

Dear Peter & Liz,

First Descents is deeply grateful for your leadership support of our mission and the communities we serve. Together, we have championed the healing power of adventure to improve health outcomes and foster supportive peer communities nationwide. We are honored to partner in this work and are grateful to share the impact of your grantmaking!

YEAR IN REVIEW

With the support of our devoted partners, FD continues to effectively deliver upon its three strategic priorities and provide equitable access to psychosocial supportive care. In 2022, First Descents hosted 39 programs to serve 459 young adult patients, caregivers, and healthcare workers nationwide. Specifically, this includes 262 oncology participants, 38 MS participants, 132 healthcare workers, and 27 caregivers.

A notable achievement in 2022 was the safe relaunch of the organization's signature, weeklong programs. In 2020 and 2021, FD transitioned to shorter, local multi-day programs (two nights, three days) in order to adhere to the organization's COVID-19 communicable disease plan. While these were necessary precautions, the desire for longer duration programs has been a consistent point of feedback from participants throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, FD's goal has been to return to its core program model in order to provide the greatest benefit to participants. FD successfully resumed its weeklong programs across 11 unique geographies.

Over the last two years, First Descents identified the need for ongoing community engagement beyond the availability of in-person core programs. Thus, FD made intentional investments to resume local events, launch new virtual lifestyle resources, and drive local adventures to support community members. These investments included nine local events, the production of a six-part nutrition series featuring recipes from FD Chefs ([more info](#)), a 16-part yoga and mindfulness series hosted by Lov Yoga ([more info](#)), and a community adventures platform ([more info](#)). As a result, FD engaged 1,181 community members through local events, reached 197,499 interactions through the organization's virtual lifestyle content, and supported 77 alumni through 12 self-facilitated community adventures.

Organizationally, FD continues to strengthen its network of advocacy and healthcare partnerships. To-date, FD has established relationships with more than 530 medical centers and 1,550 providers nationwide. As a result, FD drove 2,509 new participant inquiries through Prescribe Adventure in 2022. These efforts have allowed First Descents to reach patients earlier in the treatment process, serve more young adults of diverse backgrounds, build communities that reflect the cultural interests and values of participants, and address the substantial gap between treatment and psychosocial services for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

In October, First Descents was featured on Good Morning America, which showcased the organization's programs to a national audience. Watch the inspiring segment here ([more info](#))!

FD's program model acknowledges that not every healthcare intervention comes in the form of clinical treatment. Instead, FD's initiatives engage local communities and promote interactions within natural environments to introduce individuals to a broader perspective of health and healing.

EFFICACY & OUTCOMES

FD's primary objective is to provide participants with complimentary, non-clinical programming that allows them to prioritize their mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing and connect with their peers. The intended effect of these programs is to decrease episodes of psychosocial distress, increase coping ability, introduce new avenues for social support, and foster self-efficacy.

Participant outcomes from FD's 2022 programs have been consistent with the improved health outcomes outlined in the organization's published impact studies ([more info](#)). Additionally, beginning in 2021 First Descents began collaborating with researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the effectiveness of the organization's healthcare worker programs. The study is measuring FD's impact on specific phenomena affecting healthcare workers and first responders, including stress, burnout, resilience, and well-being. The study will continue to enroll participants through the 2023 program season, and will evaluate outcomes in 2024.

TESTIMONIAL

The following testimonial demonstrates the healing power of adventure. Thank you for making these experiences possible for the young adults we serve.

"Seeing other cancer survivors take on rapids head-first, sideways, and even upside down gave me a sense of pride in my journey. A feeling like maybe my diagnosis hadn't been solely a punishment, but maybe a "Get Out of Jail Free" card. One free chance to step away from the person, expectations, and path that I felt obligated to fulfill. Cancer gave me the best excuse to try the things that I never had the courage to do. My First Descents trip showed me that there was something still left. Something inside was still there. Something that came out in the river that needed space in my normal life. Maybe a realization that my life didn't fall apart but might have opened-up. Maybe the chance to learn how not to shy away from the rapids in life. Maybe the freedom to see that life doesn't have to be the way that it's always been."

CONCLUSION

True impact is built on a foundation of collaboration. In sharing this impact report, we welcome your feedback, questions, and ideas. Together, we will continue to pursue opportunities that provide ongoing healing and connection to those we serve.

RESOURCES

Website ([link](#))
Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion ([link](#))
Oncology Alumni Story, "Jeter" ([link](#))
MS Alumni Story, "Birdy" ([link](#))
Healthcare Alumni Story "Athena" ([link](#))
Caregiver Alumni Story "Moses" ([link](#))

SOCIAL

Facebook ([link](#))
Instagram ([link](#))
YouTube ([link](#))
Twitter ([link](#))
Linkedin ([link](#))
FD Blog ([link](#))

CONTACT

Emma Burick
Development Officer
emma.burick@firstdescents.org
801.694.6577



First Descents provides life-changing outdoor adventure programs for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions