

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



O R M S S I O N

## MISSION

CONDITIONS.



## SPOTALLM SPOTLIGHT

In 2017, I was living the life I had always imagined: married, two babies and a dog, and a beautiful house in a quiet neighborhood. I was a career second grade teacher with a retirement plan and summers off. I had just returned to work after maternity leave and was in the midst of figuring out how to balance it all when I noticed I wasn't able to feel my left foot.

The next few weeks brought a whole new level of clumsiness I'd never experienced. I was dropping dishes and running into table corners and door frames. I began to misread and mishear things. Driving through the town where I'd always lived, I would forget where I was going. All of this was accompanied by constant nausea, hot flashes, wooziness, and migraines that forced me to spend most evenings on the bathroom floor.

One Saturday I went to play soccer. I thought maybe some exercise would improve my circulation or reset whatever glitch was messing with my system. I tired quickly and I felt slow. My legs felt like lead and I didn't have enough strength to even lock my ankles when kicking the ball.

What followed was a series of trips to the ER, neurology appointments, MRIs, extensive blood work, and a spinal tap to receive an official diagnosis: multiple sclerosis. The rest of the year was one loss after another. I couldn't play soccer anymore - something I'd spent my whole life doing. I could barely walk around the block. I couldn't read without falling asleep. New medications meant the end of breastfeeding way earlier than I had planned. I sought mental health services to help cope with the MS diagnosis and ended up with several mood and personality disorder diagnoses to go with it. I had a miscarriage. My dog died. My marriage was failing. I had no time or energy to socialize.

After my diagnosis, I began to accept my mortality – a deep understanding that my time on earth is limited. But I was so focused on letting go that I forgot to let things in. I was stuck, standing in place waiting for the next storm to blow through. Until I opened an email one day and learned about First Descents.

I read the announcement about this organization hosting a pilot program for young adults with MS and just knew I had to go for it. Even though I'd never been whitewater kayaking before, it sounded like something I would love to do in a place I would love to be. It was the first time in more than a year that I felt a spark of excitement, anticipation, and the call of adventure.

While taking it all in on my First Descents program in Tarkio, Montana, I observed something interesting - in this place, in this group, having MS became the least important thing about us when in everyday life it is the thing that screams different. I felt a profound sense of freedom wash over me. Being surrounded by others who knew exactly what I was going through let me feel seen, heard, and loved as a whole person.

In the years since my time in Tarkio, I have dedicated myself to out living my diagnosis. I invited adventure and excitement back into my life, despite the fear. I started singing and dancing in public. I have traveled and met countless new friends. I have left behind harmful relationships and formed new loving ones. I have found new activities to channel my passions into. I am always learning how to live a healthier and more authentic life.

I could never tell the story of my life without mentioning First Descents. It was truly what brought me back to life when I needed it most. My heart still burns brightly with passion for the healing power of adventure and the mission of First Descents. My First Descents adventure gave me my answer to Mary Oliver's question - what will you do with this one wild and precious life? Answer - absolutely everything I can.

**Elyse "Birdy" Palmer**, First Descents MS Participant





MNI SPOTLIGHT

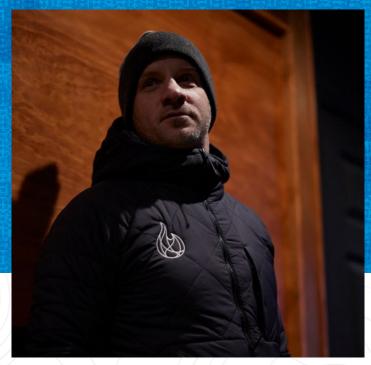


Photo Credit: Mike Arzt

Reflecting on the past year, I am truly grateful for all that we have accomplished. Despite facing numerous challenges leading up to 2022, we found our focus, stayed resilient and returned to our core mission of providing week-long outdoor adventure programs for the young adult community that we serve.

I'm thrilled to share that this year we successfully executed 39 life-changing, week-long programs across 12 awe-inspiring locations coast-to-coast, serving a total of 459 participants. And what's more, we were able to provide these transformative experiences amidst the untouched wonders of the wild while keeping the safety and well-being of our participants top priority.

Each participant experienced the Healing Power of Adventure as the Out Living It spirit filled the air. Lifelong bonds were formed, extending the impact far beyond the program itself.

The success of this year has reinvigorated our commitment to serving as many young adults impacted by cancer and MS, healthcare workers, and caregivers as possible. We

are fully dedicated to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in all aspects of our work. Working closely with our JEDI committee and JEDI Advisory Council, we continue to make progress in ensuring that First Descents reflects the diversity of today's community.

In addition to our weeklong programs and on-going commitment to JEDI, we have expanded our resources to support our community and the Out Living It lifestyle. Our Out Cooking It content series features healthy recipes prepared by FD chefs, encouraging community members to explore new culinary adventures from home. Our Mindfulness series led by FD mindfulness coach Sprinkles, offers yoga, breathwork, and meditation practices further promoting health and well-being. And our Community Adventures provide a platform for peerled experiences encouraging participants to live the life of adventure while connecting and supporting those around them in their local area.

None of this would have been possible without your support. Your belief in our mission has allowed us to overcome

obstacles and make a positive impact on the young adult community we serve.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to empowering individuals through the Healing Power of Adventure. Together, we will create more opportunities for growth, connection, and resilience.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

With heartfelt gratitude, **Ryan "Wolf" O'Donoghue**, CEO of First Descents

## LETTER FROM THE 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

- 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% U TO 7%

PARTICIPANTS WHO REPORTED FEELING DEPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER FIRST DESCENTS

LEARN MORE



# SUR HIGHLIGHTS

4.59

PARTICIPANTS SERVED

TOTAL PROGRAMS

2.587

\$4.75M

**FUNDS RAISED** 





### **Expand Programs**

With more than 680,000¹ 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**

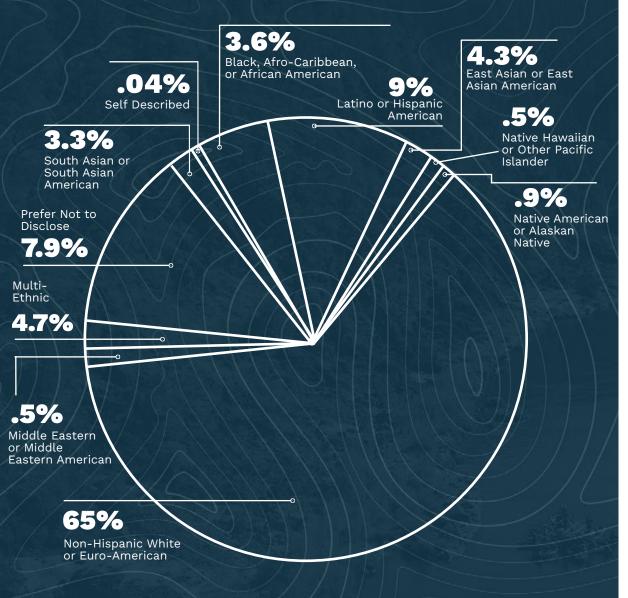
Young adults coping with health conditions often experience feelings of isolation and alienation. FD's local adventure communities provide year-round outdoor experiences and ongoing supportive peer relationships.



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.

# STRATEGIC BEIORITES

In 2022, 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 numbers below highlight the ethnic background of 2,577 participant inquiries from 2022:



In 2022, First Descents committed to expanding and improving our work in the JEDI space. In February 2022, we received a workplace evaluation led by Camber Outdoors to better understand how to improve justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in our specific workplace in the year ahead. From there, the JEDI Committee, LT and JEDI Advisory Council crafted a training and continuing education plan for the team in the year ahead including the following milestones:

FD expanded our travel scholarship grant with a goal of further reducing barriers to attending destination-based programs. In 2022, 100% of applicants who requested a Travel Scholarship were granted one. We worked to plan 2-4 JEDI Custom Programs as a strategy to provide a more safe and inclusive space for participants from marginalized communities. When compared to traditional week-long programs, custom programs are logistically harder to plan, have limited recruitment pools, and have added complications due to partnership contract agreements. Custom programs accounted for six of our 21 unfilled spots.

As a continuation from 2021, FD requires all staff and board members to take part in Camber Outdoors' "Building Blocks of DEI" series. Additional JEDI trainings and resources are available to all staff, board, lead staff and contract staff. We established a formal JEDI onboarding process for all new employees, and a more in depth JEDI training for all Lead Staff. We incorporated Native Land Acknowledgement to website pages, programs, and Lead Staff training. Lastly, we focused on individual care and program accessibility to ensure participants felt a sense of belonging while on their program. Participants with disabilities received ADA bedrooms or the most accessible accommodations. Outfitters were briefed on how to better accommodate participants with mobility challenges. Participants who identified as trans or non-binary received private accommodations when requested.

### RUNDING COMMUNITY



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

PRESCRI

In 2022, 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:

- Expanded accessible program locations by teaming up with world-class lodging partners and outfitters in Outer Banks, Estes Park, Crested Butte and Buena Vista which are suited to serve the MS population for years to come.
- Partnered with the Adapt Functional Movement Center and NeuroLab 360 to develop an 8-week trip/travel readiness program for participants that consist of: 4 weeks of Neuro PT and 4 weeks of Functional Movement Therapy.
- 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





























UC San Diego Health



"I love adventure big or small, and I also love making a difference in the lives of others. It's with these two things in mind I began planning my purpose-driven bike ride across the country. Through the Out Living It Project, I was able to take on this grand adventure and raise as much money as I could to fund the adventures of others who are going through challenges I can't even imagine. The more I learn about First Descents, the more I know they are providing a service I can truly get behind."

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 2022, Team FD athletes competed in renowned races including the Ragnar Trail Relay, Leadville 100 MTB Race, Leadville 100 Trail Run, TransRockies Run, and the NYC Marathon. To date, the Out Living It Project has raised \$6.9M across 2,070 projects with 38,274 supporters.

\$560,310
RAISED

OUT LIVING IT PROJECT

3,018
DONATIONS

100 CAMPAIGNS

LEARN MORE



**- John Wittry,** Out Living It Project Fundraiser





### **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 Kammi Reiss Kip "Wombat" Cross Michael Gross Susan "Hawk" Rafferty Tanum "UniKitty" Davis Bohen Advisory Josh "Bear" Behr **Honorary Director** Brad "Uncle B" Reiss

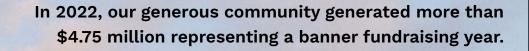
**Director, In Memoriam** Rochelle "Hefty" Shoretz

### Staff

CEO Ryan "Wolf" O'Donoghue COO Adam "Toby" Schuster VP of Programs Mackenzie "Spudz" McGrath **Program Director** Nancy Crane Program Manager Angelina "Katniss" Mangiardi Program Manager Andrew "Tops" Coulter Program Manager Kate "Lil Mo" Medici Program Coordinator Sophie "Bubbles" Ohaus Partnerships & Recruitment Director Michael "Blades" Neustedter VP of Advancement Ray "Cheddar Bunny" Shedd Marketing & Communications Director Chris "Apres" Dolan Senior Marketing Manager Becca "Turtle" Rohrer Marketing & Events Coordinator Anna "Whiplash" Wallace **Development Director** Amy "Agave" Hart **Development Officer** Emma "Piano Pat" Burick Finance & Operations Manager Keith "Focus" Feikema Finance & Operation Coordinator Annie "Jelly" Stettinius

## FD SOUAD

FINANCIALS



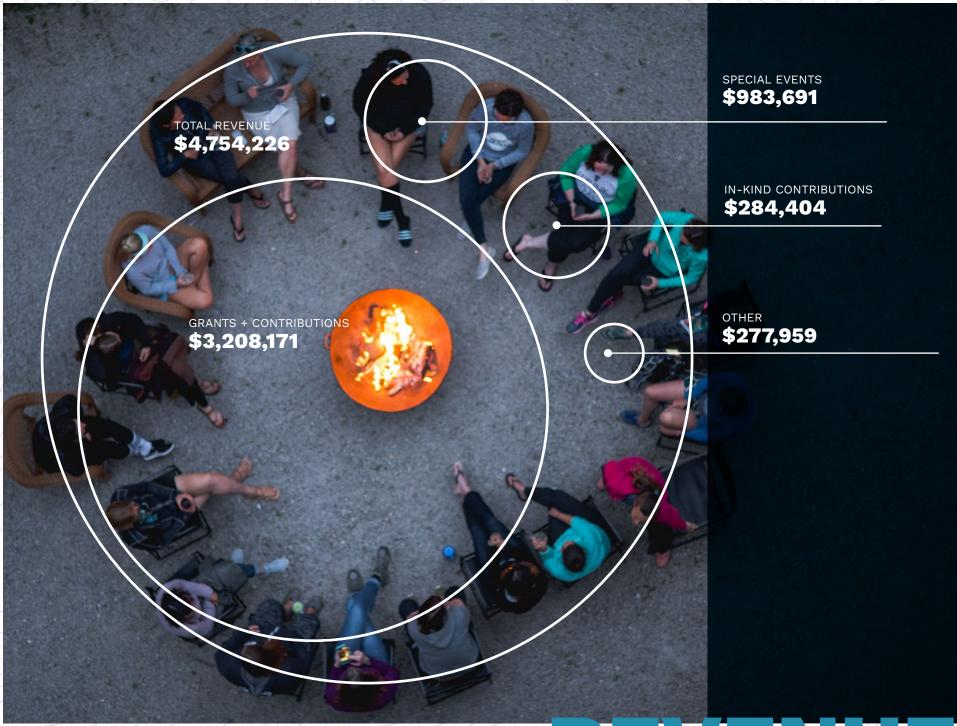
In recognition of our financial transparency, Guidestar awarded FD with its coveted platinum ranking.

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



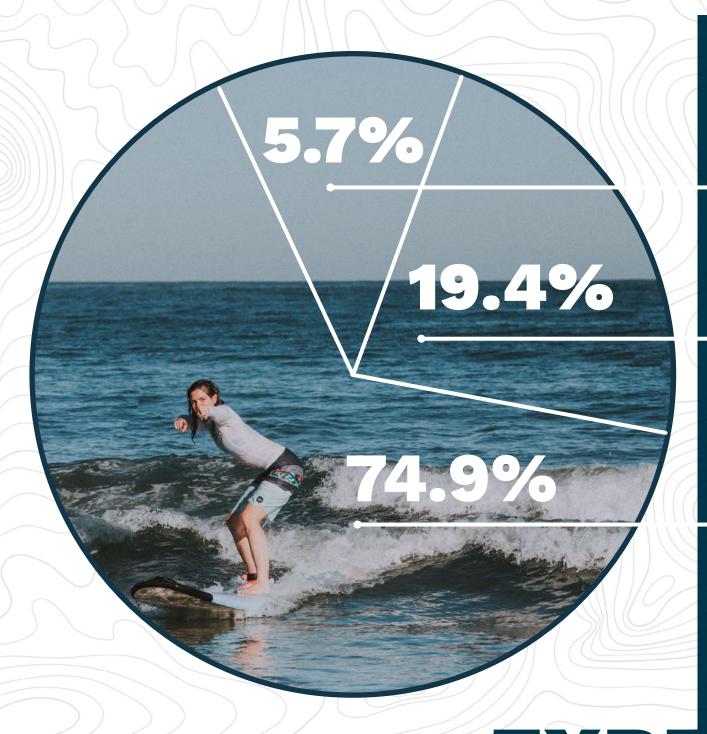


REVENUE



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

RIAVIANUS



**GENERAL ADMINISTRATION** \$226,245

DEVELOPMENT \$766,975

**PROGRAMS** \$2,965,989

74.9% of 2022 expenses were allocated to programs, providing 459 unique adventure experiences

EXPENSES

### GIVING SOCIETIES



Always Keep Pedaling Foundation
Amy Lin
Anonymous
Brent & Lisa Goldstein
Cathleen Robinson
Chad McWhinney
David & Iris Gordon

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

Katherin & Doug Milham
Katie & Tom Morgan
p Cross & Jessica Mart
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** Corbin Clement Danielle's Dreams 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
Rita Lamoureux
Sandy & Joe Samberg
Shine Foundation
Wacky Warriors

### CIVINIC COCIETIES



Genentech

Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Michael Gross Family Foundation

Sandy & Joe Samberg

Steve Hovde

Tap Cancer Out

Velocity Global

Wend II, Inc.

### **\$50,000 — \$99,999**

Amy Brown & Bryce McMaken

Anahata Foundation

Chad McWhinney

Christina & Stuart Smith

Chuck Ludden

I'm Not Done Yet Foundation

Kimbal & Christiana Musk

Oak Foundation

Pete Rive & Natasha Dvorak

Scott Klein

The Mayer Foundation

The Offield Family Foundation

VF Foundation

### **\$25,000 — \$49,999**

BDT & MSD Partners

Ben & Julie Wright

Brent & Lisa Goldstein

Cas & Missy Schneller

Dan & Anna Shak

Gray Foundation

Haymakers for Hope

Joel & Tiffany Appel

Kirk MacKenzie

Matt & Ashley O'Reilly

Nathan & Carrie Trookman

River Roots

Scott Lynes & Brian Coulthard

The Anschutz Foundation

The Gateway Fund II of the Denver

Foundation

The Tappan Easton Foundation

Vicki Gross & Jonathan Levine

### **\$10,000 — \$24,999**

Adam Stanchina

AlleyCorp Healthcare Fund

American Junior Golf Foundation

Anonymous

Brian Hoyt

**Bullet Proof Strategies** 

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

deLaski Family Foundation

**Epperson Family Foundation** 

Foundation Medicine, Inc.

Gary & Lois Claar

JAC Family Foundation

John & Liz Ridyard

Jonah Casin

Kathleen MacKenzie

Kathryn & Nick Raffensperger

Kelly & Brad Rainko

Mary Beth Jester

Mellam Family Foundation

Mildred's Dream Foundation

Richard Adler

Rod & Linda Gray

Rodney & Caryn Cohen

Ron & Caryn Suber

Russell & Sara Hirsch

Seagen

Servier

Shawn & Richard Tomasello

Silas Eldredge & Lara Nickel

SOUL RYEDERS

The Change the World Foundation

Triford Foundation

Usher Family Charitable Foundation

Trust

### **\$5,000 — \$9,999**

Adam Wertz

Amy Lin

Andrea Blank

Arnold & Marilyn Greenberg Memorial

Gift Fund

Bank of America

Bill Johnson

Brandon Hayes-Lattin

Bristol Myers Squibb

Cathleen Robinson

Christa Multhauf

David & Christine Myers

David & Iris Gordon

David Weaver

Debbie King Ford & Rob Ford

Doug & Katherine Milham

**Emmett Foundation** 

Earl Reiss

Foley Incorporated

Goldman Sachs Gives

Hans & Alix Berglund

Jeff Simmons

John & Gay Coe

John Geller

Kevin & Elizabeth Keating

Kevin Clement

Kip Cross & Jessica Martin

Lyndon & Madeleine Rive

Nancy E. Barton Foundation

Patricia Spencer

Patrick Johnson

Rutledge Cancer Foundation

Ryan & Tara O'Donoghue

Scott Kaplan

Shannon Peterson

Shine Foundation

Sophie Sparrow & Chris Eldredge

Steven Bogacz & Kai Eldredge

Takeda Oncology

The J.E. Fehsenfeld Family Foundation

Tom & Angela Civik

Wacky Warriors

William Newton Jr. & Anne French Charitable Lead Annuity Trust



#### **\$2,500 — \$4,999**

Alan & Sarah Hathcock

Anya Kane

Artur Tomala

Betsy Schweitzer

Brett Greenfield

Carolyn & Laurence Belfer

Christina Jue

David & Nanette Bender

Derek Wintle

Duncan Gills

Dwayne Kramer

E.H. & M.E. Bowerman Advised Fund

Eric Fretz

Faith Goldstein

Harmon Foundation

Howard Postal

Intrinsic LLC

Jack & Greer Gardner

James & Lois Benfield

Jean Smart

Jeffrey Hoffman

Jennifer Mills

Jesse Sanders

John Welz

John Wittry

JW Bennett

Katherine Estes Rogers Foundation

Kevin & Whitney Zimmerman

**Kevin Conners** 

Kevin Riegler

Kimie & Brad Kreidle

L. Dee Family Foundation

Lisa MacDougall

Mark & Nancy Duarte

Mary Maguire

Mary Thomas

Michael Coslov

Patricia Kritek

Patrick Currie

Rachel Jones

Rick & Cathy West

Rocky Mountain Bliss

Schwartz Family

Scott & Ford Woods

Sean Glynn

Stephanie Rosenthal

Stewart Gross

Suzy, Nancy & Carol Minkoff Charitable

Fund

TREW Gear

Victoria Johnson

William & Molly Gilmore

William Hoeft

### **\$1,000 — \$2,499**

Aaron Batte & Jill Sturman

Abigail Pogrebin

Adam Peshek

Amy & Jon Meltzer

Andrew Hottell

Andrew Schuman

Ashton Barker

Baird Foundation Inc

Barry & Marilyn Goodman

Beverly Martin

Blake Nyman

Bill Gregorak

Blake Nyman

Brad & Marla Jeffress

Brad Hollister

Bruce & Ellen Winston

Brynn Crowe

Buffy Burge

Byron Walker

Carrie Accardi

Carrie Goldberg

Casey Easton

Charles Lozner

Charles, June & Sean Contant

Chris Warner

Christopher Henandez

Christopher Irish

Craig & Lynn Lubbock

Craig Urciuoli

DAC Inc Lubbock

Darren Hinton

David Cole

David Ruf

Dawn Cartier

Dawn Lyon Debbie Tick

Deborah Leder

Diageo

Diane Meyer Simon

Don & Terri Oliver

Douglas Jackson

Drew Fink & Daniela Uribe

Ed Mellers

Edward & Kathleen Quinn

Eileen & Lowell Aptman

Elaine Stucy

Elizabeth Surma

Emma Rouse

Enterprise Holdings Foundation

Eric Menell

Eric Mindich

Francesca DiMaio

Gable Silvian

George banker & Candice Carson

Gray Holdings LLC

Greg Greenwood

Harriet Burnett

Harriet Libstag

Icelantic Skis

James & Carolyn Brett

James Hadden

barries riadderi

Jamie Becker

Jason Minard

Jean DiNatale

Jeff Moody & Cheryl Marcus

Jen Brill

Jill Seigerman

Joan & Gene Walsh

Joel & Valerie Virta Pearlman

John Ourisman

John Wortman

Jon & Julie Cohen

# DONORS

Jon Zalisk

Jonathan Georger

Jonathan Graham

Jonathan Skipper

Jordan & Erin Robbins

Joshua Jeffries

Julian Scott

Justin Davis

Katherine Borsecnik

Keep Climbing Foundation

Keith & Shannon Love

Kerry Siggins

Kevan Haas

Kevin Prefontaine

Kimberly & Jeff Veber

King Family

Lawrence & Kimberly Weinberg

Liz & Peter Menges

Lori Moore

LOTT WIOOTC

Loriel Townsend

Lotz Family Foundation

Luke Cobb

Marc & Carel Slatkoff

Marc & Lindsey Gutman

Margaret Howard

......

Margot Badenhausen

Mark & Jo Brinkerhoff

Mark Goldstein

Mark Helper

Mark Kogod

Mark Rees

Martha Vanderhoof

Max Eckstein

Meghan Newcomer

Melissa Barker

Melissa Marinko

Merle Postal

Mesdag Family Foundation

Michael Kantor

....

Mick Ribault

Mike & Erin Anello

Mizuho Bank

Neil & Marcy Cohen

Nick & Caitlin Smarrelli

Patrick McGinley

Paul Brown

Peter Burack

----

Peter McBride

Ralph & Debra Merritt

Randall Loker

RichardJ. Buoncore

Monardo. Baomoon

Rick Schoen

Rob & Nancy Samit

Robert & Carol Burman Family

Foundation

Sam & Chris Powell

Sam & Gwyneth Stites

Sarah Rogers

Sarah Uram

Scott & Amy Brody

Scott Drablos

Sean Nimmer

Stefan Lalos

Stefani & Scott Kimche

Stephanie Donner

Stephen Nilsen

Steven & Gail Shak

Susan Rabinowitz

Susana Ribault

The Spanx by Sarah Blakely Foundation

Fund

Thoryn Stephens

Timothy McCabe

Tracey Kruse

Verisk Analytics

Victor & Janice Rosenberg

Victoria Morrissey

Wendy & Douglas Eisenberg

# DONORS

