

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**WILDERNESS  
INQUIRY**

[ LOCATION: APOSTLE ISLANDS // PHOTOGRAPHER: ANGIE BANKS ]



# Dear Friends

When I look back on the past year, I feel enormous pride in what Wilderness Inquiry has accomplished. Captured in the following pages are highlights from 2022 made possible thanks to all of those who believe in the transformative power of building community in the outdoors.

Early in the year, we embarked on an intentional path forward for the organization with the development of a new, five-year strategic plan. Guided by our commitment to equitable inclusion in the outdoors, the plan sets the course for building stronger organizational efficiency, excellence, and long-term sustainability, while expanding our reach and impact. Through collaborative planning, we've created the momentum needed to truly shape our future and the future of outdoor learning, recreation, and engagement.

As always, we remain grounded by our mission and values, which guide our day-to-day work of connecting people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities to the natural world.

I look forward to what's next, knowing that Wilderness Inquiry is supported by the generosity of partners, donors, community members, and travelers who are committed to advancing our shared mission of making the outdoors a place where everyone belongs.

The best part of our recent accomplishments is that we are far from done. The future of Wilderness Inquiry lies before us, set on a strong foundation and ready for us to shape it for future generations.

*Erika Rivers*

Executive  
Director  
Erika Rivers

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## I definitely like ME a lot when traveling with Wilderness Inquiry!

Living a purposeful life matters so much to me and I feel valued and appreciated when traveling with Wilderness Inquiry. The unique blend of participants makes for such a rich experience, in ways that are profound. The travels have reaffirmed my deep belief that ALL people have special gifts that enrich the lives of others."

[ LOCATION: APOSTLE ISLANDS //  
PHOTOGRAPHER: CHRISTY ILLIG ]





# WE BELIEVE EVERYONE BELONGS IN THE OUTDOORS

## MISSION

Connecting people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

## CORE VALUES

Paddling Together

Seeking the Exceptional

Finding a Way

Nurturing Inclusion



## Wilderness Inquiry Serves

**78%** of participants are under the age of 21

**74%** of participants receive financial aid

**58%** of participants identify as girls/women

**48%** of participants identify as BIPOC

**32%** of extended trip participants and 7% of participants across all programs identify as having a disability



# 2022 BY THE NUMBERS



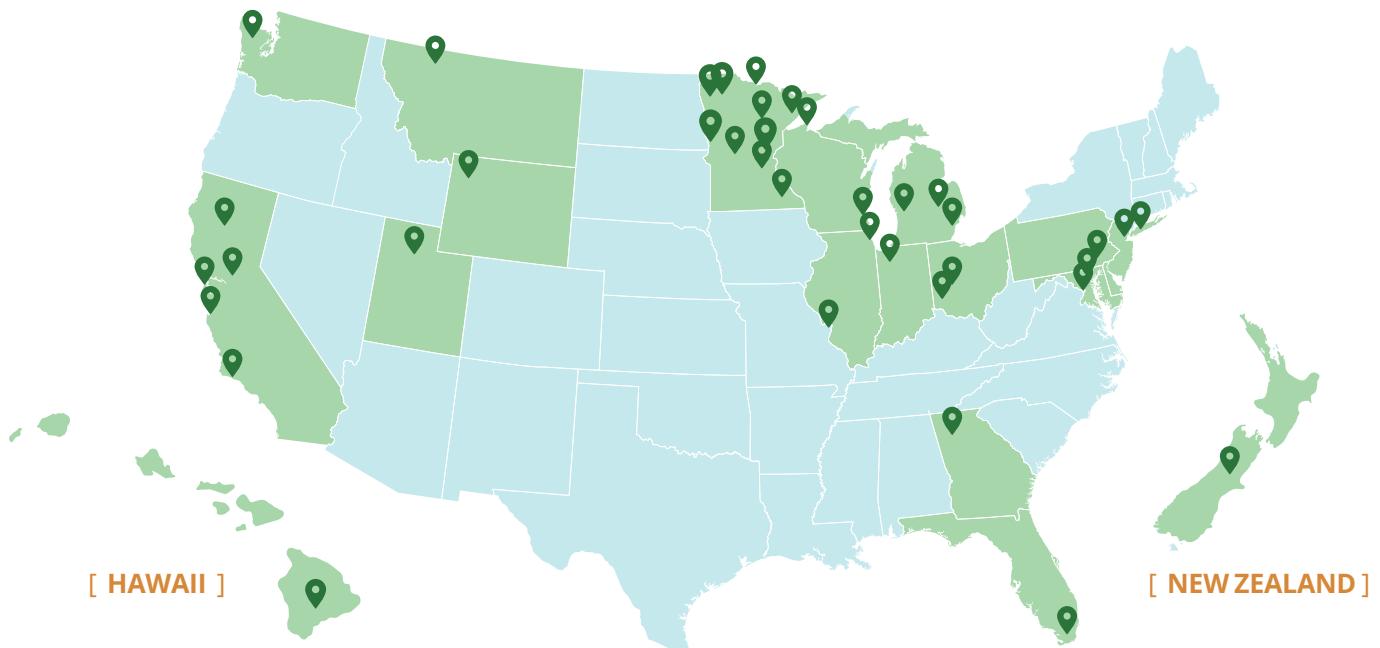
In 2022,  
**27,554**  
people  
joined us for  
immersive and  
life-changing  
outdoor  
adventures

**21,698** youth paddled,  
learned, and explored on their local  
waterways through **Canoemobile**,  
promoting outdoor equity and  
fostering engagement with the  
natural world

**4,037** individuals joined  
extended, **in-person travel**  
experiences, building confidence  
and connection

**1,819** youth participated  
in content-rich **virtual learning**  
that supports hands-on exploration  
and outdoor education

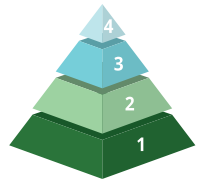
## 2022 ADVENTURE DESTINATIONS



# Building Stronger People and Communities Through Shared Outdoor Adventures

Centered around our belief that everyone belongs in the outdoors, Wilderness Inquiry programs break down barriers to outdoor education, recreation, and careers while building community through engagement in the natural world. Through a progression of repeating and reinforcing outdoor experiences – our Pyramid of Engagement – we offer deepening levels of participation, exploration, and connection.





# Supporting Individuals and Communities on Outdoor Journeys

From introductory activities to wilderness adventures, our nature-based programs build confidence, connection, and tangible skills. We welcome participants of any age and at any level of outdoor experience, supporting individuals on their journeys into the outdoors.

1

**DAY PROGRAMS** offer an introduction to nature-based activities, build outdoor skills, increase confidence in outdoor settings, and expose participants to the physical, mental, and social-emotional benefits of time spent in nature. Single-day experiences are designed for participants of all ages and abilities, serve as an introduction to local resources, and are enriched with land-based learning activities such as hiking, water quality testing, and exploration of cultural and geographic history.

2

**NEARBY-NATURE, MULTI-DAY EXPERIENCES** provide deeper outdoor engagement through group experiences that build community, teach essential camping and paddling skills, and connect participants to public lands and waterways. Adventures include overnight camping trips, virtual programs, introductory excursions to state and regional parks, and Outdoor Credit Recovery – which supports students in earning academic credit through hands-on, immersive outdoor learning.

3

**EXTENDED OUTDOOR ADVENTURES** bring participants of all ages and abilities to destinations including international locales, national parks and forests, wilderness areas, and other public lands and waterways. Immersive adventures engage youth, adults, and families through experiences lasting 3-15 days and support ways to safely explore the backcountry. Adventures include canoeing in the Boundary Waters, family camping and kayaking in the Apostle Islands, youth backpacking in Yellowstone National Park, and more.

4

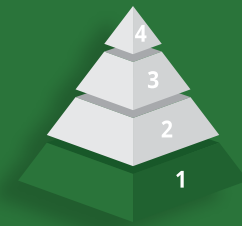
**LEADERSHIP AND CAREER PATHWAYS** provide connections to community, and support well-being and belonging among individuals and groups. This includes leadership development, educational and professional opportunities to experience outdoor careers, paid fellowships and internships with Wilderness Inquiry and partner organizations, and training, credentialing, and skills development. We support opportunities for life-long engagement in community and in the outdoors.



# 1

STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

## Day Programs



**In 2022, our Canoemobile program reached more than 23,000 youth and families** in 50+ communities nationwide. With support from the U.S. Forest Service, Canoemobile visited Detroit during its fall tour and connected nearly 500 local students to the Detroit River and surrounding waterways. Educators in Detroit reflected on the program's ability to not only immerse students in nature but allow them to see their city in a new way and create deeper, more meaningful connections to their community. "I think it's so important for them to come to these beautiful spaces and hopefully be affirmed that there's absolutely reason to take pride in where they come from, and that there are these places for them to enjoy the beauty of nature," shared Monica DeGarmo, Educator at Academy of the Americas, Detroit.

[ LOCATION: DETROIT // PHOTOGRAPHER: ALLISON TORRES BURTKA ]



[ LOCATION: LAKE PHALEN // PHOTOGRAPHER: ALICE BENNETT ]

### **Inclusion and community are at the heart of Wilderness Inquiry's mission.**

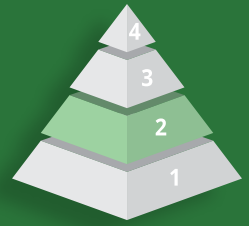
In the summer, we partnered with several organizations to provide meaningful outdoor adventures for members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (DDBHH) communities. On a warm sunny day in August, 15 high school students, who are blind or have low vision, paddled Lake Phalen together in 24-foot North canoes. In partnership with the Minnesota State Services for the Blind, the group spent the afternoon exploring Saint Paul's famed lake and gathered for a group activity focused on building strong self confidence and advocacy skills.



# 2

STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

## Nearby-Nature, Multi-Day Experiences



[ LOCATION: WILD RIVER STATE PARK // PHOTOGRAPHER: JULIA BLINTZ ]



**In 2022, diverse groups of people joined us for overnight outdoor adventures**

in nearby nature including Baker Park Reserve, Wild River State Park, and Chequamegon National Forest. From Harding High School students to Urban Boatbuilders youth, participants engaged in nature-based group activities such as camping, paddling, and hiking, that helped hone essential skill sets, strengthen community bonds, and build deeper outdoor connections. "I had kids pounding on my office door this morning asking about the next trip and if we can do this again next year. Your staff and the Baker Park staff made the trip excellent," shared one group's chaperone.

**Throughout the summer, we partnered with Saint Paul Public Schools** to bring our Outdoor Credit Recovery program to their students for the first time. Co-led by licensed teachers and Wilderness Inquiry Outdoor Leaders, Saint Paul students earned academic credit through multi-day, hands-on exploration and learning outside at historic Fort Snelling, Hidden Falls Regional Park, Crosby Farm Regional Park, and more. Designed to enhance the summer school model, the program supports social-emotional and academic development of high school youth while helping them remain on track to graduate.

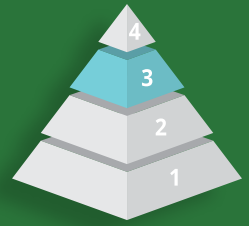
[ LOCATION: THEODORE WIRTH PARK // PHOTOGRAPHER: ALICE BENNETT ]



# 3

## STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

# Extended Outdoor Adventures



[ LOCATION: BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA // PHOTOGRAPHER: RISS LEITZKE ]

### In July, our first Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (DDBHH) Boundary Waters Canoe Area Affinity trip ventured north for a four-day extended adventure led by two DDBHH leaders and with full access to American Sign Language. The group, which included travelers aged 21 to 64, entered Seagull Lake off the Gunflint Trail and set up camp. They spent their time exploring surrounding nature and paddling the pristine lakes together. "DDBHH trips provide an opportunity to spend time with others who communicate the same way. We all have something in common with not being able to hear and use ASL to talk with one another. It's wonderful to spend time outdoors with others I can communicate with," reflected one of the participants.

**We proudly teamed up with Disabled American Veterans** in September for a four-day extended trip to Olympic National Park with a group of nine Minnesota veterans, ranging in age from mid-20s to late-60s. Coming together from different branches, different eras, and different places in their lives, the group bonded over hiking six miles in the challenging but beautiful rainforest, relaxing in the natural hot springs, and walking the peaceful beaches along the coast, which provided majestic views and several sea otter sightings!

[ LOCATION: OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK // PHOTOGRAPHER: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS OF MINNESOTA ]

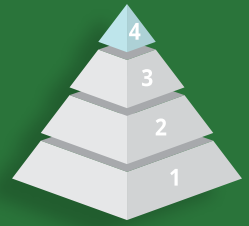




# 4

## STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

# Leadership and Career Pathways



[ LOCATION: BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA //  
PHOTOGRAPHER: ASHA SHOFFNER ]

### In 2022, we launched the Wilderness

**Inquiry Outdoor Fellowship,** an introductory career learning opportunity for people whose identities are underrepresented in the outdoor industry – people who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and/or as an individual with a disability. A cohort of five Fellows joined this 10-week paid program to gain real-world experience, professional skills, and career development tools, while co-leading Wilderness Inquiry expeditions including extended trips to the Boundary Waters, the Apostle Islands, and Yellowstone, Glacier, and Voyageurs national parks.

### Access to enjoy and explore public lands belongs to everyone.

As one of America's most accessible national parks, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is at the forefront of creating inclusive nature-based experiences. Over the years, Wilderness Inquiry has worked alongside the National Park Service on accessible design of our Little Sand Bay base camp in the Apostle Islands and staff training to deliver programs that break down barriers to outdoor participation. In 2022, we were proud to support the Friends of the Apostle Islands *Access for All* initiative to improve and strengthen the park's accessibility and use by a wider range of visitors – opening the beauty and popularity of the area to everyone.

[ LOCATION: APOSTLE ISLANDS //  
PHOTOGRAPHER: ERIK JOHNSRUD ]



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

“Wilderness Inquiry ended 2022 on firm financial footing, maintaining the organization’s fiscal responsibility and good stewardship of donor and stakeholder resources. For a remarkable 8th consecutive year, Wilderness Inquiry was awarded the highest rating from Charity Navigator, demonstrating the organization’s exceptional trustworthiness, transparency, and efficiency. Consolidated audited financial statements were prepared by Carpenter, Evert & Associates, Certified Public Accountants.” — JOHN BUTLER, BOARD TREASURER

## CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

Assets	2022	2021
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$580,516	\$450,836
Short Term Investments	\$1,251,287	\$1,239,271
Other Current Assets	\$388,380	\$379,140
Property & Equipment, & Right of Use Asset	\$1,064,142	\$860,463
Endowments & Investments	\$2,552,417	\$2,610,295
Long Term Investment - WI Foundation	\$5,731,360	\$6,000,097
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$11,568,102</b>	<b>\$11,540,102</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accrued Expenses	\$232,785	\$277,377
Deferred Revenue	\$168,156	\$84,804
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$400,941</b>	<b>\$362,181</b>
Long Term Liabilities & Lease Liability	\$854,246	\$582,547
Net Assets	\$10,312,915	\$10,595,374
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$11,568,102</b>	<b>\$11,540,102</b>

“In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Wilderness Inquiry, Inc. as of December 31, 2022 and 2021 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





## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

### Support & Revenue

	2022	2021
Grants, Contributions, Gifts	\$1,560,717	\$1,534,396
Government Grants	\$987,046	\$551,488
Program Fees	\$1,056,470	\$695,523
Endowment Payment	\$71,337	\$60,794
Special Event & Miscellaneous Income	\$163,262	\$142,620
Investment Income	-\$148,301	\$432
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,690,531</b>	<b>\$2,985,253</b>

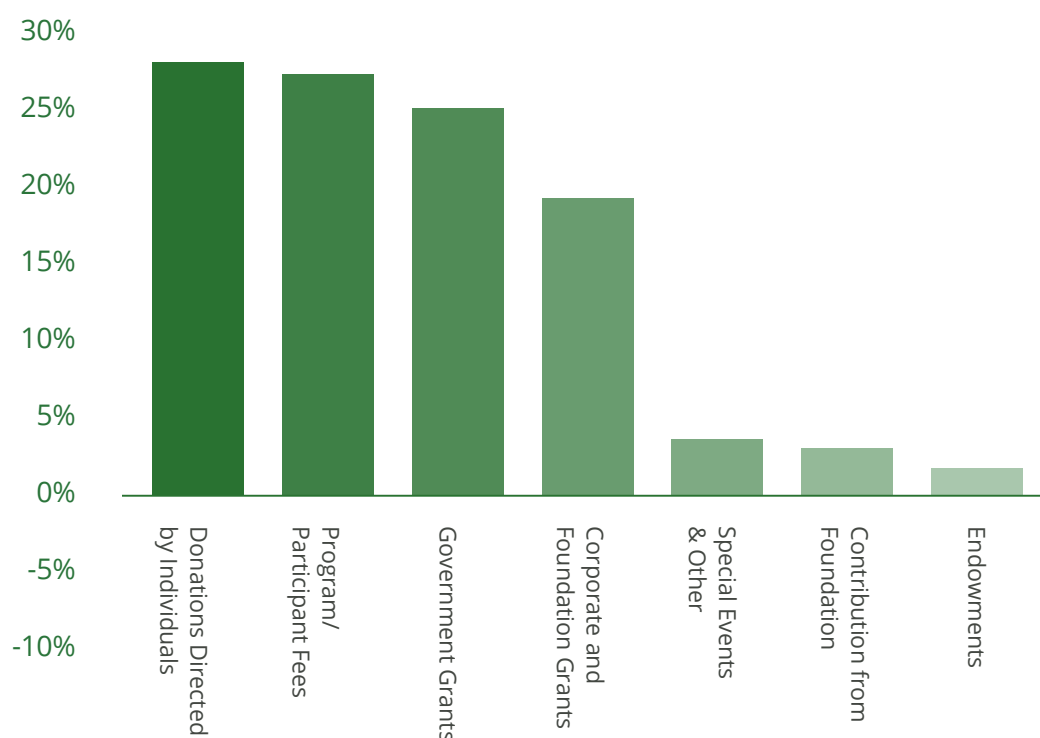
### Expenses

	2022	2021
Program Services	\$3,461,528	\$2,791,470
<i>Share the Adventure</i>	\$1,347,197	\$800,931
<i>Canoemobile</i>	\$1,651,625	\$1,437,062
<i>Individuals &amp; Families with Disabilities</i>	\$462,706	\$553,477
Management & General	\$586,303	\$639,906
Fundraising	\$263,391	\$263,491
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,311,222</b>	<b>\$3,694,867</b>

### Financial Adjustments

	2022	2021
Change in Value of Endowment	-\$185,764	\$333,658
Less: Endowment Payout for Operations	-\$71,337	-\$60,794
Endowment Contributions	\$291,429	\$157,319
Gain on Sale of Building	\$303,904	\$6,080,863
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>-\$282,459</b>	<b>\$5,801,432</b>
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$10,595,374	\$4,793,942
Net Assets - End of Year	\$10,312,915	\$10,595,374

## 2022 EARNED REVENUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS





# FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



**LOCATION:**  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
**PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
MOLLY STREET

Contributions from generous donors and supporters power our mission and provide inclusive, accessible outdoor experiences for all. Thank you to the many individuals, families, and corporate, foundation, and government partners whose investment in and commitment to our work enables Wilderness Inquiry to remain an important connection to community and the outdoors.

Every effort is made to ensure accurate listings. If we did not attribute your donation correctly, or if you have other questions or comments, please contact Senior Development Officer Julie Edmiston at 612-676-9424 or [development@wildernessinquiry.org](mailto:development@wildernessinquiry.org)

## \$100,000+

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## \$10,000-\$24,999

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Ken and Laura Higgins

## \$1,000-\$4,999

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Erik Allen  
Amy Alpine and John Grump

**FEDERAL PARTNERS:** Thank you to our federal partners, agencies, and their staff for paddling together with us in 2022. Through valued public-private partnerships, Wilderness Inquiry is 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, and national parks and forests are accessible for all.



**US Army Corps of Engineers.**



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 Sherry Ann Dayton  
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**LOCATION:**  
 MINNEHAHA  
 REGIONAL PARK

**PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
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 Joan Bierscheid  
 Michael and  
 Rae Ann Blazer  
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 Erik and Hanna Brandt

**LCCMR:** Canoemobile's "floating classroom" engages youth across Minnesota to experience place-based, environmental, and STEM learning in the outdoors. Since 2017, with support from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), more than 33,500 youth from across Minnesota have explored local ecosystems and the species that depend on healthy watersheds in our headquarters state.



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Renee Mattson  
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 Nell Holden and  
 Craig Sweet

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**Kay Ronngren**  
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**ENDOWMENTS:** Wilderness Inquiry's endowed funds commemorate some of our most ardent participants while fostering long-term investment in inclusive outdoor programs for future generations. We greatly appreciate the generosity of the families listed here who share their passion for the outdoors through these dedicated endowments, and to the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation for their sustaining support.



## Endowments

Endowments help us fulfill our mission in perpetuity. We are especially grateful to the families of the following individuals for their support.

Carol Beim Nulsen  
Neil DuBois  
Harold, Catherine, and Martha Finch  
Founders Endowment  
Sean Maher  
Andrew Murphy  
Harriet Spencer  
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Clint and

Jessica Hooppaw

Fay and

Donald Peterson

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Linda Sweitzer

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Laura and Steve Inglis

Susan Jerutis

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### Julie Oliver

Ingrid, Hugh, Nick,  
and Anna Roberts

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Thank you to the following companies that matched their employees' or retirees' gifts.

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Thank you to those who contributed goods or services.

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Irving Briscoe

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Larry and Clara Raineri

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## Great River Race

Thanks to sponsors who raced to close the opportunity gap.

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Travelers

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Memorial Fund

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# EVERYONE BELONGS IN THE OUTDOORS



## OUR MISSION

Connecting people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

[ LOCATION: APOSTLE ISLANDS //  
PHOTOGRAPHER: RYAN BRADY ]

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