adventure risk challenge



year in review 2026

Dear ARC Community,

Founded in 2004, ARC began with a powerful idea: the outdoors can be an incredible classroom for self-discovery, confidence building, and literacy development. Twenty-three years in, that founding idea still shapes everything we do.

We work in Tahoe and the Central Valley year-round. Both regions are home to communities with high costs of living, significant English Learner populations, and Title I schools where students often lack access to extracurriculars, outdoor experiences, and individualized support. By partnering directly with schools, we reach the young people who stand to benefit most and help close opportunity gaps. And this is more than a one time experience; we stay with our students throughout high school, offering a multi-year program progression with transformative experiences across our four pillars: literacy, leadership, community, and the outdoors.

ARC's programs are needed now more than ever. Young people spend an estimated 7.5 hours a day on screens, nearly 40% of U.S. high schoolers reported persistent sadness or hopelessness, and 67% of youth say they hide their worries from others (2023 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey). Today's youth need trusted adults and supportive spaces to build confidence, connection, and belonging. Group outdoor experiences help by removing digital access, reducing stress, and giving young people the chance to build trust, practice communication, and form supportive relationships.

To make sure every student can participate, we remove every barrier we can. ARC provides academic year programs free of charge, and most students pay $1 per day for summer courses. Thanks to supporters like you, we can continue offering these transformative experiences to students at little to no cost.

This book is our thank you for your partnership, and a look at how far your generosity reaches. We hope that as you read, you'll see the tangible impact of your support.

We also have a new teammate to introduce. In August, Heather David joined us as ARC's new Director of Development, coming from NOLS's national development team. Heather: we're so glad you're here.

With gratitude,



Bree Lindsey, Executive Director
bree@adventureriskchallenge.org



Heather David, Director of Development
heather@adventureriskchallenge.org

Since 2004,

ARC has engaged more than 4,000 high schoolers in California's Central Valley and Tahoe/Truckee regions.



Over the years we've adapted our programming to respond to student needs. Today, we partner with North Tahoe, Truckee, Firebaugh, and Dos Palos High Schools to offer multiple entry points into our programs and to support students throughout their high school journeys in our multi-year progression.

Students connect to ARC throughout the school year in college and career readiness classes, lunch and after school clubs, and weekend and after school outdoor trips. In the summer, they can go deeper with our immersive wilderness courses that are run out of our new basecamp at Rideout Elementary in Tahoe City.

Because there are so many entry points, we reach more students, and we stay with them for years, building literacy and leadership skills all throughout high school.

93% of our summer graduates report feeling more comfortable making new friends, **83%** want to spend more time outdoors, and **83%** felt significant improvement in their literacy skills and confidence as a result of participating in ARC.

In a student's words: *"The most valuable thing I learned this summer is the importance of confidence. I noticed that the times when I had confidence and trust in myself, I was able to enjoy things more or have better memories. For example, in rock climbing, when I first tried it, I had no confidence, but the third time I tried it, I was confident and I enjoyed the experience so much." - Immersive student*

Mission

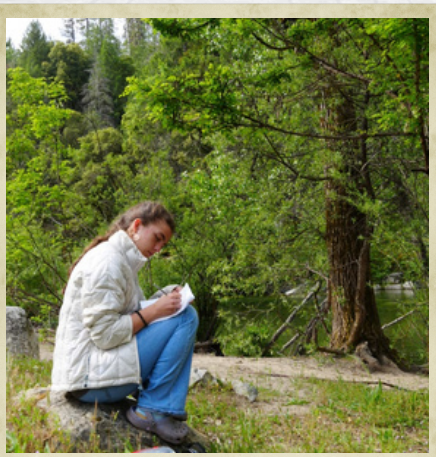
Adventure Risk Challenge's mission is to empower underserved youth through transformational literacy, leadership, and outdoor experiences.

Vision

Our vision is that all youth become stewards of their own future, their communities, and the environment.

Academic Year Programming

Our academic year programs provide both entry-level opportunities for new students as well as advanced leadership, literacy, and outdoor opportunities for our ongoing students. All of our programs are cohort based, designed to support students' community development skills.



Weekend Outdoor Trip in Tahoe



Backpacking Orientation Trip



Weekend Outdoor Trip in Central Valley



Tahoe Community Leadership Graduation

Program Pa

Fall 2025 to Su

Total Students Engaged

268

Total Pro Day

2,23

ARC Integra

Literacy

ARC supports students as they learn to articulate their internal worlds to others through reading, writing, and public speaking practice.

Leadership

Leadership at ARC begins by building self awareness and confidence through new experiences, challenges, and identity and values exploration.



Summer Programming

Our summer programs provide opportunities for students to deeply engage in all four of our pillars: literacy, leadership, community, and outdoors. The Stepping Stone Summer Course is introductory level and our Immersive Summer Course is our signature month-long experience. Both of our summer courses utilize our unique integrated curricula and are designed around the goals of student self-discovery and self-empowerment.

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gram s

38

Total Student Hours

5,375

ted Pillars

Community

ARC students build authentic self, peer, and adult relationships, creating inclusive and supportive spaces where everyone can connect.

Outdoors

ARC students connect to the outdoors while they hike, backpack, rock climb, kayak, swim in alpine lakes, and enjoy the views from the tops of peaks.



Immersive Student



Immersive Students

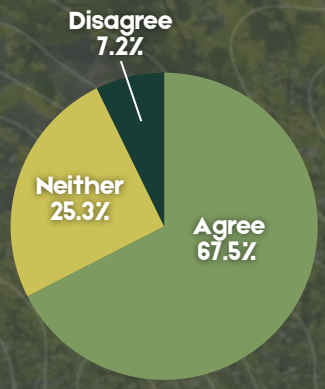


Stepping Stone Student

As a result of participating in ARC, Academic Year students said:

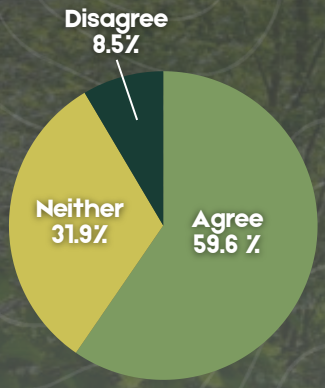
"I learned that writing about myself is a great opportunity for me to connect to who I am and who I want to be."

-Academic Year Student



Lite

My writing h

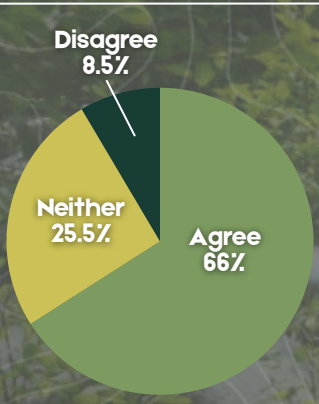


Leade

I feel more comfortable advocating for my needs.

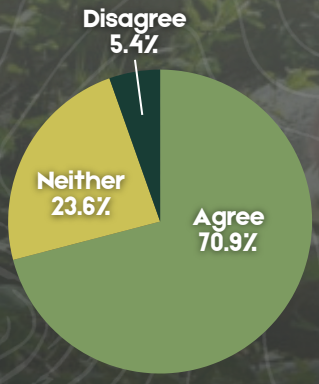
"I found that I really enjoy the outdoors. I hope in my future that I can work in conservation to further help in protecting nature."

-Academic Year Student



Comm

I feel more comfortable being myself around my peers.



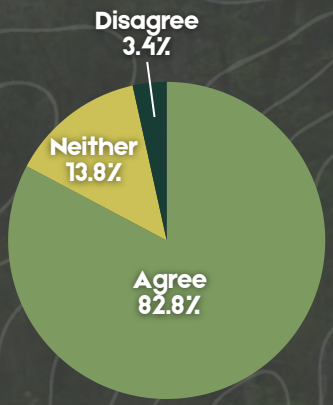
Outc

I want to spend m

As a result of participating in ARC, Summer Students said:

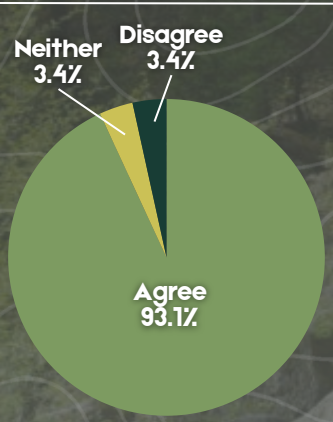
racy

as improved.



ership

I learned skills that will help me be a better leader.

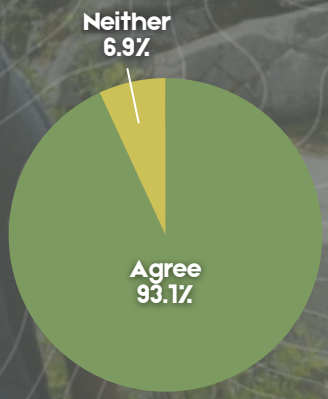


"The most valuable thing I learned this summer was confidence in speaking in public, or writing things for events like Voices of Youth."

-Summer Student

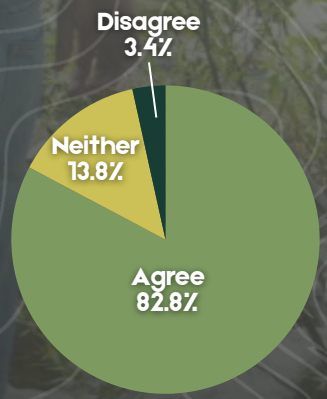
nunity

I feel more comfortable making new friends.



loors

more time outdoors.



"One of the most valuable things that I have learned is that I can be open to create bonds with new people even if they are very different than me."

-Summer Student



"Through ARC I learned to build loving relationships and to be surrounded by motivated individuals who work as a team to create life lasting memories."

Throughout my teenage years,

I have always doubted myself and questioned my reality. I hated everything about school. I hated having to think about the future. I hated people for having expectations of me. I hated my life. I took my life for granted and didn't care about what happened to me. Something needed to change in me or else I would become nobody. I needed an opportunity to bring me adventure, a risk, or something that would challenge my beliefs and comfort zone. I needed gratitude for my life. In this depressing time frame, my brother introduced me to a program that offered all three of those desires. It was called ARC, and they were hosting an immersive course in the Tahoe region. The program was 34 days long. I had nothing going for me and I always wanted to see Tahoe, so I signed up. ARC completely changed my perspective on life. Through the ARC experience, I learned how to create and sustain relationships, engage in conversations that make me happy and open minded, appreciate my body and health, and to be happy that I am alive.

The conversations I had on the immersive course made me grateful to be a part of a community where I could express myself without judgement. Within my first week in the backcountry, I started socializing and talking about my life with anyone who bothered asking. Eventually, I found myself joining in on games and meal conversations. Then I started joining social circles at night and sleeping next to others instead of being alone. People would crack jokes and show smiles and I would reciprocate those emotions back.



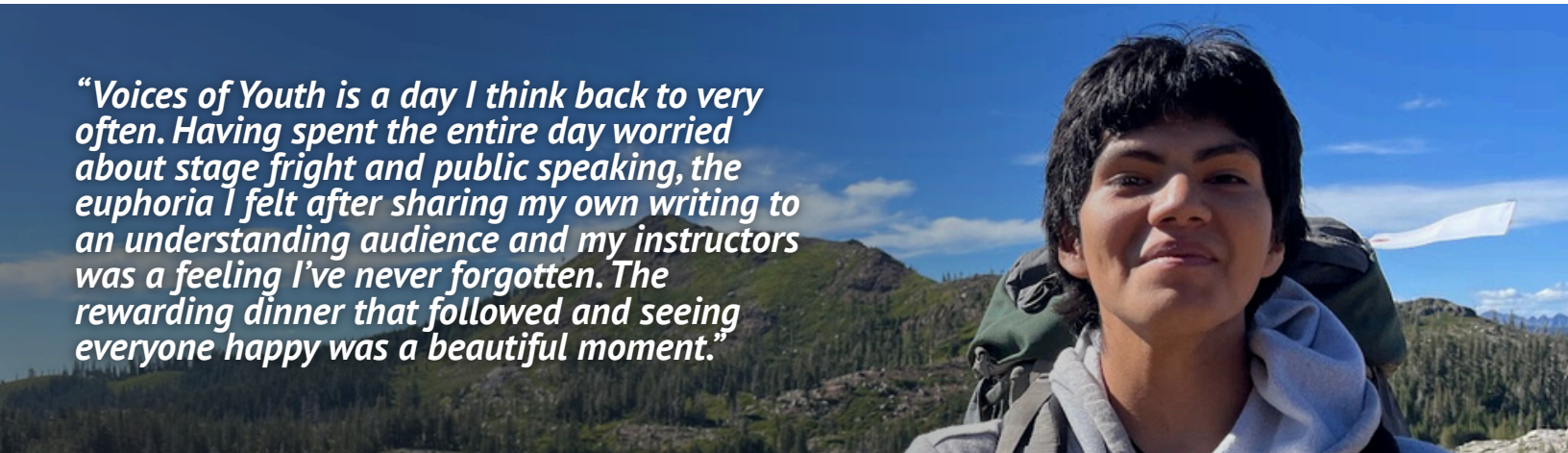
By day five of our course, my mindset had already changed. I felt great knowing I was capable of change and shedding my pessimistic skin. By the end of our first expedition in Tahoe, I had connected with great people and was initiating conversations. I felt comfortable at night, knowing I had people to keep me company rather than just my own thoughts to contemplate. This feeling of euphoria and connection thankfully followed me for the rest of my adventure.



For the first time in a long time, there was a community in my life that I cared about and that genuinely made me happy. When it came to the evening, we had a free space, called community, to share our emotions. One question about appreciation and one question about building ourselves. No judging. It was nothing like I have at home. My school friends don't care to hear me out. My school friends think they can make me laugh by insulting me and others. That's not the environment anyone should live through. I've always wished for real, loving friendships. Friends who I could hear out and they would hear me out with the same respect. My peers and instructors at ARC are likeminded individuals who are aware of their own strengths and limits. They knew exactly how to keep me motivated, and keep me on track. I was never judged, only encouraged. I showed my appreciation for them anytime I could. It hit me early on that the feeling I was experiencing is one I'm not accustomed to - affection.

What does it mean to feel affection? How do I show it back? How do I deal with the realization that the only people who have shown me affection will be gone from my life by the end of the week? I don't have the answer to any of these questions that I've had on my mind for the past seven days. After 34 days however, I think I have partially found some relief. The euphoria I felt is forever engraved in my mind, and I can relive the laughs, the smiles, and the welcoming affection I encountered. I remember the loving attention I received from instructors when my mental health was at a breaking point. I will be grateful for the attention and patience of those that helped me challenge myself to learn to swim. I will remember taking selfies on peaks. Or being raised into the air to take a triumphant photo. I will remember how bright the moon was at night as we sat in circles recounting funny school stories. I will always appreciate the times I was offered or given a layer to keep me warm. I remember the unbearably cold wind in the Tahoe backcountry and me and my friends having to huddle like penguins and throw every layer we had available over each other; the sounds of my teeth chattering from the cold making everyone laugh. I will never forget the laughs that made me gasp for air, or shoot boogers out of my nostrils. Even the simplest of things will live on in my heart; A motivational run, a health check in, getting recognized for sharing my thoughts, sharing a cookie on the beach. Furthermore, what will never leave my life are the hugs I shared from time to time. I am too shy to ask for one, and frankly I feel awkward even doing one. Thankfully, I received hugs out of love from everyone on this course. It was those moments and those individuals that made me happy. It was those moments that for the first time in a long time, I told myself I was grateful to be alive.

-Enrique Ruelas



"Voices of Youth is a day I think back to very often. Having spent the entire day worried about stage fright and public speaking, the euphoria I felt after sharing my own writing to an understanding audience and my instructors was a feeling I've never forgotten. The rewarding dinner that followed and seeing everyone happy was a beautiful moment."



Who here has heard of groupthink?

Groupthink is the atmosphere of a group and how that may affect how they perceive a situation because they are following each other's example. Well, I had a very interesting experience with the concept the two times I participated in an ARC course, both the short course and long course (I was the first to go on both by the way. I am an ARC celebrity.) This UNIQUE position gave me perspective on two different ARC groups. On my short course, I resonated with the group's attitude; fun, excitable, and very happy to be there, which I leaned into.

However, my second group was more down on the whole "ARC" experience. Much more resistant to the challenges. The negative groupthink was pervasive. However, I carried over my jolliness from the first ARC course's groupthink. This perspective, which had worked stunningly in my first group, turned away my second. And things only snowballed from there...

In the first week of the Immersive course, I broke down crying. Now, someone might assume this was because of the physical challenge– which I didn't like, but was not nearly cry-worthy. Or you might think of homesickness. It wasn't that either– although I did miss my mom. No, the thing that made me cry in the first week of ARC was the social stress of being trapped with a bunch of other teenagers in the woods.

Jokes I would have said to my friends did not fly in this larger group. And it required resilience, being able to talk a problem out; I was forced to sit down and engage with people who frightened me. It was one of those lessons that had been taught to me many times, yet never stuck. It's something that, while foreign, helped me more than I can say after the fact.

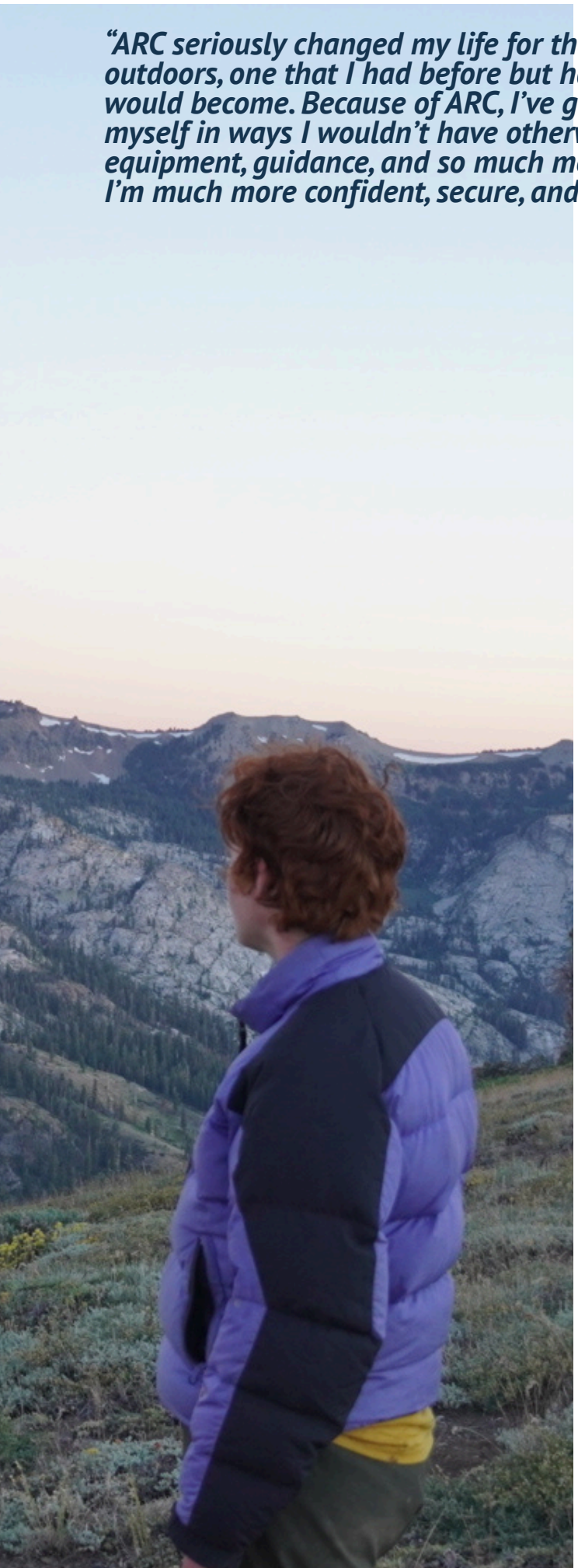
For instance, I have a job at one of the many ski resorts, Alpine Meadows. I first got this job freshman year, far before I ever went on the month-long ARC course. When I started working there I was deeply timid. Too socially awkward to do my job properly. I was often unable to ask for rides from my co-workers. I was PARANOID of being trapped on a chairlift with a 5 year old.

But after going on the ARC course and learning a little bit more about pushing through the tough times, my attitude towards work greatly improved. I could ask for a ride. I could talk to a child on the chairlift. I could engage with my co-workers without feeling like I was pulling teeth. And sure, some of that is attributed to growing up, but the training I got at ARC made me feel like I could take those challenges head on without turning tail and quitting the job.

"I think that the most impactful thing I learned at ARC was self confidence. It really helped me feel more assured with myself to have so many amazing people encouraging me and cheering me on! Its what has given me the courage to continue backpacking and doing outdoor experiences."



"ARC seriously changed my life for the better in that it gave me a passion for the outdoors, one that I had before but had never had space to grow into what it would become. Because of ARC, I've gone on so many amazing trips and pushed myself in ways I wouldn't have otherwise. I've received funding for trips and equipment, guidance, and so much more from the amazing staff. Thanks to them, I'm much more confident, secure, and educated than I would be otherwise!!"





ARC really changed my perspective for the better– I learned that, even though the longer course was hard, I could be resilient. Best of all, I could make friends with people I was initially wary of. After my drama with the other students on the course, I ended up having a really amazing time.

I don't think I would've been able to stick with my job, which I love, without a confidence boost. And I don't think I would've been able to get through the ARC long course without my instructors and patience from my fellow students.

AND SO MY MESSAGE TO YOU.
Always take a chance to grow.
ACCEPT the challenges that come into your life and stick with them.
You never know where they might lead you.

-Clara Burton



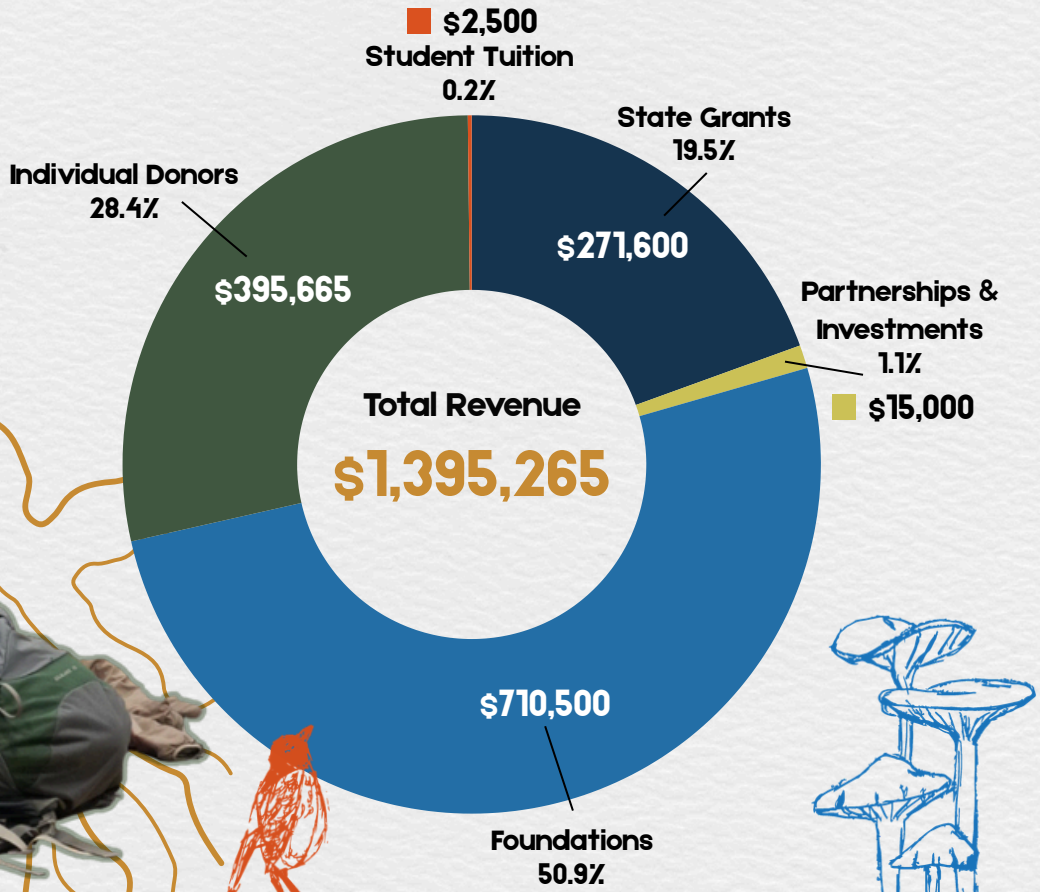


ADVENTURE RISK CHALLENGE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT MORE THAN EVER.

REVENUE

99.8% of our revenue is contributed by our funders, with only 0.2% of our budget coming from student program tuition.





EXPENSES

Program expenses cover direct and indirect costs. We support: clothing, footwear, transportation, food, and equipment for students for all programming. Expenses also include: ongoing replacement of group gear, reservation fees, recruitment of staff and students, staff training and certifications, and a high staff to student ratio for ongoing mentorship, student support, and connection with families.

Academic Year Programming	$636,420	46%
Summer Programming	$502,463	36%
Adminstrative	$246,382	18%

Total Expenses

$1,385,265

82% of our expenses directly support programming.









GIVE MONTHLY.

Monthly gifts give us steady, reliable support so we can plan ahead and show up for students year-round. Even a small monthly gift adds up to lasting change. Sign up using our QR code to visit our donate page.

GIVE BY MAIL.

Checks payable to Adventure Risk Challenge,
PO Box 3208, Truckee, CA 96160

GIVE THROUGH A DONOR ADVISED FUND (DAF).

Checks payable to Adventure Risk Challenge,
PO Box 3208, Truckee, CA 96160
Tax ID: 47-1579462

GIVE APPRECIATED STOCK OR OTHER ASSETS.

Giving appreciated stock held more than a year may let you deduct its full value and avoid capital gains tax, while making a difference.

GIVE FROM YOUR IRA (QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION).

If you're 70½ or older, give directly from your IRA to ARC through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). It can count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and isn't included in your taxable income. Please check with your financial advisor if this is the right option for you, and if so, ask your IRA provider to send the gift directly to ARC using our mailing address and Tax ID: 47-1579462.

GIVE A LEGACY GIFT.

Include ARC in your will, estate plan, or as a beneficiary, leaving a lasting legacy by ensuring that future students can join ARC at no cost for years to come.



QUESTIONS OR TRANSFER INSTRUCTIONS?

CONTACT US:

Bree Lindsey, Executive Director
bree@adventureriskchallenge.org

Heather David, Director of Development
heather@adventureriskchallenge.org

SUPPORT

- **$15,000** Sponsors an entire Immersive Summer Course for one student.
- **$10,000** Covers gear and equipment for the entire summer program.
- **$7,000** Sponsors one academic year weekend outdoor trip.
- **$5,000** Sponsors an entire Stepping Stone Summer Course for one student.
- **$1,000** Provides one scholarship to a graduating Community Leader.
- **$750** Sponsors an academic year weekend outdoor trip for one student.
- **$350** Covers gear and equipment for one summer participant.







FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS & STAY CONNECTED WITH US.

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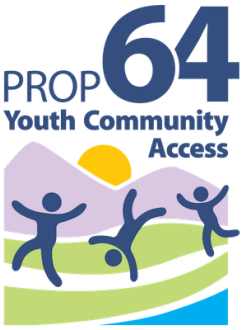


















Thank you to our supporters for making an incredible impact. Adventure Risk Challenge greatly appreciates your generosity, loyal support, and collaboration and the impact that your support has on our programs and students.

Thank you to Truckee High School, North Tahoe High School, Dos Palos High School, Firebaugh High School for your partnership and collaboration throughout the school year. Additionally, thank you to Tahoe Truckee Unified School District for welcoming ARC to our new basecamp at TAHOE Lab and Outdoor School, former Rideout Elementary campus, to co-locate all of our summer programs in the Tahoe basin. Also, thank you to our dedicated volunteers who support as writing coaches, mentors, community interview day participants, ARC Advisory Council members, and ARC Board of Directors members.