Our New Face in Albuquerque

by Kris Salisbury

“It’s not pretty, but it has good bones”. That’s what Scott Pierce said on a cold Autumn day when the entire board and year-round staff were huddled next to what would become our new ABQ HEADQUARTERS, or as Spring staff would come to call it, Urban Base Camp. Two weeks later we signed paperwork to put this property into our name and started renovations.

“It’s not pretty right now, but it has good bones”

Many alum have inquired about our new purchase. The short answer is that we have grown so much that we were bursting at the seams of our old rented one room Albuquerque office. You may be shocked to hear just how many groups, staff and students are involved in our programming. As of last year, we explored with nearly 1100 participants, more than 900 coming from school groups throughout the Spring and Fall. This Spring alone we will have hosted 625 participants on outdoor expeditions throughout the Southwest by the end of May. In the summer we will be joined by over 140 trekkers and 37 talented staff. We are thrilled to be growing to meet our mission even more effectively.

As I looked around the other day as Spring staff were bustling to get their trips organized and packed for the 20 school trips we would be serving this Spring, Jason Howard, our contractor, was installing the final kitchen hood venting for the staff bunkhouse and the Kent Beierle, our Architect, was completing the plans for our front office building remodel, that was the moment that I knew our decision to expand in Albuquerque was succeeding in allowing us to grow as a program and a community.

We officially moved our office in late January from 600 Central to 9223 4th St NW located in what is referred to as the Far North Valley only about a mile from the Rio Grande river.

Our new urban home consists of two self-contained buildings on nearly half an acre. The back building will serve to house our growing seasonal staff during the Spring and Fall school group season when the temps at Base Camp are still dropping into the 20’s. The larger building will serve as an office space and meeting area to support our year-round and seasonal staff team to continue to plan and implement excellent programming and to interface with our local community, educators and policy makers.

So, yes, it needed, and still needs, a lot of TLC to get our Urban Base Camp to a place where it will both showcase our history and current programs while providing a larger office and meeting space to give the Gulch a stronger presence both in Albuquerque and the larger state and region.

So, the next time you are in Albuquerque, look us up and see what the buzz is all about. We are taking great steps to meet the need for outdoor education and to bolster the science curriculum of regional schools.

If you are asking “what can I do to help the Gulch continue to get trekkers outside and engaged?” our greatest need at this point, are donations to our scholarship fund, both for the school groups and summer trek - your choice, as well as donations to our Annual Fund.

“What can I do to help?”

Calling all volunteers and craftspersons! Between plastering walls, building solid wood furniture, creating custom cabinets and mounting enlarged Gulch photos, we can get you involved in this project. Give us a call or send us an email and we will put you to work!

Warm Regards,

Kris Salisbury

The Cottonwood Gulch Foundation sponsors educational wilderness expeditions and outdoor programs in the American Southwest that promote personal growth, scientific, historic, and cultural discovery as well as a knowledgeable environmental ethic among all those who participate.

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(505) 248-0563
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Photo: Top - Carla Jo Ehlinger and Stephanie Gallo in front of the new bunkhouse. Right - John Bloch and Gregg Henry re-opening a doorway during a volunteer work day.
Dear Gulch Family,

We are proud to announce that we have bought, refurbished and moved our headquarters from the rented space near Old Town Albuquerque to a newly refurbished adobe setting in North Albuquerque. The reason for the move is great news: Our Mission is Growing! Last year, beyond the traditional Trek summer groups, we served nearly 1,000 students from schools and outdoor groups around the region and the world. Many of them were outfitted and staffed in Albuquerque instead of Thoreau. We needed the extra space to relieve the logistical constraints and cramped space of our former office. The next time you are in New Mexico, fight the urge to go on that Breaking Bad tour, and come see our headquarters. The physical address is 9223 4th Street NW in Albuquerque. We would love to see you and show you our new digs!

Please join me in welcoming two new Board members: Tom Hyde and Diane Bigbee Calhoun.

Tom Hyde has a robust history with the Gulch, starting as a member of the Little Outfit, Group II, and Group III, before coming on staff with the Outfit and Group I. Describing himself as a computer jock, Tom has been an invaluable resource to the Foundation staff as the professional who knows “all things database.” He has helped keep our records up-to-date and secure. Tom’s sister, Lynn Overgaard, was on the Board a few years ago, and his niece, Sidsel, is married to Mike Sullivan, our former Executive Director. Tom lives in Burlington, VT, and is a member of the Development Committee of our Board.

Diane Calhoun is a fourth generation New Mexican who lists her skills as cowgirl, headmistress, accountant, business owner, gardener, pastry chef, pecan farmer, Goddess of Laundry and university development officer. She is also the mother of three daughters, who have been trekkers and staff members. Serving on the board of Cottonwood Gulch Foundation means Diane can broaden her efforts to practice land stewardship and foster her deep commitment to experiential learning. Diane lives in Las Cruces and works in advancement with the Foundation for New Mexico State University. She is a member of the Development Committee of our Board.

For all you active hikers and adventurers, we are launching a fun way to get involved with the Gulch, support the next generation of trekkers, and get yourself out on the trail. Read more about it in Beth Williams-Breaul’s article later in the newsletter. We are excited to continue to grow our scholarships for summer trekkers.

Check out our Facebook page, for those of you with an account. (And this may be a reason to finally get an account!)

As always, thank you for your continued support of our unique educational mission.

Henry E. Hooper
Chair, Board of Directors

Photos:

Top Left - Fall 2013 Board Meeting
Top Right - Tom Hyde in his winter wonderland of Vermont
Bottom Left - Before picture of bunkhouse
Bottom Right - After picture of bunkhouse
On the trail with a public school

Stretching to meet the need for science education locally

“I’ll always remember when I could see an amazing view from the top. It was beautiful!”

On April 2, 2014, I joined Kris, Carla Jo, Amil, Anna, Stephanie, and Steve on a trip to Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument near Cochiti Pueblo. They were taking forty 5th grade students from East San Jose School, in Albuquerque’s south Broadway neighborhood, for a day trip to explore this magical place of curious geological formations. When we arrived at Tent Rocks, the kids gathered in a circle, and enjoyed some group games that were engaging and energizing. Then they broke into small groups, each one led by a Gulch staff member to slowly discover the wonders of the place. I joined Carla Jo’s group and enjoyed observing her enthusiasm for every plant, animal, and rock formation seep into the group. The students asked many good questions, made thoughtful observations, used the appropriate field guides to further their understanding of specific plants and animals, and surprised themselves at their ability to hike all the way to the top!

“I am proud I hiked up to the top, and I learned NOT to touch cactus!”

Admittedly, one of my personal goals was to visit with the teachers and find out if this one day trip model is something that will be embraced by the schools. Even a one day trip is expensive, and the students had to raise $10.00 each (to match the $20.00 each student received from a grant from the Barker Foundation). The teachers I talked with were grateful for this opportunity for their students and would like to find ways to continue this partnership. We discussed finding a corporate sponsor in Albuquerque which might commit to a specific school annually. As a New Mexico retired public school teacher, I am proud of the role the Gulch played in the education of these 5th grade students, and hope we can find a way to build our commitment to local schools. This was a wonderful Gulch experience for Albuquerque students, none of whom had ever been to Tent Rocks before!

At the closing circle before returning to school, students shared what they were most proud of and what they learned. The answers were variable, but one student’s response indicated the very basic, yet important, effectiveness of this trip: “I am proud I hiked up to the top, and I learned NOT to touch cactus!” We need to remember that not all children in New Mexico have had the opportunity to explore its wonders, including cactus!
My first summer at the Gulch was like no other. I will never forget the exhilarating rush of nerves and excitement I felt when arriving at Base Camp for the first time in the #10 van. This place—THIS PLACE, I thought. This ponderosa-scented, red-rocked, big sky, euphoric place is magic. These people are magic. I loved everything about that summer.

We all share that feeling. That feeling that is deep in our core. It’s what ties us together. It’s the essence of our extended community. The Gulch is an experience that changes us forever. It changes us into extraordinary people.

This is your chance to change someone’s life. You have the opportunity to help talented and motivated children, with less means, have the experience of their lifetime.

Like a high desert garden, the Gulch keeps growing strong. We need constant TLC from our nurturing family. One way you can feed the Gulch is to hike for the Gulch. Hike for future trekkers!

We want to hear about your local, regional and global outdoor adventures. Wherever you hike, find some sponsors to pledge per mile. Document your hike and share it! When you complete your hike, your sponsors donate their amount to the Gulch. The first place winner wins a new tent! Runner-up wins a new sleeping bag!

If you don’t have the chance to plan a hike this year, please consider donating to the annual fund. All proceeds from “Hike for Future Trekkers” will go directly to scholarships. Plan your hike today!

Log onto www.hikeforfuturetrekkers.com for further information.

Thanks for the support and trek on! ~ Beth Williams Breault

Need more info? Email Beth Williams-Breaut at hoochild78@gmail.com or Kris Salisbury, our Executive Director, kris@cottonwoodgulch.org
Pack your backpack and get ready....

Outfit Expedition, Session 1  6/21 - 7/6  Filling Fast
Outfit Expedition, Session 2  7/13 - 7/28  Filling Fast
Wild Country Trek, Session 1  6/21 - 7/10  Waitlist
Wild Country Trek, Session 2  7/16 - 8/4  Filling Fast
Turquoise Trail  6/23 - 7/28  Filling Fast
Prairie Trek  6/23 - 7/28  Filling Fast
Art and Music Trek  6/21 - 7/10  Still Open
Paleontology Trek  7/16 - 7/31  Filling Fast
Family Trek  7/06 - 7/13  Still Open
Mountain Desert Trek  6/23 - 8/4  Filling Fast
NEW Farm and Build Trek  7/16 - 8/4  Still Open

“The bonds I’ve made with my sisters will truly never change.”
Standing amid the dried pumpkins and corn husks that remain from the fall crop at our base camp farm, I found myself watching a group of 2nd graders from Uplift Community School, a public school alternative in Gallup. Seven boys and girls stared into a pot of compost they had just screened, counting rove beetles and shrieking with joy when they discovered a grub. One boy grabbed the grub and lifted it above his head, as though he had just removed Excalibur, and exclaimed, “We found a GRUB!” We had planned for them to plant seeds, screen compost and water our fruit trees but this activity was just as engaging, and inspired on the ground chanting “I am a roots- I slurrrrp up water,” in practice for an activity they can lead in their own classrooms. I have also been representing the Gulch as caretaker of the county Open Space, Bachechi, where I have seen dozens of families come to engage themselves, at any age, in the world around them.

This is an exciting time to be a part of Environmental Education in New Mexico. Our state has such a large land mass compared to our very small population. What this means for Cottonwood Gulch, is that we have the ability to make a big impact in getting kids connected with nature in our own unique way and effecting Environmental Education within the state. There are a plethora of open spaces, nature centers and resources available for teachers to connect students with nature, as well as changes being made in the way the classroom is taught, yet by getting these students involved with the Gulch, the outdoors becomes a laboratory for science to become real. In addition to the new Common Core standards which primarily focus on Language Arts and Math, there are new standards that we hope will redefine the way science is taught and tested.

The Next Generation Science Standards are currently under review to be implemented across the country. Whereas Common Core was implemented swiftly, these standards are expected to take more time to be adopted—maybe as much as five to ten years. The promising thing is that these standards will promote curiosity, problem solving, and out-of-the-box thinking. If all rolls out as planned, students won’t just test with pencil and paper, but by practicing in a skill, and in understanding of full systems rather than concepts. These standards promote interdisciplinary learning, where math is not a stand alone subject, for example, but a process to understand physics.

As New Mexico experiences this shift in the way classrooms are structured, the Gulch will continue to collaborate with teachers in cultivating programs that appeal to these skill sets-- discovery, cultural exploration, over-coming challenges and more.

Perhaps the most inspiring thing I have seen at Cottonwood Gulch is that we hit the same components of the curriculum-focused learning, without just cracking the spine of a book. It has been amazing for me to step away from my love of curriculum and let the students be the teachers. At the Gulch, we foster curiosity-based learning, which, according to Dr. John H. Falk, is the only way people really learn (from a lecture “When, Why and Where does the Public Learn Science” at the Balloon Fiesta grounds a few weeks ago). Falk’s studies centered on the benefit of museums, but taking students on treks offers a similar level of discovery as a museum, with an added sense of adventure.

A walk on the trail at Tent Rocks could seem like a peaceful nature walk to some, but to a geologist, it’s an endless museum exhibit. To an anthropologist, it’s an unwritten book of the people who used to live around here. To a biologist, it’s a continuous example of life overcoming adversity, and to a botanist or entomologist, it’s something full of hidden secrets. To a 6th grader on a trip with us, it can be all of those things. Our staff are each facilitators of knowledge and discovery.

I couldn’t help but think, as I watched those children sit around a bucket of composted soil for at least ten minutes, that Environmental Education doesn’t need to come from a workbook or correlate with standards. It was clear when asking a group of 7th graders at Bachechi that some had already forgotten the ecological principals they had studied the week before. But those 2nd graders won’t forget their experience, or the curiosity of the world around them it inspired.
Those were the “good ole days”!

Our innovative past continues to inspire our future.

Reflections from a Red Rock Society Member

by Beal Hyde

In 1938, I was a pea-green New Englander, and I didn't know anything about the west. Everything I saw on the Prairie Trek was new. It was a small group – 20 boys, 2 counselors: Mr. Howie, and Doc Olmstead. Whenever Doc Olmstead was around there was always something interesting.

Crossing Kansas in the years after the Dust Bowl, you could see the damage to the buildings, and where people had to abandon the farms. If you just tapped on the wall of a building, the dust would fly up.

Whenever Doc Olmstead was around there was always something interesting.

There had gotten to be too many wild horses in one area, so the USDA asked some Navajos to cull the herd. Mr. Howie heard about this, and took us to see them castrate a large group of males they had rounded up. We boys were quite interested – we sat on the corral fence and watched. Mr. Howie came up behind one of the boys, gave him a shove, and said “you’re next!”

CALLING ALL VINTAGE TURQUOISE TRAIL ‘ERS

1956 on.

Having no electricity after Hurricane Katrina flooded my New Orleans home didn't bother me too much. After all, when I was an impressionable 17 year old, I'd spent a 1956 Turquoise Trail summer caravanning with none at all. Those days, the sun marked the beginning and end of each waking day, and we'd learned that nature furnishes the basics, plus some.

We, of those past World War II gulch summers, are now-authentic vintage TTers, right? And, if you are like me, with careers behind us and grandchildren growing up, we find our thoughts revisiting the Gulch.

Believe it or not, the Gulch is still there. And, we are still here! Isn't it a time for a “hookup” a rendezvous, or some plan to thread the gulch back into our lives?

Girls, here's a plan: In the spring of each year, base camp has to be made ready for the lucky campers to come. Can't we help? Surely, there are many tasks we TTers can take on and complete: cabin spruce up, tidying up the grounds, inventorying and organizing supplies and equipment, making signs, sharpening knives, repairing furniture, whatever. Sound good? Good enough for you to consider taking a “time out” for a weekend or more to gather at the Gulch for a “make ready” work party? If enough details fall into place, could you do it this June?

Once begun, this might became an annual opportunity for an annual alumni mission. I’m taking comments:

SUE SPILSBURY (Graydon)
e-mail: spils@loyno.edu
phone after 6P, CST:
(504) 710-0133

[When Beal Hyde went on the Prairie Trek in 1938 and 1939, the campers took the train to Indianapolis to meet the rest of the group, then drove to the Southwest. During the 1950's, the Hydes often camped in the Southwest, where they would sometimes meet Trek groups. They often visited Base Camp.]

photos courtesy of Beal Hyde. Top: Wild horse castration.

The Red Rock Society was formed 13 summers ago by generous individuals who have committed to support the Gulch with bequests and legacy gifts. Please contact Henry Hooper or Kris Salisbury to donate in this manner.
Women’s Wilderness Trek - May 24 - June 1, 2014

New or recently returned to outdoor adventure?
Want an opportunity to explore with a small group of women?

Late May can offer the best trekking weather in northern New Mexico! Blooming wildflowers in the high alpine country and sparkling starry nights (as the moon wanes toward new moon on May 28th) make this a season for discovery. Our favorite trails, along with their flora and fauna, beckon. Tucked away for winter, wilderness springs forth with fresh greenery and streams singing with snowmelt. Come trek with us, your female guides (mother and daughter anthropologists, Dava and Gaea McGahee) as we travel to our treasured places. Camp and hike at Ghost Ranch and in the nearby landscapes famously captured by Georgia O’Keeffe and Ansel Adams. We find inspiration in the ever changing light and color as we take remote roads and trails less traveled.

This trek will challenge you with rewarding hikes to alpine meadows above 11,000 ft, geological wonders, and jaw-dropping vistas. As part of the Women’s Trek, you’ll enjoy southwestern flavors and aromas such as tamales, green chile, and local wines. Steep yourself in the wild, find sweetness in outdoor living, soak in hot springs and listen to the wilderness.

Canyons and Skies Trek - Aug 2 - 10, 2014

Need a reason to get out outdoors and explore the Southwest?
Want an edifying opportunity that gives you a behind the lines experience?

Cultures stretching from the ancestral Pueblos to some of today’s top scientific research programs have enjoyed, studied, and marveled at the wonders of the universe thanks to New Mexico’s spectacular dark skies. Join us on this new Adult Trek as we explore some of the Four Corners’ treasures of archaeology, astronomy, and archaeoastronomy — the study of how ancient peoples understood celestial phenomena. We’ll visit Chaco Canyon, with its numerous structures and pictographs aligned to important sky events, Hovenweep Castle, whose doors and windows make a carefully designed solar calendar, and a professional astronomical observatory in the Jemez Mountains. We’ll bring our own telescopes along for nightly stargazing under the desert skies. Together we will build a bridge across thousands of years to the ancient inhabitants of the region and across millions of light years to distant galaxies beyond the confines of our own Milky Way.

Recalibrate while exploring the poetic beauty of the Southwest
and support the next generation of trekkers
(a portion of adult trek tuition goes to support our scholarship program)

Check out our website for more info
www.cottonwoodgulch.org
Water, Water, Everywhere but Not a Drop to Drink by Carla Jo Ehlinger

Rio’s big sister in the east, the Colorado River. The Colorado is responsible for supplying 30 million people with freshwater, and it’s one of the most carefully managed rivers in the world. Since 1922 the Colorado River has seen over 100 dams built along her banks for harnessing energy, diverting water for agricultural irrigation, and providing flood control. The San Juan River is the primary tributary that diverts water from the Colorado to the Rio Grande River, supplying Albuquerque and New Mexico populations with fresh water. When the Colorado River withdrawals were first written in 1922, the river was in an exceptionally wet period that has yet to repeat itself. The river is allocated across seven different states and now runs at 3 million acre-feet less than at the time the water rights were given to stakeholders. The two largest reservoirs, Lake Powell and Lake Mead, have dropped exponentially over the last several years, threatening supplies for major cities throughout the Southwest.

Studies from further north on the Colorado have confirmed that broken desert crust soils are easily blown into the mountains, coating the Rockies annually with a layer of dust that is speeding up the snowpack melt and increasing the evaporation rate of snow. The dust accounts for at least five percent of the water runoff decrease. National Geographic’s Jonathon Waterman reports, “Each year 35 billion cubic feet (261 billion gallons) of water are being lost to the dust on the mountains. This is five times more water than needed to restore flows through the dried-out Colorado River Delta so that the river can once again reach the sea.”

Waterman paddled all 1,450 miles of the Colorado River in 2010 on a quest to solve the very same question asked earlier: if the river is dry, then where does all the water go? Waterman writes, “I saw a river being both depleted and salted thick by farms (78 percent of the river goes to agriculture). Few farmers are implementing sustainable water irrigation or crops more suited to the desert.”

We have all felt this way before. We’ve all been stuck at home in a frantic search for our car keys, tearing apart the kitchen and thrashing through the pile of laundry on the couch, only to find that the keys were in our hand the entire time. How could we have missed it?

Water will flow down river only by the amount we allow to flow through our fingers. As Ed Abbey writes, “There is no shortage of water in the desert but exactly the right amount, a perfect ratio of water to rock, of water to sand, insuring that wide, free, open, generous spacing among plants and animals, towns and cities, which makes the arid West so different from any other part of the nation.”

The fall flood of 2013 brought massive amounts of water through basecamp property that brought destruction along with it. The water was quick to come and quick to leave, not allowing enough time for the water to settle or the soil to absorb and store it. Over the past two years Jordan Stone has been collaborating with Todd Haines of the New Mexico State Forestry Department to create a forestry plan for the base camp property. The plan focuses on forest thinning, and tree planting which have been successfully incorporated in several treks as a service-based learning project and a lesson on the importance of understanding fire ecology. Thinning the forest will allow more water to be stored within the soil and watertable as well as accomodating the established trees with the appropriate amounts of water.

The work of Stone, Haines, and former trekker Alex Nees have found that the thinning efforts throughout the property will accomodate healthier Juniper-Pinon forests and vigorous Ponderosa stands. Perhaps most importantly to the Gulch, the thinning will foster healthier Cottonwood trees, the keystone of base camp dendrology and the icon of the Gulch legacy.

As June melted into July we found ourselves crammed in the Base Camp office crowding over dusty maps, scrambling to shift our backpacking trips to wilderness areas that hadn’t yet succumbed to the wildfires that smoldered the southwest during the summer of 2013. After months of hot, dry, and windy conditions the whole state of New Mexico became the supreme place for wildfires to spread. The Trekkers were in awe of the Hot Shot hand crews and wildland firefighters sprinkled across the state as we made our way north to find suitable trails. We took the opportunity to teach the Trekkers about the role wildfires play in an ecosystem, misnomers and myths about fire, and the responsibility humans hold for managing these susceptible areas. All of the Trekkers returned safely from their expeditions with nothing short of respect for the power that fire has on a landscape.

The fall of 2013 was no less forgiving than the season preceding it. Torrential rainfall, volleys of hail, and 80 mph winds created chaos for residents statewide. Heavy rainfall allowed water levels to rise 15 feet in the Gila and Rio Grande rivers. Riverbanks crumbled willingly into themselves and new streams flowed through the loose ground sediment, changing the contour of everything that lay within their reach. Lives were lost, homes were ruined, and parts of the painted southwest landscape were unrecognizable even to the keenest eye. It was a hard season for the land to recover, and many areas are still suffering the effects of the monsoon damages.

As the sun began to stretch farther from the earth and the Northern hemisphere blanketed herself with cooler air, the desert slurped up the last of the residual runoff from the fall season. There were hopes that the massive flood events would relieve the unprecedented drought by replenishing the water table. However, the state of New Mexico has remained at a crisis point concerning water availability. So where has the water from this great flood gone? Why are we still struggling to allocate enough water for the state?

Today, less than a fifth of the Rio Grande’s historical flow is reaching the Gulf of Mexico, and the 2000’s saw several years where the river failed to reach the gulf entirely. The same can be said of the
Thanks to our Generous Contributors

The following individuals and families have given generously to the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation during the dates of October 1, 2013-May 1, 2014. We are extraordinarily grateful for all of the support!

Your contributions blaze the trail of our work. Thank you very much!

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**MAY 2014 News from Trek Country**

With your help this year, we are:

- Thinning the Riparian Area and around cabins
- Re-sealing and preserving the wood siding/logs
- Purchasing our Albuquerque Office/Bunkhouse
- Providing scholarships for outdoor laboratory experiences for Title 1 public school classrooms
- Providing 25 partial scholarships
- Bringing an Archaeology Scholar to the Gulch
- Implementing our new Farm and Build Trek
- and so much more!
Help us “See a Job and Do It”

Your Donation Can...

- Replace Staff Cabin Roofs $2,800
- Preserve the siding on our aging cabins $4,000
- Repair and Re-grade flood-damaged roads $8,000
- Upgrade silversmithing/pottery equipment $500
- Upgrade/Renovate our Ropes Course $19,000
- Bring a Visiting Scholar to the Gulch $2,000
- Provide a scholarship for a TT Trekker $3,995
- Furnish our Albuquerque office/bunkhouse $4,500
- Improve forest health $ varies

...Or donate your time/talents to assist us in many ways

Who, When, Where?

Check out our Facebook page to join the conversation!

www.cottonwoodgulch.org
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