Volunteers who generously give their time and skills make the Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program possible. Among the many ways you can get involved:

• Host outdoor experiences with youth and other participants who have limited access to wilderness and the natural world

• Foster collaboration with like-minded organizations and schools to expand opportunities for people to connect to the outdoors

• Conduct outreach to promote trips that excite and actively engage the community

• Work with others to raise funds to sustain the outdoor programming

Volunteers can learn and further develop a wide range of personal and professional skills such as wilderness first aid, outdoor leadership, and youth development.

We always welcome financial support from foundations and individuals.

Tax-deductible contributions to ICO may be made to The Sierra Club Foundation (write ICO in the memo field).

Donations, as well as inquiries, may be sent to:
WHO WE ARE

The Sierra Club’s San Francisco Bay Chapter established the first ICO group in 1971 to introduce people who would not otherwise have the chance to get outside to the transformative power of nature. Five years later, ICO went national, leading the way in recognizing the importance of sharing and facilitating outdoor experiences with communities underrepresented in the outdoors and the environmental movement. Volunteer-run Inspiring Connections Outdoors groups now conduct more than 900 outings for about 15,000 participants nationwide every year.

Through these outings, ICO connects people to nature, to themselves, and to others. As participants discover the beauty of wild lands, ICO also helps the Sierra Club build support for environmental protection and activism in communities across the country.

ICO volunteers collaborate with partners such as social service agencies, community centers, church-affiliated youth groups, and schools to design outdoor experiences that build and foster connections between people and nature. ICO furnishes most of what is needed for an outdoor adventure: skilled leadership, equipment, food, and transportation. Trips encompass a wide range of activities, including hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing, and white water rafting, that can serve as an extension of the classroom and engage the community in local outdoor projects.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“I feel that experience shaped my life because now I am more interested in the wilderness type. I want to preserve it since it is gonna be up to my generation to preserve it in the future.”
- Leo, Chicago ICO participant & aspiring leader

“I love watching [the kids] whenever they experience something for the first time, something that we take for granted. Some kids have never been in a river. It’s mind-blowing to watch. Seeing [nature] through their eyes is the most marvelous way to experience the great outdoors, and I can’t get enough of it.”
- Katie, NYC ICO Volunteer

“ICO has drastically improved our youths’ lives, by providing safe, fun and adventurous activities for them to be a part of. Most of these children have never been out of San Diego, and now they have gone camping to the desert, camped at Sequoia National Park, and played in the snow. Our children’s grades have improved because they want to be included in future trips. ICO has provided nutritious meals for our children, who normally are malnourished…. We feel that the ICO volunteers have been the most valuable resource we have obtained over the years of our program. We are truly grateful.”
- Katie Price, staff, Alpha Omega Creative Arts Project, (San Diego ICO partner)

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