



# Outdoor Lab FOUNDATION

# 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT



# Letter from the Executive Director

January 2026 marks my five-year anniversary with the Outdoor Lab Foundation. From the doldrums of canceled camps and no overnight programming during COVID, to now having over 90% of all sixth graders attend in 2025, we have come a long way. We now have two new principals working closely together, and with them, renewed energy and a growth mindset to make more meaningful and relevant the Outdoor Lab experience for all schools and students.

Together, we launched a new Fire Ecology core class and have reimagined the Evening Programs students receive. We redesigned the Field Study Journals to feel more like a keepsake so that students are more connected to the program after they return home. We increased the number of credits interns can earn through concurrent enrollment at Red Rocks Community College's Outdoor Leadership Program to up to six. Every intern now receives a Wilderness First Aid credential and a Leave No Trace teaching credential.

But nothing illustrates Outdoor Lab's dedication to students more than the single day experience Mount Blue Sky organized in May to welcome about 20 students with severe special needs from the district's Fletcher Miller School. These students spend most of their lives in mobility devices and under the careful supervision of family and professional care providers. It was a joy to see them on the deck of our new dining hall enjoying the mountain views and feeling the warm sun on their faces. The teachers and interns took great care to make the day in the mountains a fun one for them and their families. Outdoor Lab is built on the foundation that every student deserves a transformative experience in the outdoors regardless of their socioeconomic background or physical ability.

For different reasons, middle school and high school are times of change, but Outdoor Lab remains a steadfast source of stability, community, and belonging for thousands of sixth grade students, teachers, High School Leaders, and interns. While we worry about rates of anxiety, depression, and disconnection among our children and teens, Outdoor Lab remains a vital source of human connection and growth. We build belonging in a time when students report feeling isolated. We cultivate resilience when life feels uncertain. We connect students to nature, to their peers, and most importantly, to themselves.

In the coming months, we will be celebrating Windy Peak's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To think of all the lives that have been transformed thanks to their time on that campus is humbling. To think of the leaders and teachers that had the foresight to purchase the property in 1975 is inspiring.

While we celebrate Windy Peak in 2026, we will also stay deeply committed to our core mission. We will work to ensure more youth, from every background and walk of life, have access to Outdoor Lab by reducing barriers, funding scholarships, supporting teachers, and forging new community partnerships.

Thank you for being part of this local tradition. You are making these unforgettable experiences and memories happen for so many children each year.

Sincerely,



**Bryan Martin**  
Executive Director



# Our Team

## Foundation Staff

**Bryan Martin**  
Executive Director

**Ian Nawalinski**  
Development Manager

**Breanna Bashford**  
Strategic Partnerships Manager

**Emily Garcia**  
Enrichment Coordinator

## Administrative Staff

**Tarah Blazek**  
Program Coordinator

**Ashley Volzke**  
High School Leader Coordinator

## Board of Directors

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At-Large

**Katie McClammer**  
At-Large



## Mount Blue Sky

**Becky Paschke**  
Principal

**Amanda Ruleman**  
Registered Nurse

**Michelle Wright**  
Principal's Secretary

**Cari Chopyak**  
Registered Nurse

**Cheyne Heiny**  
Program Director

**Nate Fishel**  
Health Tech

**Jason Harding**  
Program Specialist

**Ricky Martinez**  
Site Manager

**Donna Deneke**  
Kitchen Manager

**Luke Antill**  
Asst. Site Manager

**Jeremy Brasher**  
Principal

**Ellie Steyn**  
Principal's Secretary

**Garden Marantino**  
Program Director

**Shawna Spivey**  
Program Specialist

**Danny Aronson**  
Kitchen Manager

**Katie Moser**  
Registered Nurse

**LeAnne Downing**  
Registered Nurse

**Sue Bramblett**  
Clinic Aid

**Pat Bramblett**  
Site Manager

**Christian Wilde**  
**Ash Swackhammer**  
Food Service



# Introducing Mount Blue Sky's New Principal



As students return to Outdoor Lab this year, those heading to Mt. Blue Sky will meet an exciting new addition to the team. We're delighted to introduce **Ms. Paschke** as the new principal!

Ms. Paschke brings a wealth of experience in enriching student experiences, having served as a dedicated teacher at Dennison Elementary, D'Evelyn High, and also as an Assistant Principal at Conifer High. We had the opportunity to chat with Ms. Paschke and learn more about her background and vision for the future of Outdoor Lab at Mt. Blue Sky.

**Q: To start us off on the right foot, what animal best represents your teaching style?**

**A:** Hummingbird. I love to be in the action of teaching and learning! I wish that I was more like a hummingbird and could travel the beautiful Mt. Blue Sky site as fast and gracefully as them.

**Q: What drew you to outdoor education; why did you want to become principal of Mt. Blue Sky?**

**A:** When I was a younger, I attended Girl Scout camp each summer but also participated in a similar program to Outdoor Lab in Colorado Springs. I was able to experience outdoor education as a 6th grader and then as a high school leader. I love that outdoor education pushes learners out of their comfort zones to build confidence. There is no better place to be than the great outdoors!

**Q: Can you describe a moment you've had exploring Mt. Blue Sky that's made you smile?**

**A:** I just love it when I hear kids laughing, singing, and just being kids. One of my highlights from the summer was seeing a moose near Jackson Pond! The wildlife here never ceases to amaze me.

**Q: What excites you most about the future of Outdoor Lab, and what are you hoping to achieve?**

**A:** It is so amazing that Jeffco Public Schools had the foresight to invest in two beautiful campuses almost 70 years ago. I truly feel that it is my duty to ensure that this legacy continues on into the future. I hope to create lifelong memories for all that visit and that our students are able to apply our mission of stewardship into their lives.

**Q: How do you hope students describe Outdoor Lab when they reflect on their time here?**

**A:** I hope that their week at Outdoor Lab is something they cherish forever. I hope that students share with their families and loved ones the lessons they've learned here. I also hope that they are in awe of Colorado's beauty!

# The Happiest Place on Earth Above 8,000 Feet

By Sophie Martin

**Sophie's journey from sixth-grader to advocate shows the lasting power of Outdoor Lab. Outdoor Lab doesn't just teach academic lessons — it teaches life lessons. Today's sixth-graders will carry these lessons forward, just as Sophie has, creating ripples of impact we're only beginning to see.**

My first time at Outdoor Lab, I stayed in the Columbine cabin, my second in Kinnikinnick, my third in Juniper, my fourth in Limber Pine East, Juniper again for my fifth, and back in Columbine for my final trip. If you've never been on an Outdoor Lab experience, you're probably wondering why I remember such minute details, right?

It's been five years since my first trip to Windy Peak Outdoor Lab, and every trip since that first week has been unforgettable. I remember the layout of every cabin, the people I stayed with, and most importantly: the memories I made and the community I earned. But the experience extends far beyond the bunkhouses.

Hiking through the great outdoors of Colorado, dancing at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, stargazing and learning about our solar system, and creating a community between students, teachers, high school leaders, and staff is what makes the campus the amazing destination called Windy Peak.

Windy Peak Outdoor Lab is a Jefferson County school campus that houses a new group of sixth-grade students every week. The groups of sixth-grade students and teachers are accompanied by about 20 high school students who volunteer their time as leaders to enrich the experience for the kids by being positive role models and sparking an interest in the activities as well as the overall experience.

I have attended the Windy Peak campus seven times, three times as a middle school student and four times as a high school leader; every time has been an unforgettable experience. The skills I learned and the community that I gained were life-changing, to say the least.

We live in a time where it is becoming increasingly normal for sixth-graders, and even younger, to be deeply involved in technology and social media. This exponential increase in online involvement has had severe effects on offline communication. One of the first steps to bringing confidence back into face-to-face communication with children is to simply get them away from their screens.

Although it's a school program, the community is the heart of Outdoor Lab. From the moment the sixth-graders step off the buses as they arrive on campus, they circle the flagpole. These circles, throughout the week, fostered involvement, encouraged face-to-face communication, and created a community. After their week on the mountain, kids are able to return to a familiar room but are now more connected with the people around them, friends are made, relationships with teachers are positive, and everyone is engaged. But the changes are noticeable even beyond the classroom that the sixth-graders return to, and many spend the next few years reminiscing about their experiences during the previous week.

My first time attending Outdoor Lab as a high school leader was during my junior year of high school. During that week, I truly fell in love with Windy Peak Outdoor Lab. What I loved most was watching the outstanding growth in the students I was attending with. Kids who started the week quiet were the ones you could hear across the cafeteria on Friday during breakfast.

That positive change in kids' confidence, not only in themselves but in their relationships to their community, is something that I have yet to witness or hear about anywhere else.

# Site Support Highlights

Outdoor Lab's inspirational mountain campuses are the backdrop of every experience at Outdoor Lab. The Foundation's Site Support Program ensures that Mount Blue Sky and Windy Peak are maintained and improved so they may continue to host transformational outdoor experiences for thousands of Jeffco sixth-graders each year.

## 2025 Accomplishments:

- Over 90 volunteers donated 522 hours valued at \$18,160
- 700 feet of trail tread improved or developed
- Built and painted two new low ropes course elements
- Painted thirteen picnic tables, three road signs, archery range, and amphitheater
- Removed invasive plant species Mullein and Thistle from Mount Blue Sky



# Community Engagement Highlights

Our community outreach program builds awareness, fosters connections, and engages the community in our mission. We participated in various festivals including the Colfax Marathon, Buffalo Bill Days, and Carnation Festival. By involving the community, the Foundation inspires a shared commitment to preserving and enhancing outdoor educational experiences.

## 2025 Accomplishments:

- 50+ volunteers donated 143 hours valued at \$4,975
- Tabled at eight community fairs and festivals
- Engaged over 20,000 community members
- Added 998 emails to the foundation database
- Roasted over 1,260 s'mores





After Dark 2025 brought together Outdoor Lab supporters, partners, and community members in celebration of our mission. The event showcased the impact of Outdoor Lab programs through compelling stories, student experiences, and a shared commitment to expanding access to outdoor education.

Thanks to the generosity of attendees, sponsors, and donors, we raised over \$100,000, directly supporting life-changing outdoor learning experiences for students. The success of the evening reflects the strength of our community and its belief in the power of outdoor education to inspire, connect, and transform young people. We hope you'll join us again for After Dark 2026 as we continue building brighter futures through outdoor education.



Celebrate Windy Peak's  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!



# AFTER DARK

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## 2026

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### NIGHT OF IMPACT

Join us in toasting to the lives changed at Outdoor Lab. Your support ensures that future generations of students continue to learn, explore, and thrive in our remarkable outdoor classrooms.

Festive Food / Camp Activities / Auctions  
Camp Casual Dress Code

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**MAY 2ND, 2026**

4:30—9:30 PM

DENVER MARRIOTT WEST  
GOLDEN, CO



# Ways to Give

## Recurring Donor

Becoming a recurring donor has a significant impact here at the Outdoor Lab Foundation. It's reliable funding we can count on each month. By signing up, you're saying to the community: "This is important and Outdoor Lab and its legacy matter." Caring for and guiding our students to care for the outdoors, matters. Scan the QR code to become a recurring donor today.



## Gift of Stock

Appreciated securities or mutual fund shares you've owned for more than one year are excellent charitable gifts. Each stock gift we handle strengthens our programmatic work while providing tax benefits for supporters. Donating stock or securities offer numerous benefits: a federal income charitable contribution tax deduction based on the stock's fair market value on the date of the gift (up to 30% of your adjusted gross income) if the stock was owned for more than one year; carryover of the deduction for up to five additional years if the fair market value of the gift is more than 30% of your adjusted gross income; and avoidance of capital gains tax that is due when you sell appreciated stock. Note: Stock owned for one year or less is considered a short-term asset and usually won't produce attractive tax benefits. We recommend that you consult with your attorney or tax advisor about the various tax benefits and restrictions that may apply to your specific situation. We are available to you and your advisors to answer questions or help arrange a planned gift to Outdoor Lab Foundation.

## Corporate Sponsor

Our corporate partners play an important role in our ability to achieve our mission. We have developed a tradition of generous, committed support from companies large and small over the years. We offer a variety of platforms for companies and their employees to become involved and engaged with Outdoor Lab. Whether your interest lies with a corporate sponsorship, volunteerism, employee engagement, cause-related marketing, in-kind donations, or event promotion, the Outdoor Lab Foundation can help meet your unique objectives.

## Planned Giving

Planned giving, like including Outdoor Lab Foundation in your will, allows you to decide how to distribute your assets after you pass away. Listing us in your estate is a fantastic way to ensure future generations of Jeffco students have access to Outdoor Lab. We recommend that you consult with your attorney or tax advisor for the various tax benefits and restrictions that may apply to your specific situation. Foundation staff are available to you and your advisors to answer questions or help arrange a planned gift that meets your needs.

# Financial Overview 2024-25

## Assets:

Unrestricted: \$1,181,333

Restricted: \$275,671

**Total Assets:** \$1,457,004



## Income:

Contributions & Grants: \$794,986

In-Kind Support: \$29,516

Investment Income: \$58,725

**Total Income:** \$883,227

## Expenses:

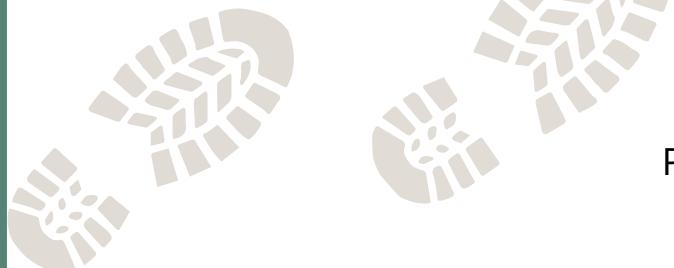
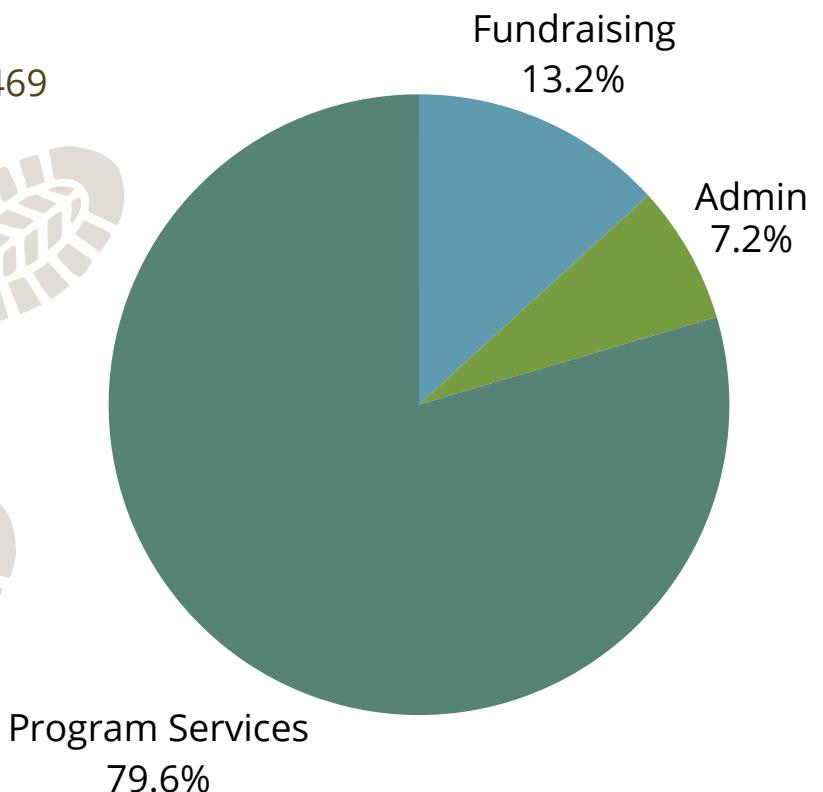
Fundraising: \$103,599

Program Services: \$619,239

General & Administration: \$56,469

**Total Expenses:** \$779,307

## 2024-25 Expenses





# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL VALUE OF CONTRIBUTIONS **\$ 392,000**

**\$175,000 IN TUITION  
ASSISTANCE DISTRIBUTED**

**\$22,000 FOR INTERN STIPENDS**

**\$6,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS  
DISTRIBUTED**

**142  
VOLUNTEERS**

Contributed **985 hours**  
valued at **\$35,000**

► **4,212 STUDENTS ATTENDED FROM  
34 NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS**

► **11 TITLE-1 SCHOOLS PARTICIPATED**

► **1,440 UNDER-RESOURCED STUDENTS  
ATTENDED FOR FREE**



**16,848 YOUTH PROGRAM DAYS IN  
THE FIELD**



**55 ASTRONOMY NIGHTS HELD**  
**33,696 MILES HIKED BY SIXTH-  
GRADERS**



**440 FLAG CEREMONIES**  
**25 TITLE-1 EVENING PRESENTATIONS  
FUNDED**

**330 CORE CLASSES TAUGHT**

**40 INTERNS EARNED WILDERNESS  
FIRST AID (WFA) CERTIFICATION**



**\$20,000 in  
outerwear donated  
to gear libraries**



**\$25,000 to support  
site maintenance**

**LEAVE NO  
TRACE  
TRAIL  
COMPLETED**

**2 NEW LOW  
ROPES COURSE  
ELEMENTS  
CONSTRUCTED**



**1,040 HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS**

Contributed **88,400 hours** as  
instructors and mentors

# Legacy Society



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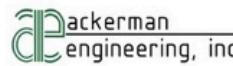
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# FOUNDATION

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**Tersus** enables over 25 premium brands, such as The North Face, Patagonia, REI, New Balance, Dr. Martens, and many others to participate in branded resale and the circular economy. When recommerce is not an option for garments, Tersus donates products to Outdoor Lab's Gear Libraries. To date, Tersus has donated over \$100,000 in product to Outdoor Lab.



**Trout Unlimited** West Denver and Evergreen chapters partner with both Outdoor Lab campuses to teach sixth-graders about fishing, fly tying, and water conservation. Moreover, they have supported construction and volunteer projects connected to our fishing ponds and docks.



Thanks to a \$7 million FEMA grant, the **Colorado State Forest Service and Jefferson Conservation District** are securing the safety and the long term forest health of our mountain campuses. In concert with forestry technicians, land managers, and Jeffco Schools personnel, they have crafted a resource management plan that will restore our forests to a more healthy condition and protect our campuses from wildfires.



**Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado** has been a stalwart partner in the management of Mount Blue Sky's trail system. The partnership goes back ten years and involves dozens of volunteer projects that helped construct our Leave No Trace and Ecosystems trails.



The **Evergreen Audubon Society** has been working with us for the past three years to put on free evening programs for our most under-resourced schools. Their "All About Owls" program shares fun owl facts, leads listening for owl calls, and dissects owl pellets. Participants learn about owl diets by examining regurgitated indigestible parts like bones and fur, providing hands-on education for our students.



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OutdoorLabFoundation.org  
(303) 982-1200**