



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**“When we dare to be powerful, to use our strength in the service of our vision, then it becomes less and less important whether we are afraid.” - Audre Lorde**

2020 challenged Women’s Wilderness in the existential way. For the first time in 23 years, we experienced a moment when we were simply not allowed to lead people in nature. We watched as peer organizations shut their doors or went dormant. We reckoned with how the darkness of racism and White supremacy has been manifesting in our own work. A retrospective look at this year reveals a deep questioning of why we are here and what role this organization could/should play in responding to the multiple catastrophes facing our communities.

The WW team had a choice to make in the early summer as COVID cases grew - pause and wait out the storm or show up with humility and purpose, open our doors and take a significant financial risk in doing so. As an organization rooted in supporting girls, women and queer folks, especially those holding identities that are additionally marginalized, we felt deeply compelled to “lean in” to the moment. We restarted programming in July and led open-enrollment girls’ and women’s courses and prioritized opportunities for participants with non-dominant identities. We launched our Outdoor Girl Immigrant and Refugee Leadership Series after school program in Denver/Aurora and restarted Trailblazers (BIPOC) series and a Queer Wilderness youth summer program. We received affirming support from our core, perennial donors who have been holding this organization up for decades, and welcomed new supporters including partnerships with foundations and companies who saw strategic alignment with our vision and ever-increasing relevance of our work.

You will see the impact of the tough choices we made in these pages. 2020 was a year of powerful growth in the face of existential risk taking. I reflect on the year with pride in the strength of this team, who dared to be powerful in a moment of greatest need in the communities we serve. We are dedicated to taking this learning and introspection into our work in the future.

With gratitude to all those who stood with us,  
Sarah Murray  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Murray", written in a cursive style.

# OUR VISION

# OUR MISSION

# OUR VALUES

Women's Wilderness is a 501c3 nonprofit organization founded in 1998 in Boulder, Colorado. We were one of the first and still one of the only gender-informed organizations providing direct outdoor experiences in the world. We are also a licensed child care provider in the state of Colorado. Our objective is to look through outdoor experiences through the lens of social justice to change the way people connect with nature, each other, and the power within themselves. Our day-camps and after-school courses are based in Boulder, JeffCo, and the Denver Metro areas. Our overnight trips take place throughout the high alpine country and desert environments of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico.



## OUR VISION:

A socially just and environmentally sustainable society.



## OUR MISSION:

To support girls, women and LGBTQ+ people in accessing their power and improving their health through connections to the outdoors and community.

## OUR VALUES:

We believe ACCESS TO NATURE IS A RIGHT and being outdoors has transformative potential for us all.

We WELCOME UNIQUE AND DIVERSE IDENTITIES, experiences, and ideas and rely on them to do our best work.

We COLLABORATE CONTINUOUSLY in partnership and community.

We LEAD from out front, from behind, but most importantly, from within. We HUSTLE for ourselves and for each other — and after the hustle, we celebrate.

We EVOLVE AND ADAPT individually and collectively in the face of our dynamic world.

# WHY WE DO THIS

Girls, women, and non-binary individuals face unique challenges and gender-based oppression in both the outdoors and, more broadly, our society and systems. This oppression is even more pronounced when we consider race and status. Black, Indigenous, People of Color as well as immigrants and newcomers experience racism and nationalism in addition to sexism and other forms of gender-based oppression.

The physical and emotional health benefits of spending time outside are well documented, however the exclusivity of this industry compounds broader inequalities, denying individuals with marginalized identities these benefits. While gender will always be a primary concern for us, we see that understanding and centering intersectionality in the strategy, planning, and execution of our work will be necessary for meaningful impact.

Our goal is to use the outdoors as a modality for both individual and collective transformative experiences.



“

**For me, Women's Wilderness is about empowerment. It's a chance for women and girls to feel strong and just to feel supported and comfortable and just confident to do things outdoors.**

”

- 2020 Backpacking & Climbing Course Participant

# COMMUNITY



In addition to our geographic roots in Colorado and the national audience we serve, we also actively collaborate with mission-aligned non-profits and community organizations on enrollment, programming, accountability, and more.

We believe in our work and see ourselves as playing a crucial role in the community, but we do not do this alone, nor would we want to. We believe that the best way for us to bring value is through connecting and collaborating with organizations and groups that also seek to support the community and see where we can contribute. In 2020, we focused on building awareness and trust within the community and finding our place in the ecosystem of organizations that have similar values and seek to support the same people we do. We are excited to grow this group, especially as more organizations come out of dormancy as COVID abates.



## **2020 Community Partners**

PLAYPass · Aurora Action Zone Schools (Aurora Public Schools) · Aurora Mental Health Center, Trauma Resilience Youth Program · The Village Institute · The Spring Institute · International Rescue Committee · Soccer Without Borders · Game On! Sports 4 Girls - Boulder · Latino Outdoors · Black Women's Alliance · Out Boulder · Lincoln Hills Cares · Down West · One Colorado · American Mountain Guides Association

# COURSES

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- GIRLS LEAD FOR LIFE: GOLDEN
- GIRLS LEAD FOR LIFE: ENGLEWOOD
- MIDDLE SCHOOL REMOTE ADVENTURES
- HIGH SCHOOL REMOTE ADVENTURES
- QUEER WILDERNESS REMOTE ADVENTURES
- ADVENTURE DAYS: BOULDER
- ADVENTURE DAYS: JEFFCO
- ADVENTURE CAMP
- ADVENTURE CLIMBING CAMP
- HIGH SCHOOL BACKPACKING AND ROCK CLIMBING
- HIGH SCHOOL BACKPACKING
- FRONT RANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLIMBING
- FAMILY CANOE
- WOMEN'S BACKPACKING
- HIKING MONDAYS WITH
- FAMILY DAY HIKE

As we consciously crafted our Summer 2020 program offerings, we **intentionally focused our resources and energy to ensure that programs were designed to meet the needs of youth and folks with marginalized identities who have borne a disproportionate impact of COVID-19.** While we offered a smaller suite of programs in order to ensure that participant safety was the top priority, **we strategically designed courses that would have the most significant impact on communities experiencing the most need.**

“I CONNECTED WITH THESE WOMEN MORE THAN I HAD CONNECTED WITH PEOPLE IN A LONG TIME”

-BACKPACKING COURSE PARTICIPANT



# COURSES - AFFINITY AND CUSTOM

## AFFINITY:

QUEER WILDERNESS PROJECT SERIES  
QUEER WILDERNESS PROJECT BACKPACKING  
TRAILBLAZERS COMMUNITY HIKE  
TRAILBLAZERS GEAR INTRO  
TRAILBLAZERS INTRODUCTION TO CLIMBING  
TRAILBLAZERS CLIMBING 2.0  
OUTDOOR G.I.R.L.S.

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## FREE / PAY WHAT YOU CAN:

QUEER WILDERNESS  
TRAILBLAZERS  
OUTDOOR G.I.R.L.S.

## CUSTOM:

CUSTOM FRONT RANGE HIGH SCHOOL  
CLIMBING  
NAROPA  
TRAILHEAD INSTITUTE  
GAME ON! SPORTS 4 GIRLS - BOULDER



"I WOULDN'T HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROGRAM IF IT WASN'T BECAUSE THE INSTRUCTORS WERE WOMEN OF COLOR. I NEEDED A SPACE THAT WAS FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF MY IDENTITY TO LEARN SKILLS WITHOUT FEAR".

- TRAILBLAZERS PARTICIPANT

# 2020 IMPACT

TOTAL DIRECT REACH = 465

Intrinsically we know that spending time outdoors - connecting with ourselves, our communities and the natural world - is transformational. To tell the story of our impact we create feedback loops that allow us to evaluate our impact and learn constantly. We develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation tools to help us better understand the depth and breadth of the impact of our programming. We are proud to give voice to the incredible growth that participants experienced in 2020.

## LEADERSHIP

- Build confidence and communication skills that enable participants to fully step into their power.
- Envision a better world and becoming the change they wish to see.

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Develop a deep sense of belonging and connection with peers and mentors.
- Growth in areas such as resiliency, emotional regulation, and cultural competence.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Develop new technical outdoor skills, have joyful embodied experiences, and develop an appreciation for one's body and the power it holds.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Develop a connection to the land that cultivates a lasting environmental ethic.

### Goals

### Impact

- **100%** of participants believe they have many good qualities.

- **100%** of participants said they made friends that they can count on.

- **100%** of participants said they believe their bodies are strong and capable of doing difficult things.

- **96%** of participants said they know how to access the outdoors in their communities.

- **96%** of participants said that they can collaborate with people from different cultures.

- **100%** of participants said it is important to take care of our planet.

**45% of participants in Women's Wilderness programming identify as BIPOC**

**We distributed 100% of our Financial Aid resources**

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND SPONSORS

Donna Abdeni  
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## FOUNDATION:



The Denver Foundation



The Colorado Health Foundation



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
BOULDER COUNTY



THE CAIRN PROJECT

## CORPORATE:



Lizard Thicket



## IN KIND:

Nemo - Deuter - Branch & Barrel - Salomon - Exped - Icebreaker - Red Paddle Co. - Cotopaxi - Osprey - SERE - Lowa - Mountain Hardwear - Raen Blundstone - Chaco - Carve Designs - La Sportiva

## GOVERNMENT:



DENVER  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

# 2020 FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

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PROGRAM FEES  
7%  
OTHER  
9.2%

IN-KIND DONATIONS  
4.7%

CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS  
17.4%

INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS  
9.3%

GRANTS  
48.5%

## INCOME

FUNDRAISING  
9%

GENERAL AND ADMIN  
15%

PROGRAMS  
76%

## EXPENSES



THINGS ARE  
LOOKING UP....

## STRATEGY / GOALS / FUTURE - LOOKING AHEAD

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We exist because we believe that access to the outdoors is a right, but one that is not accessible to many people. To disrupt this inequity, we will both lean into our strengths and experience, and vigorously pursue our vision for the future.

## OUR LEGACY

We deeply and radically rethink what equitable and ethical relationship to the outdoors looks like. We instill this in all of our participants and programs, but know that a broader industry-wide shift is needed. We believe this shift starts with a new generation of industry leaders. We are positioning ourselves to be at the forefront of this shift by building and filling leadership pipelines to develop and support those who will usher in a new era.

## OUR STRENGTH

We will continue providing high-quality immersive and transformative outdoor experiences that support girls, women, and non-binary individuals in improving their physical and mental health. We will continue delivering differentiated, accessible, and evidenced-based curriculum and programming that supports participants in developing safety (both physical and emotional) and agency.

We will continue to develop programs that prioritize and engage communities with the most need. We design and implement programs in close collaboration with community partners and, as a result, our programs are one key component of a vibrant coalition of organizations working together towards a more just and equitable future.

## OUR 2021 PRIORITIES

- Continue to support people in improving their health, developing leadership and connecting to the land and community with a continued focus on COVID-impact resiliency
- Expand our reach to serve more participants in more diverse geographies
- Explore new course areas in New Mexico and Utah
- Grow our affinity programs
- Invest in the leadership of people with non-dominant identities in the form of mentorship, apprenticeship, and exchange programs
- Further professionalize our staff development and training
- Conduct an organization-wide diversity, equity and inclusion audit and develop a multi-year strategy for evolution
- Invest in community partners, coalition building, and cross-sector collaborations
- Develop an impact measurement database to help us in impact analysis and evaluative tracking
- Increase our fundraising in an effort to support organizational sustainability



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