



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Inner City Outings

Spring 2010



Eastern Sierra ICO first-time snowshoers pause for the views and a well-deserved hydration break.

New ICO Group & Trip Highlights

Gainesville, Florida is our most recent addition to the national ICO family: welcome! Maryvonne Devensky spent a good six months cultivating interest from the community before launching her ICO program. She now has three outings under her belt—two with Lake Forest Elementary School classes and one with Cultural Arts Coalition that provides African American teens community empowerment opportunities through their Environmental Ambassadors and Girl Power programs.

They plan to stick to day hikes the first year, taking advantage of the many parks in the Gainesville area. Their third outing in February, to Prairie Creek Preserve, was part of Florida Forever’s “Take a Hike, Florida!” program and received publicity in the University of Florida’s *The Independent Florida Alligator*. They have a solid group of volunteers working toward leadership roles and plan to include camping and kayaking trips next year.

Meanwhile, the **Eastern Sierra ICO** group continues to engage children from Bridgeport Elementary School in the beauties of their Sierra backyard. Youth from the fifth grade class experienced their first cross-country ski adventure in January, and the local Girl Scout troop learned how to snowshoe for the first time in February—the first of many exciting outdoor adventures!

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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Spring has sprung and we've completed the first quarter of 2010! I do hope this finds you well. ICO volunteers and staff keep active training new leaders, fundraising, setting program goals, planning outings, and most importantly, getting kids outdoors and active in nature.

During the first three months of 2010, which have seen very cold temperatures nationwide, we've heard about lots of ICO youth snowshoeing, skiing, sledding, and ice skating. With the advent of spring, ICO volunteers begin planning for mountain bicycling, canoeing, camping, backpacking, and hiking adventures for the upcoming months.

Financial uncertainty continues, but we are happy to report some positive funding news for ICO groups.:

- **St. Louis** and **San Jose** were awarded the **Mountain Hardware "Gives Back Program"** grants of \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively.
- **Washtenaw ICO** received a total of \$4,000 from two local Michigan foundations, **Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan** and the **J.A. and Faith Knight Foundation**.
- **Chicago ICO** received \$5,000 in renewed funding from the **Youth Outdoor Legacy Fund**.
- **Miami ICO** just was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the **Dade Community Foundation**.



On the national funding front, we received news that **Pam and Pierre Omidyar** will grant us \$50,000 for one more year beyond their three year commitment—a very pleasant surprise! And we again received \$10,000 from the **Wiancko Family Foundation**, one of our long standing supporters.

I continue to work with Sierra Club Advancement staff to find national foundations and individuals to support the basic operating and administrative expenses to keep the program going.

As always, thank you for supporting what the ICO volunteers bring to youth in their communities and for recognizing the program's greater importance to the future of this planet.

My best to you,

Debra Asher
ICO National Administrator
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Trip Highlights, *continued from page 1*

Sacramento ICO leaders accompanied 11 boys and girls from St. John's Shelter to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, where they heard stories from the naturalist about the Maidu, the local Native American tribe. They then took a hike, observing wildlife and birds through binoculars borrowed from the Audubon Society.



In the snowy Midwest, **Washtenaw ICO** kids from two public housing community centers in Ann Arbor—Hikone and Green Baxter—experienced ice skating at Buhr Park outdoor arena and maple tree tapping for syrup at Pickney Recreation Area.

And in sunny **Tampa Bay, Florida ICO** Academy Preparatory School teens canoed on the Little Manatee River in Hillsborough River State Park.

ICO Organizer in Action

Evaluating outcomes, improving programs

Myla Marks, our ICO Organizer, used the winter months to follow up with those who participated in her Action Plan Workshops last year, collecting data to better evaluate the outcomes of her work in the field. She is assessing the areas of fundraising, recruitment, retention, infrastructure, and growth in the number of youth served among participating ICO groups at the time of their workshops, and the groups' progress on the action plan six months later, one year after, and ultimately in two years.

By examining this data over time, Myla can evaluate the benefits of the workshops as well as what changes need to occur to best meet the volunteers' needs. At the end of March, we met with the ICO National Steering Committee (NSC) and Myla conducted a "mini-Action Plan Workshop" teaching the NSC representatives how to conduct one on their own.

ICO AT A GLANCE

Begun 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

North Carolina:
Asheville, 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



ICO Outings Chair Training

We've just completed our fifth Outings Chair Training event at the Marin Headlands Institute. It was a truly inspiring weekend!

Thirteen new ICO chairs and potential chairs, from ten different ICO groups, joined up with eight Sierra Club local outings chairs to share ideas on what makes a successful outings program: a cadre of well trained, qualified and engaged leaders; a diversity of outings for a diversity of constituencies; a set of written guidelines to plan and execute outings; a funding plan; a mechanism to use feedback to make changes in the program; and publicity to support and grow the program.

Each year we strive to improve the workshops and give participants something tangible to take back and implement within his/her group. The session topics flowed from envisioning your "practically perfect program" to volunteer recruitment, retention, and engagement, then moving from outings leadership to group management, to using publicity, developing grassroots fundraising activities, and guidelines to lay the infrastructure for the next chair. Each participant left the weekend with tasks to bring back to their groups and implement within their programs.

"I'm very excited about my new role as ICO chair; I have a lot to learn and do, but it will be an exciting and worthwhile challenge!"

*— Dawn Landon
Orlando ICO Chair*

We are pleased that six ICO attendees are new chairs and seven are assisting their current chair with plans to step into the role in the coming year. It was great to hear and feel the excitement and energy during and outside of the workshops. Participants shared best practices and challenges, collecting ideas to take home to others. It is always so beneficial for me to meet with volunteers face-to-face. We get to know the people behind the e-mails, and they understand the support that staff can provide.

ICO Communications

A major goal this year is to raise the visibility of ICO. Thanks to our Web Team, we've taken one step in this direction. Our public ICO website has a new look! Check it out at:

sierraclub.org/ico



One notable addition is the "Donate Now" pages, which enable people to donate online directly to ICO through The Sierra Club Foundation. Staff is working with local ICO groups who have active websites to create the donation pages and link them to their local sites.

With an online presence that is more engaging and easier to navigate, we'll be better equipped to tell our story to potential donors, volunteers, and participating agencies.

Our next goal is to help each local ICO group to develop equally engaging sites. In the future, we hope to have additional support from an intern or part-time staff to assist those ICO groups who need guidance in developing and maintaining active websites for their programs.

