

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions offers unique expeditions rooted in the culture and landscape of the American Southwest. Our programs offer an opportunity to immerse yourself in the majestic land and cultural heritage of the American Southwest. At the Gulch, we'll inspire you with all of the places we explore, we will take you on world-class backpacking and hiking trails, connect you with hands-on science and nature, and engage you in the art and culture of the Southwest.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jordan Stone



Atypical, yet successful. That is how I would describe the last year at Cottonwood Gulch. Putting together this report has given us a chance to sit down, exhale, and feel pride in what we have accomplished in the Gulch community over the last year.

What a year of change! As the pandemic persisted, we heard again and again from trekkers, teachers, and parents about the importance of programs like ours. In a year when kids were isolated and stuck in front of screens much of the day, the Gulch offered an opportunity to live outdoors as part of a caring, adventurous community. We had to alter things to make our programs happen during a pandemic--new COVID protocols, smaller groups, outdoor meals, and more--which gave an atypical discomfort to those of us who were accustomed to "normal" Gulch treks. It wasn't simple, but we made it happen, and I hope you can share a sense of pride in all that we were able to accomplish in the last year. Here is a snapshot of what that looks like:

- Over 1,000 trekkers and young adults participated in Cottonwood Gulch Treks in 2021.
- We finalized a Strategic Plan to guide the organization into our 100th year (2026!).
- Our summer treks and school treks were COVID-free.
- We are in good financial shape, with cash reserves and a successful track record of high-quality programs and partnerships.
- Our Basecamp facilities (old and new!) are in excellent condition thanks to efforts from our staff and volunteers.
- We have a committed community that shows up when we need them -- donors, volunteers, staff, board members, parents, teachers, and trekkers.

We are excited for what 2022 brings, and we hope each of you will find a way to join us, on a trek, during a volunteer weekend, or even on the phone. Thank you for your continued support.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Marjorie Kittle

It is an honor to take my place in this role; I send huge thanks to Greg Barker for his leadership as Chair for the last four years. I am excited to be starting when our new strategic plan will guide the Gulch. The plan sets priorities that move us toward being relevant, inclusive, connected, environmentally aware, financially secure, and operationally efficient. My role will be to support those priorities and build the strongest Board team possible.

In the past year, we worked with over 1,000 trekkers. We have built a solid financial position thanks to generous donors and COVID relief grants. Basecamp projects have improved forest health and program facilities. We are also pushing efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization. We have finalized a new strategic plan that will guide the organization for the next five years. I am grateful to have this robust platform from which to look to the future. As we embark upon our next 100 years, the Gulch will focus on dynamic ways to engage with the world while staying true to our core strengths. We welcome the opportunity to confront the challenges of a rapidly changing world with our “can do” spirit.

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SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Our partner schools this year include the following:

Amy Biehl High School
Discover U
eCademy
Escuela Del Sol
Mandela International Magnet School
Monte del Sol
Mountain Mahogany
North Valley Academy

Robert F. Kennedy Charter School
Rio Grande School
Sandia Preparatory
Six Directions Indigenous School
South Valley Academy
South Valley Preparatory
Technology Leadership High School
The Montessori Middle School
United World College



"I first met the Gulch when bringing students from my elementary school out for a trip. When I walked into the kitchen at Basecamp and met Walter, I thought to myself, "I know what I want to do when I grow up. I want to work with Walter in this kitchen." Instead, I went out to the Gulch and started up a mountain bike program as part of summer programming and supported getting kids on bikes for two summers.

One memorable moment, out of too many to count, was hiking up to the Mt. Taylor summit in the dark, and in the snow, with a group of 5th graders for sunrise. As we sat at the top and watched the sun come up over the Sandias and Albuquerque, ***we all felt strong and proud in a significantly different way from feeling accomplished in a classroom setting.***

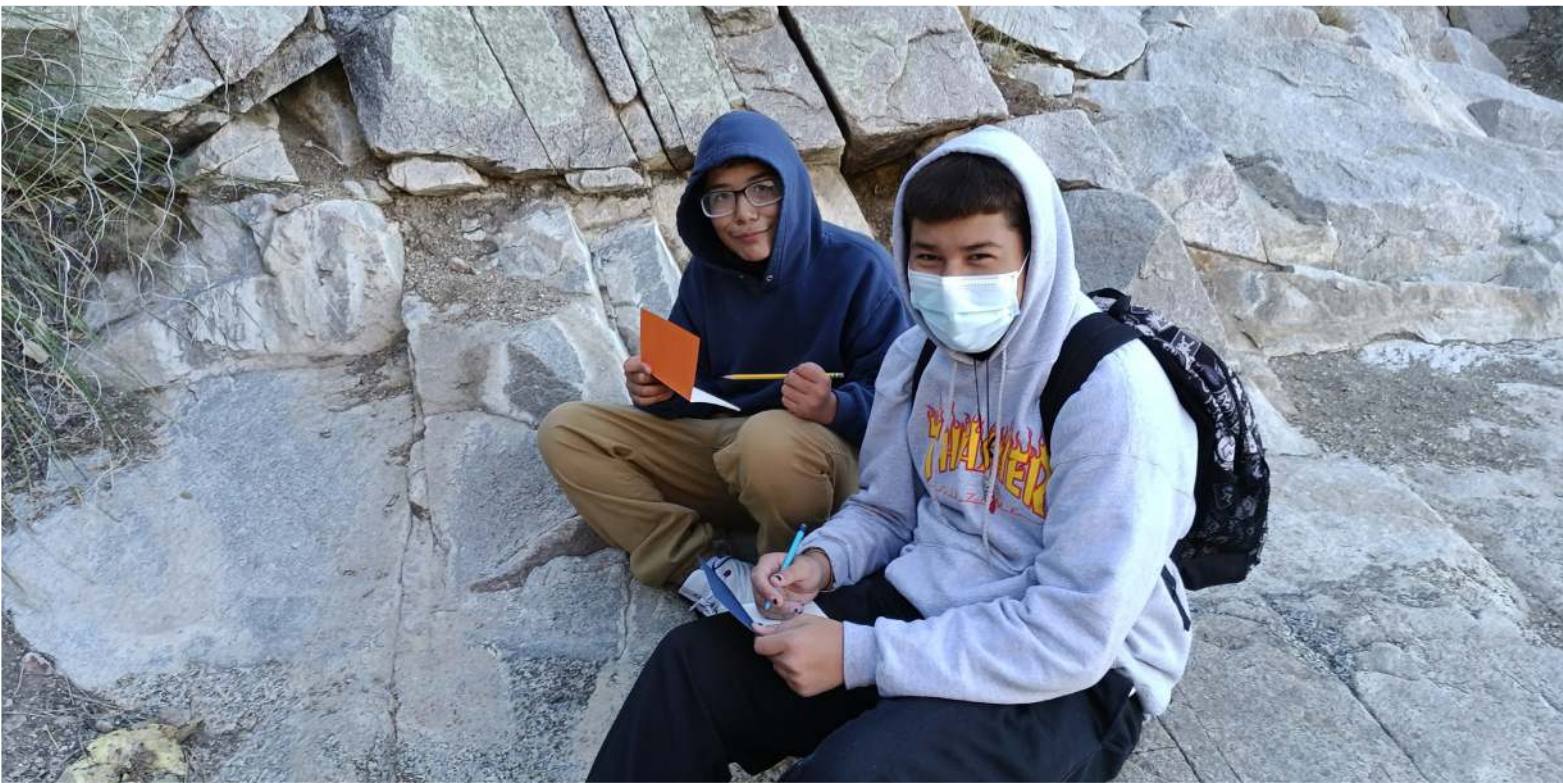
My oldest son, who grumbled at times about living out there all summer, credits the Gulch with asking him to grow up in ways not possible when surrounded by the comforts of his city, school, and community. I hold such gratitude that the Gulch brought him to these new places."

Lisa Keck

Albuquerque Teacher and Gulch School Partner since 2009

“I enjoyed being outside and having fun with my friends and teachers. I’m going to miss the people and the environment.”
-SIWI Student

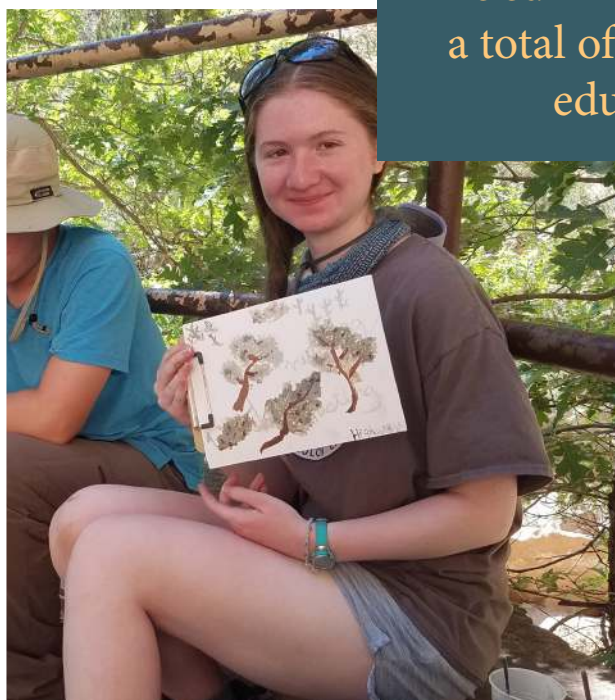
STUDENTS IN WILDERNESS INITIATIVE



“The Students in Wilderness Initiative (SIWI), now in its fourth year, is a year-long program in partnership with The Wilderness Society that introduces 8th graders throughout New Mexico to public lands via both the classroom and outdoor experiences. This program consists of 10 classroom sessions and 10 days of field-based learning, divided into day trips to nearby open spaces, overnight camping trips, and the opportunity to go backpacking in a New Mexican wilderness. The entire program focuses on New Mexico’s public lands and engages students in conversations regarding their own roles and relationships to the public spaces around them. CGE hopes to create investment and nurture stewardship of New Mexico wildlands and community open spaces through the SIWI program, as well as develop critical thinkers in New Mexico’s next generation.”

“Thank you for taking care of us as we go outside, with our friends. I’m so happy I got to see my friends after a year of being inside and I’ve had a great time learning about wilderness in New Mexico!”
-SIWI Student

SUMMER PROGRAMS



This summer we hosted 133 unique trekkers, who spent a total of 3,074 days in the field on epic outdoor and educational adventures in the Southwest.





Lucy Beckman, Semester in the Southwest

"The Southwest is like nowhere else in the world. The past couple of months I've spent here have made an incredible impression on me. Learning to live, work, and experience day to day life with a small group has given me the perspective I will take with me to college, and onward. I am so grateful to have experienced the changing aspens, vast New Mexico sky, and staggering canyons."

WORDS FROM THE TREKKERS



Anonymous, Art & Music Trek

"I grew most in my ability to socialize and push myself. I was most challenged by the physical aspects but I made it through. I think going forward I will have more confidence."



Holly Parkin, Mountain Desert Trek


"I did things I had only ever dreamed of. I was challenged in seeing if I could have the best summer ever - and I did! Being here has made me want to be outside even more than I already have and I will definitely do even bigger things because I came here."

PARTNERSHIPS

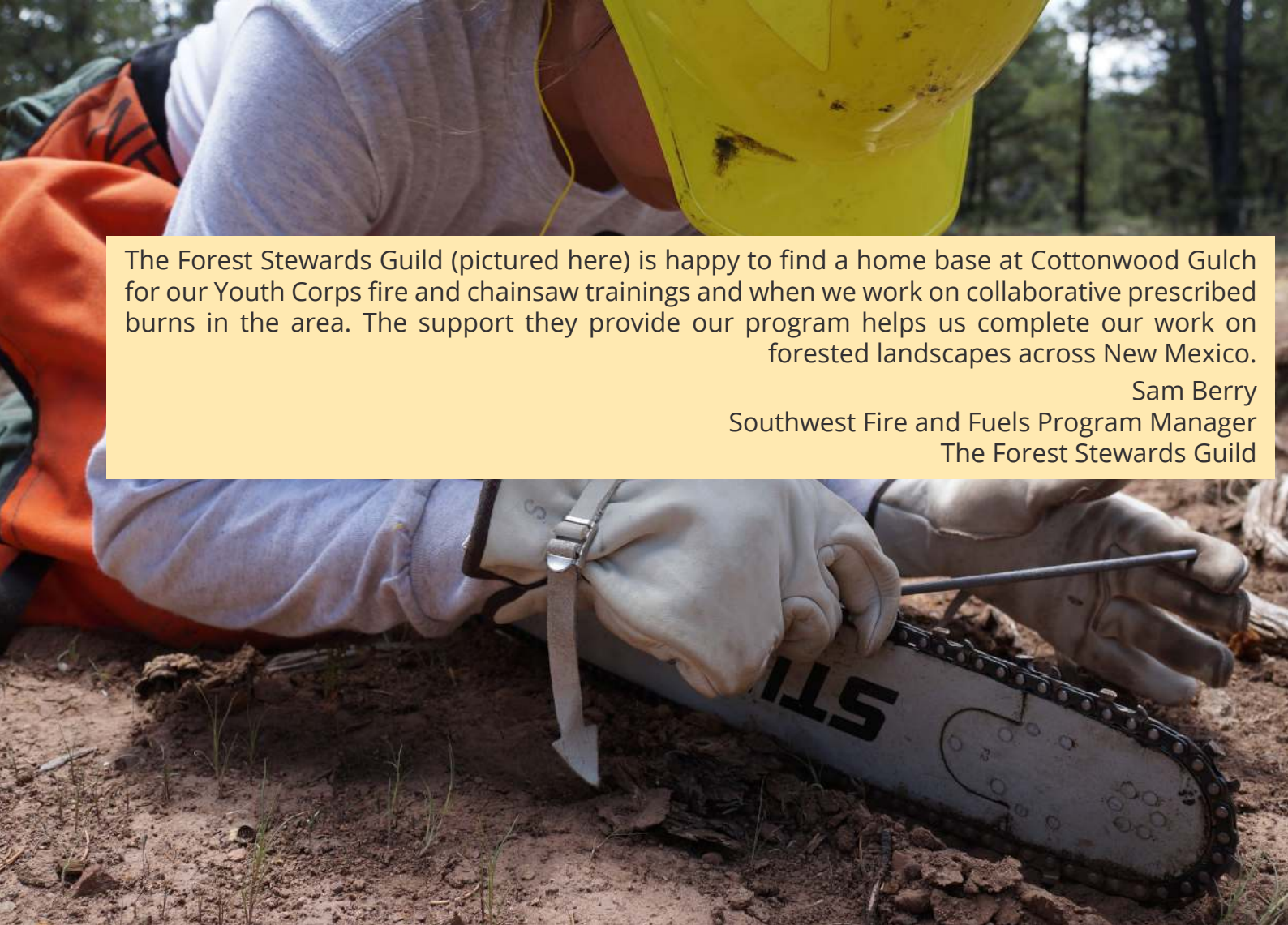
"I was a summer camp counselor back when the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) just started and our outdoor retreat was run by Cottonwood Gulch. As a participant, those experiences were life-changing for me. I was able to be vulnerable in a safe space and do activities that helped me grow as a young leader. From the entire summer experience, our time with the Gulch was always a highlight. Fast forward to today, I am now the Youth Development Coordinator for ZYEP and am so proud to say that we continue to partner with the Gulch to facilitate our outdoor retreats for our summer camp counselors. To be on the other side and learn from the Gulch ways to coordinate

and facilitate these meaningful experiences helps me be better at my job. The Gulch inspires us to grow as an organization. We see the impact their programming and their guides have on our youth, which then allows them to be better mentors for Zuni youth. I believe the best strength of the Gulch is the awesome people working the trips. ***The people who run the Gulch retreats are incredible individuals who I trust and truly enjoy being around.*** Thank you, Cottonwood Gulch, for all the various ways you have made a positive impact on ZYEP, the Zuni community, and myself."

-ZYEP Tahlia Natachu

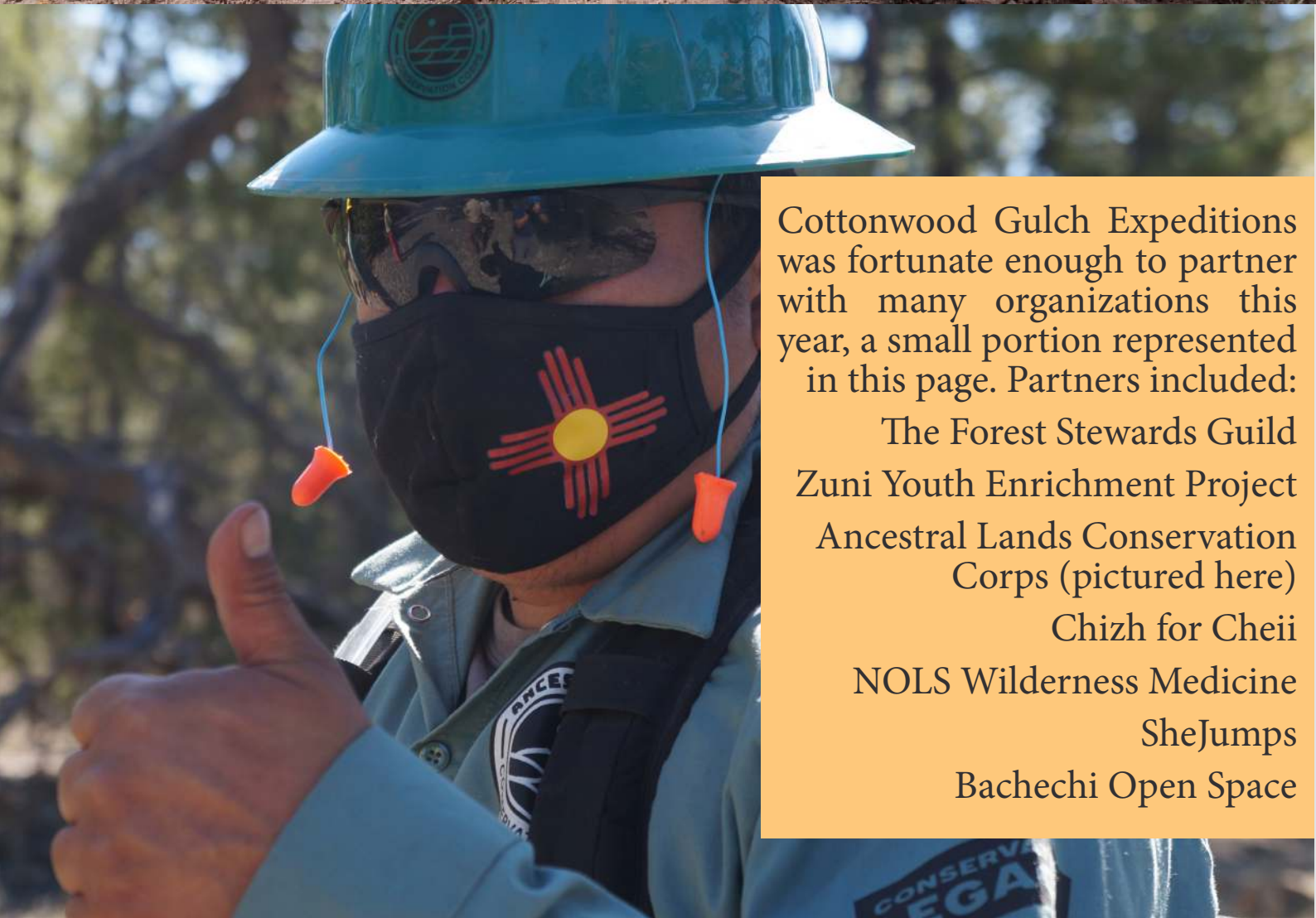


Most summer programs had the opportunity to help with Chizh for Cheii, "Firewood for Grandpa", an organization focused on providing fire and cooking wood for seniors in the Navajo Nation and Zuni Pueblo. Outfit Expedition trekker pictured here!



The Forest Stewards Guild (pictured here) is happy to find a home base at Cottonwood Gulch for our Youth Corps fire and chainsaw trainings and when we work on collaborative prescribed burns in the area. The support they provide our program helps us complete our work on forested landscapes across New Mexico.

Sam Berry
Southwest Fire and Fuels Program Manager
The Forest Stewards Guild



Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions was fortunate enough to partner with many organizations this year, a small portion represented in this page. Partners included:

The Forest Stewards Guild
Zuni Youth Enrichment Project
Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (pictured here)
Chizh for Cheii
NOLS Wilderness Medicine
SheJumps
Bachechi Open Space



"There was this one time during our first backpack through the San Juan Mountains that I realized I hadn't been asking the right questions when signing up for a 6-week trek throughout the southwest. Before – in the middle of quarantine – I joined thinking: it's my sophomore year of high school, what could I lose? Instead, I should have been thinking: what do I have to gain? And on top of Ruby Overlook, I, a Floridian standing at 13,000 feet with crushed lungs, a sore back, and the feeling like I was on top of the world, and I found that ***I had gained everything: lifelong friends, an unforgettable experience, perspective, and an open mind.***"

Sing To
MDT 2021

"Before trekking with Cottonwood Gulch, I had a lot of doubts flowing through my head: would I really enjoy 6 weeks out in the middle of nowhere? Would I be able to live without my phone? What if I didn't like the people I ended up with? I finally told myself that I would just try it out and see how it goes. Little did I know that (it) would be the best decision I could have made. Through the Gulch, I was able to learn to open up to people, not be afraid to try new things, and appreciate things the way they are. ***It was totally, 100%, worth it.***"

Chung To
MDT 2021

In Memory of Madeline Henio Chavez

The family of Madeline H. Chavez wants to express our heartfelt appreciation of the assist that was received during the memorial event on August 14.

Your generous donation of time, food, setting up of the tents, serving of the meal was so awesome and monumental. We did express our appreciation on that day, but feel it wasn't enough. It made our hearts happy we have family, friends and long-time alumni spent that the day with the Henio, Chavez, and Cloud family. You are all appreciated, love each and everyone that was present. We pray that you are all blessed with your need. Navajo poem;

**"Beauty is before
me
Beauty is behind
me
Beauty is above
me
Beauty is below
me
I walk in beauty!"**

-Tommy and Irene Henio



**MADELINE HENIO
CHAVEZ**
SEPT. 7, 1931 - MAY 15, 2020
Beloved Wife, Mother,
Sister & Grandmother



Grace Henio Cloud
Oct. 27, 1932 - Dec. 2, 2020
Forever In Our Hearts,
Always In Our Thoughts



Jefferson James Cloud
Oct. 16, 1963 - Dec. 2, 2020
There's more fun in hunting
of the bow than there is
the sureness of a gun



THE MEMORY SIT DOWN

I was a trekker for three summers during the early 1980s. I have returned to the Gulch several times in recent years as a volunteer Basecamp staff member, teaching pottery, guitar, and songwriting.

Though I didn't fully understand it until middle age, my experiences at the Gulch shaped me in profound ways. For example, after my mother's death ten years ago, I picked up my guitar, searched for words to express my grief, and wrote my first song. Where did I get the idea to connect with others through music, and that some feelings are easier to sing than to say? Surely it was the Gulch, singing "Cottonwoods" and "Rock Me To Sleep" at the end of an intense, life-changing summer some forty years ago. As a young trekker I

struggled to process what I had shared with my new Gulch family, the love I felt so deeply for them, and my sadness about saying goodbye. I didn't have the words or a way to express these feelings, but the songs did.

Cottonwood Gulch gave me--and all of us--the space, the time, sky, and the stars to put it into perspective.

I recall a line from the song "Cottonwoods" that goes, "Is it true what they say how some things never end?" Nearly forty years on from when I first set foot at Basecamp, I can confidently say the answer is "Yes."

Cottonwood Gulch is always at the top of my giving list, and not just because of the personal connection.

I know from seeing it firsthand during recent visits that the organization is incredibly well-run. The dedication, work ethic, and professionalism of the staff and board are truly remarkable.

I hope that my modest donations will make a small difference, whether it is upgrading Basecamp facilities, repairing a truck, or expanding the organization's reach to more young people.

Jamie Kresberg
Prairie Trek 1982-1984
Parent of Trekkers 2014-
2016
Visiting Scholar
2017-present

Thank you to the Donors of Oct. 2020- Sept. 2021

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This list represents donors to Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. We did our best to list all the donors. If your name or organizations name does not appear here and we missed it, please contact us. Thank you for your support!

Looking Ahead: A Strategic Direction for the Gulch

Coming to life in a grove of cottonwoods off a dusty road outside Thoreau, New Mexico, Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions (The Gulch) recently turned 95 years of age. Over this period, hundreds of trekkers and staff forged strong traditions – respect for nature, appreciation of diverse cultures, individual resilience partnered with teamwork. As we embark upon our next 100 years, The Gulch realizes that the compelling needs of the next century require us to focus on new, dynamic ways to engage with the world while staying true to our core strengths. Through a new strategic plan, we have cleared a path toward a revitalized future for our students, our staff, and the land we cherish.

Under the direction of a consultant, Building Beloved Communities, the Board of Directors worked for over a year alongside a special Strategic Planning Team, our partners in education, our Indigenous neighbors, alumni, donors, and many other stakeholders to craft the plan is summarized here. Based on their input, we affirmed our Mission – who we are; our Vision – the ultimate aim of our efforts; 11 Values – how we act; and four Strategic Directions – what we will do to achieve our Mission.

Mission

Cottonwood Gulch creates outdoor learning adventures for youth from all backgrounds that foster personal growth, strengthen community, and inspire stewardship of the natural world.

Vision

Cottonwood Gulch envisions a global community grounded in reverence for the Southwestern U.S., and respect for the lands, waters, and human cultures of the world.

Values

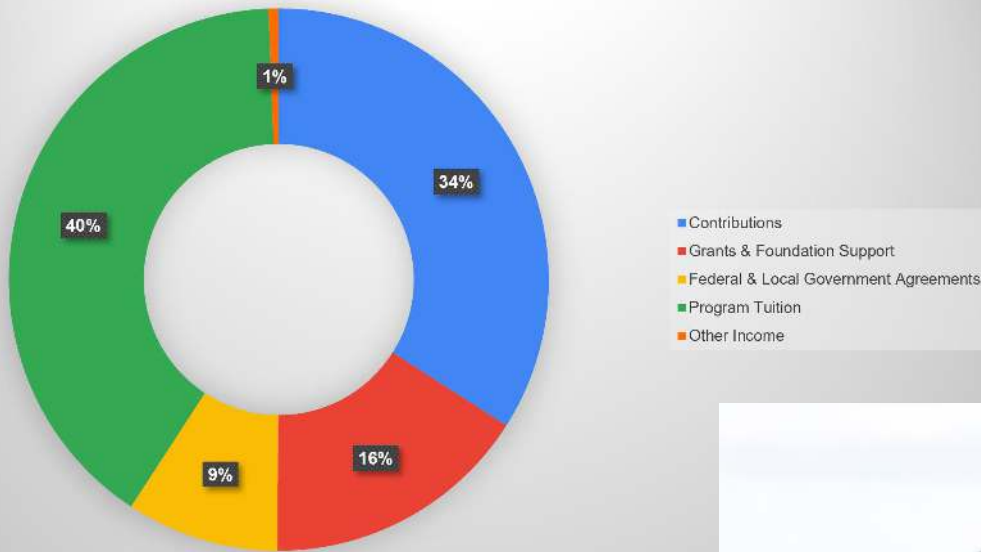
Live in community, steward the environment, expand access, be inclusive and welcoming, embrace challenges, manage risk, instill a spirit of adventure, honor native and indigenous communities, educate through immersive and place-based learning, nurture partnerships, foster personal responsibility.

Strategic Directions 2021-2026

- Strategic Direction #1: Inspiring Programs, Immersive learning for a changing world
- Strategic Direction #2: Strengthen and Diversify the Gulch Community
- Strategic Direction #3: Model Environmental Stewardship
- Strategic Direction #4: Invest in our Operations and Infrastructure

We welcome the opportunity to confront the challenges of a rapidly changing world with The Gulch “can do” spirit. Our focus will be on helping trekkers build knowledge, skills, and inspiration to creatively tackle some of the world’s biggest challenges: climate change, intercultural understanding, digital citizenship, land stewardship, food, everyday social-emotional skills, and more. We will provide more information on these strategic directions in the coming months--stay tuned!

THE NUMBERS



Income

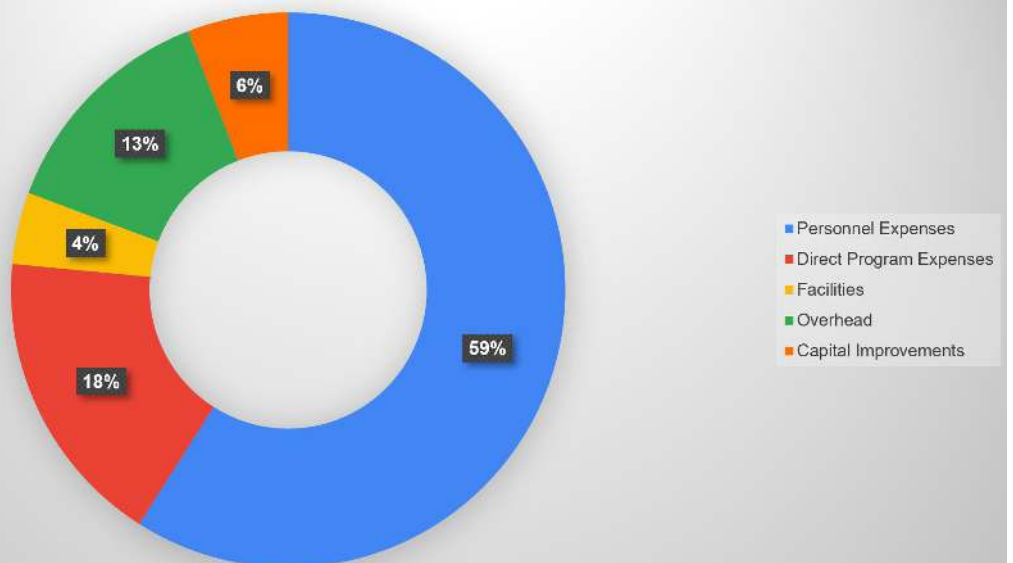
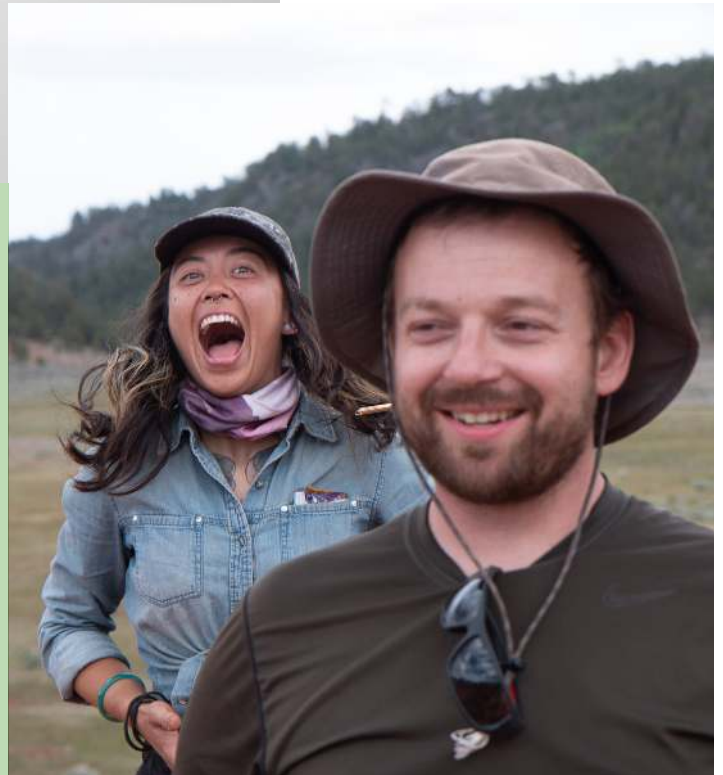
Contributions	\$470,504.32
Grants & Foundation Support	\$221,500.00
Federal & Local Government Agreements	\$126,321.45
Program Tuition	\$555,194.47
Other Income	\$8,464.46

Total	\$1,381,984.70
PPP/CARES Act Support	\$255,197.89

Expenses

Personnel Expenses	\$616,962.25
Direct Program Expenses	\$182,609.18
Facilities	\$43,759.94
Overhead	\$140,404.52
Capital Improvements	\$61,432.55

Total	\$1,045,168.44
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The Red Rocks Society: Planned Giving for the Gulch

The red rocks of New Mexico have always elicited a special feeling in those familiar with Cottonwood Gulch. Whether it was the first glimpse from the window of the train indicating your imminent arrival in Gallup or listening to a distant freight train echo over the rocks as you gazed out from the old Andrew's Ranch campsite, the red rocks provide an ever-changing yet stable backdrop to the trek experience. The Red Rocks Society has been formed to recognize those individuals who choose to contribute in a manner reflective of the rocks themselves -- solid, durable, and worthy of respect.

The Red Rocks Society are members of the Cottonwood Gulch community who have chosen to make deferred gifts as part of their estate planning. We invite you to join the Red Rocks Society: please contact Jordan Stone, Executive Director for more information. director@cottonwoodgulch.org

It has been a challenging, wonderful year. Thank you for all your support. We look forward to your continued engagement as we build toward an even better 2022.

