



Dear Parents and Students,

Hello from Cottonwood Gulch, we are excited for you to join us!

Cottonwood Gulch Foundation has been leading wilderness courses in the Southwest since 1926. As an educational nonprofit, our mission is to promote personal growth, scientific, historic, and cultural discovery as well as a knowledgeable environmental ethic among all students who join our expeditions. Founded originally by Mr. Hillis Howie, a school headmaster and outdoor education pioneer from Indianapolis, the "Gulch" today manages a 540 acre nature preserve and low-impact education facility in the Zuni Mountains of northwestern New Mexico and sponsors several summer expeditions for elementary, middle and high school students. These treks focus on the natural science and cultural history of the area. Each summer, the Gulch is home to about 130 students, ages 10 to 19, from all over the country and world. Alumni from the past 85 years of expeditions include Senator Mark Udall (CO), authors like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. and Douglas Preston, and countless professional geologists, biologists, archaeologists, and environmentalists.

SAFETY For parents, please know that safety is a big priority for us. While students are in an outdoor rustic setting for the entire time, the group will explore and learn together with their teachers, chaperones and Gulch instructors for the entire day. We will be emphasizing a safe and responsible way to explore nature. Our programming stems directly from the Gulch's 86 years of experience leading expeditions in this landscape. Instructors are certified in a minimum of Wilderness First Aid and CPR in order to assess medical issues should they arise on our trip.

CHALLENGE Our goal is to instill a sense of wonder and awe for students in nature while challenging them to explore living in community and pushing their personal limits while expanding their individual comfort zones. These trips have elements which are fun and exhilarating and also elements which may stretch student's sense of their personal abilities and can at times be somewhat uncomfortable. We are with them along the way to support and encourage each child!

AT HOME BEFORE It's essential to make sure students come prepared for the weather that occurs on our trips! Please make sure to work with your student to pack EVERYTHING on the list. Please take the time to talk about what challenges may arise for your student and encourage them to have the courage and creativity to meet these challenges.

AT HOME AFTER When we return back to school, not only will your student be a little dirtier, but they will also have great stories and tales of their adventures, challenges and endeavors. We encourage you to explore the learning that is ripe from these experiences and help them see their accomplishments as amazing! We find this type of reflection from parents can help distill the resiliency and confidence created in outdoor education for the student to make a part of their everyday life!

We look forward to spending more time with the students on this expedition and getting an infusion of their inquisitive spirits and enthusiasm. Great adventures await us!

Warm Regards,

The Staff at Cottonwood Gulch
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