



FAQs

Seeds of Stewardship - After School on the AZT Winter 2022

Who can participate?

This program is for Flagstaff youth in grades 6-8. Participants should be prepared to hike, snowshoe, and cross country ski up to 4 miles on uneven terrain in varying weather conditions.

We expect everyone who signs up to attend the campout over President's Day weekend; the campout will include a 1-night backpacking excursion, wherein we'll carry approximately 30 pound packs up to 4 miles per day. Participants should be prepared for a challenging, yet rewarding and fun, adventure. You do not need to own any special equipment to sign up!

What is the schedule like?

We'll meet once a week on Wednesdays for 6 consecutive weeks, starting January 12 and ending February 16. Plus, we're excited to host a [campout](#) that will take place February 19 at 8:00 am - February 21 at 5:00 pm. Participants are highly encouraged to attend all 6 weekly outings, but we understand that everyone's lives are very full; please keep us informed if your child can't make it to an outing, so we know to skip the gear rental for them and not to wait up at the parking lot.

For every outing, the drop off and pick up location will be the [Cal Ranch parking lot on N Fourth Street](#); we will provide transportation from there via our 15 passenger van. The typical outing time will be Wednesdays 1 pm - 5 pm. Since it's hard to predict what kinds of conditions we'll have this winter, [it's likely that outing locations](#)

and activities will change in response to the weather and snowfall. Your flexibility is appreciated!

[Check out the calendar with meeting times and locations.](#)

Is there a fee?

Nope! Our program is funded by grants and private donations. We hope to remove the barriers to entry as much as possible and don't want cost to be an issue. We do however accept donations from anyone who wants to support Seeds of Stewardship; you are welcome to donate here: <http://www.aztrail.org/donate.html>.

What will participants do and learn?

Outings will typically consist of snowshoeing/hiking/cross country skiing, a snack break, games/initiatives/mindful moments, and an experiential lesson on an outdoor skill!

Participants will gain skills and knowledge essential for a lifetime of trail adventures, including Leave No Trace principles, winter ecology, and survival techniques. Every week, we'll practice a new skill that will prepare us for the program's capstone experience, a 2-night campout.

The campout will include 1 night of car camping and 1 night of backpacking. The group will have collaborated over several outings to plan group meals and prepare accordingly. Youth will be given the chance to self-lead many of their tasks, demonstrating their refined abilities to pack appropriately, work together effectively, communicate, identify potential risks, and guide others with compassion.

Winter trail conditions typically aren't conducive to trail work, so we won't be hosting a trail maintenance project this season.

But my child doesn't have cross country skis or snowshoes?

We will provide cross country skis and snowshoes for anyone who doesn't have the necessary equipment. We will need advance notice of this request, and please let us know if your child will be missing any outings, so that we can skip the rental for those days.

What else is needed for outings?

We have a hearty supply of loaner winter clothing –gloves, hats, snow pants, jackets, boots, etc! Please don't let the clothing list prevent participation. We will make sure everyone has what they need!

Participants should come prepared with...

- A mask. Masks are not required while we're social distancing outside. Masks are required in the van.
- A comfortable backpack with space for extra clothing layers.
- Minimum 2 liters of water. Warm water is nice for colder weather.
- Snacks are provided: Bars, chips/pretzels, seeds/nuts, fruit. We will accommodate allergies and dietary restrictions.
- Comfy weather-appropriate clothing (layers) meant for moving.
*Winter adventuring requires the right clothing for sure! See below for our suggested approach to layering:

- 1) Base layer - specially for colder weather and snow, participants should be wearing a base layer of long johns. Polar fleece pajamas work great as long johns! So does a combo of non-cotton yoga pants and a long sleeve polyester athletic shirt.
- 2) Mid layer - a fleece jacket or light to mid weight puffy.
- 3) Outer layer - a waterproof shell or snow jacket, snow pants or a combo of warm fleece pants with waterproof pants and gaiters.

**No clothing for winter adventuring should be cotton. Cotton, when wet, retains no insulative value and will transfer heat away from the body rather than keeping it in!

- Insulated waterproof gloves
- Wool or fleece socks
- Insulated waterproof boots
- Sunglasses - Very important for sunny days with snow.
- Sunscreen
- Reusable insulated mug
- Cell phones should stay in backpacks on silent.
- Any participants who require an epi pen, inhaler, or other life saving medications must have those medications available for every outing.
- Optional: binoculars, hand/foot warmers

Where will the campout be, and what will participants need?

Check out the [Campout Details & Packing List](#) doc for more information!

What if there is inclement weather?

Please ensure the participant is always prepared with weather-appropriate layers and, if forecasted, a rain jacket; be sure to check the weather the day of or before and then pack accordingly. Given our variable mountain town weather, it's hard to predict what kind of conditions we might be working with. Nevertheless, with the proper clothing and attitudes, rain, snow, and cold are awesome opportunities to experience the trail in new ways, awaken the senses, and embark on memorable adventures. That being said, our instructors know when to call it off; when inclement weather is forecasted, we'll be in touch to give you a heads up to pack extra items or that we'll be adjusting/cancelling that week's outing. We'll cancel outings if driving conditions are unsafe.

What measures are being taken in response to the coronavirus?

The Arizona Trail Association's Seeds of Stewardship program is committed to reducing the risk of coronavirus transmission. Information about our safety strategies can be found in our [Revised COVID Epidemic Protocols](#).

Participants will be required to:

- Follow any federal, state, and local mask ordinances.
- Wear a mask during group transportation and when we're unable to maintain physical distancing. We will not check participants' vaccination status, and we ask that participants respect one another's requests to wear masks and/or requests for physical distancing.
- Carry and use disinfectants (provided by ATA).
- Not share beverages.

We ask that youth kindly refrain from participation if they have COVID-19 symptoms, believe they may have COVID-19, or have had any exposure to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

What if our family prefers to provide our own transportation?

We understand if you're more comfortable providing your own transportation to and from the trailheads in light of COVID-19. Please indicate this preference on your registration form. Because we will reserve 13 spots in the van for the same participants, if you choose to provide your own transportation, you'll be responsible for transportation for the entire duration of the winter session; we can, however, still accommodate group transportation for the campout, since it's a further drive, and we'll have an additional SUV. Providing your own rides will require some extra coordination and will alter your drop off and pick up times.

Who is leading the outings?

Miguel Sotelo, Arizona Trail Association's Youth Outreach & Education Associate, joined After School on the AZT in September 2020 after moving back to Flagstaff from Seattle where he worked as an Environmental Educator and Backpacking/Climbing Guide for middle and high schoolers. Miguel holds a B.S. in Environmental Science and a Wilderness First Aid certification. He has been leading and guiding groups in the outdoors for over 5 years. Miguel uses his education and experience to actively diversify and equify outdoor and conservation spaces. Miguel's goal is to use these outings to a) help participants feel confident in the outdoors, b) challenge participants to better make the outdoors a safe and welcoming place for everyone, and c) give youth the opportunity to be themselves and make new friends.

Julie Polovitch, ATA's Youth Outreach & Education Coordinator, launched After School on the AZT in response to challenges that youth, families, and public lands faced through the coronavirus pandemic. Julie, a Flagstaff resident, holds a B.A. in Environmental Education and a Wilderness First Responder certification. She has extensive experience leading groups in wilderness settings, a background in ecology and conservation, and an excitement for enlivening new curiosities for the natural world. A perfect outing in Julie's mind is one that a) excites youth to explore more and ask more questions, b) challenges participants to try something new, and c) leaves a little extra dirt on our shoes, hands, and—yes, sometimes—faces.

Learn more about Seeds of Stewardship online!

Check out our After School on the AZT [website](#).

Follow us on [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)!

More questions?

Please reach out to Miguel at miguel@aztrail.org.