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

**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.

**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

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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.
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**Expand Programs**
With more than 680,000\(^1\) 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.

**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.

\(^1\) ACS Journals
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
“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