

An aerial photograph of a riverbank. On the left, a sandy and pebbly shore is lined with a group of people standing in a loose formation. Several colorful inflatable kayakers (yellow, blue, and red) are pulled up onto the shore. The river water is a deep, clear green, and the bottom is visible through the shallows. The overall scene suggests a recreational or training activity in a natural setting.

# FIRST DESCENTS

A N I N T R O D U C T I O N

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


## 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

 **86,000 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?

# 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. Now, we have the research and experience to prove it. Since 2018, we've continued to develop our programs for those living with MS year after year.

## **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.

## **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.

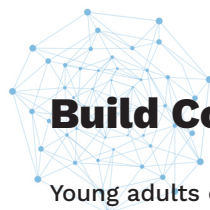
# WHO WE SERVE



## Expand Programs

With more than 680,000<sup>1</sup> adolescent and young adult cancer survivors in the U.S., First Descents (FD) programs are offered nationwide and improve survivorship and quality of life for this unique demographic. Further, FD expanded programs to support young adults coping with other health conditions.

<sup>1</sup> [ACS Journals](#)



## 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.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# ADVENTURE

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 quality of life and 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.

# 1,045+

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ENGAGED  
THROUGH PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE

# 520+

MEDICAL CENTERS AND HEALTHCARE  
ORGANIZATIONS REFERRING PATIENTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
**MD Anderson**  
Cancer Center

  
Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

 **Dana-Farber**  
Cancer Institute

 **UCLA** Health

 **City of**  
Hope

  
**KAISER PERMANENTE**

 **Penn Medicine**

 **UCSF** Hematology  
and Oncology  
Department of Medicine

  
**ROCKY MOUNTAIN**  
CANCER CENTERS

 **University of Colorado**  
Anschutz Medical Campus

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN**  
**MS CENTER**  
—the answers begin here—

 **CAN DO** | Multiple  
Sclerosis

**UC San Diego Health**

  
**THE CONSORTIUM OF**  
**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS CENTERS**

 **MS** | National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society



# PRESCRIBE ADVENTURE



“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

# IT PROJECT

**The Out Living It Project** is FD’s grassroots fundraising platform that combines adventure, creativity and philanthropy. Launch your own unique fundraiser or join a team event to raise funds and awareness for First Descents. Over 20% of our funding comes from people stepping up and supporting First Descents through the Out Living It Project! All funds raised through directly support FD’s mission of providing outdoor adventures for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions.

## \$6.9 MILLION

RAISED

SINCE 2001

## 38,274

DONATIONS

## 2,070

CAMPAIGNS

# OUT LIVING IT PROJECT



---

**KYLE WAGNER, Marketing & Communications Manager**

kyle.wagner@firstdescents.org

303.870.4861

[www.firstdescents.org](http://www.firstdescents.org)



@FirstDescents



@First\_Descents

#OutLivingIt



@FirstDescents

#OutLivingIt