

Youth Outreach & Education Report

Northern Arizona



Seeds of Stewardship:

- Collaborated with Treven in Southern Arizona to strategize how we're going to adapt SoS through the coronavirus outbreak. See "Seeds of Stewardship Through Corona Season" at <http://bit.ly/sosthruc19>.
- Developed and launched After School on the AZT, an extracurricular program for 5th-7th graders. We have two groups of 6 to 7 youth each. Each group meets eight times this fall for educational hikes and a stewardship project.

Gear Girls:

- Fall programming is running! We're hosting 20 rides total, including two trail maintenance projects. We're adapting to COVID by offering programming two days a week for two different groups of 8.
- Three new volunteer coaches are starting with us this fall.

Plans for October - December, 2020:

- Continue adapting Seeds of Stewardship programming in collaboration with schools.
 - Develop virtual curriculum and online resources for school partnerships.
 - Facilitate some online lessons.
- Plan for extracurricular opportunities through winter and spring, including educational adventures and open registration trail work days for various age groups. Open registration trail work days will help us increase our volunteer hours and our number of youth engaged.
- Capacity building:
 - Hire two lead Gear Girls coaches who are committed to working every other weekend. Lead coaches will be experienced mountain bikers or skiers and youth leaders who can facilitate practices without me there. This will add expertise to our program, while allowing me to balance my other tasks more effectively.
 - Work to establish an ongoing internship program through NAU, AmeriCorps, or elsewhere. The Outdoor Educator Intern will assist in curriculum development, logistics, social media, and facilitation. Interns will bring in fresh ideas, allow us to expand our reach, and serve as consistent co-leaders.
- Enliven our SoS & GG pages on the ATA website and social media.
- Plan and launch registration for summer programming: Gear Girls summer season, Peaks to Park, potentially 1 backpacking trip and 1 camping/hiking trip.
- Distribute and promote *Junior Explorer Handbooks* and maps of the AZT.

Southern Arizona

In the early months of 2020, programming was strong as we were operating at full capacity. Partnered with 12 schools, we were providing excellent expeditions for nearly 240 youth all over Southern Arizona. Our gateway trail community partners included Globe/Miami, Patagonia, Tucson, Superior, Vail, and Oracle. In the spring of 2020, three schools offered academic credits to students who were participating in SOS programming. SOS was expected to fuse into actual accredited science classes. Teachers would use SOS to teach students about the environmental sciences within Southern AZ, using the AZT as their pathway to do so.

By March, all SOS programming halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth were limited to indoor spaces and their ability to engage with the outdoors became contingent on familial support. For many youth, that support is nonexistent. School groups were unable to commit to partnerships, and the future of our program looked bleak.

After a lot of deliberation internally and with our partners, SOS was able to rework the program structure. We understood that our mission, our partnerships, and our program was at stake. We needed to design something that was going to stand up to the pandemic and support our community safely and healthily. Welcome to the Arizona Trail Ambassador Program – Seeds of Stewardship's new six-month internship program. With 10 Ambassadors, 12 expeditions and 12 online meetings, COVID-19 safety protocols, and excellent leadership, the Ambassador Program fulfills the SOS mission wonderfully with a whole new approach.

The Ambassador Program is an internship providing training for high school seniors to become outdoor environmental educators specifically tuned to the ecology and history of the AZT. These Ambassadors will receive certifications, which are recognized by the National Association of American Environmental Educators and Arizona Association of Environmental Educators, confirming their expertise on AZT history, stewardship, and environmental science. These Ambassadors are a new generation of AZT advocates who are passionate about the trail and the communities it connects. This is a six-month program providing 1,180 total hours of AZT experience, training, and education. This will be the most qualified and highly trained group of young people to emerge from an ATA program.

Seeds of Stewardship's mission is to create the next generation of AZT stewards. The ATA Ambassador Program ensures this to be the case. After completing the Ambassador program, Ambassadors will have priority for volunteer and leadership opportunities within the organization. We have created a track for enthusiastic and passionate youth to support the ATA from the inside out. Ensuring our trail goes on to be protected, maintained, and supported indefinitely. The future of SOS will now include the AZT Ambassador Program, allowing us to support our community, and our community to support us.