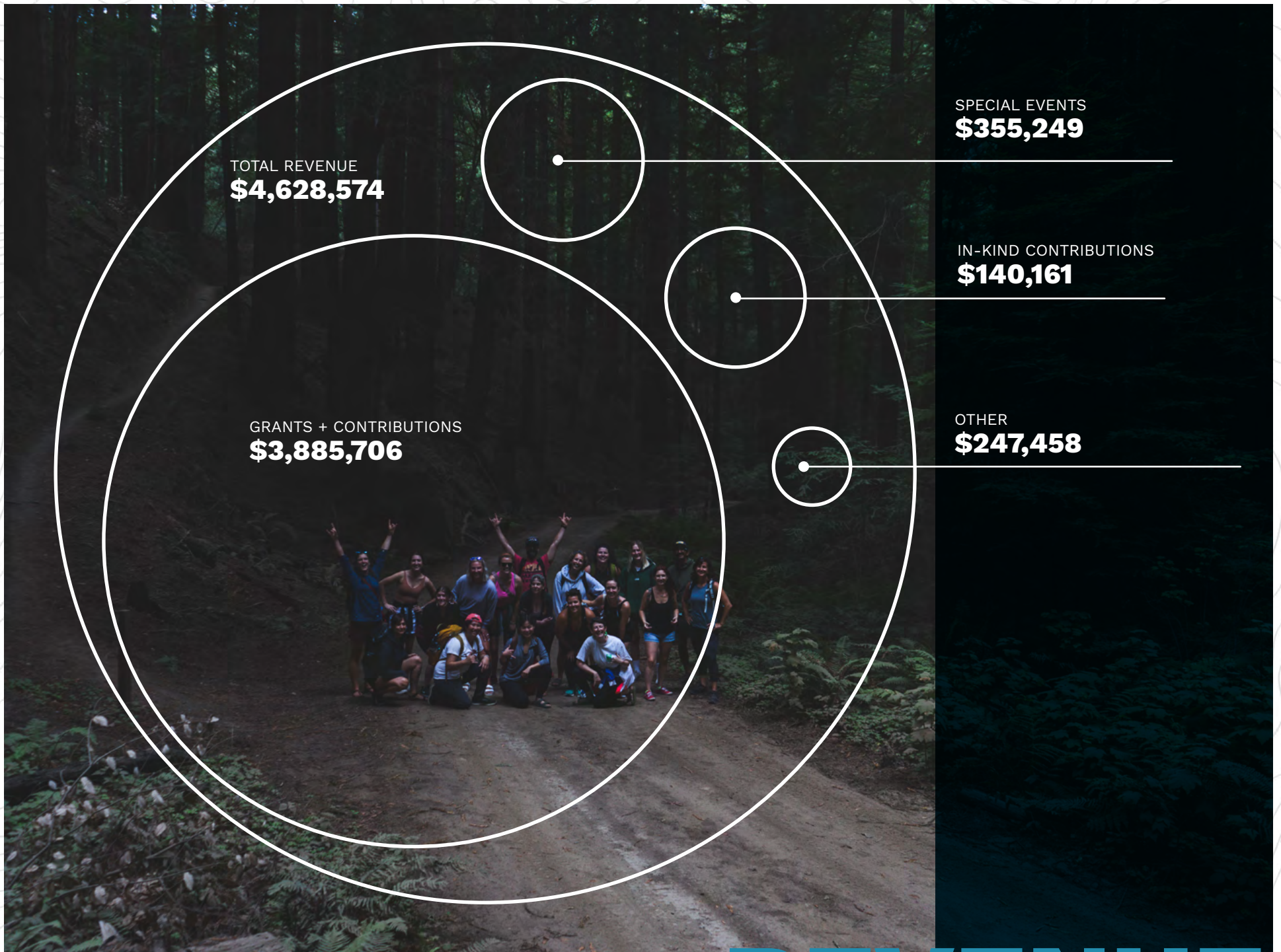
In 2021, our generous community generated more than \$4.63 million representing a banner fundraising year.

In recognition of our financial transparency, Guidestar awarded FD with its coveted platinum ranking.

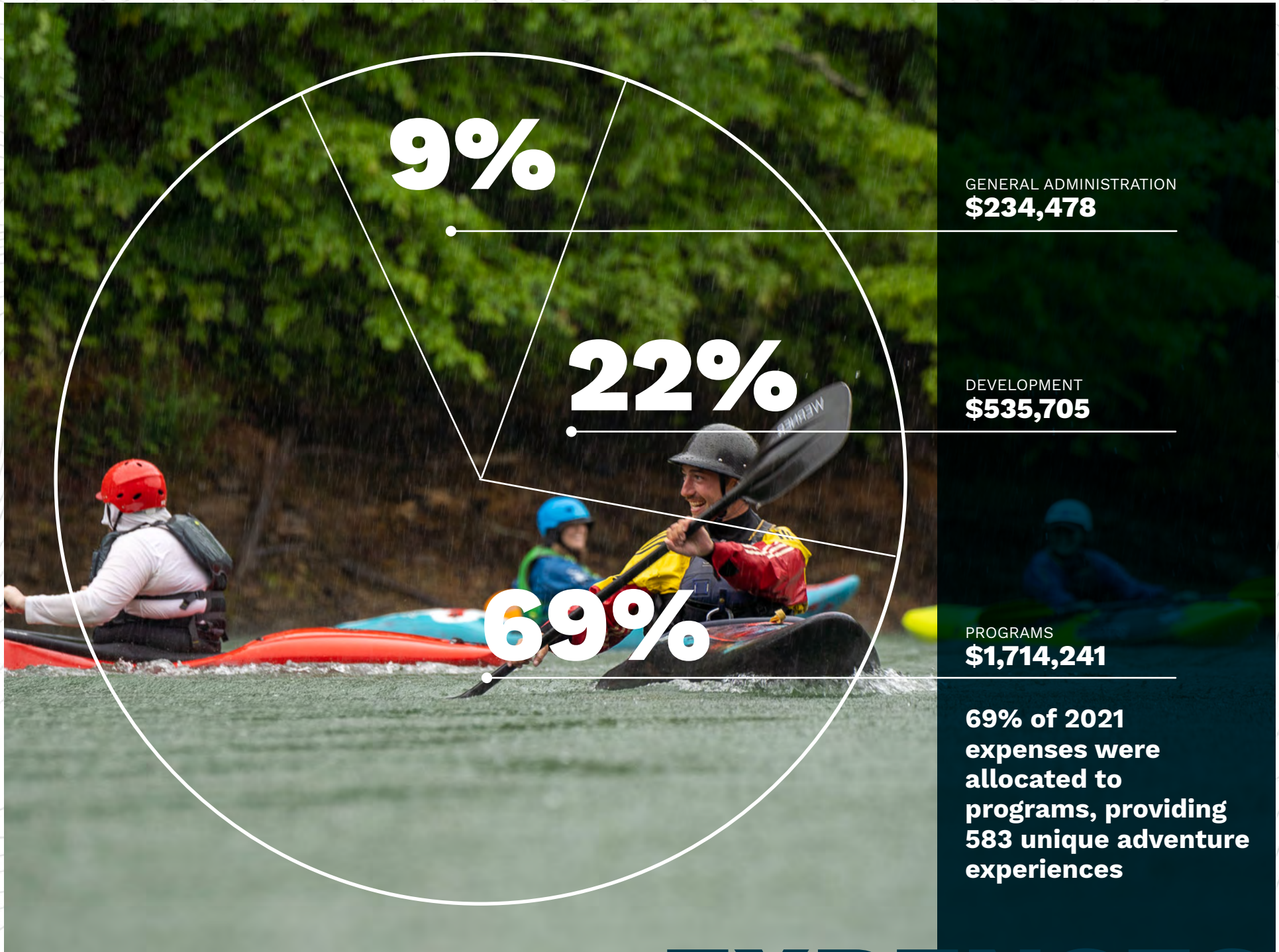
For full financials, please visit www.firstdescents.org/financials



FINANCIALS



For full financials, please visit www.firstdescents.org/financials





Always Keep Pedaling Foundation

Amy Lin

Anonymous

Brent & Lisa Goldstein

Cathleen Robinson

Chad McWhinney

Debbie King Ford & Rob Ford

Eva Ho

Grady Durham

James & Crystal Dean

Jennifer Feikin

Jeremy & Sandra Shevlin

Joel & Tiffany Appel

Josh & Jennifer Behr

Katherin & Doug Milham

Katie & Tom Morgan

Kip Cross & Jessica Martin

Kirk MacKenzie

Michael & Mia Kantor

Michael & Violet Gross

Mindy Boyum

Nancy Oaks

Prather's Market

Rich & Diane Easton

Rise Above It

Wacky Warriors



Anna "Snoop" Noland

Ben & Julie Wright

Brad Ludden

Brent & Lisa Goldstein

Greg McFadden

Gutkin Family

James & Crystal Dean

Jamie "Alpha" Stec

Jason & Laura Minard

Jennifer "Galaxy Girl" Jackson

John Ourisman

Kelly Hoffman

Lois & James Benfield

Paul Fraynd & Katie "Emoji" Doble

Paul Johnson

Susan Doran

Theresa Wilson

Timothy Sheets

Travis Stover

Will "Stand Up" Flanary

Zach Calkins



Chad McWhinney

Joel & Tiffany Appel

Kirk Mackenize

Sandy & Joe Samberg

Rise Above It



Alix & Hans Berglund

Brent & Lisa Goldstein

Jennifer Mills

Kevin & Whitney Zimmerman

Mark & Marshall Stockseth

Nancy & Rob Samit

Penni Thow

Rita Lamoureux

Sandy & Joe Samberg

Shine Foundation

Wacky Warriors

\$100,000 +

Genentech
 Michael Gross Family Foundation
 Omaze
 Sandy & Joe Samberg
 Small Business Administration (SBA)
 #StartSmall LLC
 Tap Cancer Out
 Wend II, Inc.

\$50,000 — \$99,999

Anahata Foundation
 Chad McWhinney
 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
 I'm Not Done Yet Foundation
 Kimbal & Christiana Musk
 Kirk MacKenzie
 The Offield Family Foundation
 Velocity Global
 VF Foundation

\$25,000 — \$49,999

Anonymous
 The Anschutz Foundation
 Caring for Denver
 The Gateway Fund II of the Denver Foundation
 Gray Foundation
 Pete Rive & Natasha Dvorak
 Rich Byrne
 Scott Lynes
 Servier Pharmaceuticals LLC

The Tappan Easton Foundation
 William Flanary

\$10,000 — \$24,999

Anonymous
 American Junior Golf Foundation
 Ben & Julie Wright
 Bob & Amy Martin
 Brent & Lisa Goldstein
 Brian Hoyt
 Casey O'Malley
 Chris Hermon
 Chuck Ludden
 Debbie King Ford & Rob Ford
 Edward & Marsha Mattison
 Epperson Family Foundation
 First Responders Children's Foundation
 Haymakers For Hope, Inc.
 Joel & Tiffany Appel
 Joy in Childhood Foundation (Dunkin Brands)
 Ken deLaski
 Kevin & Elizabeth Keating
 Mark & Marshall Stockseth
 Matt Turner & Julia Mauro
 Matt Zimmerman
 Medidata Solutions
 Mellam Family Foundation
 Nancy Oaks
 River Roots
 Rod & Linda Gray
 Sam & Alexandria Warren

Shawn & Richard Tomasello
 SOUL RYEDERS
 Tanum Davis & Sean Bohen
 The Char & Chuck Fowler Family Foundation

\$5,000 — \$9,999

Alyssa Snyder
 Amy Lin
 Barbara McCafferty Family Foundation
 Dr. Alexander Robb & Dr. Jenna Tjossem-Robb
 BNY Mellon Charitable Gift Fund
 Brad Kreidle
 Brady & Kristen Dolsen
 Brandon Hayes-Lattin
 Cathleen Robinson
 Clif Family Foundation
 David & Iris Gordon
 Doug & Katherine Milham
 Emmett Foundation
 Gary & Christine Muskett
 Hans & Alix Berglund
 Jennifer Mills
 Jeremy & Sandra Shevlin
 John Geller
 Josh & Jennifer Behr
 Kim Metcalf
 Kip Cross & Jessica Martin
 Lisa Kohl
 Marcia Donziger
 Matt Fargo
 Max & Elaine Appel

Michael Hammond
 Rylee Johnston & Ryan Wells
 The Kirby-Jones Foundation
 Travis Stork
 Troy Cox & Adeo Alday
 Vail Valley Surgery Center, LLC

\$2,500 — \$4,999

Alison Hadden
 Amy & Chris Hart
 Brian Levin
 BWBacon Group
 Charlotte & Chuck Fowler
 Chauncey Tanton
 Chris Hansen
 Danny Effron
 Donald Weaver
 Doug & Dana Flora
 E.H. & M.E. Bowerman Advised Fund
 Eric Fretz
 Eric Schweitzer
 Frank Fumich
 Grace Brann
 Harmon Foundation, Inc.
 Helene & Andrew Glick
 Howard Postal
 Jack Garner
 James & Crystal Dean
 James & Lois Benfield
 James Hiseler
 Jeffrey Hoffman
 Jesse Sanders
 Jessica Billingsley
 Jill Dahan
 John & Liz Ridyard
 John Colonna
 John Lacy
 Jonathan Been
 Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation

Katherine Estes Rogers Foundation
 Kevin & Whitney Zimmerman
 Kristin L. Gardner Foundation
 Kristine & Tom Dowd
 Lori Lyons
 Mark Harmon
 Mark Scully
 Martin Carrigan
 Meghan Newcomer
 Michael & Mia Kantor
 Myron Holscher
 Nancy E. Barton Foundation
 Newman's Own Foundation
 Overbrook Family Advised Fund of
 Serena Altschul
 Paul Berliner
 Paul Johnson
 Prather's Market
 Renee Noland
 Richard Michaux
 Ross Stern
 Ryan Foley
 Samira Woodings
 Stephanie Webber
 Stephen Turner
 Taylor Bevis
 Taylor Boylan
 The Steadman Clinic Lynda Sampson
 Thomas Blumenthal
 William & Molly Gilmore
 William Workman

Terry McNamara
 The Omidyar Group
 TransRockies Race Series
 Trevor Stern
 Von Jones
 Waldron Charitable Fund

\$1,000 — \$2,499

Aaron Batte
 Adam Wertz
 Albert Davidson Jr.
 Andrew Lazerow
 Andrew Pitakos
 Andrew Schuman
 Andrew Tu
 Anthony Pigliacampo
 Austin Kuhrmeyer
 Bailey Family Foundation
 Barry & Marilyn Goodman
 Bart Foster
 Ben & Shirley Eisler
 Bill & Sarah Ross
 Bill Gregorak
 Blake Nyman
 Bob & Kim Hammer
 Bret Burton
 Brian Ciciora
 Brian Krull
 Bruce & Ellen Winston
 Bruce Goldstein
 Byron Walker
 Cari & Kimberly Howland

Carol Hordis
 Catering by Design
 Charles Johnson
 Charles Lozner
 Chris Nehls
 Christine Goethals
 Christopher Mutzel
 Christopher Pilat
 Christopher Walters
 Christopher Watson
 Christy Orris
 Clifford Ruff
 Corey Jensen
 Dalfen Industrial
 Daniel Kaufman
 David & Robin Gonzales
 David Christian
 David Freibaum
 David Ratner
 David Ruf
 David Weaver
 Deanna Byck
 Denver Health
 Derek Wintle
 Drew Fink & Daniela Uribe
 DrumsForCures Inc
 Edward & Kathleen Quinn
 Elizabeth & Justin Bruns
 Enrique Tamayo
 Eric Beaty
 Eric Glass
 Erin Moore

Ethan Castro
 Faith Goldstein
 Frank & Joyce Puglia
 Gable Silvan
 Gavin Lantzy
 George Rizk
 Giving Assistant, Inc.
 Heritage Heights Academy
 Hilary Schiff
 James & Kimberly Hakala
 James & Carolyn Brett Charitable
 Foundation
 James Clydesdale
 Jay Hirsh
 Jayne Flinn
 Jean Smart
 Jenny & Greg Baldwin
 Jesse Brownell
 Jo Ann Neusner
 Joan & Gene Walsh
 Joel Heath
 John Crittenden
 John Hammond
 John Ikalowych
 John Livesey
 John Ourisman
 Jon Henrichsen
 Jonathan Georger
 Jonathan Graham
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 Jonathan Mottern
 Jonathan Teaford

Joseph Colletti
 Joseph Guilmartin
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 Keith Brisson
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 Kevin Connors
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 Kyle Jansen
 Larry Smith
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 Leigh Augustine
 LendUS
 Lisa Ihm
 Lori Wellins
 M Harger
 M. Robert Burman & Carol W. Burman
 Family Foundation Fund
 Marc & Lindsey Gutman
 Marckwardt Family Charitable Fund
 Margot Badenhausen
 Mark Imbertson
 Mark Kogod
 Matt Holmes
 Melissa Lawrence & Shawn Madden
 Merle Postal

Merritt Hopper
 Michael & Karen Standish
 Michael Cessario
 Michael Corridan
 Michael Gellman
 Michael Saltman
 Michael Sullivan
 Michele Resnick
 National Christian Foundation
 Neil & Marcy Cohen
 Nick & Caitlin Smarrelli
 Nick Burgess
 Nicole Tondre
 Olga Macedo
 Patricia Spencer
 Paul Borgman
 Paul Brown
 Paul Rago
 Peter McBride
 Phyllis Johnson
 Randall Loker
 Richard Rothgeb
 Rick & Cathy West
 Rob Mossman
 Rob Shaver
 Robin Cheung
 Ryan Drant
 Ryan Long
 Ryan Turbyfill
 Samit Family Foundation
 Sarah Uram
 Sasha Pierson

Scott & Amy Brody
 Scott Beardsley
 Scott Kaplan
 Scott Nimmer
 Sean Glynn
 Seth Waddell
 Silas Eldredge & Lara Nickel
 Stephen Huskins
 Stephen Nilsen
 Steve Friedman
 Steven & Gail Shak
 Steven Barardo
 Suzy, Nancy & Carol Minkoff
 SylvanSport LLC
 The Baupost Group, L.L.C.
 The Spanx by Sarah Blakely Foundation
 Fund
 Thomas McCafferty
 Tim Wakeland
 Timothy McCabe
 Vincent Connolly
 Walter Hagstrom
 Wesley Walton

HERE'S TO ANOTHER YEAR OF **OUT LIVING IT ADVENTURES**



www.firstdescents.org

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#OutLivingIt

