

Rolling Through the Rincon Valley

by Rebecca Patterson-Markowitz

On December 10, 2014 seven adventurous students from City High School experienced an unforgettable mountain biking outing on the beautiful stretch of Arizona Trail near the Rincon Valley. We meandered through shrubby foothills palo verde and prickly pears facing our fears, feeling exhilaration as we wove in and out of cactus and jostled over rocks, and glided over sand.



Edgar takes the lead on the trail!

Rolling on the front-suspension mountain bikes provided by Southwest Trekking was a highlight for everyone on the trip, but the sense of contentment that came from catching our breath and taking in the beautiful views of the Rincon Mountains was always palpable.

Michaela, a sophomore, and the least experienced cyclist of the bunch, learned to face her fears and practice a kind of resilience that had every member of the group in awe as she fell and stumbled and got back on the bike.

Before we hit the trail Randy Young, our experienced guide, spoke to the group about mountain biking technique, "If you focus on the obstacle in your way you're gonna hit it. If you concentrate on finding a path around the obstacle you're more likely to find a way around it." Sage advice that easily translates from mountain biking to many other areas of life.

Students also got to quickly find a greater and new awareness of what was taking place in themselves kinesthetically as they practiced shifting their weight and playing with tension and flow, a kind of physical embodied awareness not often achieved in the classroom or in life off the trail.

We stopped for a nice lunch in the shade of an *arroyo* and talked about life, future aspirations, and about stewardship. This particular group is so well acquainted with the Seeds of Stewardship program that they could confidently share ideas about stewardship and Leave No Trace ethics.



Our fantastic group pausing for a shot in front of a majestic saguaro and the Rincon Mountains.

As we rode back in the bus three students and one teacher enjoyed a little naptime. When we arrived back at the school we did a little debriefing and shared our highlights of the day and the ride.

Edgar said his favorite part was “getting the hang of it,” with a clear sense of confidence at his mastering a new skill. “Going fast,” was an unsurprisingly popular answer. Michaela said with no trace of irony that “falling” was her highlight, which relieved a slightly worried coordinator, and also proved how meaningful it had been for her to persevere. This group demonstrated during the entire day a true understanding of the values that Seeds of Stewardship strives to cultivate in all participants. All in all another rewarding day was had by a group of students on the Arizona Trail.



Jason moves quietly and confidently through the desert.

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