Innovation in Outdoor Education & bridging the “Access Gap”... 
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* Printed on Recycled Paper with Soy Ink
Bridging the Access Gap  
by Kris Salisbury

New Mexico is an exceptional state in so many ways. It's unique landscape, natural history and ancient cultures form the backdrop of this diverse state making it a place that so many of us are proud to call home. New Mexico is also a diverse state making it a place that so many of us are proud to call home. (out of 3100 in the US). The racial/ethnic demographics of NM are: 48% hispanic, 38% white (non-hispanic), 10.5% Native American, and 2.6% African American.

So, “What does this mean for the Gulch?” you might ask. It means that when outdoor education is typically comprised of mostly middle-to-upper-income Anglo participants, we are situated perfectly to engage a more diverse and representative demographic right out the door of our office and base camp. It also means that to do this, not only do we need the intention, but we need the dollars to back our programs.

Classrooms Get Outdoors (GO), a Title 1 component of our Wilderness Classrooms Program, currently reaches 388 students and accounts for 12% of our overall user days. Classrooms GO provides scholarships and discounted tuition to local schools who might otherwise not have a chance to access quality outdoor programs in the wild places of the Southwest. Ultimately, this program means that the Gulch is helping NM students of all socio-economic backgrounds engage with the outdoors in meaningful and transformative ways.

“Why is this important to me?” you might ask yourself. “What can getting NM youth outdoors mean to me?, “Why should I give dollars to support this?” Those are great questions. Think of a place you love out here. Perhaps it is Ahshilepah... or the Organ Mountains, Chaco, the Gila, Escalante, Bears Ears or so many other public lands where we wander. As you have likely heard there is an assault on many of these places. We need ambassadors for these special places. We have found that the best way to create an advocate, an ambassador, is to engage that person in time spent wandering, exploring, smelling, seeing, touching (and even sometimes tasting) these places up close and in person.

Without the support of the local communities of the Southwest, these lands have less of a chance of being stewarded and preserved. Without programs like Classrooms GO and our summer scholarship program, both of which make a point to strongly include local youth, we cannot hope to create a strong local voice. Without funding for these programs and facilities/equipment to support these efforts, we at the Gulch, cannot continue to do this work.

As we draw closer to the end of our campaign, my message to you is that while our robust summer program continues to give young people from all over the country and world formative outdoor experiences, we also have increased our ability to more representatively serve the population of New Mexico and we can all be proud of that! We continue to steward a beautiful little piece of land with a cottonwood forest and an occasionally seeping spring, and we must also be engaged in growing the next generation of local, regional and national stewards of public lands overall.

In the spirit of being welcoming to all, the face of the Gulch includes a demographic that looks a little more like the faces of New Mexico's demographics. This is good for the Gulch, good for our participants and good for the future of public lands. The more of our population that loves the outdoors and is passionate about conservation, the more likely we are to have a healthier more robust natural landscape and more engaged citizenry. Can you assist? Consider a generous contribution to our campaign. And, for a limited time, have your donation matched if you are a new donor or if you give 10x your normal gift this giving season.

Trek On,
Greetings from a new voice taking over this column. I officially took over as Board Chair at the Fall Meeting of our Board of Directors on October 28th. A big thank you to our outgoing directors and officers for volunteering their time and expertise to the Gulch. Four dedicated officers have led our organization to greater impact than ever before: Chair Henry Hooper, Secretary David Greenberg, Treasurer Neil Macneale, and Secretary Ellen Ebersole. Thanks also to tireless organizer and hostess Beth Williams-Breault and legal and strategic thinker John Mayer for their contributions. The Gulch continues to be a special place today thanks in part to the efforts of this group.

What exactly is the role of the Board? Our board convenes twice each year (plus 2 conferences calls) to deliberate and determine the direction of the organization at the highest level. The board approves the annual budget, oversees Executive Director, leads fundraising, and ensures that the organization fulfills its mission and follows its bylaws. Three committees of the board and other working groups meet and deliberate between board meetings.

Since all the above decisions happen through the collaboration and vote of the Board or committee, the most important job of each individual board member is to bring their wisdom, expertise, and love of the Gulch to bear in discussion and collaboration with fellow directors. Directors must look out for the local area, which strengthens our connection to the community.

This allows us to offer more scholarships, many from the stock market, the endowment is now over $1 million. We voted to authorize Kris to move ahead with contractor selection and building plans for moving the showers and renovating the kitchen.

We also looked at (and approved) the budget for next year. Kris explained some of her income and expense projections. Summer enrollment was good this year, although not as good as 2015. With the new cottonwoodgulch.org web site and a big push on Search Engine Optimization to direct more inquiries there, we are hoping for an increase in web enrollment next year.

Thanks to generous donors and the strong stock market, the endowment is now over $1 million. This allows us to offer more scholarships, many from the local area, which strengthens our connection to the community.

We always look at bylaws and policies. Our new board members bring fresh eyes and new knowledge of non-profit governance to help keep them up to date and relevant.

All the best from a dark and rainy Vermont,
Tom Hyde, Secretary
“We hand-washed some of our dirtiest laundry and then all packed up to head to James and Joyce Skeet’s farm. On arrival, I was immediately put to work weeding the garden with the help of David Allen, James (little James), Taylor, and Sylvia. We worked for three hours, with amazing puppy-petting breaks in between, until it was time for a Navajo taco dinner. The fry bread was so good and, along with all the toppings, made an amazing taco. [We then began campfire with James’ Navajo drumming] and told stories and sang around the campfire”
- Sam Robinson, Prairie Trek

“Good, old, fun” - Oliver, Outfit
“I think Cottonwood Gulch has the best staff”
- Pasha, Outfit
“I learned a lot of leadership skills” - Ezra, Outfit
“I learned perseverance and stamina”
- Petra, Outfit

What is the most important thing you learned?
“How to have fun in the pouring rain!”
- Dessa Monat, Wild Country Trek

What did you learn? “That I will always find friends here at the Gulch.”
- Isabel Chavez, Wild Country Trek

Three words to describe: “Super- duper- cool” - Evan DiNome, Adventure Conservation Trek
“I loved waking up early to the smell of the desert after the night rain. It was great to see the Gulch so full of happy engaged campers! Working in the NAW with my family was truly memorable. I spent a quiet hour or so on the porch of the Mess Hall watching the hummingbirds come and go. I listened to the wind flipping the pages of an old book.”
- David Andrews, Family Trek

“I gained a new perspective to life and I learned more about environmental justice and being a girl in 2017”
- Claire Torgelson, Turquoise Trail

“I learned that I can hike 13 miles in five hours and that I really love painting”
- Marc Hidalgo, Art and Music Trek

“Our adventure went by fast, but it was obvious something had changed in that time. We were no longer just a group of unique individuals—we had become an aspen grove, connected to one another with more depth and complexity than can be seen.”
- Miles Kintz, Mountain Desert Trek

“I learned perseverance and stamina”
- Petra, Outfit

“I am taking home with me a sense of accomplishment and good vibes. I am also taking with me a new way of thinking and new knowledge and memories. I am leaving behind friends and basically a whole different life”
- Brianda Ruiz, Adventure Conservation Trek

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“Everything is more than beautiful
I watch, walk, seems like forever
Then I see water “I open my eyes
To see
The world from my view
We walk for miles
Everything is more beautiful.
Setting up tents
We sing
Or are silent
Me and my friends
walk
I pick up a snake, a beauty natures wonder
We walk on I find another
Serpent
We name her Septa
We head back
And dinner is ready
We eat under the setting sun, and then we set up beds
We sleep under the stars
I name the constellations
We laugh
The night is beautiful
I close my eyes, and sleep”
- Anodyne, Outfit

“The hike followed a wash into the canyon, and we were dwarfed on either side by sweeping red and white cliffs. With long stripes of desert varnish, dotted with small alcoves in the rock. The hike was relatively flat, and we entertained ourselves by describing our houses to each other. We stopped for lunch in the shade of a large boulder that was near the trailhead of another trail that lead to a rock arch. Hiking to the arch would have added an extra three miles to the total mileage, which I was up for, but we voted not to go. The rest of the hike was still absolutely stunning and we made it back to the vans in record time. From the trailhead we drove to the Capitol Reef visitor center to fill water bottles, use the bathroom, became Junior Rangers, and learned cool facts about the land around us. Did you know that by driving twenty miles in Capitol Reef National Park you can see seventeen rock layers that range in age from 275 to 85 million years old? Yay science!”
- Leah, Turquoise Trail

“...Then we met our friend, our monster-like crocodile called Phytosaur. Doc showed what they looked like. They had sharp teeth and the biggest skull that we had ever seen. We took a ten-minute break and drank water. Doc showed us the skeleton of a scary modern carnivore reptile called Postosuchus. Then we went to the dino lab to clean phytosaur fossils. It was fun work, and feels like I am already a paleontologist. Everyone cleaned teeth and ribs. I tried to clean an armor plate, I got rid of the mud, and it made my hands tired.” - Willem, Paleo Trek

“We stopped at Monument Valley next, which despite being very commercial and touristy, was simply an outstanding work of nature. It seemed almost unreal, as if I were looking at a postcard or a computer screen saver. As I gazed at the view, I thought about how different this part of the U.S. is compared to my home in Ohio. It really is like a completely different universe.”
- Sarah, Mountain Desert Trek

Join us for
Rendezvous 2018
First Rendezvous: July 8th
Second Rendezvous: July 29th
As always, our Rendezvous celebrations are open to all former trekkers, staff, and their friends and family. Send us a note if you can make it and we’ll make sure there is an SS cup and a spoon ready for your arrival.
kris@cottonwoodgulch.org

Wilderness Medicine Courses
Sponsored by Cottonwood Gulch, taught by the NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute
For those of you who spend much of your lives outdoors—or those who want to spend more time outdoors—these courses will give you skills and confidence to live safely in the wilderness. We require our staff to complete WFA training, and many have WFR or WEMT level certifications

Courses in Albuquerque
Wilderness First Responder: Mar 9-18, 2018
WFR Recertification: May 26-28, 2018

Course in Thoreau, NM
Wilderness First Aid: June 14-15, 2018
Find Yourself in...

Prairie Trek
June 25 - July 30
• Rock climb in the Santa Fe National Forest
• Experience Valles Caldera & Bandelier
• Visit a blacksmith in Chama
• Summit the highest peak in New Mexico
• Backpack the San Juan Mountains
• Visit a pueblo in Northern New Mexico

Turquoise Trail
June 25 - July 30
• Experience the grandeur of Keet Seel
• Soak in the incredible vistas of Muley Point
• Trace the Ed Abbey’s footsteps on Mt. Tuk
• Enjoy a home stay on the Navajo Nation
• Enjoy all Four-Corner states
• Visit Pie Town, New Mexico

Art & Music Trek
July 19 - Aug 9
• Enjoy music and art from local artisans
• Explore a local music and art festival
• Meet incredible artists from the Southwest
• Go behind the scenes at Santa Fe Art Museums
• Find inspiration from pristine natural areas.

Adventure Conservation Trek
June 23 - July 14
• Experience world-class rock climbing sites
• Travel by mountain bike through the desert
• Overcome personal challenges
• Learn from experts in outdoor adventure
• Give back to local communities
...the American Southwest

Wild Country Trek
(3 sessions)
June 23 - July 14 - Latir Wilderness, NM
July 9 - July 30 - Weminuche Wilderness, CO
July 19 - August 9 - Colorado Plateau, UT

- Choose from three unique sessions
- Two Backpacking trips in the Four Corners
- Experience farming in the desert
- Explore a pueblo

Mountain Desert Trek
June 25 - August 9
- Backpack in Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico
- Go rock-climbing at world-class sites
- Immerse yourself in the Navajo Nation
- Be amazed by the Escalante Slot Canyons
- Work with National Forest Rangers on Wilderness service projects

Outfit Expedition
(2 Sessions)
June 23 - July 9
July 14 - July 30
- Climb Mount Taylor for a Southwest sunrise
- Watch the bat exodus at El Malpais
- White water raft the San Juan River
- Experience the Gallup flea market
- Create art and music with our local experts
- Get your hands dirty in on our working farm

Paleontology Trek
July 24 - July 9
- Discover new fossils
- Learn excavation techniques from paleontologists
- Earn college credit for your adventure
- Contribute to scholarly research

YOU!
Dear Former Trekkers,

Someone you know is waiting for you at the Gulch. Let me describe them to jog your memory: warm and kind, generous and helpful, creative and artistic, willing to try new things without fear of failure, appreciative of the uniqueness of others, in love with the Southwest. Ring any bells?

This person, of course, is you. Or, to be more specific, the Gulch version of you. If you don’t recognize this person today, I promise that you will after a few days at the Gulch. I know that from my experience this past summer spending a week at base camp after a hiatus of over thirty years. Kris Salisbury generously called me a “visiting scholar,” but I think a more accurate title would be “volunteer Base Camp staffer” or perhaps “middle-aged guy who randomly showed up.”

How did my visit come about? Well, I was a trekker for three years in the early 1980s. Three decades flew by. Meanwhile, I finished college and grad school, taught English in Japan, got married, lived in London, New Hampshire, and Ohio, adopted two children, and eventually settled into a productive, somewhat-compromised life in New York. Add up all the hours dedicated to work and family obligations, and there aren’t many left for much else. So, like many people, I struggle to find time to pursue my passions: playing guitar, writing and recording original songs, making pottery, working with young people, being outside and enjoying nature. I squeeze these activities into weekends, vacations, and occasional evening classes, but I wish there was more time.

I started wondering, “What would it be like to spend all day, every day doing the things I love? And how could I make it happen?” Then it hit me: Cottonwood Gulch! So I called Kris, got the green light, and bought my plane tickets. There was not much of a plan beyond “show up and try to be useful,” but that was plenty. Show up, help out: unofficial Cottonwood Gulch words to live by.

Pretty good words to live by, in general, but I started to look to the sky for the weather forecast, to walk in silence listening for birds and other creatures, to mark the time with bells, and with sunrise and sunset.

I remembered what it feels like to be part of a team of exceptional people working for a greater good, practicing its values every day: empathy, gratitude, kindness, respect for people and the environment. I started to feel like my old self, my true self, my best self. That is to say, my Gulch self. He was waiting for me all this time. All I had to do was show up.

Over the next few days I taught guitar, wrote songs with Outfitters and Prairie Trekkers, and wrote a new song of my own to play at campfire (you can hear it on my website, jkresberg.com). I helped with a pitfire of the clay pots. I pitched in with KP, sweeping, G&L, and games on the field.

Like a house cat that wanders outside, I breathed the fresh air and began to feel more alert, energized and curious. I started to look to the sky for the weather forecast, to walk in silence listening for birds and other creatures, to mark the time with bells, and with sunrise and sunset.

On a Friday afternoon in late July I emerged from my rental car, strolled towards the Mess Hall, and was immediately invited to join afternoon Cottonwoods—when staff members offer activities for campers to choose from. I offered to give a pottery wheel demonstration and teach a few campers how to throw. I had not sat at a pottery wheel in over ten years. But the feel of the wet clay sliding across my fingers and palms triggered the old, familiar techniques: left elbow braced against my abdomen, bringing the clay up into a cone, then back down with the side of my right hand; pulling, shaping, trimming. It all came back quickly and easily.

By: Jamie Kresberg
We Love Lucy...

Who can explain how biodegradables work on a molecular level in one sentence and then get a group of grandmothers and toddlers loaded into a van for a Zuni dance? None other than Lucy Kluckhohn-Jones! Anyone who has spent a few years at the Gulch has at least heard of Lucy. She has an impressive Gulch resume, starting with TT as a teenager and growing to lead 30 different family treks! Most current tekkers know her as the woman who lead the week-long trip with their family before they came to the Gulch on their own. Other alumni have stories of working beside her and the adventures that ensued under her wonderful guidance. It takes a unique charisma to corral the diverse families that join our week-long trek, but not surprisingly, Lucy has it down to a science.

After all these years of commitment to the Gulch, we thought the least we could do was name our newest van after her, and along with that, highlight some stories from her Gulch life and beyond.

David Salmonson, who cooked on trek with her in ’91 dug up this delightful summary assembled by ‘the old folks’ after a trip to Chaco.

The Song of the Ancient Ones
Now you may call us the Family Wreck
But we know we’re the Family Trek!
So listen up all you little campers
We were tough, when you were still in pampers.
We don’t bathe, but we do drink
Take a whiff of us, what do you think?
So now it’s time to go and it’s much too soon.
We’ve learned that although every meal’s a banquet, you eat it with a spoon.

He also recalls a time that Lucy came through with a group from Santa Monica College. They were mostly adults. They didn’t eat their vegetables, so David threatened them with putting them in the morning pancakes. Then he did. They thought they were blueberries. Lucy didn’t correct them... until after breakfast. “Nothing I like better than peas in my pancakes.”

Her niece, Chiqui, reflected on what she has learned from Lucy over the years, and I think many of us could agree.

• Love nature for its glory
• Live life with gusto and humility
• Laugh, laugh and laugh some more and pec fast!!!
• Love yourself because you are “AWESOME!”
• And most importantly, try not to drop your camera in the General Store!!!

Lucy is “honored to have any recognition” at Cottonwood Gulch. When I told her of the van naming, she responded, “As you know, it’s been a big part of my life (more than 50 years, yipes!), and I’m not done yet. I’m delighted to be in such august company as Mr. Van, and I think the world of Walter and Nick and all the Clouds (as does everyone, I’m sure). Nobody can squeeze a van into a skinny parking place like Walter. I don’t know how he does it. All I can claim with such an endeavor is one time when Santa Monica College took a field trip with a bunch of students out to New Mexico. Of course we camped out at the Gulch. We went to visit Kin Ya’aa in Crownpoint when you could actually drive down past the oil tanks to see the ruin. I drove down the track (couldn’t call it a road), and scared the daylights out of my SMC colleague. We just had vans, not four-wheel drive vehicles. We made it out and back, of course. After all, it was Trek country. And we left only footprints, so far as I know.”

David Salmonson summarizes—“The point is, she is the nicest, toughest, smartest, group leader any staff member could hope to work with. She somehow made me be colorful rather than mean-spirited and dared me to do my best. She pulled me out of Trek retirement when I thought I was too old, and showed me how to be a better parent while she was at it. Of all the colleagues at the Trek I’ve had, it’s her opinion that matters most to me.”

We hope that our new van characterizes the caring, practical and helpful person that Lucy is. And we look forward to the opportunity to share her stories with every trekker who sees the van and asks, “Who’s Lucy?!”. You may have the opportunity to trek with Lucy this summer on Family Trek, or as Wenda Trevathan would like it to be called, “Lucy Trek!”. We already have a few families signed up!
The Campaign for the Gulch
Invest in the future of Cottonwood Gulch

Can you help?

Follow us!

Donate...

Our Goal - $3,000,000

Do you have a connection to a family or corporate foundation that you would be willing to share with the Gulch? We would welcome the conversation!

we are here!

$2,000,000

Finished!
A group of generous donors has challenged us to raise $600k from new donors*.

There’s one catch: you must give before the match expires Dec 31, 2017.

We need YOU to complete the matching grant!!!

*matching grant applies to new donors and those who did not give between 11/2011-11/2014
Adult Programs (21+) & Family Trek (all ages)

Weekend Intensive Series

Small Metals Workshop and Basic Metalsmithing
Learn the building blocks of metalsmithing and create your own metal masterpieces with an expert metalsmither.
April 27-29, 2018 (Ages 16+)

Handbuilding Basics and Pit Fire Techniques
Get your hands muddy and learn basic skills from a local ceramist in a weekend sure to inspire some creativity through grounding yourself.
Sept 1-3, 2018 (Ages 16+)

Fiber Arts and Navajo Rug Auction
Enter the enchanting world of weaving and fiber arts with local Navajo weavers, with opportunities to see and purchase hand-made rugs.
May 11-13, 2018 (Ages 16+)

En Plein Air Painting & Nature Journaling
Let the landscape and colors of the desert direct your paintbrush, as you relax and reflect in a beautiful southwestern forest landscape.
Sept 7-9, 2018 (Ages 16+)

Traveling Expeditions

Weekend of Stewardship
Spend time with local rangers and land managers on local projects and learn what you can do to support New Mexico’s public lands.
Oct 12-14, 2018 (Ages 16+)

Geology of Western NM
Explore the wealth of archaeology and geology found in the Southwest with local experts.
Aug 24-26, 2018 (Ages 16+)

Flocks & Rocks Trek
This trek into exotic southeastern Arizona will remind you of field schools in your university days: traveling in vans, camping in tents, and learning all about birds, geology, and ecology from seasoned and salty professors. From the soaring canyon walls of the Chiracahua to the limestone labyrinths of Kartchner Caverns to Organ Pipe cacti found nowhere else in the US, the unusual birds live in unusual ecosystems surrounded by arresting geology.
May 19-27, 2018 (Ages 21+)

Archeo-Astronomy
Gaze at the same stars as the ancestral people in the lands and places they called home. Learn about the interconnectedness of astronomy on daily living, art and ceremony, while enjoying star-filled evening skies, desert landscapes, nightly campfires and seasoned guides who will feed you and lead you on this edifying and unique trip.
Dates: TBD (21+)

Equinox Treks to Chaco with NM Wilderness Alliance & Cottonwood Gulch
March 17-20
Explore the reaches of New Mexico’s historical places, traveling between Chaco, Aztec Ruins, Mesa Verde and beyond in the company of an esteemed Southwestern Archaeologist.

Sept 21-24
Enjoy the Autumn Equinox in Chaco Canyon, and experience a dark sky park on their astronomy weekend. We will spend some time exploring the local Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness Study Area as well as exploring the many niches of Chaco.
Recalibration Weekends

Wellness Retreat
Treat yourself to a weekend of relaxation including a medicinal herb walk, salve-making workshop, hiking, yoga classes and an optional massage in the recalibrating outdoors.
May 25-28, 2018 (Ages 21+)

Women Writing & Riding
Spend a reflective weekend putting pen to paper and tire-tread to dirt in this woman focused mountain bike and journaling workshop.
Sept 28-30, 2018 (Ages 21+)

Family Series

Camping 101 Weekend
Let our seasoned staff show you what you need to know to get outside and camp with your family.
May 18-20, 2018 (All Ages)

Basic Backpacking Weekend
Master the essentials and build your skills to sleeping under the stars from our expert guides.
Aug 30-Sept 3, 2018 (All Ages)

Intro to Mountain Biking Weekend
Learn to ride the beautiful desert trails with mountain bike experts. Open to all ages.
May 4-6, 2018 (All Ages)

Summer Family Trek
Unplug and discover the Southwest with your family on a weeklong adventure and exploration! Let us do the heavy lifting while you enjoy family time.
June 23 - July 1, 2018 (All Ages)

Bachechi Speaker Series 2018

We’ve got an exciting line up of information and family fun activities in the North Valley of Albuquerque in 2018. We hope you can join us!

Adventures at Bachechi- Sundays 1:00-3:00pm
Hide and Seek- March 18
Splash Day and Grape Harvest - Aug 19
Fort Building- Sep 23
Bigfoot and Beyond- October 28
Sense of Place and Season
Mindfulness- June 20
Drawing/Painting- July 25
Music- August 22
Writing/Poetry - Sept 19

Intro to Outdoor Expeditions - 4:00-5:30pm
Hiking and Map Reading 101- March 4
Camping/Backpacking 101- May 6

Bachechi Open Space is located at
9521 Rio Grande Blvd NW, ABQ, NM 87114
Last July, when my mother and I joined my nephew David and his PT group in the new Cha’oh at final rendezvous, I felt like I’d come home.

That’s how the Gulch has always felt, ever since I joined the TT 1974-76. And I’ve always thought of the career I’ve developed since—I design public arts and humanities projects on environment and public space—as very Gulch-rooted work.

I’ve written essays, such as “Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A.,” about urban nature. My Los Angeles Urban Rangers collective has designed participatory public art projects, such as “Public Access 101: Downtown L.A.” And I’ve created a Nature Trail at Laumeier Sculpture Park in my hometown St. Louis—which includes stops at the bathrooms, power lines, and parking lot—and also co-created a mobile-phone app that tells you how to find and use the public beaches in Malibu that are lined with private development.

At the moment, I’m finishing a short book, “Stop Saving the Planet!: A 21st-Century Environmentalist Manifesto.” Which might not sound very Gulch-like, but I surely hope it is. It asks a question that many of us see as ever more urgent in 2017, and that’s also long been a focus of my work:

How can we start understanding environment as literally the stuff we use and inhabit to create our lives—and not just as a separate world out there. How do we live inside of environments—and can we do that tons more sustainably and tons more equitably to create healthy and equitable cities, economies, and communities?

Jenny, you continue to inspire our staff team here at the Gulch! Keep up the good work.
“With Chaco Canyon as its objective, the Trek moved on over roads which grew continually worse and eventually restricted travel to a snail’s pace. After entering Chaco Canyon, camp was pitched a stone’s throw from Pueblo Bonito, the largest Indian surface ruin ever excavated.”

- Report of the 13th [Prairie Trek] Expedition, Summer of 1938

All of our journeys have to start somewhere. At the Gulch, our 91 year journey started from the brain of a teacher in Indianapolis, who wanted to explore the Southwest with his students. For Mandela International Magnet, an IB school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, their journey started in August of 2014 when they opened their doors with a mission to provide a small, personalized learning environment with a focus on thinking internationally. A year later, we were fortunate enough to be a part of that vision as they dreamed of a way to bring their students to Chaco Culture National Historic Park. A lot of local schools read about New Mexico’s incredible, intertwined cultural history… but a surprising few get to actually walk between the walls built by their ancestors and get a sense of the scope of community and remarkable history that existed in Chaco, Aztec Ruins, Coronado, Jemez Pueblo other ancient spaces that you can visit today. Fortunately, Cottonwood Gulch has a long history of taking groups to Chaco Canyon (a 1930’s log details our trekkers sleeping amidst the ruins—back before the historic park was established), which we often combine with a trip to the memorable Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness. Our first year with Mandela, we successfully brought over 40 of their students to explore and engage in the history at Chaco Culture. This year, thanks to the continued commitment to organizing and advocating outdoor experiences of art teacher Susanna Mireles-Mankus, we did our third annual fall trip to Chaco, as well as a 9th/10th grade art trip to Abiquiu Lake in which students were able to practice their landscape skills at the White Place and paint a recycling bin as a service project that will be seen by visitors for many years to come. We also took Mandela 8th graders on their second annual culminating trip in the Jemez, which ended in the second-annual late-April snowstorm. This fall we were able to bring their 10th graders into the Pecos for a unique service project in conjunction with NM Wild. We are so thrilled at the commitments Mandela is making towards getting their students outdoors, and we look forward to continuing with them on their journey to engage kids in the wild places in their backyards!

Classrooms Get Outdoors (GO) bridges the outdoor education “access gap” for New Mexico students!

Can you support Title 1 classrooms to get outside and explore?

Yes? Contact: Cass@CottonwoodGulch.org
Six weeks ago, I arrived at the Albuquerque International Sunport to begin my journey as a part of the Mountain Desert Trek. This was my fourth and final year as a Trekker at the Gulch, but my first time being a member of MDT, which has proved to be the most powerful experience I’ve had yet. Despite any anxieties I had before leaving regarding the intensity and length of the trek, I found the transition into the familiar rhythm of the Gulch natural and almost effortless. We were quick to fall into a comfortable routine, forming honest relationships and becoming the tight-knit group we are today. Despite (or perhaps because of) how easy it was to begin this adventure, it is hard to imagine returning to the outside world in a matter of days - returning to a routine that for all its amenities, lacks so much of what is offered here at Cottonwood Gulch.

It can be hard to articulate exactly what is so special about the lifestyle of being on trek - after all, it’s not fundamentally different from any other way of life. In fact, it’s essentially just a simpler version of the lives we live at home, and this is what makes it so meaningful. Being at the Gulch provides an environment free of the countless agendas, opportunities, and distractions offered by our home lives, leaving more room for purpose and clear-mindedness. The modern lifestyle that so many of us take part in contains such complexity that our everyday routines are “watered down” - they lack depth and meaning, which for me is ultimately dull and unsatisfying. Life on the road is certainly busy, spontaneous, and exhilarating, but it has the focus and purpose necessary to make a Trekker crawl into their tarp each night with a distinct feeling of gratified exhaustion.

From packing the com, to helping Chet with a project, to hiking 19 miles in a day, everything I’ve taken part in this summer has had a clear objective and a meaningful outcome - standards few things that I do at home can live up to. The removal of so many distractions from my daily routine is a blessing for my mental health and my ability to grow as a person, because when confronted with fewer things to think about, the remaining items on one’s mind can be given much deeper and more thoughtful attention. Perhaps the most powerful truth I’ve gotten from this trek is the idea that simplicity in my lifestyle leads to so much more complexity within myself and in my relationships with others.

This environment for personal growth that is cultivated at the Gulch is by no means exclusive to myself - over the past six weeks (and to a lesser extent, the past four years), I have witnessed an individual evolution in each of the members of my trek, each of them having embarked on their own inner journey during our 44-day shared adventure. It is undeniable that all of us are completely different today than we were on airport day in late June. However, it would be wrong to say we are returning home as different people: if anything, we are going back as truer versions of ourselves. Being out here invariably draws out a Trekker’s truest self over the course of the summer - as my friend Miles put it, “all it takes is backcountry and time”.

Looking back at the last six weeks I’ve spent with my trek as my truest self, I’m amazed at how happy I’ve become with this lifestyle without becoming complacent. Each day is an adventure, and throughout the summer I have learned more about myself and the world than I have through many years of schooling. However, with this observation comes the painful recognition that I won’t remain here forever. Tomorrow, we leave Base Camp for the airport to go our separate ways and bring our journey full-circle. Despite having braved lightning storms, sheer cliffs, bears, and rattlesnakes, the prospect of leaving my life as I’ve known it for the past month and a half is petrifying. A part of me fears that this reality will fade away, clouded by the chaos of everyday life or buried in an inaccessible crevice in the landscape of my memory. This article is my vessel: a way for me to attach permanence to the Gulch lifestyle, a reminder of the self I became that was shaped by backcountry and time.
A Case for Public Lands
And our pro-active response at Cottonwood Gulch

“By taking away our public lands, it gives us less places to spend time together and make memories. The decisions that we make today about our public lands will not only affect us, they will affect the nation’s future generations and the resources that we have in the future. This is why we hope that our public lands will stay public.”

These words of wisdom come from 7th grader, Jaxon, of the Magellan International School from Texas. We had the pleasure of Jaxon and his class on a 5-day trek during our spring classroom expedition season, gallivanting from the natural Olympic-sized pools of Balmorhea in Texas to the proposed wilderness area of the Organ Mountains to the mysterious caverns of Carlsbad National Park. Throughout a trek with classic Gulch traditions, like com line-ups, van rides through majestic landscapes, and singing “Desert Silvery Blue” every evening under the stars, their teacher Claudia emphasized both the importance of having fun and trying new experiences and becoming informed students about the history of the lands we visited and the issues facing them. Claudia constantly asked her students how to take the next step with this knowledge: how will you make an action that would preserve these landscapes for others? Throughout the trek, these students gathered that base of knowledge in order to make an action.

I was surprised to learn that Texas has very few public lands (4.2%) as compared to New Mexico (47.4%). While it may be easy for someone like me to take New Mexico’s acres of public land for granted, Claudia’s class definitely did not. After returning to school, her class created a report of their trip: “Learning from Nature, Learning in Nature—Reflections After a Week in Nature.” The articles included descriptions of the places we visited, what it was like to camp for the first time, a forecast of a dismal future if we don’t act to preserve public lands, and a discussion on how the class engaged in seven principles of Leave No Trace, an ethic on how to engage with the environment in ways that minimize human impact while maximizing human experience.

This student commentary was a part of their school's Service Learning component and has been offered as a powerful resource to be shared with policy-makers of the state with the hopes that this civic engagement will inspire other voices to be expressed and help policy-makers make an action. It was amazing to see how appreciative these kids were of the beautiful spaces New Mexico has to offer has to offer, especially after staying here for a school week. At the Gulch we are grateful for their efforts to protect our wild places and will continue to make these impactful expeditions available for schools near and far of the Southwest! -- Monica Stert

Students in Wilderness Initiative (SIWI), is a proposed program to take student’s engagement with the wilderness to the next level. SIWI continues the tradition of Classrooms GO to give local Title I New Mexico schools transformative multi-day expeditions but with a twist. SIWI will engage 5th and 8th grade classrooms in a year-long experiential exploration of “Why Wilderness?”

The program will engage students with 2-3 WSAs, Designated Wilderness Areas or proposed wilderness areas throughout the year. The program will include innovative monthly experiences in both the classroom and outdoors tying the concepts of classroom learning with the outdoor laboratory, address wilderness designation definitions, panel presentations and discussions with public land stakeholders and culminating the year with a final presentation of student observations, suggestions, the opportunity to receive feedback and a chance to field questions.

This program will connect students to transformative outdoor experiences, create civic engagement in these students, introduce students to public land career opportunities and ultimately foster land stewardship in local youth. If you would like to fund this or other programs, contact us.

Volunteers Wanted for 2018
Making the Gulch sustainable is a community endeavor. We need you!!

SEO Consultant
Google Adwords Guru
Marketing Advisor
New Cabins Architect
Website Designer/Developer
Contractor/Builders
Cabinet Maker
Bunks Builder
Stone Mason
Welder
Plumber/Electrician
Base Camp Handyperson
Fundraising/Grantwriting
Log Archiver
Visiting Scholars for summer 2018
Others skills to offer?

Contact Kris Salisbury if you can lend your skills!
kris@cottonwoodgulch.org

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1) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE HIGH MARKET -- We are near a record high for the DJIA and the S&P 500 in our lifetimes. And what goes up, also goes down. Now is a great time to put your financial assets to work for you. The Gulch can make this type of gift easy for you to give. Ask us how!

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If you want to give to the Campaign for the Gulch, but don’t have any money left over after your expenses each month, then it might be time to look outside your wallet. Look at your other assets -- your real estate, your art collection, your old cars, your rare coins, your stamp collection. These jalopies and jewels might be collecting dust in your garage or drawers, but they can be monetized and put to good use at the Gulch.

Thank you for considering creative ways to give to the Gulch so that you can support the causes we all hold dear. Call us and see what good things we can do with your hard-earned assets.

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The following donors have contributed within the dates of January - November 1, 2017.

As always, we thank you for your support!

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Thanks for helping us grow tomorrow’s stewards...

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Zuni Youth Enrichment Program

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list as of 11/01/17
Help us “See a Job and Do It”

Our Wishlist...

- Send a PT boy or TT girl on trek $4450
- Build a new cabin in the TT Cabin Loop $30k
- Build our new shower building $50k
- Contribute to the Walter Cloud walk-in fridge $100 or more
- Purchase a field art kit $200
- Sponsor a Classrooms GO Title 1 student $120
- Start a new endowed scholarship fund $25k
- Send a 25 student classroom on a 2-day trek $3,000
- Plant 100 seedlings on our 1/2 acre farm $200
- Donate your gently used 4WD truck or SUV $ Priceless!

Check out our Facebook page to identify this location!

When and Where?

www.cottonwoodgulch.org
9223 4th St NW ~ Albuquerque, NM ~ 87114
1-800-2GO-TREK or 505-248-0563