Riding From the Pine Trailhead
by Sabrina Carlson

On October 13th, 2017, twenty students from Payson Rim Country Middle School gathered for a mountain bike ride at the Pine Trailhead, access to the Whiterock Mesa and Highline passages of the Arizona Trail (Passages 25 and 26).

Some of the Payson riders are old pros who have been mountain biking with their teacher, Mr. Davidson, for a long time, while others are very new to riding. After uploading all the bikes from the trail and fixing and tuning up any that needed attention, we headed out to chase daylight and get some trail under us before dark settled in.

The more experienced group set out with Mr. Davidson on a nearly 5 mile loop since their skills and speed would allow it. The newer riders tackled a 1.5 mile loop with myself and a parent volunteer. The trails around Payson are all fairly technical for new riders and it was helpful to keep mileage short to allow time to try, and to walk at times where sections were intimidating to beginners.

No matter the length of the ride or the level of technical difficulty, students always go through a journey of self discovery from challenging their limits on a bike. This day was no exception. Even with a short loop, there were riders who started with serious self doubt that they could finish the ride, but in the end faced big fears through riding narrow rocky trail. Everyone finished their respective rides and felt victorious, empowered and excited.

This outing was made possible with support from Arizona Trail Association members, donors and grant funds from: