



Inner City Outings

Providing outdoor opportunities for urban youth and adults



Students from Thurgood Marshall High School enjoy the outdoors—on the White House lawn! *Photo courtesy of Jackie Ostfeld.*

Group Highlights

ICO at the White House

Outdoor Alliance for Kids (OAK)—a coalition of environmental, youth, and outdoor organizations founded by the Sierra Club—is working with First Lady Michelle Obama on her “Let’s Move Outside” initiative. In June, OAK coordinated an event on the White House lawn to promote the fun and healthy aspects of being active outdoors. Students from Thurgood Marshall High School in Washington, D.C., participated in a series of nature-based physical activity stations to learn about rock climbing, camping, fly fishing, and kayaking. **Baltimore ICO’s** Nicole Veltre took the lead at the kayak demonstration station, teaching students proper paddling and kayak-carrying techniques and how to pack healthy snacks for a boat trip.

Hikers Safely Scale Breakneck Ridge

In May, **New York ICO** led a group from Kingsbridge International High School, where most students speak English as a second language, on a hike in Hudson Highlands State Park. Together they ascended Breakneck Ridge, which overlooks the Hudson River. Taking time out from strenuous and steep climbs over rocky ledges, the group stopped at level spaces offering wondrous Hudson River vistas. Scott Reynhout, a volunteer and geologist, explained that the jagged cliffs were not the result of glaciers or other natural erosion, but the work of people dynamiting to extract ore.

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Above: Dallas ICO's outing in Cedar Ridge Preserve, 20 minutes from downtown Dallas. The first-graders came from Jubilee Center, an after-school program in a low-income South Dallas neighborhood. The kids identified insects and then splashed and played in the stream at the end of the trail. *Photos courtesy of Liz Wheelan.*

A Note From Debra

Dear Friends,

We continue to define and refine the place of Inner City Outings within Sierra Club's Conservation Department. Under the direction of Martin LeBlanc, "Mission Outdoors" will encompass Inner City Outings, Local Outings, Building Bridges to the Outdoors, and Military Families Outdoors—serving as a grassroots effort to link environmental protection and conservation goals with outdoor enjoyment. These changes epitomize what ICO seeks to do: get kids not only to enjoy and explore our planet, but also to learn to protect it.

As part of Mission Outdoors, ICO will expand its ability to collaborate with other Sierra Club programs for funding, marketing, and joint projects to get kids outdoors and develop youth leaders for the Sierra Club. In late July, the Mission Outdoors staff will meet to define and discuss:

- our action plan based on survey results from volunteers and staff;
- how we will collaborate using the strengths and resources of each Mission Outdoors program;
- how we will work toward our common goal of getting youth and families outdoors and involved in environmental conservation. We will also continue to work with advancement staff to raise awareness and funding for local ICO groups and the national program.

We have had some great success (and surprises) in fundraising news. **San Francisco Bay ICO** received an unsolicited foundation donation of \$10,000, and it also benefited from a 13-year-old's birthday donations of \$500—she heard about ICO and wanted to help kids experience the outdoors too! **Boston ICO** enjoyed a \$10,000 surprise from a new volunteer's parent. Other awards include \$13,300 total to **Baltimore ICO** from three small foundations, and \$7,000 from our Earth Day campaign with Groupon, which also provided us national exposure on Groupon's popular website.

My best to you, in hopes that you are healthy and enjoying the lovely days of our wonderful summer.

Warm Regards,

Debra Asher
ICO National Administrator
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During their descent, the kids found green toads and yellow box turtles and watched as streams became rivers and waterfalls. At the end of this marvelous day, volunteer Peter Pizzutiello remarked, “Many thanks for the best ICO hike in my 5-year career. Now I love New York even more!”

Exploring Bear Island

Triangle ICO (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill) spent a wonderful May weekend with youth from Heritage Park Learning Center exploring and camping on Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park in Swansboro, North Carolina. After spotting egrets on the ferry ride to the island, the group set up camp in the dunes and spent the rest of the day swimming, floating, exploring the shoreline, and watching the pelicans—they even saw dolphins! Another special moment occurred during their night hike, as campers watched ghost crabs scurrying into the ocean in the dark.

Rookie Rafters

San Francisco Bay ICO spent a day on the beautiful Cache Creek with 14 middle school girls from the YMCA’s Earth Service Corps, a group that also helps provide opportunities for environmental education and action. The kids enjoyed the thrill of rafting for the first time, and they also tried their skills at fishing, using equipment donated by Zebco through the Sierra Club’s Water Sentinels program.



Clockwise, from top: San Francisco Bay ICO rafters express their excitement on their Cache Creek float trip; Triangle ICO relaxing on Bear Island; New York ICO taking a break from hiking up high at Hudson Highlands State Park. *Photos courtesy of Lisa Katzman, Megan Rua, and Scott Reynhout.*

ICO AT A GLANCE

Started in 1971 by the Sierra Club’s San Francisco Bay chapter, ICO promotes appreciation and protection of the natural environment through wilderness adventures and environmental education.

Today, 50 groups nationwide serve more than 11,000 young people on approximately 845 outings and service trips each year. Participants include low-income inner city youth and adults, as well as the physically challenged; people who would not otherwise have access to safe, enjoyable outdoor experiences.

Three part-time staff and approximately 400 volunteers run the program.

ICO LOCAL GROUPS

Alabama:

Birmingham

Arizona:

Phoenix, Tucson

California:

Eastern Sierra, Los Angeles, Orange County, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Francisco Rafting, San Jose

Colorado:

Boulder, Denver

Connecticut:

Hartford, New Haven

DC:

Washington

Florida:

Gainesville, Jacksonville, Manatee-Sarasota, Miami, Orlando, Tampa Bay, West Palm Beach

Georgia:

Atlanta

Illinois:

Chicago

Kentucky:

Lexington, Louisville

Maryland:

Baltimore

Massachusetts:

Boston

Michigan:

Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti (Washentaw), Grand Rapids

Minnesota:

Minneapolis/St. Paul

Missouri:

St. Louis

New Jersey:

North Central

New York:

New York City

Nevada:

Las Vegas

North Carolina:

Triangle - Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill

Ohio:

Cincinnati, Cleveland

Oregon:

Portland

Pennsylvania:

Harrisburg, Philadelphia

Tennessee:

Nashville

Texas:

Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston

Washington:

Seattle, Spokane

Wisconsin:

Madison



Update: Special Trips

This year we announced the creation of special ICO outings—trips that are longer, more challenging, or more educational. We now happily report our first special outing has been completed by **Tampa Bay ICO**: a two-day camping trip to Ichnetucknee Springs State Park with youth from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Brandon and Windemere. Most of the participants had never been to the beach, even though they live in Tampa.

After swimming, playing, and snorkeling in a spring, the group hiked through the pine scrub and learned about the formation, abundance, and role in the ecosystem of central Florida's fresh water springs. The kids also learned how to put up a tent for the first time. The second day of the trip included a four-hour float in tubes down the pristine waters of the Ichnetucknee River, observing wildlife, cypress trees, and eel grass. When the trip finally ended, one youth asked, "When can we go again?"



Photos courtesy of Nicole Loisel.

New ICO Group!

We are excited about the formation of a new ICO group in Las Vegas: Southern Nevada Sierra Club volunteer Eric King has rallied a group of enthusiastic volunteers to establish the first ICO group ever in Nevada! Eric and others are working with local school officials to develop a regular schedule of outings in the fall, and they may also run a few pilot outings in after-school summer programs. We are hoping to establish a date to provide ICO Outdoor Leader Training 101 and 201 as well as strategic planning support. Eric has made strides in promoting ICO locally, including pitching to REI and the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association, both of which could become supportive future partners.

"It's thrilling to take kids out to the river for the first time, to see the wonder in their eyes, to watch them go from fear to exuberance and thoughtful appreciation of the river."

Bill Weinberg, ICO volunteer river guide for over 20 years

Project Life Raft

San Francisco ICO has launched "Project Life Raft" in conjunction with Sierra Club's San Francisco Bay Chapter's Water Committee. Chapter volunteer Sonia Diermayer trained a select group of ICO river guides to incorporate river history and current politics, as well as water education and conservation, into rafting trips for youth participants. ICO leaders then developed an environmental education curriculum for rafting participants based on the Water Committee's input. The group sees this as a multi-year project to make the curriculum an integral part of guide trainings and rafting outings. So far, feedback has been positive from guides who have used the tools and materials on their trips.

Check out ICO online at www.sierraclub.org/ico. Learn more about our programs, watch exciting trip videos, read previous newsletters, become a volunteer, or show your support!