

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue helmet, a camouflage-patterned t-shirt with a Nike logo, and a climbing harness, is rappelling down a large, light-colored rock face. He is holding a blue rope and looking towards the camera with a smile. The background shows a steep, rocky hillside with patches of green vegetation.

EXPLORE AUSTIN

LEADERSHIP MENTORING ADVENTURE

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Explore Austin Supporters,

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” -Helen Keller

2017 was a year of daring adventure for Explore Austin, leaping into transition and change for the year. Eighteen teams of Explorers and Mentors dared to show their courage by completing intrepid adventures in six states covering thousands of miles by boat, on foot, and on bikes. As an organization, we dared to embark on another adventure that began with a change in leadership. This transition brought with it an opportunity to view our organization with a fresh perspective while remaining focused on our core mission to help youth in low-income communities achieve their full potential through our long-term mentoring, leadership, and outdoor adventure program.


Our staff and volunteer Mentors continued to build on the eleven-year foundation daring too to provide Explorers with safe, challenging, outdoor experiences through our Saturday Challenges and week-long Summer Wilderness Trips. And, we dared to provide education, support, and training for Mentors and Trip Leaders alike throughout the year as seen in holding our first ever Mentor Summit and continued Lead Mentor monthly meetings, Trip Leader trainings, and wilderness response workshops.

It takes a village to ensure the teams of Explorers and Mentors have the right resources and opportunities that combine to support Explorers to see their full potential and set the plans in motion to achieve beyond. We are so grateful for the generosity of the many individual donors, foundations, corporations, and the community who believe passionately in the Explore Austin mission and organization.

As we look back on 2017, we see and believe in the promise of what the future holds for each and every Explorer and Mentor. We are emboldened to continue our journey in growing future community leaders who are action-oriented, courageous, excellent teammates, and strong communicators with your continued support and partnership.

Thank you for being a part of our journey and mission and daring to adventure with us!

Explore on,



Ann Jerome, CEO



In 2017.

OUR EXPLORERS

RECEIVED

59,940 HOURS

of mentoring

PARTICIPATED IN

1,300 HOURS

*of community service
by Explorers*

TRAVELED A COLLECTIVE

11,280 MILES

*during Summer Wilderness
Trips in six states*

2017 DESTINATIONS

One team of 11th graders went mountaineering in the Wind Rivers Range in Wyoming

6th year
EXPLORERS

Two teams of 10th graders went backpacking in the Snowy Range in Wyoming

5th year
EXPLORERS

Two teams of 9th graders went mountain biking at South Park Crest in Colorado

4th year
EXPLORERS

Two teams of 7th graders went rock climbing and one team of 7th graders went backpacking in Oklahoma

3rd year
EXPLORERS

Two teams of 8th graders canoed the Buffalo River in Arkansas

One team of 7th graders went backpacking in New Mexico

2nd year
EXPLORERS

2nd year
EXPLORERS

Two teams of 8th graders went rock climbing in New Mexico

3rd year
EXPLORERS

6th year
EXPLORERS

One team of 11th graders went to Colorado Bend State Park in Texas

Two teams of 6th graders traveled to Camp Eagle in Texas

1st year
EXPLORERS



DEMOGRAPHICS

• IN 2017 •

We served

283 EXPLORERS AND **100** VOLUNTEER MENTORS

• OUR EXPLORERS •



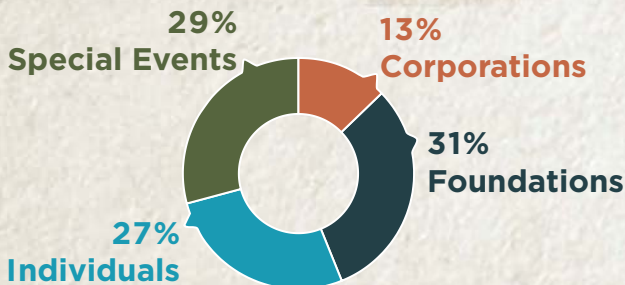
49%
MALE



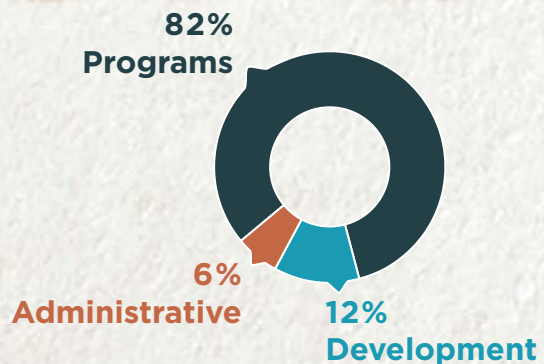
51%
FEMALE

FINANCES

• INCOME •



• EXPENSES •

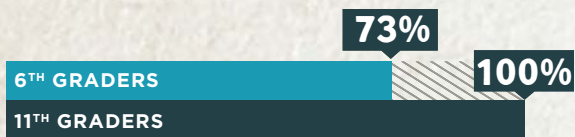


MISSION MATTERS

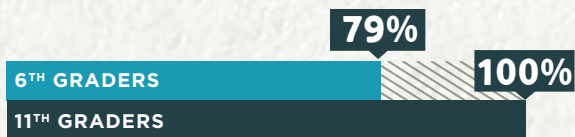
Our Explorers



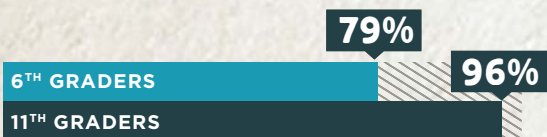
• ACES CURRICULUM •



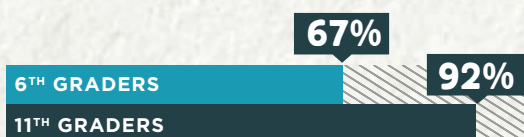
"I am Action-Oriented"



"I am an Excellent Teammate"



"I am Courageous"



"I am a Strong Communicator"

EXPLORE AUSTIN is a positive youth development organization that uses **MENTORING, NATURE, AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES** to transform the lives of young people and inspire them to **BECOME FUTURE COMMUNITY LEADERS.**

ALUMNI EXPLORER SPOTLIGHT

The First Explorer to Become A Mentor, Guillermo Flores

Guillermo Flores joined Explore Austin as a member of the second class of Explorers in 2007. At that time, the Program was in its infancy, and for Guillermo, he had six years ahead of him. He had first become interested in the Explore Program after seeing his friends who were already in the Program become recognized by his teachers for their growing maturity and confidence.

Every month, Guillermo and his team of Mentors and fellow Explorers would gather for their Saturday Challenge, learning the ins and outs of outdoor adventure while forging bonds with each other. And as his outdoor skill-set increased, so did his worldview expand. One Saturday after the other, Guillermo soon learned that his Mentors lived a life he had never seen before. They had different jobs than the adults in his community, especially his parents, jobs he never even thought to consider for himself. Overtime and after many conversations with his Mentors, Guillermo began to dream of a life that grew from his upbringing and expanded from his experiences as an Explorer. He dreamed of a life that included college, a stable job that would help him break that cycle of poverty he knew all too well, and a life filled with key Mentors too.

“Most of our parents that have jobs work service jobs or construction. Explore Austin gives minority kids, just like me, the opportunity to take the blinders off the dream higher than what’s expected of them.”

This dream carried him through the Explore Austin Program and into college--a place he never thought he would be.

Today, Guillermo is currently finishing up his degree in Construction Science at Austin Community College while simultaneously working as a project



manager for a local construction company, Joe Bland Construction. After originally working day and night shifts in the field, Guillermo realized through the modelship of his Mentors that there were other possibilities too. From there, Guillermo took the confidence his Mentors and Explore Austin helped him find and asked his supervisor to shift into office work so that he could begin to learn the skills to become a project manager. Not long after that, Guillermo was promoted.

“Never be scared of any challenges. Explore Austin challenges are different from life challenges but they help you find the inner confidence that you need to succeed in life.”

At the end of 2017, Guillermo was selected to be an Explore Austin Mentor, becoming the first Explorer to ever return as a Mentor. When asked why he applied to become a Mentor, he simply said, “It is the ultimate way I can help prove the impact of the Explore Austin Program. My Explorers will see somebody who has made it through the program, benefited tremendously, and then know that they too can make it in life. It will really bring it home when they see someone who looks like them succeeding.”

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

When Mica Crouse joined Explore Austin as a Mentor in 2012 she wasn't quite expecting the profound effect the Program would have on her life. Already equipped with her own leadership and adventure experience, she was certain she would impart great wisdom on her team of Explorers. But what she didn't realize was that there would be great wisdom that would be equally imparted on her too.



During the first two years alongside her Explorers, Mica took a business-like mentoring approach. She followed a set of steps and rules derived from what her experience and research taught her about how to be a mentor. But after two years of feeling like she was not getting through to her Explorers, she knew her method had to change.

And so she waited. She became still. Rather than push her way into her Explorers' lives, she began waiting for an invitation. Instead of directing their paths, she encouraged them to find their own way. And in place of constantly talking to them about what she thought they needed to hear, she began listening. Almost immediately after her own shift of self, Mica witnessed transformations happening. Her relationships deepened, and she soon realized her listening had built trust and that trust had led to shared vulnerability. They finally had become a team.

Six years later and after completing her final year in the Program, Mica now has those deep and meaningful connections with each of the girls on her team she had once hoped to have. But they came from an entirely different approach than what she had originally thought. Today, Mica and her fellow Mentors continue to guide their team—helping the girls (now young women) apply to college, writing recommendations letters, and continuing to candidly discuss adult pressures and problems each Explorer may be facing.

“To me Explore Austin was life changing in the way that it changed my perspective on how to approach a lot of things in life. But now, I also have these young women that I am going to have lasting bonds with my entire life.”

When asked about the impact she felt she had on her Explorers' lives, Mica's immediate response was helping them to feel loved from someone outside of their families and friends. After her Explorers figured out their Mentors were not being paid they couldn't quite grasp why these five women were spending time with them. It took about two years for the girls to really figure out that the Mentors truly wanted to be with them and that they were volunteering their time just to help the girls grow and succeed.

“I am a positive force in their lives. I am another strong woman that they can turn to with any need. I am also a strong professional role model on top of being there for them and being the ear and shoulder. Someone who loves them unabashedly.”

Explore Austin is so proud of Mica and the commitment she has shown her Explorers and fellow Mentors over the last six years. Thankfully for Explore Austin, Mica's journey is not finished. Her next step will be serving on the Explore Austin Board of Directors where she will bring so much of her wisdom and talent to help ensure more Explorers find a community beyond their families.



Thank you

WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL *to everyone who supported Explore Austin and*
HELPED TO MAKE *each Explorer's* **LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY POSSIBLE.**

PATHFINDERS CLUB

By making a three-year commitment to give \$5,000 or more each year, Pathfinders lead the way by empowering youth to become leaders of tomorrow through team sponsorships and support. Thank you to the following people for their commitment to Explore Austin through the Pathfinder Club!

Malia & Steve Aycock
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Mary Clare & Jamie Matthews
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Kerrie & Chris Schneider
Kirsten & Jeff Serra
Mimi & Allen Smith
Jennifer & Rusty Stein
Kevin Walbrick
Dyan & Warren Walters

SUMMIT CIRCLE

By making a three-year commitment of \$1,000 a year for three years, Summit Circle members support the cost of one Explorer for one year. Thank you to the following people for their commitment to the Explore Austin through the Summit Circle!

Shana & Brady Anderson
Allison & Rob Bassetti
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Kim & David Todd
Laura & Michael Townsend
Shanel Vandergriff
Cynthia Alaniz & Gavin Villarea
Shannon & Michael Wardlaw

“I’ve been in Explore Austin for six years now and ***I’ve changed in ways that make me awe*** and I’d like to thank you from the bottom of my heart because ***you help make my developing years impactful.***”

~RICARDO P., Explorer, 2019 Boys



“***Your support*** has allowed for these past six years to be ***unforgettable and essential to my future.***”

~OMAR S., Explorer, 2016 Boys



“***Without you,*** I wouldn’t have been able to experience amazing opportunities that have helped ***shape me into a better individual, communicator, and leader!***”

~CYNDY C., Explorer, 2018 Girls



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Empowering young people.

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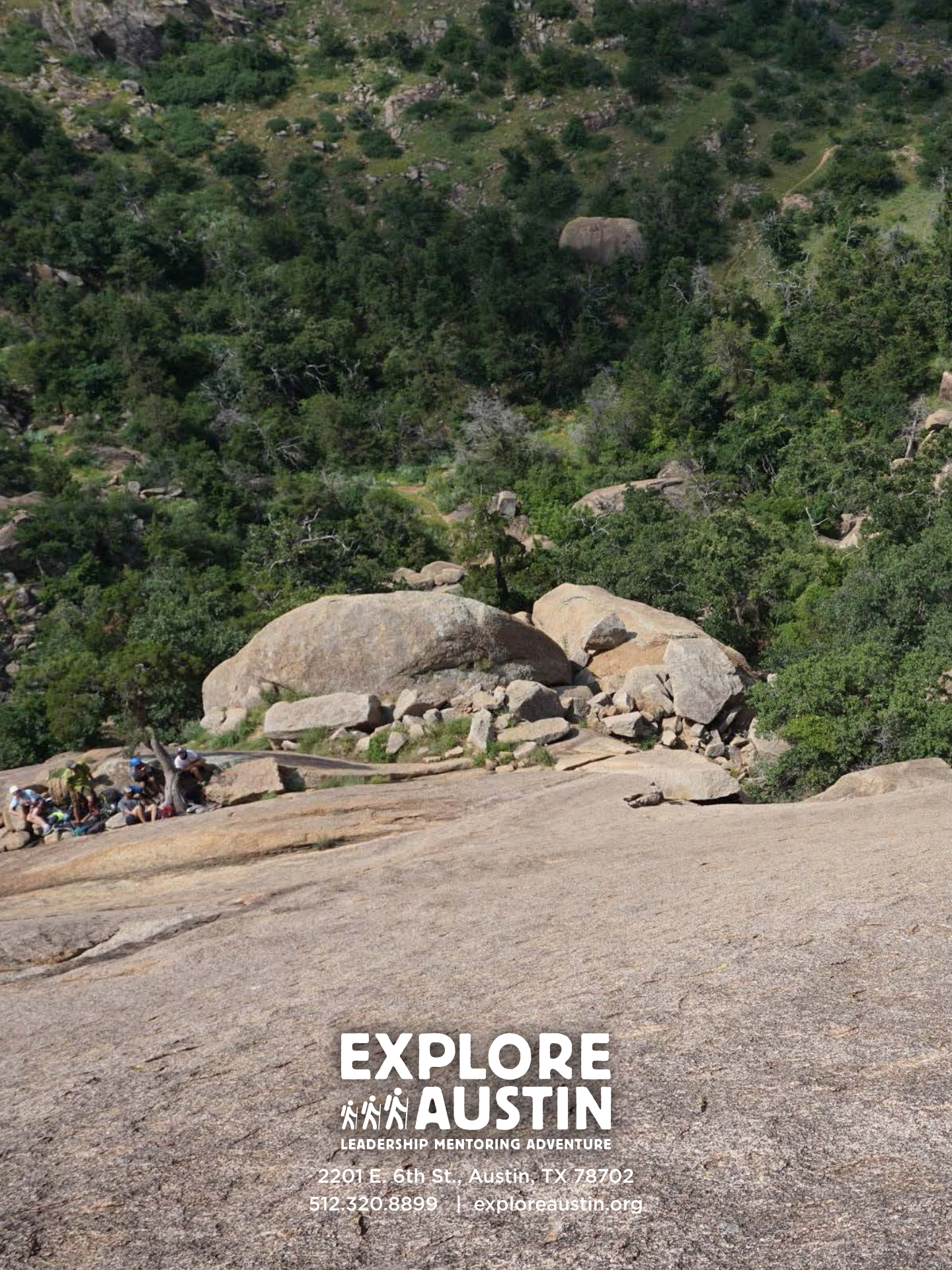
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LEADERSHIP MENTORING ADVENTURE

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