



2020

ANNUAL REPORT



Photo Credit: Alyssa Ki

A Letter From Our Founder

The pandemic, unemployment, and social injustice has presented historic challenges for the communities we serve. To try to better serve them in April, like many organizations, we quickly pivoted to an online format. Our after-school program, Wilderness Club, went virtual. We supplied laptops to our youth that didn't have them, or were sharing them with a sibling, and we continued tutoring and team-building activities online. But as the 2019-2020 school year was ending it was clear that teens were already growing tired of online programs.

Countless articles in the early pandemic months stressed the importance of getting outside to cope with the mental changes of the quarantine. However, in New Jersey, people of color are three and a half times more likely to live in nature deprived areas.*

With this in mind, in the mid-summer we sent out surveys to dozens of local teens. The results were clear: NO MORE ZOOM! They wanted and needed face-to-face interaction. Even more startling, the results showed that **in the first five months of the pandemic nearly 60% of teens were active only two times or less a month.** We realized that emphasizing virtual activities was not the path forward our youth needed. In order to safely provide empowering outdoor adventures and adhere to state COVID-19 program standards we reimagined the way we provide programming.

To reduce time in transit we replaced trips to upstate New York with local trips paddling on the Hudson River. We also made the deliberate decision to operate inefficiently. Traditionally our programs would transport a dozen youth in a 15 passenger van. In the summer we limited that number to just 5 teens. In the fall we switched from a van to a 54 passenger school bus while only allowing 10 teens at a time.

We knew these changes would dramatically increase our per-youth cost, but didn't hesitate to make them. Providing teens with empowering outdoor experiences is more important than ever. Thanks to you, despite being solely online for one quarter of the year, we served nearly 50% more youth than the previous year. With your help, we will continue to innovate and adapt to serve even more youth this year.

Thank you!

Steve Cunningham

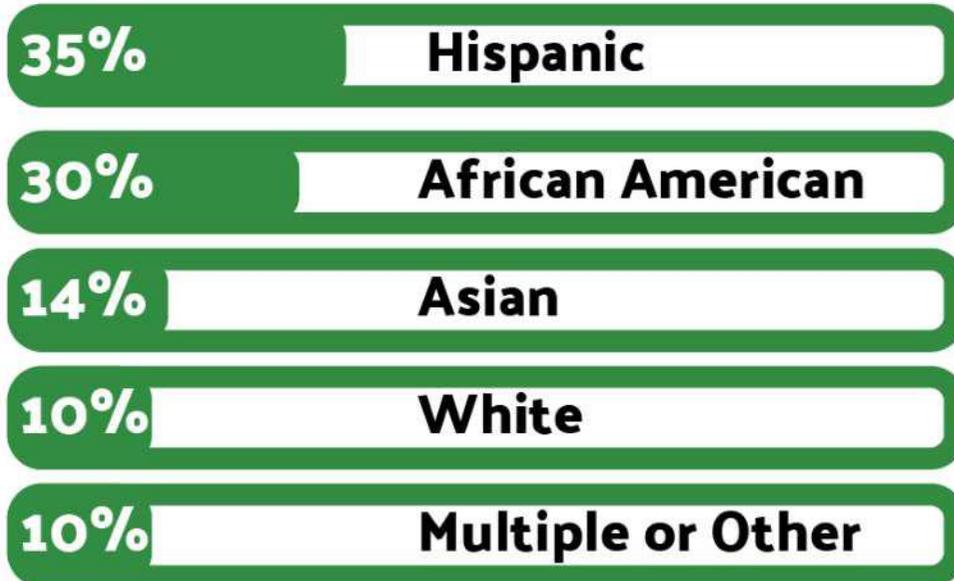
*Rowland-Shea, Jenny, et al. (2020) The Nature Gap. [online] Center for American Progress.



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2020 Results

Ethnicity of Participants



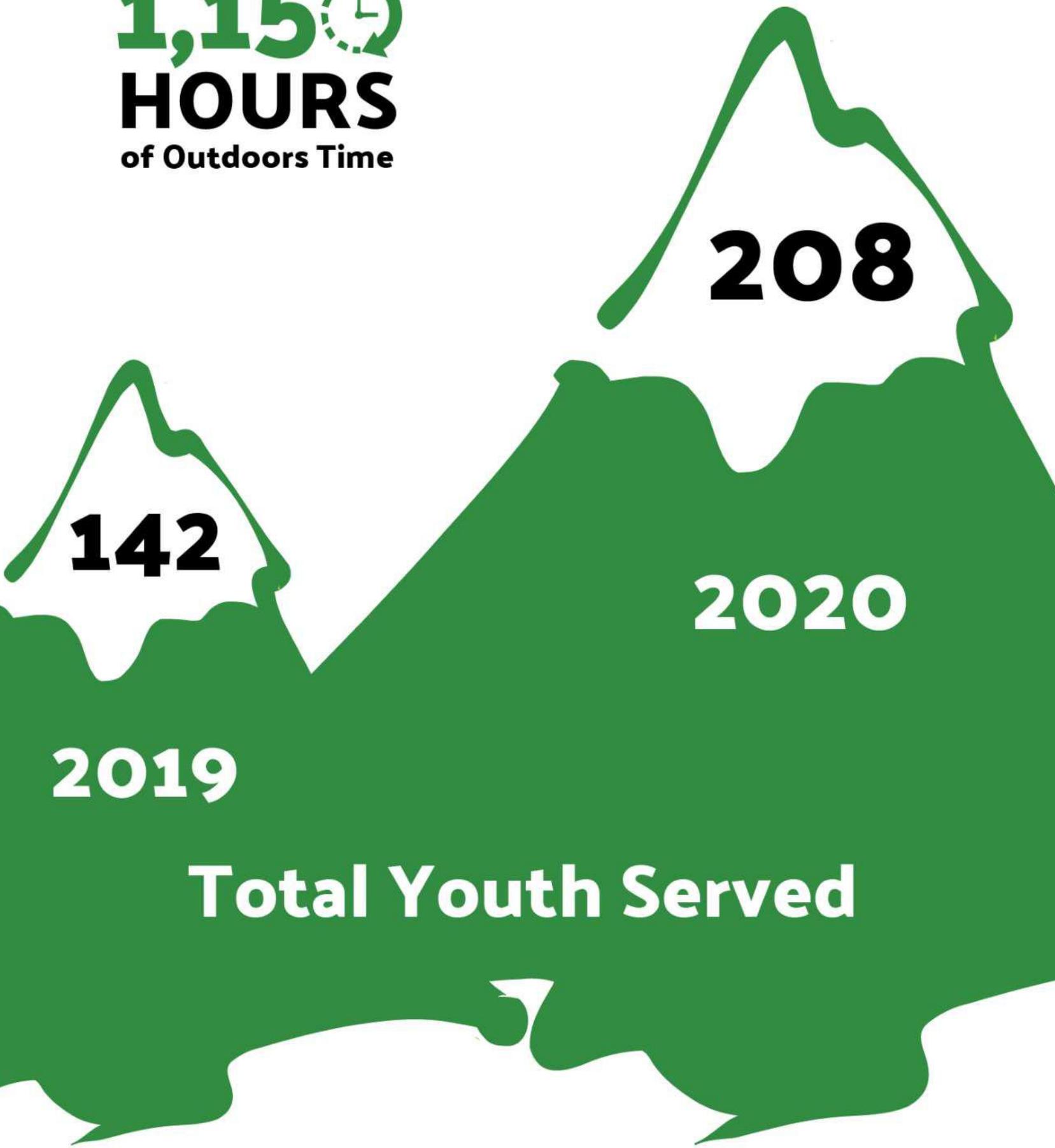
Free/Reduced Lunch Recipients



100%
report increased
self-confidence and
a desire to try new things



O V E R
1,150 
HOURS
of Outdoors Time



Total Youth Served

Jahleer's Story

I first joined Team Wilderness during a single day-hike in the spring of 2019. The mountaintop views were so inspiring that I immediately signed up for their two-week summer program.

Summer Treks was full of first-time experiences and challenges for me and the new friends I made there. One of the most bonding of them was when we went backpacking for three days in upstate New York. It was a massive challenge. I had to push myself in order to get to the peak while carrying all that hiking gear. One person had to carry the tent, while another carried two sleeping bags.

One night a huge thunderstorm parked itself right above us. It scared many of us to death. We had to leave our tents in the middle of the night to hike to a safer location. This changed me. When I started, my fear of heights made hiking up mountain hard, now I was doing it in the middle of the night in the pouring rain. With help from my team and the staff I didn't just make it, I was empowered. When I got home I went straight to bed out of exhaustion. But I knew I would return for more adventures.

I was so disappointed this past summer when I saw there would be no backpacking trip due to the pandemic. Not only that, but the entire program was going to be based around water. I had to think about it, because I didn't even know how to swim. Though if there's one thing I've learned through Team Wilderness, it's to have faith in myself. As it turned out my experience on the water was outstanding! I learned how to kayak, paddle board and how to read a chart. How many people get to kayak along the NYC skyline?! Because I loved being on the water so much and was such a leader, Team Wilderness arranged it so I could come back next summer as a helper and work with first time paddle boarders.

I now sign up for every Team Wilderness activity I can. I will never forget these adventures and can't wait to see what comes next.





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Our Mission

It is the mission of Team Wilderness to grow teamwork, leadership, and character within our urban youth through wilderness excursions.



Our Core Values

To achieve our mission we emphasize striving to be E.T.H.I.C.A.L. in the wilderness and reflecting on its application to life.

EMPATHY Through co-dependence to force teens to develop compassion towards each other

TEAMWORK To understand and embody a positive team culture

HEALTH Through mental and physical challenges recognizing what is necessary to be your best self and live a healthy and balanced life

INCLUSIVE Through interdependence to learn to value and work to create an environment inclusive of everyone that supports and respects differences

COMMUNITY Understanding social and environmental responsibility

ADVERSITY Using a foreign setting to compel teens to challenge themselves mentally and physically resulting in increased self-confidence and self-actualization

LEADERSHIP Out of necessity to demonstrate the ability to collaborate, communicate, problem-solve and resolve conflicts promptly and effectively

Across New York & New Jersey

To grow who we serve, where we serve them, and the activities we offer them we teamed up with:

Beloved Community Charter School
Hoboken Public School District
Jersey City Public Schools

Liberty State Park
Resilience Paddle Sports
REI Paramus

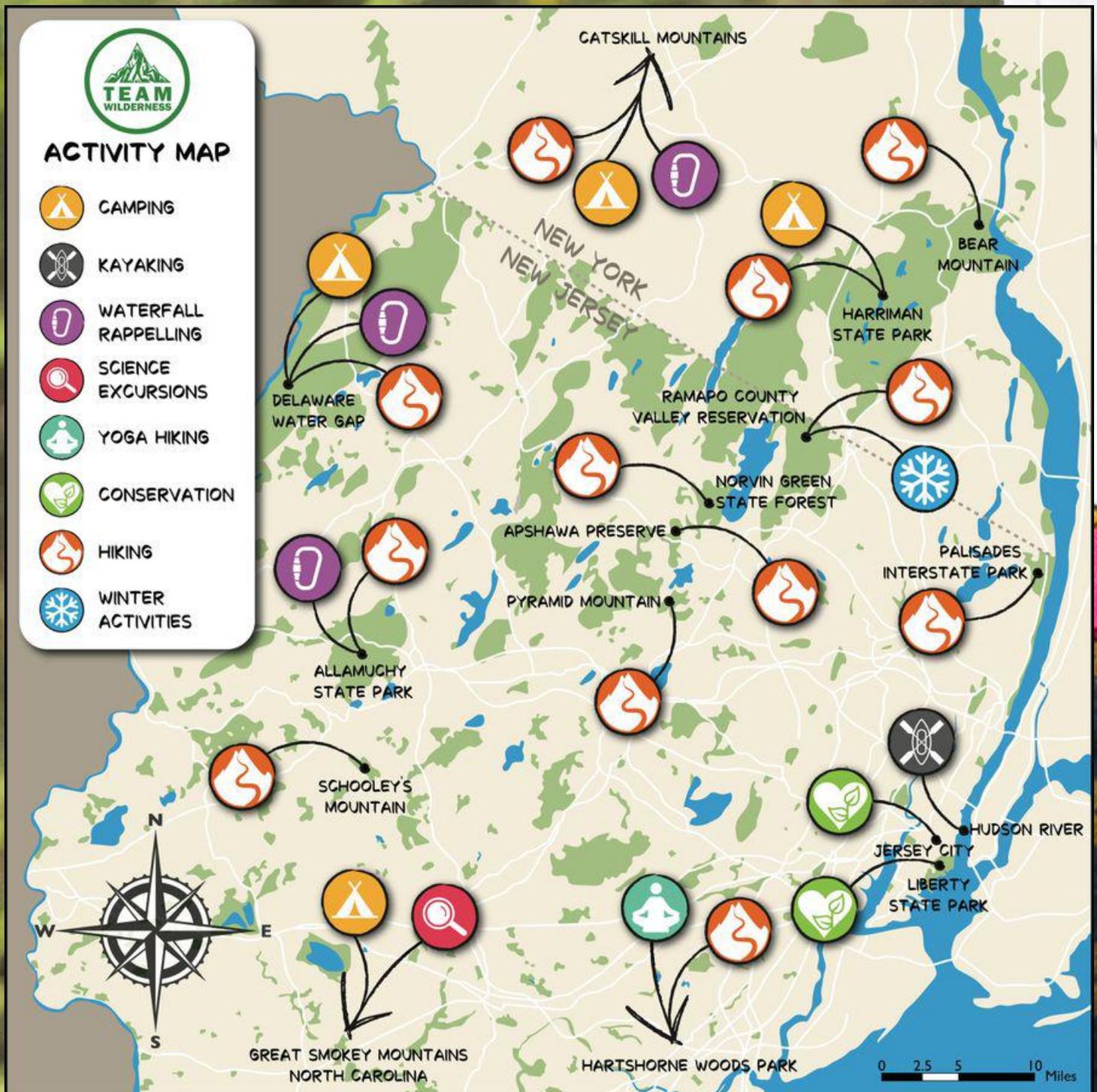


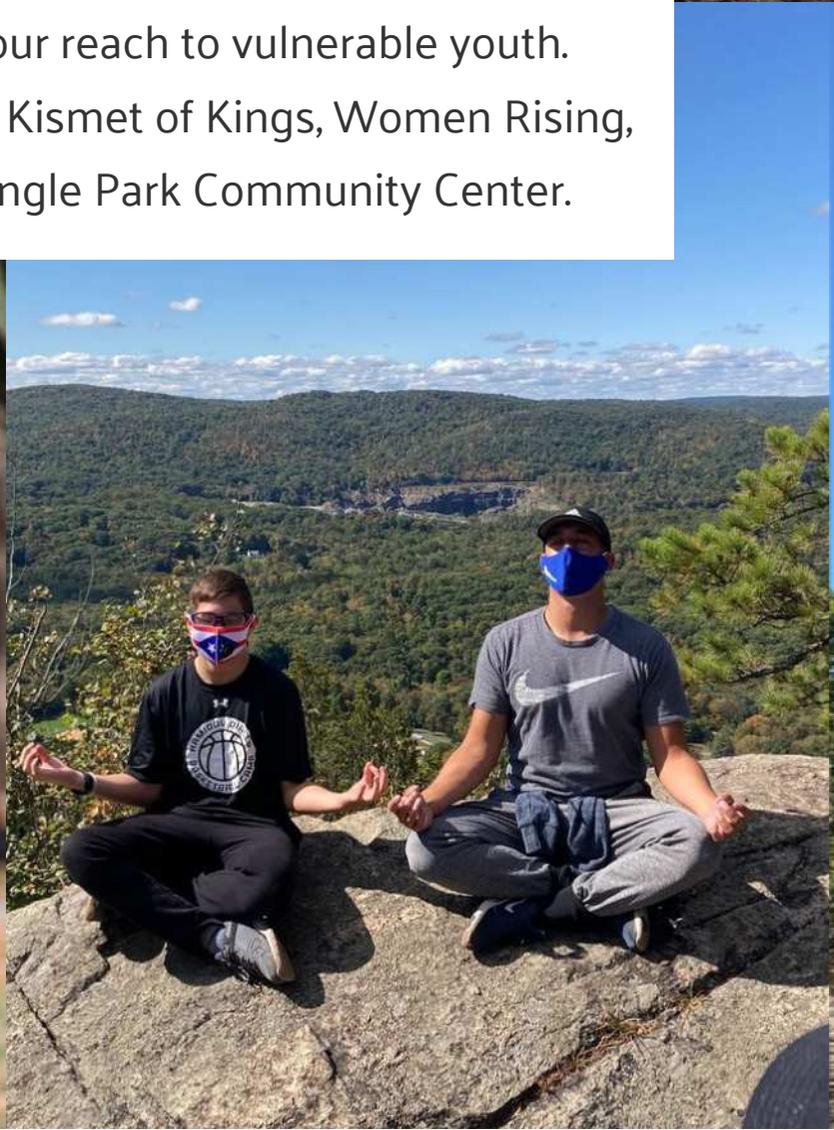
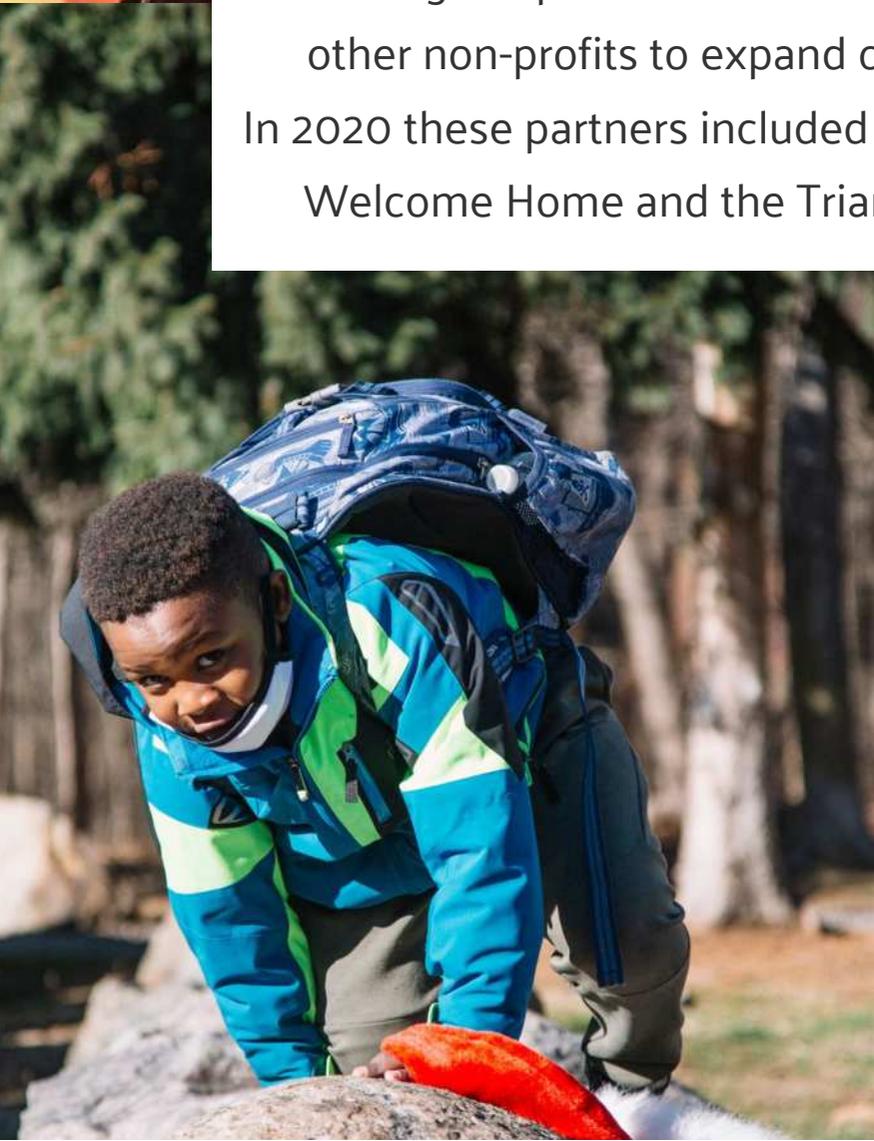


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PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

During the pandemic we increased our partnerships with other non-profits to expand our reach to vulnerable youth. In 2020 these partners included Kismet of Kings, Women Rising, Welcome Home and the Triangle Park Community Center.



Hudson CMO

Our most extensive partnership was with Hudson Care Management Organization (CMO). They provide care coordination for youth ages 5-21 who may be struggling with: mental health or emotional issues, challenging behaviors, substance use or developmental disabilities. The partnership included four empowering day-hikes and a kayaking adventure.



When working with and supporting children and families it's important to stay creative and holistic. The experiences Team Wilderness makes possible for children are invaluable, opening their eyes to new environments and challenging them to push themselves provides life lessons that will carry over for years to come.

- Steven Campos

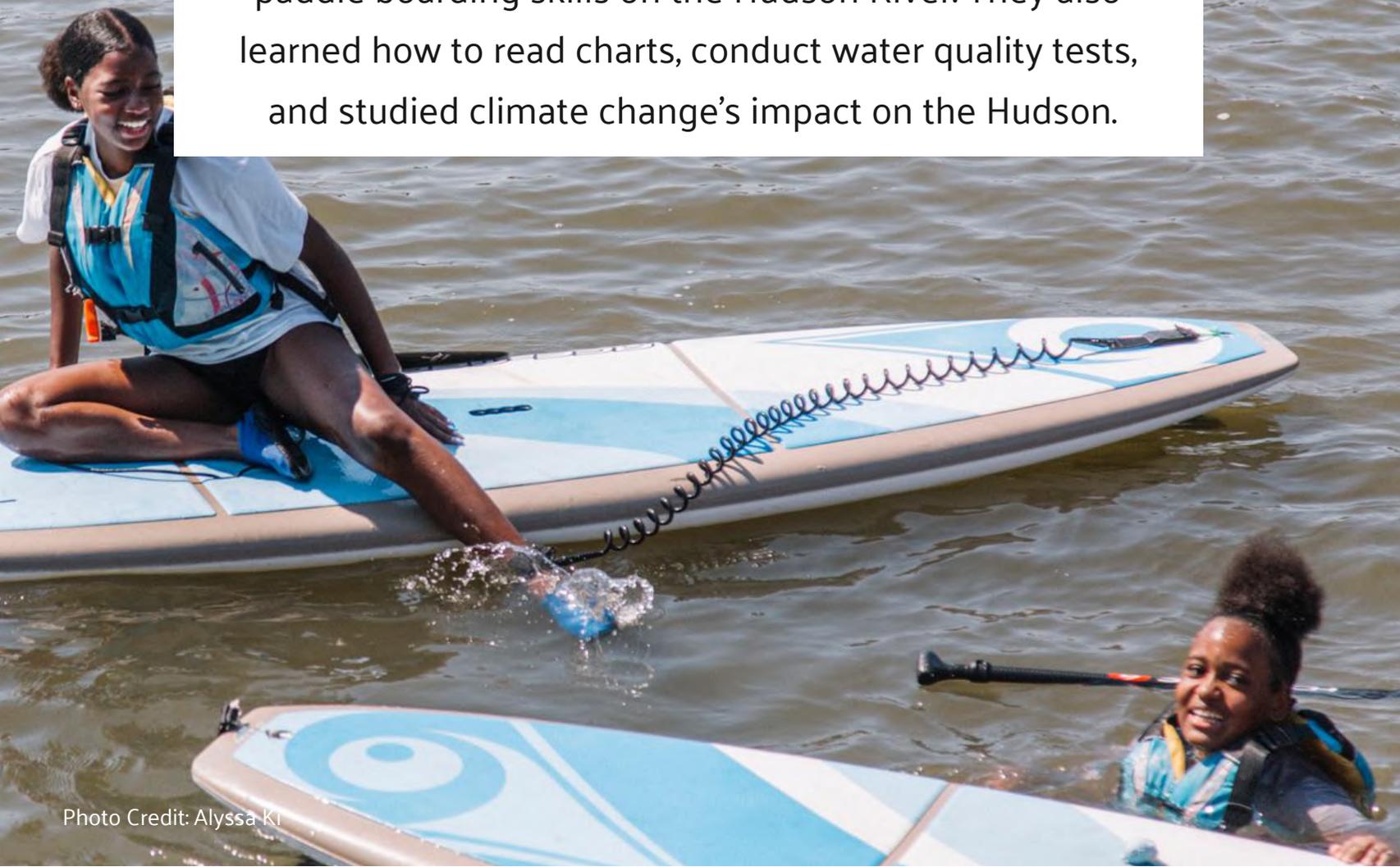
Community Resource Director, Hudson CMO





WILDERNESS ON THE WATER

We partnered with Resilience Paddle Sports to provide water-based STEM adventures. Teens learned kayaking and paddle boarding skills on the Hudson River. They also learned how to read charts, conduct water quality tests, and studied climate change's impact on the Hudson.



Thank You Supporters



\$1,000+

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\$1 - \$99

Too Many to list here!
 Thanks for your support!

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2020 Financials

Revenue

Individual Donations	\$34,653
Corporate Donations	\$9,762
Grants	\$76,890
Fundraising Events	\$2,986
Registration & Tuition	\$2,349
TOTAL	\$126,660

Cash	\$38,778
Fixed Assets	\$29,750

Expenses

Program Services	\$74,679
Management	\$27,294
Fundraising	\$1,449
TOTAL	\$103,422

Liabilities	\$15,000
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*These figures are pending review by our accountant. Once complete, figures will be updated on our site.



PO Box 4095
Jersey City, NJ 07304
TeamWilderness.org

Photo Credit: Alyssa Ki