



**WILDERNESS
INQUIRY**

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER
IN THE OUTDOORS SINCE 1978

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE IN THE WILDERNESS

2020

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



**WILDERNESS
INQUIRY**

Dear Friends,

While 2020 brought immense challenges that impacted our communities, country, and world, we have also seen resilience, hope, imagination, connection, and change that will guide us in the years to come. The stories and photos shared here highlight the power of both human connection and connection to the outdoors — two core tenets of Wilderness Inquiry's mission that are as important as ever.

We look to the future with gratitude for a strong foundation and the collective engagement and support of our Wilderness Inquiry community — adventurers, learners, donors, volunteers, staff, and partners across the country and around the globe.

Thank you for paddling together with us!

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Kim Keprios
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Bill Schmoker
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WE BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE BELONGS

OUR MISSION

CONNECTING PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, BACKGROUNDS, AND ABILITIES TO EACH OTHER AND THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH SHARED OUTDOOR ADVENTURES.

CORE VALUES



Paddling
TOGETHER



Seeking
THE EXCEPTIONAL



Finding
A WAY

2,231
PEOPLE JOINED US FOR
IN-PERSON ADVENTURES

3,974
PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN
CONTENT-RICH VIRTUAL EVENTS

1,254
PEOPLE ACCESSED ONLINE
LEARNING RESOURCES

IN 2020

7,459 TOTAL
PEOPLE SERVED

EVERYONE
BELONGS | *in the outdoors*

CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

Connection to the outdoors can be a powerful thing. It can stir the heart and free the mind, and can heal the body and lift the spirit. Yet opportunities to connect to the outdoors are not created equal for all people.

At Wilderness Inquiry, we believe that everyone belongs in the outdoors. In this, our programs are designed so that people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities are supported, encouraged, and equipped to experience the outdoors.

In 2020, the outdoors provided a place for safe escape and a space for investing in physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Through our mission, Wilderness Inquiry provided opportunities for outdoor engagement and exploration through small group and family trips, virtual programs for youth and families, and hands-on educational activities for people of all ages to explore the natural world close to home and further afield.

"The beauty of Mother Nature is beyond what anyone could imagine. The trip inspired and opened my mind about the importance of preserving the environment for the future generations."

- LA, YOUTH
PARTICIPANT

EVERYONE BELONGS | *in community*

"The trip reminded me how powerful a community can be and what we can all accomplish when we help one another. I also came back with my spirit recharged and with the desire to keep in touch with those I just began to get to know."

- KIM, PARTICIPANT

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

For 43 years, Wilderness Inquiry has facilitated inclusion and community integration, providing outdoor experiences for people with differing abilities and identities, those of all ages, and individuals from different backgrounds.

2020 was a challenging year for connection. COVID-19 brought social distancing and isolation, and limited our ability to gather

together as we once had. Through it, we learned that when physical connection may be hard, the spirit of connection to community is a resilient and powerful force.

Whether joining together in a virtual space to learn about the history of a place or setting out with family for a shared paddling adventure, Wilderness Inquiry continued to provide opportunities for connection for our community of participants in 2020.



JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Wilderness Inquiry is committed to becoming a better partner in building a more just, diverse, equitable, and inclusive outdoors. To realize this commitment, Wilderness Inquiry has been working across all internal departments to make structural and cultural changes to our organization through our JEDI Initiative, focused on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. In 2020, we signed the In Solidarity Project's Outdoor CEO Pledge and the Board of Directors established a DEI committee as part of our long-term, multifaceted strategic plan for the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Wilderness Inquiry.

As an organization, we acknowledge the systemic barriers and structures of oppression that limit access to outdoor spaces for many, including: black, indigenous, and people of color; people with disabilities; people who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community; and other people who face barriers to outdoor participation. We also acknowledge the responsibility we hold as an organization of privilege in doing our part to break these barriers down.



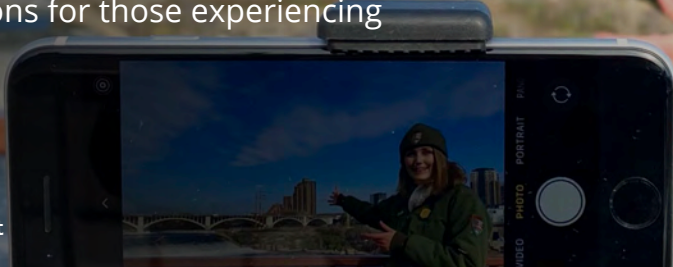
2021 ADAPTED PROGRAMS

Through the uncertainties driven by the impact of COVID-19, our team has embraced adaptability and a new lens on our programs and services. We have strengthened and expanded our program offerings to provide

connections for those experiencing social isolation, opportunities for youth and adults to explore the outdoors close to home, and small group trips that ensure the outdoors remain accessible for everyone.

VIRTUAL EXPLORERS

Wilderness Inquiry's virtual programs provide connections to community and the outdoors. Through these programs, we provide opportunities for youth and adults to explore the outdoors close to home, and create connections for those experiencing social isolation.



Minneapolis, Photo by Molly Street

SMALL GROUP & FAMILY TRIPS

In 2020, Wilderness Inquiry adjusted our in-person trips to provide small group outdoor experiences that rekindle our relationships with nature and each other, while upholding the safest health standards. These experiences promote social connection, invest in the physical and mental health of our participants, and connect individuals that may not be able to travel on their own to the outdoors.



Apostle Islands, Photo by Julia Schweitzer

ONGOING CORE PROGRAMS

We are also committed to our long-standing programs that connect people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to inclusive adventures and educational opportunities

in the outdoors, including Canoemobile, Families Integrating Together, Gateway to Adventure, and Share the Adventure.



CANOEMOBILE

Our “floating classroom” engages youth on public lands and waterways in communities around the country to improve school performance, cultivate a stewardship ethic, and create pathways to pursue educational and career opportunities in the outdoors.

Michigan City, Photo by Angela Banks



FAMILIES INTEGRATING TOGETHER

By providing adaptive strategies, specialized itineraries, scholarships, and added staff to support individuals with differing abilities, all families can experience the wonders of the natural world together.

Glacier, Photo by Claire Hassler



GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE

These supported experiences for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities break down barriers to outdoor participation and promote social integration and connection.

Boundary Waters, Photo by Angela Banks



SHARE THE ADVENTURE

Wilderness Inquiry adventures across the country and around the globe bring diverse groups of people of all abilities together to discover our common humanity and explore new places in the outdoors.

Apostle Islands, Photo by Peter MacMillan



FINANCIAL SUMMARY



John Butler
BOARD TREASURER

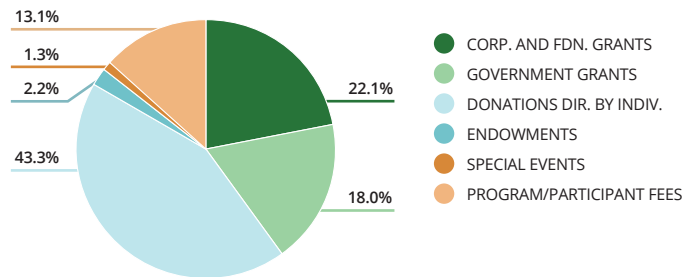
Wilderness Inquiry ended 2020 on sound financial footing while delivering on its mission to provide outdoor opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Thanks to a generous community of supporters, donors, and partners, as well as prudent fiscal management, the organization finished the year with a small budget surplus.

Wilderness Inquiry was awarded the highest rating from Charity Navigator for an impressive 6th consecutive year, demonstrating a commitment to trustworthiness, transparency, and efficiency. The organization is committed to fiscal responsibility and good stewardship of donor and stakeholder resources, and is in a strong financial position to continue to deliver on its mission in the years to come. Audited financial statements are summarized below and were prepared by Carpenter, Evert & Associates, Certified Public Accountants.

BALANCE SHEET

	2020		2019	
ASSETS				
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$	791,293	\$	745,487
Short Term Investments	\$	1,158,879	\$	614,050
Other Current Assets	\$	380,026	\$	403,758
Property & Equipment	\$	1,774,833	\$	1,937,136
Endowments & Investments	\$	2,096,557	\$	1,970,737
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	6,201,588	\$	5,671,168
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS				
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Accrued Expenses	\$	331,740	\$	233,544
Deferred Revenue	\$	575,993	\$	290,511
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$	907,733	\$	524,055
LONG TERM LIABILITIES	\$	499,913	\$	420,751
NET ASSETS	\$	4,793,942	\$	4,726,362
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$	6,201,588	\$	5,671,168

2020 EARNED REVENUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS

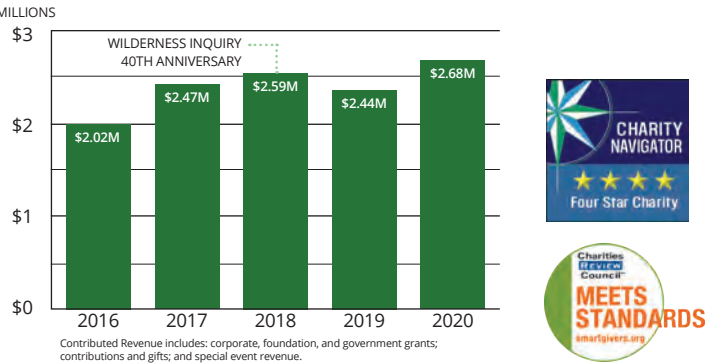


STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	2020		2019	
SUPPORT & REVENUE				
Grants, Contributions, Gifts	\$	2,129,324	\$	1,428,360
Government Grants	\$	502,558	\$	892,704
Program Fees	\$	371,366	\$	1,593,221
Investment Income	\$	60,777	\$	59,853
Miscellaneous Income	\$	68,776	\$	132,314
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	\$	3,132,801	\$	4,106,452
EXPENSES				
Program Services	\$	2,171,592	\$	3,554,015
Share the Adventure	\$	810,102	\$	2,004,348
Youth Engagement	\$	908,633	\$	831,674
Indiv. & Family with Disabilities	\$	452,857	\$	717,993
Management & General	\$	712,243	\$	535,829
Fundraising	\$	228,268	\$	199,106
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	3,112,103	\$	4,288,950

"In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Wilderness Inquiry, Inc. as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."
- Carpenter, Evert & Associates, Certified Public Accountants, March 2021

ANNUAL GROWTH IN CONTRIBUTED REVENUE



WILDERNESS INQUIRY FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Generous support from our community of donors and supporters powers our mission and directly provides outdoor programs that are inclusive, welcoming, and life-changing. Thank you to all of the individuals, families, and corporate, foundation, and government partners listed below who invest in and support our work to ensure that everyone belongs in the outdoors.

We make every effort to ensure accurate listings. If we did not attribute your donation correctly, or if you have any other questions or comments for us, please contact Development Director Willy Tully at (612) 676-9430 or willy@wildernessinquiry.org.

DONORS MAKE OUR PADDLING POSSIBLE - THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING

\$100,000+

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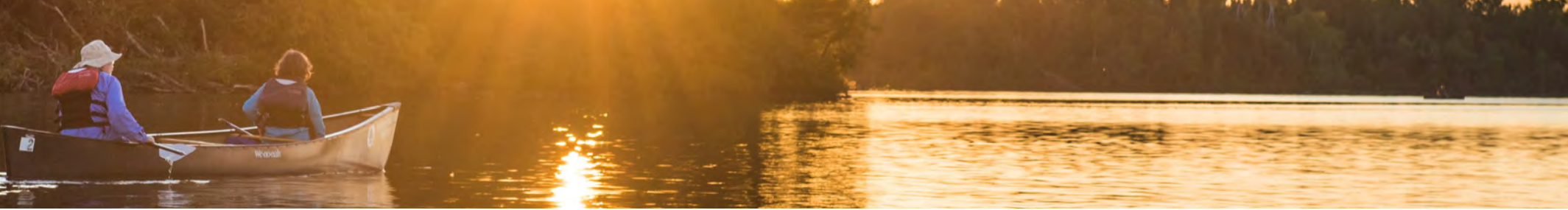


St. Paul, Photo by Unknown

Thank you to our federal partners and the staff of the federal land management agencies! By working together through these public-private partnerships, we are able to scale our programs to serve thousands of youth and adults, provide inclusive adventures from coast to coast, and ensure that our nation's public lands, waterways, National Parks, and National Forests are accessible for all.



WILDERNESS INQUIRY FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



“The Mississippi River Explorers program is a great way for our students to explore a river that runs through our own backyard. The programming offered is a high-quality experience for our students filled with meaningful content, prepared materials, active participation, and addressing cross-curricular standards. It provides a virtual step out of our classroom in these times when in-person field trips are not possible. The presenters are great with our students, energetic, and knowledgeable in their field.”

- 5TH GRADE TEACHER

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“Marta enjoyed all the sessions so much! It was so great to have something for her to look forward to in addition to usual school activities we do at home. Your staff did a wonderful job facilitating the sessions, keeping kids engaged, and communicating meaningful educational content. We are a family who loves the outdoors and Marta has especially loved nature, so this was a perfect fit for her. It was really fun to see her get a ‘deeper dive’ into the ecology and history of places we enjoy visiting on a regular basis! I appreciated how you provided some vision for such a variety of career options related to nature as well. Thank you!”

**- JULIE, PARENT OF
A MISSISSIPPI RIVER
EXPLORERS PARTICIPANT**

Support from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment provides place-based experiences for Minnesota youth to engage with the history and culture of our state's natural resources. Since 2016, more than 17,000 youth have explored Minnesota's rich outdoor heritage through hands-on programs on waterways and public lands all across the state.



Lake Phalen, Photo by Tamar Patterson

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For 28 years the Minnesota Environmental Fund has been a generous supporter and close partner in our work to share Minnesota's great outdoors with future generations of outdoor lovers, stewards, participants, and explorers.



Wild River State Park, Photo by Carly Rundle-Borchert

"You can not imagine how happy I am for being able to experience the Boundary Waters again. I cried tears of joy at night. I hope to be able to do it again in the future, but for now, I have a great memory and proved to myself that I could do more than I ever expected!"

- LYNN, PARTICIPANT

WILDERNESS INQUIRY FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



"I did it! I tested my limits and I made it! This trip boosted my positive beliefs about myself, and all my work to recover my strength got to be demonstrated to myself in a way that it can't in the city. I felt that I was able to reclaim a part of myself that has been absent for a long time; I got to live from my strengths rather than my disabilities. It gives me confidence!"

- SUSAN, PARTICIPANT

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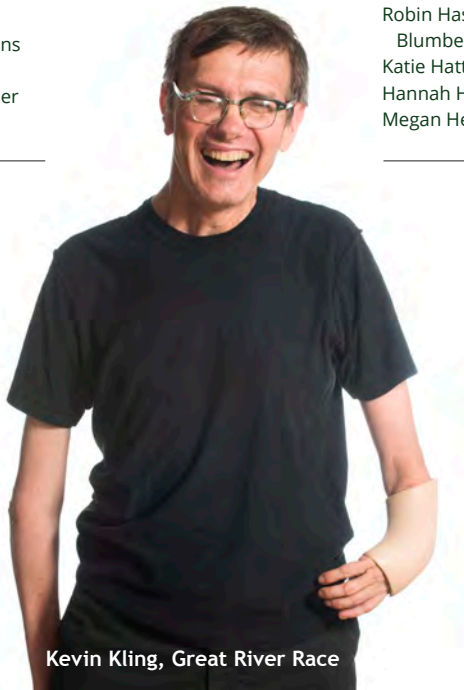
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The 2020 Great River Race looked a little bit different, but our 10th annual race became a virtual celebration for hundreds of people from across the country to get outside and share their own experiences in the outdoors! Emcee and teller of tales Kevin Kling led our virtual celebration to raise support for Canoemobile and programs that level the playing field for youth of all backgrounds and abilities to learn, explore, and grow in the outdoors. Thanks to our presenting sponsors Nature Valley and Winnebago for leading the way, and for all of the sponsors and partners who joined us to create equitable outdoor opportunities for youth!



Kevin Kling, Great River Race

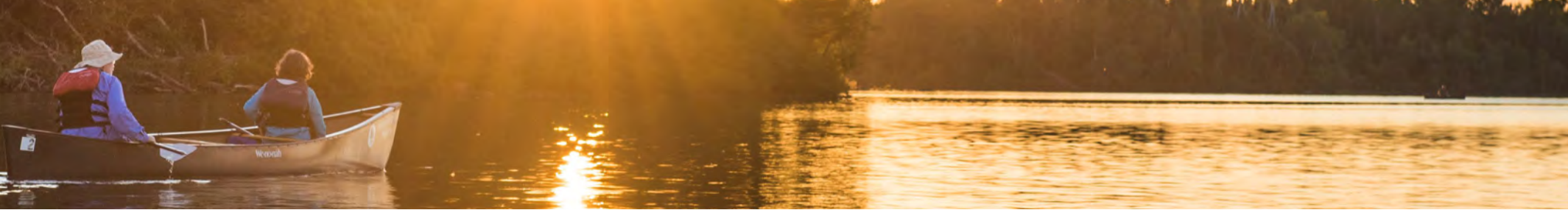


Whitney Ulvestad

Wilderness Inquiry is known for bringing people together – and no one did that better than Whitney Ulvestad. Whitney began as a Wilderness Inquiry Outdoor Leader in 2013, leading trips for hundreds of participants to the Apostle Islands, Boundary Waters, and on the Mississippi River. Her adventurous spirit, cooking and paddling skills, and ability to bring together diverse groups of people left an indelible mark on the Wilderness Inquiry community.

Whitney passed away on May 8, 2020 after a brave and tenacious battle with brain cancer. Her family and loved ones created the Whitney Ulvestad Memorial Endowment to celebrate her passion for the outdoors and we are honored to share that love with future generations of adventurers.

WILDERNESS INQUIRY FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



“Despite varying backgrounds and abilities everyone has a deep appreciation for nature and each other. I think this holds true for all people all over the world but they need to be given a chance to find that out for themselves.”

- LORI, PARTICIPANT

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Susan Breckner
Deb and John Bryant
Kate Bryant and Jon Lindfors
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Susan and Jim Clough
Carolyn Colwell Dahl

“It is really unmeasurable what Canoemobile has done for the ability of these families to see what possibilities truly do exist - not just in our community, now they’re asking, ‘How far away is the Mississippi River?’ ‘What is it like to go to Lake Superior?’ So this experience has opened their minds, and really that would not be possible if we did not have Wilderness Inquiry, not only as a partner, but as a steward of learning, and our outdoors, and our environment.”

- MATT, SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Wendy Dayton
Anne Doyle and Jim Stock
Jennie and Richard Goelz
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Wilderness Inquiry's endowed funds honor some of our most passionate and long-time participants, while providing ongoing support for inclusive outdoor programs for years to come. We are grateful to the families listed here who share the spirit of adventure through these dedicated endowments, and to the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation for their sustaining support.

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& MINNESOTA
FOUNDATION



Voyageurs, Photo by Mat Cohen



Minneapolis, Photo by Julia Schweitzer

Canoemobile's "floating classroom" is a versatile platform for youth to experience place-based environmental education and engage with STEM concepts in the outdoors. Thanks to the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), since 2017 more than 25,000 youth from every corner of Minnesota have explored the science behind the ecosystems, waterways, and habitats of our home state.



WILDERNESS INQUIRY FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



"It just reminded me how powerful a community can be and what we can all accomplish when we help one another."

- KIM, PARTICIPANT

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Nature Valley
Pelican Leadership Academy
Polaris Industries
Race Judicata
Dan and Kari Rominski
TCF National Bank
Thomson Reuters
Whitney Ulvestad Memorial
Fund
VAA Engineering
Winnebago Industries



Voyageurs, Photo by Carly Rundle-Borchert

"I appreciate so much that we have opportunities to give our kids a break from the everyday chaos of life and remind them that they can find calm by going outside."

- JOHN, TEACHER

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ON TRAIL AND ON THE WATER AGAIN IN 2021!





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Minneapolis, Photo by Noah Linck