

Youth Outreach Report

Northern Arizona

Winter typically brings a focus on the “behind the scenes” parts of our northern youth outreach programs, and this year is no different. Seeds of Stewardship (SOS) North and Gear Girls fully on-boarded Kim Cleary, an AmeriCorps VISTA member who is focused on helping our youth programs develop a more consistent and robust marketing and social media campaign, and raising money through grants and community fundraising efforts.



So far we have completed the first round of social media improvements by separating Gear Girls and SOS into their own unique brands on Facebook and Instagram, posting on a more consistent basis, utilizing the popular “stories” feature on both platforms, and engaging regularly with other organizations and influencers through our youth accounts. Round two improvements are currently underway as we create a strategic content calendar for both platforms that incorporate audience engagement and fundraising campaign promotion.

Since January, Kim has submitted 6 grant proposals in support of SOS North, South, or both for a total ask of \$119,000. A fundraiser night with Fratelli’s Pizza has been completed in support of Gear Girls bringing in \$443 with no cash outlay from us and minimal staff time. Gear Girls is currently partnering with REI on a film night that will be held April 9th. Five more cash grant proposals are in process currently, as well as an in-kind donation proposal from Hydroflask.

A Manual for Gear Girls coaches is partially completed with a first round of trainings for our coaches scheduled for the beginning of April. Having this process formalized will not only allow us to ensure quality and consistency of coaches working for our program in Flagstaff, but allow us to spread the unique strategies that we employ to other organizations wishing to utilize this model.

But it hasn’t been all computer work around here! Two SOS North schools made visits to the Flagstaff Nordic Center to study snow science, winter animal adaptations, and winter adventure safety. Gear Girls had its first winter season in which snow was consistently present so that the participants could learn winter trail exploration skills. Gear Girls also participated in a trail maintenance day mid-season, impressing Forest Service representatives and local volunteer groups with the size and enthusiasm of our group.

Gear Girls Junior Coaches program launched this week with 6 participants deepening their knowledge of bike maintenance, leadership skills, and mountain biking skills. The girls will also be creating a bike fix-it clinic for the underserved community of Sunnyside in advance of Bike to Work week as part of their learning and our greater Public Relations efforts.

Southern Arizona

Since January 1, we have worked with 8 different schools, and nearly 120 students. These expeditions have been intimate programming and provided an in-depth and wide-ranging curriculum that uses the Arizona Trail to explore nearly all biomes and ecological systems. By May, SOS-South will have completed stewardship work along approximately 360 collective miles of the Arizona Trail. Since the season began in August, we have served 13 school groups, and approximately 195 students. With 5 expeditions each, that means we have nearly 3000 youth experiences on the Arizona Trail. We have seen a 100% return rate with partner schools, and schools are beginning to offer full and partial credits to students who are participating in the program. As this becomes more widely accepted, the presence of the Arizona Trail within school functions will become necessary to uphold culture and functionality.



Our new curriculum has become so successful that schools are asking the ATA to provide more information so teachers can begin designing their lessons and programs around ours. Our student population is more diverse than ever. School partnerships include Project More High School, Mansfeld Middle School, Kino School, City High School, Imago Dei Middle School, Globe/Miami Jr/Sr High School, Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center, Empire High School, Mountain Vista Elementary School, and Edge High School. Some of these schools have two separate groups or classes we are partnering with. The communities served include City of South Tucson, Tucson, Vail, Patagonia, Oracle, Globe/Miami, and Superior.

We are now in our second year with City High School's internship program. This year, Rainer Langevin is our senior intern, studying outdoor leadership methods, outdoor education methods, trail crew leadership, and becoming an experienced Arizona Trail hiker and volunteer. This partnership ensures we are engaging in our community in many more directions than one, maximizing our effectiveness toward creating the next generation of stewards, donors, employees, presidents, and directors.

This year we have made a fundamental partnership with the Phoenix Zoo. Together we have installed wildlife cameras with youth from the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center on the Arizona Trail. Over 8 expeditions, we have effectively monitored and tracked a massive variety of wildlife, documenting the diversity in its users. The partnership has evolved so well that the Phoenix Zoo has dedicated funding and resources toward SOS to ensure our youth receive education and access on the Arizona Trail. This work is engaging isolated communities of youth who, without our work, might never discover the Arizona Trail, and who might not ever be introduced to environmental and/or conservation work. This is paramount to establishing longevity and life for the trail.