



adventure

risk

challenge

ARC YEAR IN REVIEW 2025

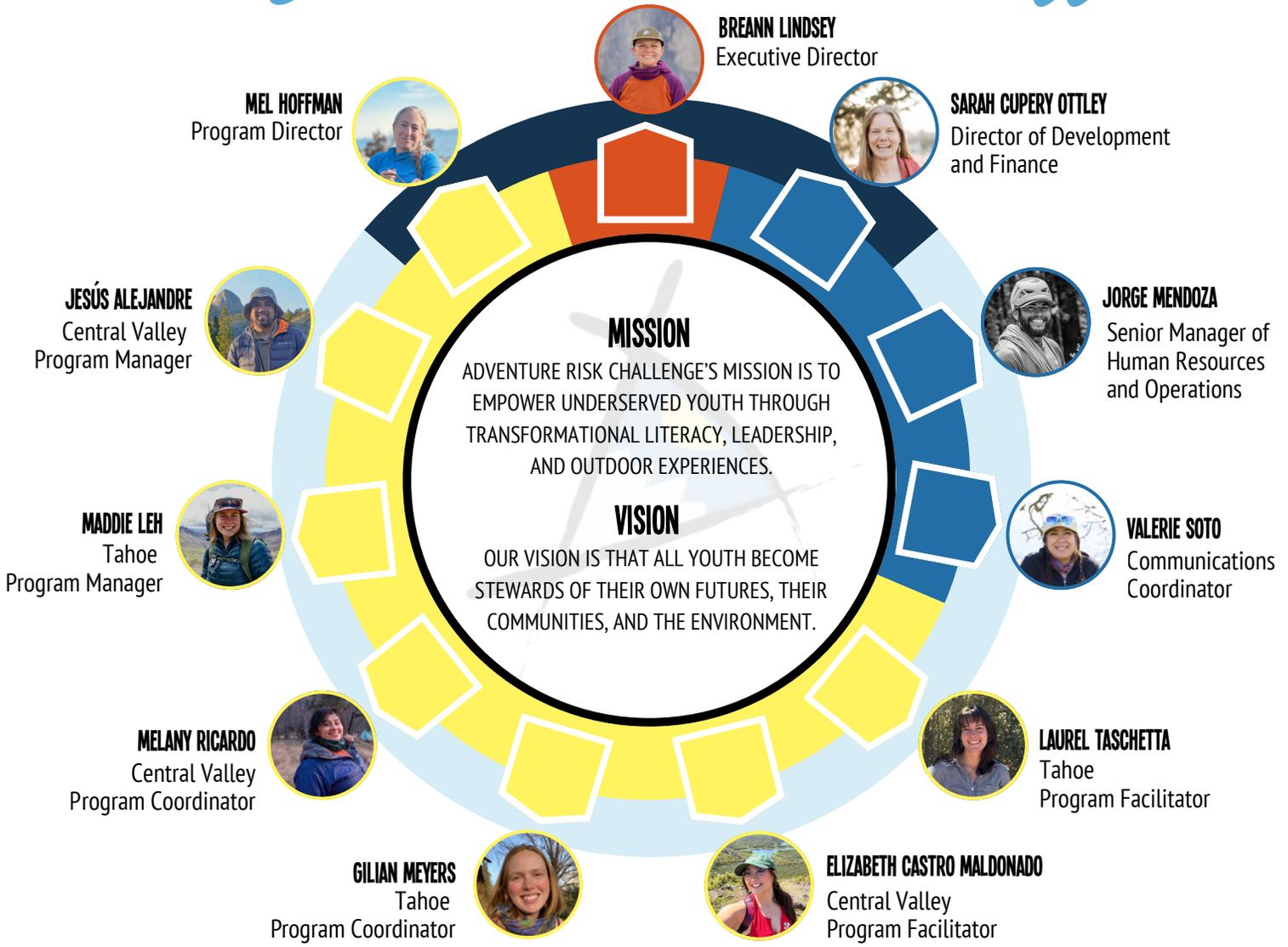
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ARC *year-round staff*



PROGRAM *purpose*

Since 2004, ARC has facilitated relationship-centered literacy and leadership development programming, using the outdoors as our classroom. We offer a multi-year progression that provides opportunities for rural and low-income high school students in the Tahoe/Truckee and Central Valley regions to grow to be more deeply engaged learners, leaders, and community members. Our students become more empowered versions of themselves as they gain confidence in a supportive environment.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES *at a glance*

LITERACY *outcomes*

COMMUNITY *outcomes*

LEADERSHIP *outcomes*

OUTDOORS *outcomes*

LUNCH CLUBS

- Students build confidence in speaking and listening to peers and adults in a variety of settings.

- Students build confidence relating to self, peers, and adults in a supportive environment.

- Students build self awareness and confidence in a supportive environment.

- Students learn about outdoor trip opportunities offered by ARC.

RISING COMMUNITY LEADERS

- Students develop writing and public speaking skills through scaffolded opportunities and a final writing project & presentation.

- Students begin building authentic self, peer, and adult relationships through scaffolded sharing.

- Students build self awareness and confidence through identity development curriculum.

- Students learn about outdoor trip opportunities offered by ARC.

OUTDOOR TRIPS

- Students build confidence speaking and listening to peers and adults in a variety of settings.

- Students build confidence relating to self, peers, and adults in new settings.

- Students build self awareness and confidence through new experiences and challenges.

- Students create initial connections to outdoor spaces through a variety of outdoor trip opportunities.

STEPPING STONE COURSE

- Students build confidence in reflective writing and sharing through scaffolded opportunities and regular practice.

- Students build authentic self, peer, and adult relationships through immersive time together.

- Students build increased self awareness through practicing leadership and followership and engaging in a values based curriculum.

- Students create a connection to outdoor spaces through immersive experiences.

IMMERSIVE COURSE

- Students develop increased ability to articulate internal experiences through integrated reading, writing, and public speaking practice.

- Students build authentic self, peer, and adult relationships through immersive time, intentional facilitation, and community conversations.

- Students develop increased self reliance and capacity to contribute to a team through scaffolded leadership opportunities and targeted feedback.

- Students develop outdoor skills and confidence through scaffolded challenges and opportunities for connection.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

- Students develop advanced writing and public speaking skills through sustained opportunities and a culminating writing project & presentation.

- Students develop tools to independently build authentic self, peer, and adult relationships through mentoring and supported practice.

- Students develop higher level leadership skills through all required program components.

- Students strengthen independent connections to outdoor spaces through continued opportunities and ARC funding to pursue chosen outdoor activities.

PROGRAM PROGRESSION *trail map*

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Our Community Leaders Program offers ongoing opportunities for graduates of our Immersive Summer Course to advance their development in all four pillar areas. Students who complete five specific components receive a \$1,000 scholarship upon high school graduation.

IMMERSIVE COURSE

Our Immersive Summer Course offers one month in an outdoor classroom for students to engage in progressive challenges and a writing process that fosters reflection and social and emotional learning.

STEPPING STONE COURSE

Our Stepping Stone Summer Course offers a week and a half for students to connect to the outdoors and build confidence through challenges and a scaffolded writing process that deepens awareness of their individual values.

OUTDOOR TRIPS

Our Outdoor Trips provide entry-level opportunities for students to engage in after-school, one-day, and multi-day outdoor experiences with their peers.

RISING COMMUNITY LEADERS

Our Rising Community Leaders Program provides a 5-month, scaffolded, cohort-based opportunity for students in school or after school to engage in team building, identity exploration, and a writing process that helps them start to articulate who they are.

LUNCH CLUBS

Our Lunch Club provides an opportunity for students to connect with peers and staff during the school day and to choose to take on a variety of leadership roles.

This trail map of our program progression shows ARC programs in order of engagement, from most entry-level at the bottom to most committed at the top of the trail. Students can begin their engagement at any level below "Community Leaders."



ARC trips + lunch clubs



91

Student-led Lunch Clubs are the newest ARC program, offering an open door to all interested students.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LUNCH CLUB PARTICIPANTS DURING THE 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR

What is the most valuable thing you learned in the ARC lunch club this year?

"I learned the importance of friendship, and working together with people."

"How important meeting new people is and exploring the world around us."

"To have better conversation skills."



TRUCKEE

NORTH TAHOE

SACRAMENTO

As a result of participating in the ARC Lunch club..



DOS PALOS

FIREBAUGH

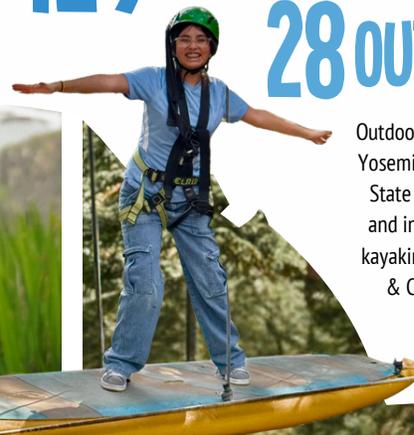
FRESNO



129

TOTAL NUMBER OF OUTDOOR TRIP PARTICIPANTS IN 2024-2025

28 OUTDOOR TRIPS



Outdoor trips included the destinations of Yosemite National Park, Sugar Pine Point State Park, and Point Lobos State Park and included the activities of camping, kayaking, ropes courses, hiking, First Aid & CPR classes, snowboarding, and college tours.



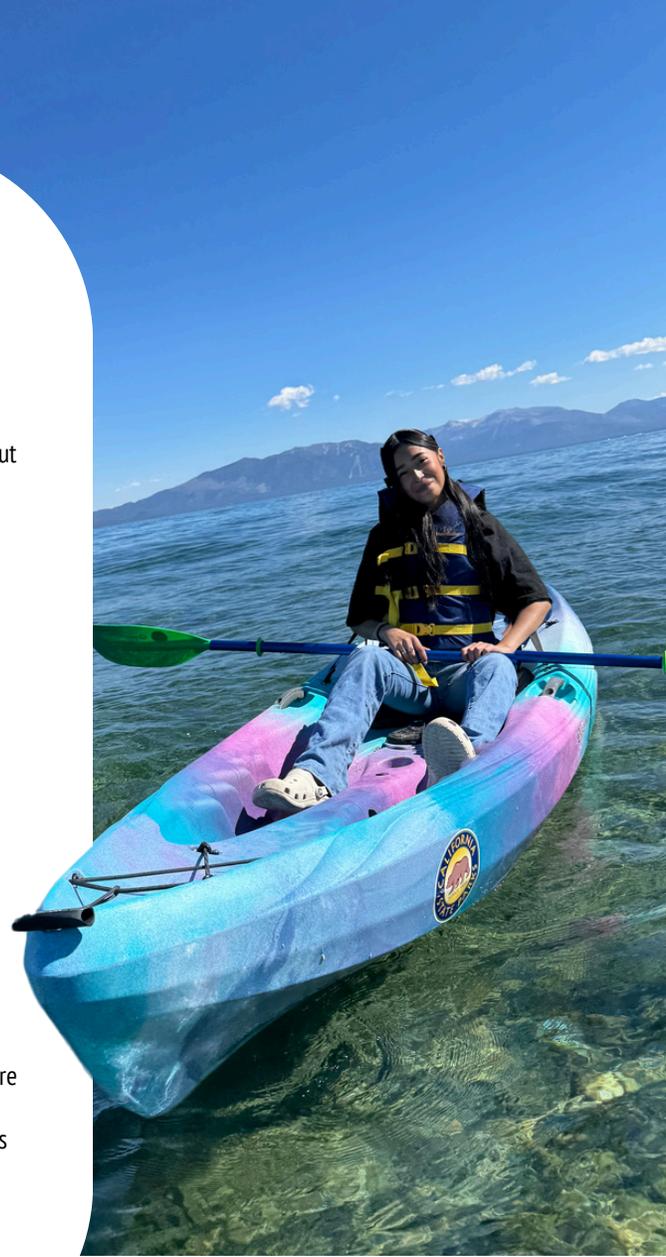
I am Ana,
Indecisive, kind, considerate.
I enjoy conversating, nature, and the sky.
These things make me feel cheerful.
I am the oldest child.
I have one younger brother;
We have a normal sibling relationship
I like walking in nature, traveling, and watching movies, but
my favorite thing is watching movies,
Even though I fall asleep during most of them.

A fear, a fear of public speaking,
A feeling that makes me speechless.
I am afraid of never getting rid of this fear.
I would love to be able to go up in front of classes and
present without having this suffocating feeling,
But sometimes I'm too anxious.
I know I will be able to get rid of this fear by practicing,
But I'm afraid I'll fail.
All these feelings are so tiring.

I come from a Catholic family with Mexican traditions.
We live in Truckee, California.
Everyone in my family celebrates El Dia De Los Muertos,
Even though it's sad to celebrate it.
But none of us cry because we understand our ancestors are
in a better place now.
My mom and dad tried to help me understand a lot of this
by talking to me about it,
But I never understood why.
The only thing I understood was that our ancestors
are finally at peace.

by Ana

*This poem has been condensed from the original
with permission from the author.



The Rising Community Leaders program is designed to help students develop the interpersonal skills and academic tools needed for high school success. RCLs engage in our foundational leadership development curriculum which focuses on identity. The culminating writing project of the program is a bio poem. Through the bio poem project, students effectively articulate their backgrounds, vulnerabilities, and areas of pride in themselves.

RISEING COMMUNITY
Leaders

STEPPING STONE

summer courses

I value family, growth, and freedom.

This manifesto is for when I feel weak and need a reminder of my strength.

I believe I am strong and capable of whatever I set my mind to. My family is my motivation. Every day I remind myself that they are counting on me because they believe in me. I will work hard to reach my goal of holding a well-paying job both for them and for myself. No matter how hard it becomes, I can overcome anything as long as I have them by my side. With them I am strong, with them I am my best. My family works hard to provide for me, and for that I am thankful. One day I will be able to provide to them more than just my love and thanks, and for that I am excited. I may face criticism and neglect from various people in my life because they don't believe in my goals and ambitions. Nevertheless, my family accepts me, loves me, and understands me unconditionally.

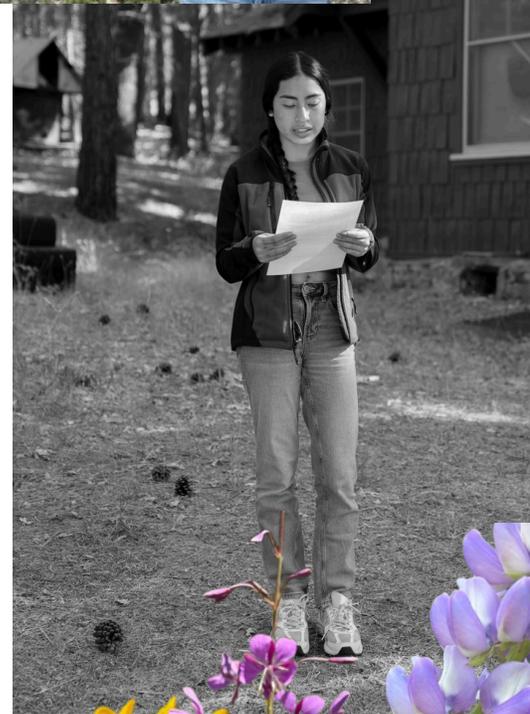
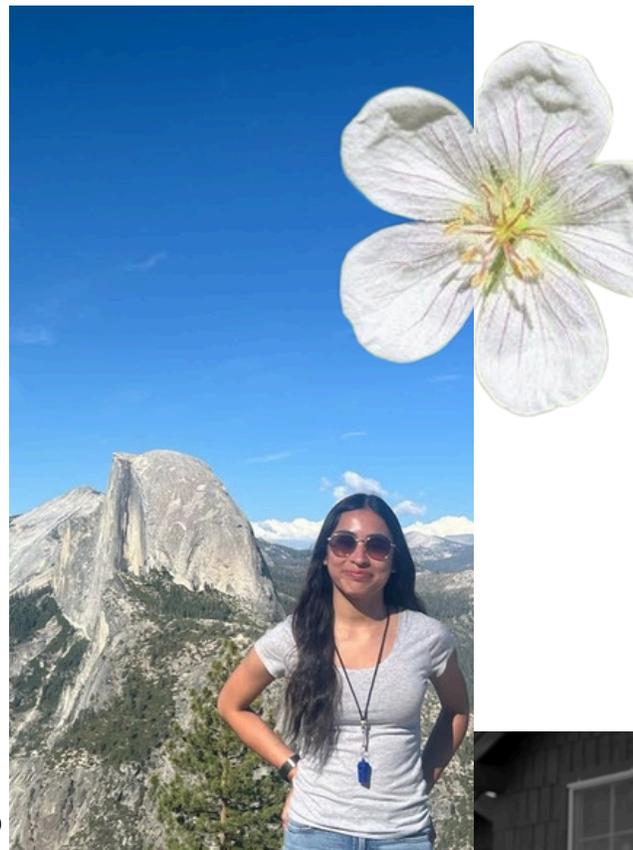
I believe I am strong and capable of whatever I set my mind to. Growth is important to me. I believe that as I grow I become stronger physically and mentally. I realize that growth is self-paced and cannot be measured. Growth for me can look like my 11-day retreat with ARC, which made me face my biggest fears and feel the worst of my emotions. ARC taught me a lot about my emotions and my limits, and for that I congratulate myself. I also know that growth for me can also look like changing the song on a car ride, which is something I usually don't do in fear of disrupting everyone else. For my growth, I choose to challenge myself constantly with both small and large steps out of my comfort zone. I will not compare my growth to others, I will focus my attention on my own growth. With growth may come instances of doubt, and that I accept. Instead of hiding, I will embrace my feelings and persevere along with them. I am in no rush. I will allow myself time and space to grow.

I believe I am strong and capable of whatever I set my mind to. To me having freedom is the key to living life to the fullest. I know my limits and my capabilities. Most importantly, I know my mind and body better than anyone else. I can and will make my own choices and accept the consequences that follow. I will learn from consequences and make smarter choices. I will not allow myself to feel trapped in a space where I can't make my own choices. Instead, I will seek an environment where I feel free. I will slowly work toward depending solely on my decisions as I grow wiser. Once again I say, as consequences arise, I will embrace and learn from them.

I value family, growth, and freedom. My bond with my family will inspire me to try my best every day and stay strong because both they and I deserve the best version of me. I know my family cares about me and will accept my flaws, and any mistakes I make, with love. I will prioritize my growth because I find it important to evolve and learn as much as possible. I will challenge myself and embrace my feelings in order to grow. I will seek freedom because I feel my best when I am able to make my own choices. I will accept the consequences that come along with my choices and make the best of it. I will have my values present and remember that I am strong and capable of whatever I set my mind to.

by Linda

THE STEPPING STONE SUMMER COURSE is an introductory-level course, perfect for younger students or those with other summer commitments. We facilitated two Stepping Stone Courses in 2025, open to students from any region. Throughout the 11 days of experiences, students explored their values while backpacking and building new relationships. The culminating writing project was a personal manifesto to help guide them upon returning home.



THE LONESOME FAWN

I was a baby fawn lost in the burnt empty forest
Separated from its herd
Feeling abandoned
With my kind eyes reflecting the broken trees surrounding me

I ran from danger on my own
Finding herds, but then running from them
Because I caused lots of damage
Rubbing my antlers on trees and bushes
Trying to clean them as they developed but
Instead stripping the bark off all the trees

I had lots of grief from losing my family
And the people, the trees, that I hurt
I was full of anger, with the wrong household
I felt alone and misunderstood
I had nobody to help me, nor did I want help

I didn't want my antlers to grow
I didn't want to lose the protective velvet on them
I loved it
My aggressive tendencies
I was cold and heartless to those around me
Damaging them emotionally and even physically
The broken trees in the forest taught me to break and burn the people around me
I regret not scraping the velvet off and not letting others help me do it

I'm still grieving till this day
I still miss my first herd
I miss my siblings and mom and dad
I wish we were still together
Playing soccer on the street
Running through the forest laughing

I miss all the herds I discovered through my journey
The bad ones and the good ones
Along the way I found one with a little baby fawn
He never liked wiping his butt
We were best friends, he would even call me mom sometimes

As a deer stops and stares at people
I as well stop and stare among others
Admiring their families
Wishing I could be connected to them
Then, as a deer runs, so do I

I run in fear
Fear of love
Because all I know is chaos
But I'm learning to develop my own strength

I'm shedding my velvet protection
and letting my antlers shine through
Becoming more vulnerable and gentle

As I continue to run through the dead forest
I will see more green appear in the trees
There will be more light
And the light will be bright

by Emily

*This poem has been condensed from the original
with permission from the author.



THE IMMERSIVE SUMMER COURSE is our signature course. It is designed to provide an opportunity for students to deeply engage in all four of our pillars: literacy, community, leadership, and the outdoors.

We facilitated one Immersive Course during the summer of 2025.

For 34 days, students engaged with our writing curriculum, practiced leadership and followership, built deep and genuine relationships, and learned how to live in connection to nature.

Two of the major writing projects were the metaphor poem, in which students compared themselves to something in nature, and the reflection essay, which gave students the opportunity to consider the personal impact of their summer experience.

METAPHOR POEM

IMMERSIVE summer course

THE FUTURE IS NOT THE PAST

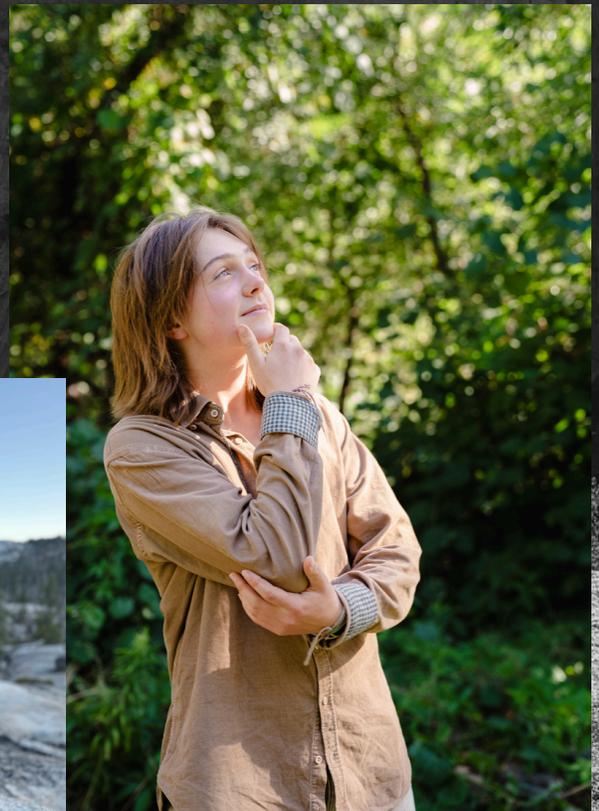
I hated backpacking. I hated telling people I was trans. I hated being physical. I hated being in pain, which is what all these things usually led to. I had been on horrible backpacking trips, and left behind by my peers. Then after finally making it, I would realize no one was waiting for me because I was the weird trans kid. But time had passed. I no longer faced the physical boundaries keeping me from exercising. I no longer held the appearance of someone “openly” trans. I no longer needed to be afraid of backpacking. That’s what I repeated to myself again and again as I sat through the ARC presentation at my school. As I sat in front of my PC at 11pm submitting my ARC application form. As I walked up to the orientation pick-up spot. But as I went through orientation, as I went through the entire immersive course, I realized I no longer needed to tell myself that, because I myself believed it. This entire ARC experience made me realize it; my past experiences do not dictate my future ones.

I walked towards the ARC orientation pick up spot with one goal in mind: to prove to myself I was different, and I could do things now that I couldn’t have done before. I expected to go in alone, and exit alone. This was a solo journey for myself. Until the second day, as I started to appreciate the people around me. I hiked along the trail with people, and wasn’t left behind. I talked about art with another passionate artist, and zoomed up the trail. I had a cook off between someone I had been wanting to talk with the entire day, but never reached out. And I laughed. I laughed, hiked, and just genuinely enjoyed myself. Backpacking didn’t have to be such an isolating experience, it didn’t have to be my solo journey. Driving back, I realized I was actually excited for the immersive course. My past experiences with people ostracizing me wasn’t permanent. My future was whatever I wanted to make it, now I just had to commit, and go for the immersive course.

The orientation trip had gone so well, but I still felt nervous about the physical aspect of backpacking. Even though after orientation I had ran and walked miles every day in preparation, the memories of pain and soreness still sat cold in my stomach. As we set foot on the first trail on the first day, I felt like my legs would give out. I had volunteered as point in a moment of braveness, yet every single step I had shooting pain up my legs. I only put my backpack on wrong, but I thought this was an omen that would dictate this entire month. I still couldn’t do it, I would have to go to the back and be left behind again, watching as everyone else disappeared from view. But then the feeling went away. My legs got used to the weight, I readjusted my backpack, and I trekked on. And I continued to trek on. I trekked past my sudden sickness through the entire first expedition, and made it back to basecamp strong. Then I trekked the second; the 7.6 miles uphill, the long days in the beating sun, and made the most of it. I swam at 5am in a crystal river, and then in a clear lake. I slept next to people and heard their stories under the milky way. I looked around at the people beside me and realized the plunging, the talking, the beauty, made me feel alive. After being trapped inside for so long, the shock of the cold water and the sting of empathy made me start to really appreciate the outdoors. I realized I was ready to embrace physical activity; I was ready to embrace backpacking. It didn’t have to be a death march; each step could be its own memory. I loved it. I put my past bad experiences and pain behind me, and stepped on each and every day. I ended that second expedition with nothing but appreciation for backpacking... and a few blisters.

*This essay has been condensed from the original with permission from the author.

by Neve



REFLECTION ESSAY

THE BUILDING OF A POSITIVE MINDSET

On July 19th, 2024, we started our climb in Tuolumne Meadows and started hiking on our way towards Ireland Lake in preparation to climb Vogelsang Peak. Unfortunately, things took a turn and as the gray clouds slowly crept on us, we decided we had to look for a campsite, fast. We quickly found a spot and began to set up camp. It sprinkled for a bit and then it stopped, we thought we were in the clear and laid back. Then out of nowhere it started hailing and before we knew it, ice the size of pebbles was raining down on us and barely gave us a chance to put our rainproof gear on. We were wet, cold, and tired from the hike. As soon as we finished setting up the tarps, it stopped and the sun came out. The me from 2 months before would've been so mad and annoyed, he would've started complaining, but at that moment I didn't feel like doing it. It was strange, but it felt nice being able to move past a problem and even joke about it around a warm fire and dinner.

I didn't realize it then, but looking back now, I know why I reacted the way I did to that situation. It was because I had developed a positive mindset, and it was all thanks to ARC. I wasn't like this before, I used to lose my patience and temper a lot, I was often negative and it would show. The stress of life had been getting to me and it felt like my wall of optimism, which was blocking out negativity, was starting to break down and I needed positive experiences to use as bricks to build it back up. I had so many positive experiences when I started my adventure with ARC on June 24th. From the day I arrived, the environment was nothing but positive and relaxing, the instructors were always so joyful, and the atmosphere was so quiet. You could smell the pines and soil in the air, and you could see the sunlight shine through the crevices in the treeline. It was a great place to get away from all the stress and I could literally feel worries and negativity lift off my shoulders. I tried to stay in a positive mindset, but sometimes challenges would arise and I'd have to put this tool I'd learned into use. One of those times was when we went rafting at ETC.

CL FINAL SPEECH

Despite it being really fun, we were all in a bad mood afterwards. Even though I had a blast, I was feeling down too because my mood often reflected what I was surrounded by. Then I realized that their mood shouldn't affect mine, and I was able to snap out of it. Once I was feeling better, I talked with Alonso about a way to lift up everyone's spirits, and we did it by playing games and laughing.

I carried what I learned at ARC about staying positive into my life presently. I tend to stay more calm and collected than before, and I'm better able to prevent myself from getting in a bad mood and more able to pull myself out of a bad mood when I am in one. I must admit though, as the months pass, I yearn for another retreat into the wilderness. Sometimes I just want a break from my duties and enter the wilderness to take time and rebuild my wall in order to keep negativity out. Because of the positive mindset I adopted, I manage to stay away from problems in life. I don't procrastinate as much as I used to, and I've been completing my work on time most of the school year. I also avoid arguments over little things and I think that's the most important out of everything.

I'm reaching the age where I will become an adult. School is coming to an end soon and I'll have to start planning for my future. Instead of thinking of it as something scary like I used to, with the help of my positive mindset, I've come to think of it as a step towards new exciting opportunities. I'll be able to drive, go to college, and I won't need my parents permission as much. But that itself is also kind of scary, it means I'm not a kid anymore. As much as I don't want to stop being a kid, I'm going to have to. I'm going to leave school and maybe some friendships will drift apart. I'll have to take life seriously and start to work. But I don't view it that way anymore, I'm going to let what's bound to happen, happen. And what I can control, I'll make work in my favor, like my mindset. I'm not as scared of the future as I used to be. It's important to view this not as the end of a chapter in my life, but the beginning of many more to come.

by Sergio

COMMUNITY Leaders



The Community Leaders program provides ongoing engagement after completion of an Immersive Summer Course.

The CL program has five components. Students who complete these components receive a \$1,000 scholarship from ARC upon high school graduation.



The prompt for the final speech was:
What tool did you develop through ARC? How are you currently utilizing this tool in your life? How will you put this tool into practice in the future?

5 COMPONENTS

1. Planning and leading an outdoor experience for peers, family, or community members
2. Planning and leading a leadership day for younger students
3. Participating in monthly mentoring with an ARC staff or volunteer
4. Completing a Wilderness First Aid training and CPR certification
5. Writing a final speech and sharing it with a community audience

COMMUNITY LEADERS scholarships



In the five years since the inception of the program, ARC has awarded **37 SCHOLARSHIPS** to graduating Community Leaders to help these exceptionally motivated students fund their future endeavors.



ACADEMIC-YEAR *program* REPORT

2024-2025 RCL AND CL FEEDBACK



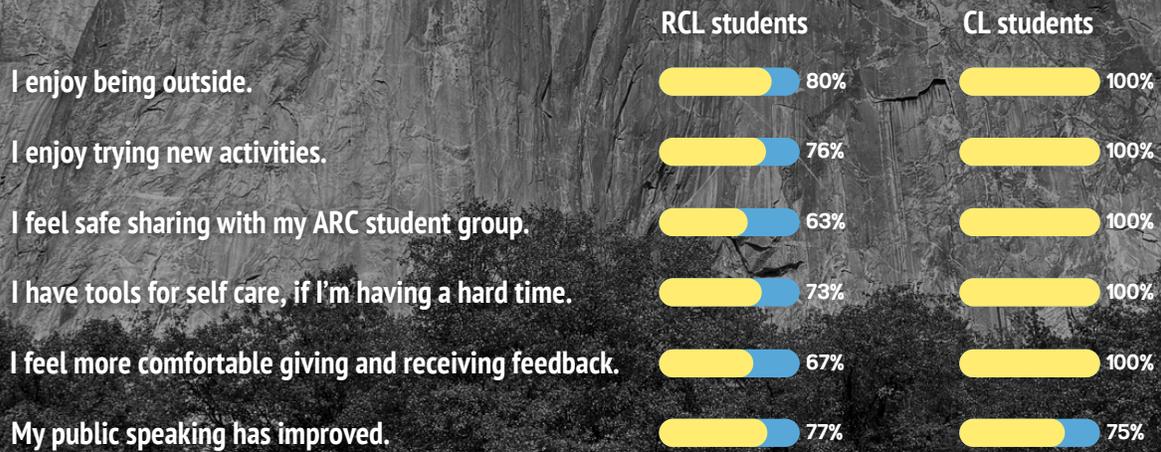
“The most valuable thing I learned with ARC this year was how to write better and how to prepare before speaking publicly.” ~ RCL student



“I feel like I have more appreciation for the outdoors, and ARC has influenced my view by teaching me how to be mature and goofy in a balanced way.” ~ CL student

2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR SURVEY RESULTS

“As a result of participating in ARC...”



*percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement

STEPPING STONE & IMMERSIVE summer courses REPORT

OUR IMMERSIVE COURSE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN:

- A daily English Language Arts curriculum aligned with Common Core, focused on writing authentically and with specificity, reading for understanding, building vocabulary, and speaking publicly;
- An Environmental Science curriculum organized around place-based education standards, introducing students to the natural world and to conservation concepts;
- The writing of a metaphor poem, a formal thank you letter, and a reflection essay;
- A public speaking event of poetry;
- An interview of an adult community member;
- Three backpacking expeditions, including a final youth-led expedition and a solo overnight wilderness experience;
- Rock climbing and whitewater rafting;
- Daily leadership activities integrating an identity and community exploration curriculum with ARC's four core values: service, growth, compassion, and determination.

ON OUR STEPPING STONE COURSES, STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN:

- A values-exploration curriculum with daily journaling exercises designed to build confidence and a secure sense of self;
- An Environmental Science curriculum organized around place-based education standards, introducing students to the natural world and to conservation concepts;
- The writing of a personal manifesto;
- A backpacking expedition;
- Rock climbing and an exploration of Yosemite Valley;
- Daily opportunities to work independently and cooperatively and celebrate their expression of ARC's four core values: service, growth, compassion, and determination.



2025 SUMMER COURSES SURVEY RESULTS

“As a result of participating in ARC...”



*percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement



TAHOE + CENTRAL VALLEY

12,532 TOTAL PROGRAM HOURS

TOTAL STUDENTS **229**

2,460 PARTICIPANT PROGRAM DAYS

2024 - 2025
by the numbers

ACADEMIC-YEAR PROGRAMMING

5,692 PROGRAM HOURS

Our 2024-25 academic-year programming in the Central Valley and Tahoe regions provided a total of 5,692 hours of immersive learning in both classroom and outdoor settings.

213 STUDENTS

Engaged in our academic-year programming.

PARTICIPANT PROGRAM DAYS **2,004**

SUMMER PROGRAMMING

6,840 PROGRAM HOURS

25 STUDENTS

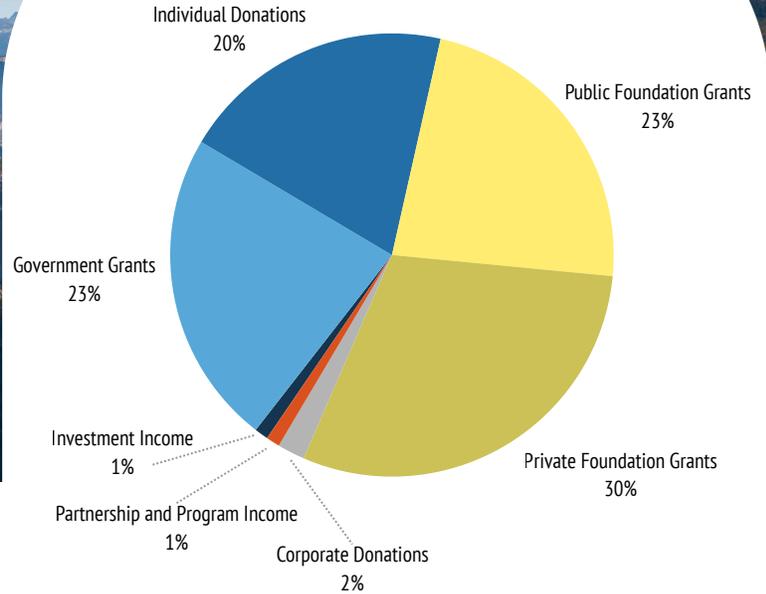
Engaged in our summer programming.

PARTICIPANT PROGRAM DAYS **456**

ORGANIZATIONAL *finances*



REVENUE

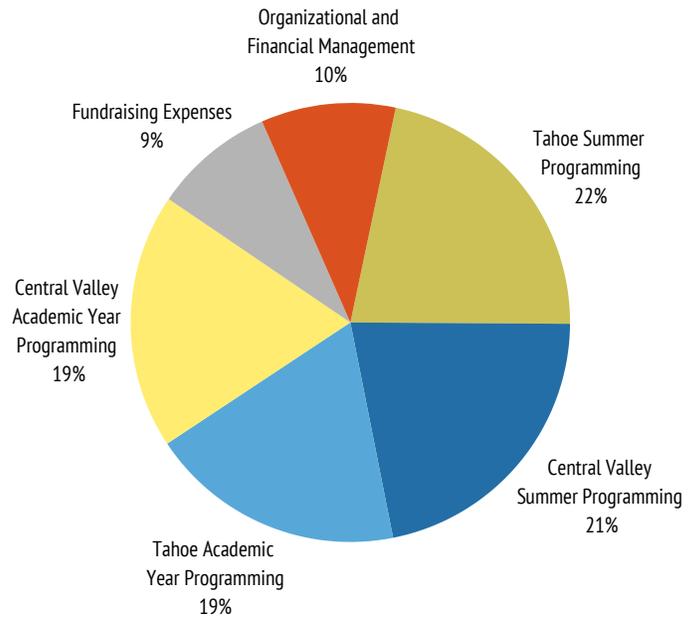


ARC has a 21-year track record of stewarding resources carefully and investing almost every dollar directly into youth programming. Because of the support of hundreds of donors and dozens of grantors, we have been able to gradually expand our programming in order to engage more youth, more deeply over time. Our organizational budget in 2025 is about \$1,350,000, a slight increase from 2024.

98% of our revenue comes from contributed grants and donations. About 80% of our spending goes directly into programming, with personnel/staff costs being our primary investment. After our exceptional staff, we cover the costs of transportation, food, lodging/camping, outdoor gear, curricular supplies, and recreational activities. Indirect expenses include organizational insurance, telecommunications, software, and professional development.

Since ARC became a 501(c)(3), we have maintained an operating reserve that sustains cash flow during the months when our expenses surpass our revenue and that sustains programming during seasons of unpredictable funding. We approach communicating about our finances like everything else - with transparency and intention.

EXPENSES



**ADVENTURE RISK CHALLENGE NEEDS
YOUR SUPPORT MORE THAN EVER.**

Contribute today.





SUPPORT

adventure risk challenge

\$9,000 Sponsors an entire Immersive Summer Course for one student.

\$5,000 Sponsors an entire Stepping Stone Summer Course for one student.

\$2,500 Covers the cost for one Rising Community Leaders cohort to go on a one-day or one-night trip.

\$1,000 Provides a scholarship to a graduating Community Leader.

\$750 Funds an ARC alumnus to build a personal backpacking gear set to continue to explore the outdoors beyond ARC.

\$500 Covers the cost of one rental vehicle for a weekend trip.

\$100 Purchases one discounted pair of hiking shoes.

FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS & STAY CONNECTED WITH US.



@ADVENTURERISKCHALLENGE

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YOSEMITE CONSERVANCY



SUMMER SEARCH



Adventure Risk Challenge would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their generous support and collaboration: Tahoe Truckee Unified School District, Dos Palos High School, Firebaugh High School, Yosemite-Wawona Elementary Charter School, and our dedicated volunteers - including writing coaches, mentors, community interview day participants, the ARC Advisory Council, and the ARC Board of Directors. Without all of you, this extraordinary program would not be possible!

ARC's programs are funded entirely by contributions, which come from individual donations and grants from family foundations, private foundations, public foundations, and government agencies, including the Outdoor Equity Grants Program, created through AB 209 and administered by California State Parks, Office of Grants and Local Services.