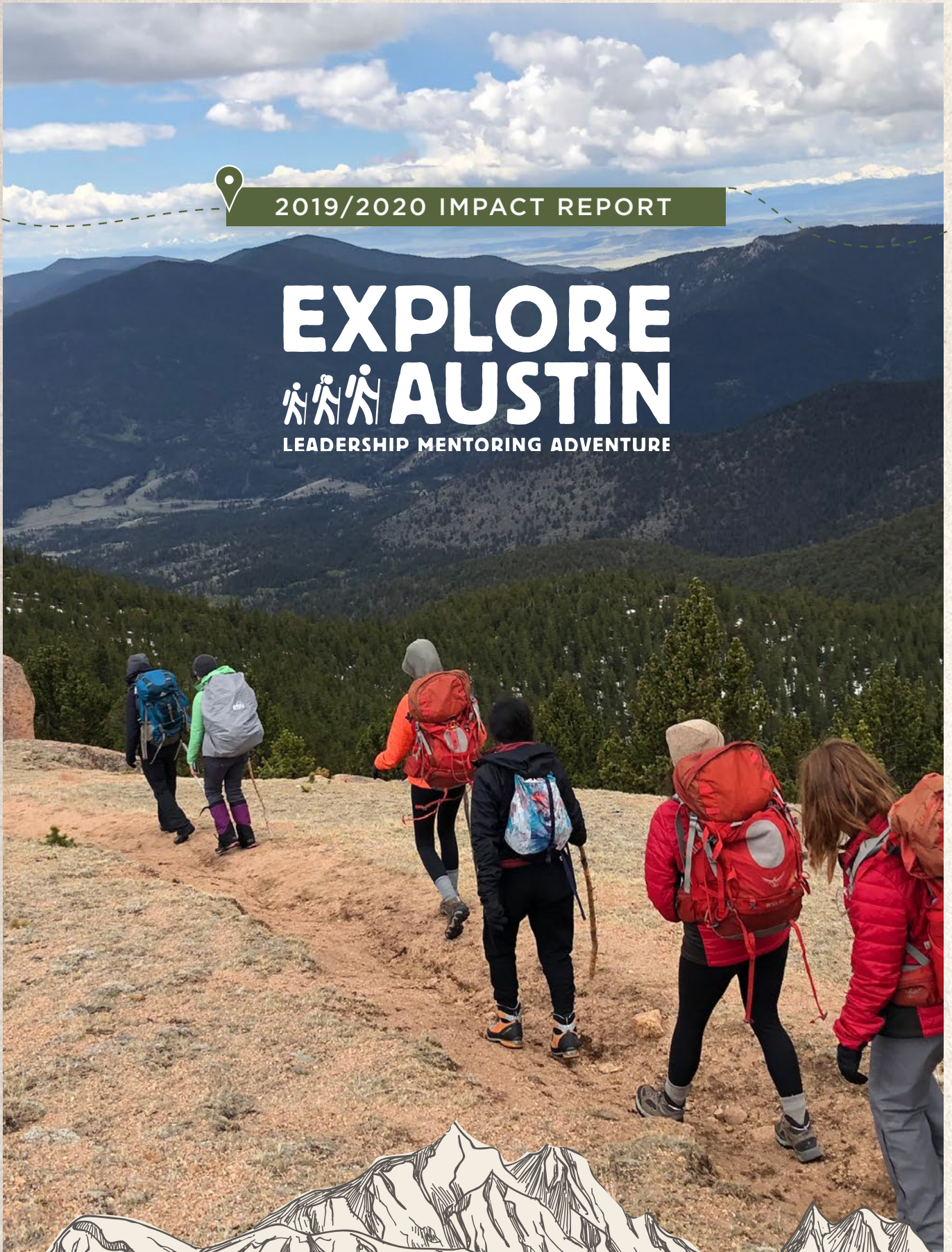




2019/2020 IMPACT REPORT

EXPLORE AUSTIN

LEADERSHIP MENTORING ADVENTURE





LETTER FROM THE CEO

DEAR EXPLORE AUSTIN COMMUNITY,

The recent abundance of research into the impact of nature on humans tells us what we already intuitively know—**time in nature is a necessity.** At Explore Austin, rich relationships are built over a six-year journey of time spent side-by-side camping, canoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and mountaineering. Through these outdoor experiences, we see firsthand how meaningful time in nature positively impacts our nervous system, cognitive functioning, physical health, and sense of self. All essential in fostering individual and community well-being.

In 2019, Explore Austin sent 20 teams across the country for Summer Wilderness Trips—the most ever in Explore Austin history. Then CEO, Ann Jerome, successfully propelled us to our greatest year of programming and development. We grew from 18 to 20 teams, welcoming 30 new Explorers and 10 new Mentors. We increased emphasis on building leadership skills through our curriculum delivery, added activities to build judgment and decision-making skills, and sharpened our communication to create increased depth in the program.

2020 began with me excitingly stepping in as the new CEO and with a plan to grow to 22 teams and 110 Mentors. However, that plan altered when COVID-19 took us all by surprise. With many unknowns facing the organization, we took a more conservative approach. **We are proud to have successfully fostered close relationships among our 300 Explorers, 100 Mentors, and 60 full-time and part-time staff members since the beginning of the pandemic.** After facilitating temporary virtual programming from March to August, we began operating in-person again in September 2020.

We also emphasized and made strides on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts with robust culturally responsive mentor training, a revamp of the Board of Directors recruitment process, and increased outreach in the Mentor recruitment process to ensure our candidate pools were reflective of the demographic make-up of the city. **We have an opportunity to continue to deepen our cultural humility as an organization and build an organization that is representative of the population we serve at every level.**

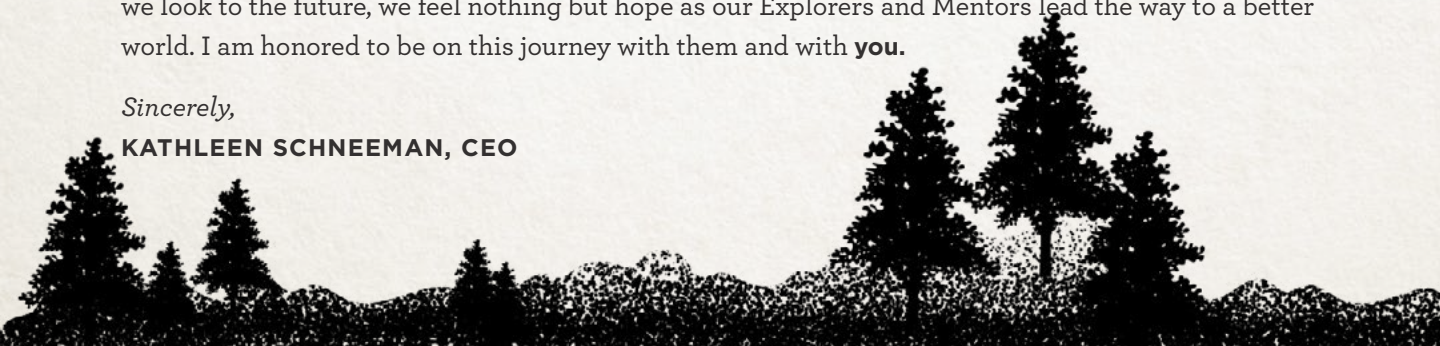
We thank you for your continued support to ensure our Explorers have the gear, clothing, food, and supplies they need to safely explore nature, grow in adaptive skills, and connect with caring adults. As we look to the future, we feel nothing but hope as our Explorers and Mentors lead the way to a better world. I am honored to be on this journey with them and with **you.**

Sincerely,

KATHLEEN SCHNEEMAN, CEO



*“To be **WHOLE.** To be **COMPLETE.** Wilderness reminds us what it means to be **HUMAN,** what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.” — TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS*





2019/2020 EXPLORER AND MENTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

IN 2019/2020, EXPLORE AUSTIN SERVED

280 EXPLORERS
119 VOLUNTEER MENTORS



84% qualify for free/reduced lunch

96% are Latino/Black students

48% male Explorers served

52% female Explorers served

86% 2020 Explorer retention rate

97.5% 2020 Mentor retention rate

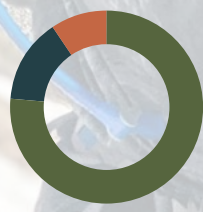


FINANCES

2019



INCOME: \$1,611,967
Foundations: \$719,174
Special Events: \$517,710
Individuals: \$213,646
Corporations: \$161,976



EXPENSES: \$1,258,692
Programs: \$1,033,691
Admin: \$193,676
Development: \$125,343

2019

2020



PROJECTED INCOME: \$1,260,000
Foundations: \$400,000
Special Events: \$228,000
Individuals: \$320,000
Corporations: \$170,000
Government: \$142,000



EXPENSES: \$1,150,000
Programs: \$903,000
Admin: \$177,000
Development: \$114,500

2020



2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- » Hours of Mentoring: **41,800**
- » Hours of Community Service: **255**
- » Miles Traveled: **14,722**
- » # of SWTs: **20**
- » # of Saturday Challenges: **148**

2019 SWT

(% of Explorers who agree with the following statements)

- » The Summer Wilderness Trip (SWT) made me a better leader: **95%**
- » The SWT made me more action-oriented: **98%**
- » The SWT made me more courageous: **98%**
- » The SWT made me a better teammate: **98%**
- » The SWT made me a stronger communicator: **98%**
- » I feel a sense of accomplishment after completing my SWT: **98%**



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020 was a different kind of adventure for everyone at Explore Austin.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, it was clear our program could not continue operating in person. We quickly pivoted to a virtual model that focused on staying in touch with Explorers and continuing to foster their love for the outdoors. Explorers and Mentors were encouraged to spend as much time outside as possible through the Fresh Air Challenge, we provided Adventure Boxes for Explorers, and distributed meals to Explorer families who have been deeply impacted by COVID-19.



- » **190 ADVENTURE BOXES SENT TO EXPLORERS**
- » **2,570 HOURS OF OUTDOOR TIME LOGGED BY EXPLORERS, MENTORS, AND TRIP LEADERS** in the Fresh Air Challenge
- » **917 MEALS DISTRIBUTED TO EXPLORER FAMILIES** July - September 2020
- » **4 NEW 2026 EXPLORER TEAMS** started in October 2020



A LOOK TO THE FUTURE: 2021 PLANS

- » 2021 marks Explore Austin's 15th anniversary!
- » We will continue to creatively adapt to COVID-19 in both programming and fundraising
- » We look forward to deepening the EA program through more parent & family engagement opportunities and adding workforce development opportunities for Explorers
- » We are excited to focus on building a culture of philanthropy throughout the organization by incorporating everyone into outreach & advocacy efforts
- » We plan to further diversify staff, volunteers, and the board of directors. We will offer more DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) training opportunities at each level



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Ramiro Ortega was in high school when a unique opportunity was presented to him: the chance to join an active Explore Austin team. While most Explorers begin in middle school, the class of 2013 were looking to add another Explorer to their team. Ramiro already knew that Explore Austin was something special due to having so many friends already involved who would constantly talk about how much fun they had and how impactful of an experience they were having. He jumped at the opportunity and set out for the final few years as an Explorer.

Even though Ramiro joined a bit later than the rest of the group, one of Ramiro's favorite Explore Austin memories came from his first Summer Wilderness Trip while mountaineering in Colorado. According to him, one day they woke up to several feet of snow and a giant snowball fight commenced. Moments like this helped to foster the lasting relationships he built during his time as an Explorer. Even now, seven years after his time with Explore Austin, Ramiro is still in touch with nearly all members of his team, from regularly having team dinners at one of the Mentor's homes to checking in on one another through social media. When asked what he learned from having these relationships,

Ramiro said *"I definitely learned the importance of camaraderie. I know that I will always have these people in my life and they will always be there to support me and fall back on. I know these are the connections that will last for a long time."*

Today, Ramiro is excelling and growing in his career as an electrician and just bought a house with his wife, Patty Huerta, who is an incoming 2026 Mentor. Funny enough, Patty has been familiar with Explore Austin just as long as Ramiro and even had a strong desire to join as an Explorer when she was younger. Unfortunately, Explore Austin had yet to expand to offer girls' programming at that time. Nevertheless, Patty continued to grow her love for the outdoors and applied to become a Mentor last fall when she felt the time was right. Even though it's a few years later than expected, Patty is excited to officially join the Explore Austin family and introduce a new generation of girls to the outdoors that might not have an opportunity otherwise.

"While I never had the chance to be an Explorer, I know so many Alumni that have benefitted from their time with Explore Austin. I can't wait to join the EA family and give back to girls from the community that I am from."



“ I know that I will always have these **PEOPLE**
IN MY LIFE and they will always be there to
SUPPORT ME and fall back on. I know these are the
CONNECTIONS that will last for a long time.”



*“I’m proud to see how they’ve become more
OUTSPOKEN, ADVENTUROUS,
and **THOUGHTFUL...**”*

really helped us bond as a group and is something we’ve done on every trip since.”

Mentors continued to nurture these budding relationships by “getting to know the interests and strengths of each girl” and “having great conversations with them about their dreams for the future and their everyday worries.”

MENTOR TEAM SPOTLIGHT

The 2021 Girls AAPS Mentors - Liz Conville, Keri Bender, Maggie Smith, Katie Larsen, and Alayna Davis - were drawn to Explore Austin by their shared passion for the outdoors and desire to empower girls through mentoring and leadership development. While some have been with the team since the beginning and others joined mid-journey, they all brought unique strengths to their Mentor team enabling them to cast a wide net of support for their Explorers.

Not only did their individual personalities and leadership styles allow for meaningful connections with a diverse group of Explorers, but it also exposed their Explorers to different types of leaders and exemplified a fundamental Explore Austin belief that *“there is no right way to lead. [All] can be impactful leaders in their own way.”*

The challenges and adventures the 2021 Girls AAPS experienced together served as a catalyst for establishing strong relationships between Mentors and Explorers, but forming a lasting bond didn’t happen overnight.

“On our first Summer Wilderness Trip, we struggled. It was hot, the kids had never camped (much less carried a full pack) and we had a hard time forming a bond the first few days. Our last night, we leaned into something we had noticed them doing organically throughout the trip...they LOVE to sing... so we held a talent show our final night. We all participated and it was amazing. That experience

As they near the end of their time in the program, the Mentors reflect on how their Explorers have grown into confident young adults.

“They’ve come so far and taken on many things I know they’ve never experienced before. Looking back on where we started 5 years ago, I’m also proud to see how they’ve become more outspoken, adventurous, and thoughtful of their teammates.”

The Explorers’ confidence and desire to lead was evident on their most recent Summer Wilderness Trip to Colorado.

“I started noticing how self-sufficient the group had become. We didn’t have to tell the girls what needed to happen, it had started to become muscle memory for them.”

The Explorers aren’t the only ones who have grown and strengthened their leadership skills. These Mentors note the profound impact that Explore Austin has had on their own lives and the countless lessons learned including the importance of letting go of control, the power of vulnerability and risk taking, and the impact that is possible when you *“show up in life.”*

We are grateful to these Mentors for sharing their lives and experiences with their Explorers. They have certainly lived out our mission of empowering Explorers to be action-oriented leaders, excellent teammates, and courageous in pursuit of their goals, always remembering that *“effort, not perfection, is the expectation.”*

2019/2020 SUMMIT CIRCLE OF GIVING

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Karen Meyer
Cori Modisett
Gregg Sales
Salina and Gunnar Teltow
Kim and David Todd
Laura and Michael Townsend
Shanel Vandergriff
Shannon and Michael Wardlaw



ASCENDER (\$2.5K/YR)

The Maund Companies

PATHFINDER (\$5K/YR)

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Lisa and Brad Garner
Marjorie and Mark McClain
Rodman Law Office
Crystal and Daniel Perry
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MOUNTAINEER (\$10K/YR)

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The Tecumseh Foundation
Topfer Family Foundation
Travis County Serve
Waterproof Foundation, Inc
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Empowering young people.

The American Campus Charity Foundation proudly supports Explore Austin's mission to empower youth through leadership, mentoring and outdoor adventure.



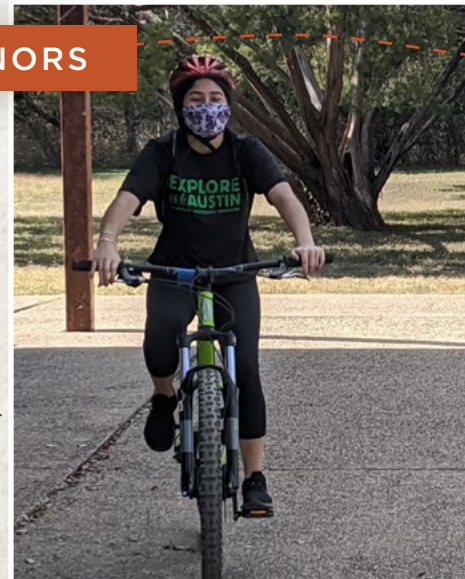
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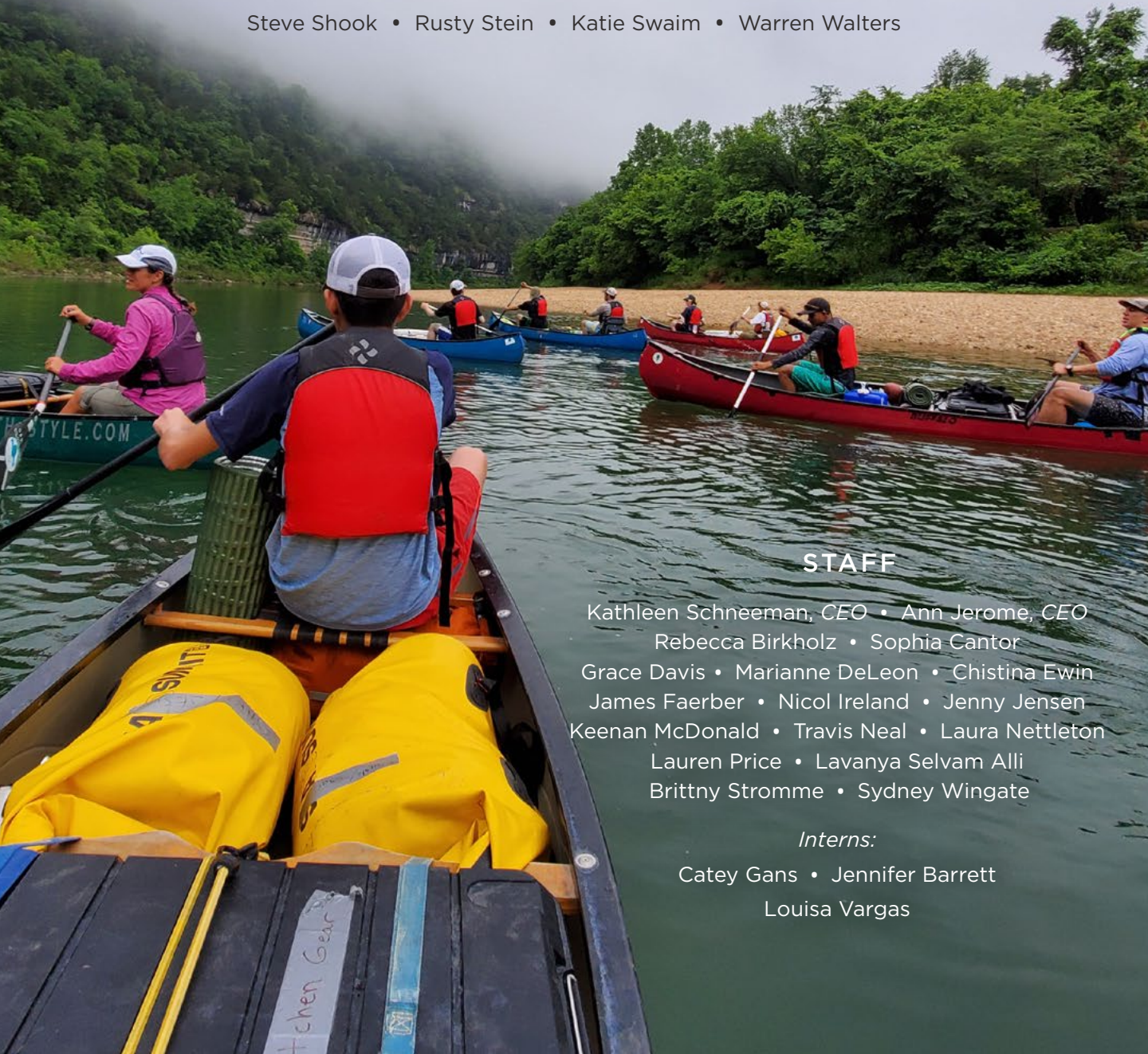
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