

# Mountaineer

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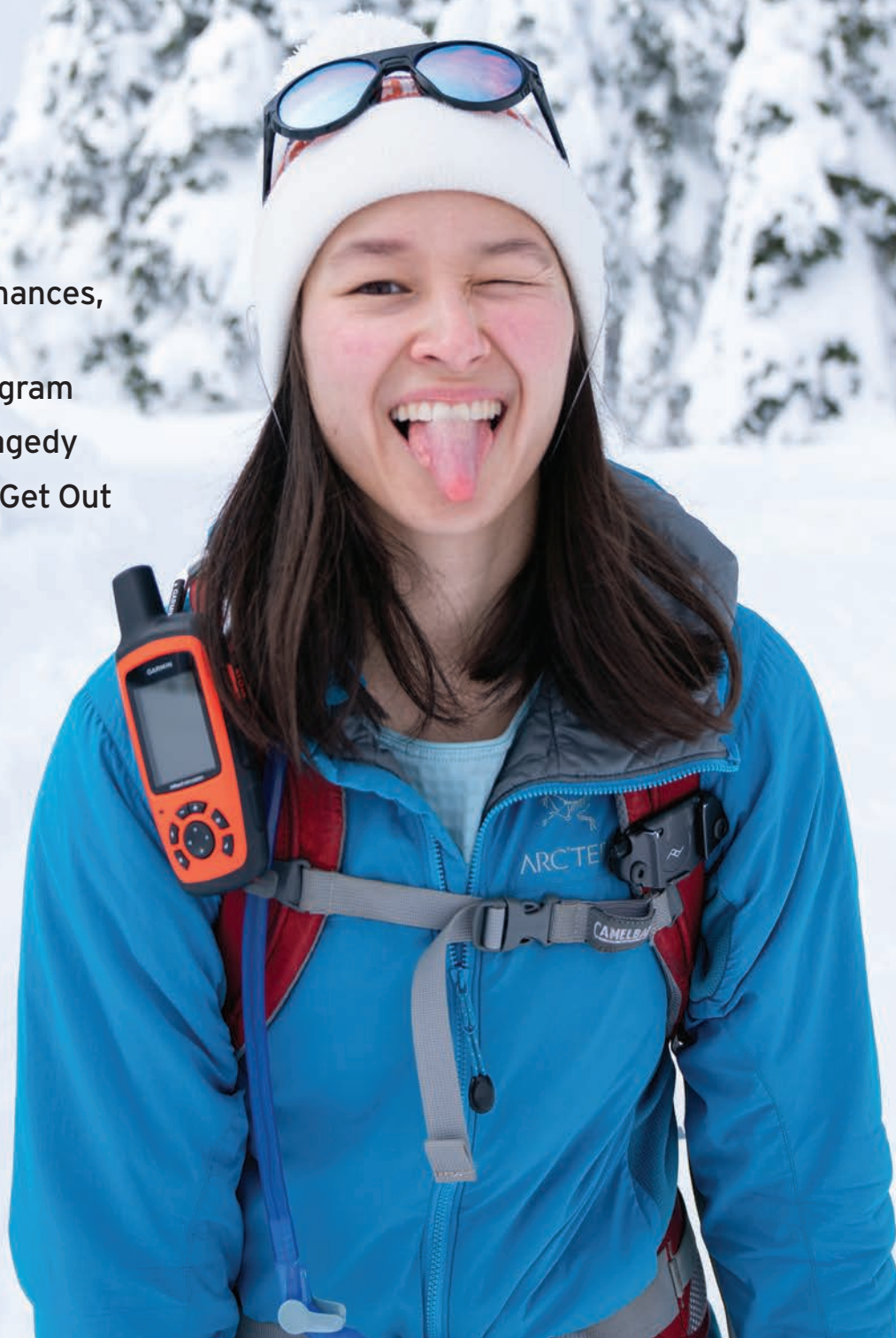
in this issue:

Belaytionships, Packmances,  
and Nature-Loves

Mountaineers of Instagram

Finding Meaning in Tragedy

Grab Your Gortex and Get Out



## Winter 2022 | Volume 116 | Number 1

The Mountaineers enriches lives and communities by helping people explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.



On the cover: Abbey Lee, one of our featured Mountaineers of Instagram, snowshoeing at Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park. Photo by Max Stein.

Mountaineer uses:



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## Discover The Mountaineers

If you are thinking of joining, or have joined and aren't sure where to start, why not set a date to Meet The Mountaineers? Check the Branching Out section of the magazine for times and locations of informational meetings at each of our seven branches.





On a sunny Memorial Day weekend this summer, our family of four rode bikes to Magnuson Park to climb on the outdoor wall at The Mountaineers. I've climbed there many times and wanted to take my girls, ages 5 and 7, climbing outside.

After showing my wife how to use a GriGri (belay device), which I selected given its auto catch feature, I led the left tower. I set up our top rope and she lowered me down. We then had our youngest climb on top rope, and when she was done, I took another turn.

After reaching the top, she started to lower me. Within a few feet of the top, she lost control of the lowering process and dropped me to the ground. I took a near free fall of 20-25 feet. I knew the impact was coming and spread out to land flat on my back. I hit hard, and thankfully the base of the wall is shredded rubber. The wind was knocked out of me, but I never lost consciousness or sensation in my fingers, toes, etc.

Nearby, one observer offered to call 911 and got the paramedics en route. Another climbing group came over, began a simple medical exam, and shaded me from the intense sun. Another family helped with our kids. Everyone there was helping in their own way.

The EMTs arrived and took charge. They also encouraged my wife to get a friend/sitter to watch the kids that afternoon, so she could join me at the hospital. Then they took me to Harborview, where they were surprised that I had zero signs of injury and discharged me within a few hours.

I took it easy for a few weeks and was stiff for a while, but am back to >95%. In fact, while the accident significantly impacted my training schedule, I was still able to complete my first 100-mile trail run, the Cascade Crest 100 (>23,000ft elevation gain) in late August, all with less than 200 total miles of training runs post-accident!

Now months later, thinking about the accident, I reflect on how:

- Dangerous even frontcountry/in town climbing can be, even on a gym wall
- We should have spent more time prior to climbing practicing belay skills; COVID in particular has many of us more rusty than normal
- I shouldn't have switched belay devices to one with which she was less familiar
- We should have had a good first aid kit with us (we didn't need it, but could have)
- I am grateful for our community of fellow climbers and first responders, both during and after the accident

When I shared the accident with a few Mountaineers friends, I heard words of amazement ("OMG!"), encouragement ("This can happen... even Alex Honnold was dropped by his wife using a GriGri"), care ("How is everyone feeling about it now? How can I help?"), and offers of help ("When you are well, let's get you and the kids back out there and I can help coach your belayer"). And while I hope that no one experiences an accident, I hope that all of us get to experience the strength and warmth of our Mountaineers community.

Vik Sahney  
Mountaineers Board President



The Mountaineers is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1906 and dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and protection of natural areas.

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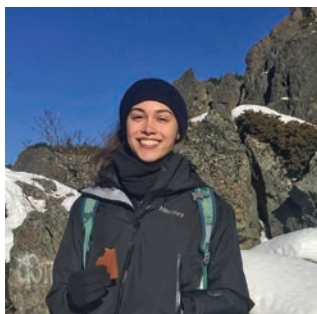
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Seattle Explorers families cross-country ski at Lake Easton State Park. Photo by Stephanie Gilbert.



Hailey Oppelt  
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Photo by Paige Madden.

Community holds the power to bolster a day from good to great or help steady the ship when things get rocky. As is likely the case for many of you, throughout my outdoor career most of my successes and failures have happened alongside a good friend or family member. When I was little, learning how to compress, roll, and stuff old-fashioned sleeping bags took at least two kids to tackle. As a young adult, friendly tips and shared stoke were my bread-

and-butter throughout hikes, backpacks, and climbs. When learning how to ski, I progressed thanks to the patience and humor of my buddies, who gave me advice as I went from constant crashes ("I've never seen someone fall that much!") to being something more than just a ski slope liability.

I like to think I've offered something too. Like the time my friend Paige and I pulled up to a vista at the Grand Canyon and I told her that actually, we were parked on a rattlesnake den and should probably leave. I've given climbing friends copies of my hyper-detailed cragging packing list (don't forget your sun shirt or the donuts), and I try to always have a spare spork, just in case you need one.

From the good days to the pouring rain ones, we offer each other the knowledge, support, and second pair of hands needed to see things through. As we explore the theme of "it takes a village" in this edition, it's clear that our support networks are what help us navigate those ebbs and flows. In *Belationships*, *Packmances*, and *Nature-Loves*, we hear about the relationships our members forge in the outdoors

(dogs included!). Our annual *Mountaineers of Instagram* piece has returned, showcasing stunning photography from our community and offering you a little inspiration for the new year. In *Finding Meaning in Tragedy*, we hear the heartbreaking story of a teen lost to the mountains, and how that death inspired a new kind of avalanche education program for youth, first piloted with our Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC). And finally, a few group-oriented outdoor activities for rainy days are shared in *Grab Your Gortex and Get Out*, a friendly reminder that every day is a good day to get outside.

Our regular features don't disappoint either, with a history-rich piece on REI's roots in *The Mountaineers* in our *Impact Giving* column and fun partner exercises in *Peak Performance*. Offering a slightly different perspective is *Mountaineers Books* guidebook author Craig Romano in his piece *It Doesn't Always Take a Village*, exploring the great personal reward he finds in solitary backcountry hiking. Our *Did You Know* column offers a fascinating look at the social life of trees, based on a mycelium network that is affectionately known as the "wood-wide web." *Retro Rewind* is a blast from the past with an excerpt from *Mountaineers Books* author Lowell Skoog's new title *Written in the Snows*, recounting ski jumping's advent in the Northwest. And don't forget to take a look at *Conservation Currents*, in which we explore the transformative impacts of the Great American Outdoors Act, a cause our community rallied behind together.

When we're surrounded by others, sometimes it's easy to take for granted how integral our friends, family, and peers are as we venture outside. But from something as trivial as learning to tie your boots to the search and rescue infrastructure that spans our region, it's important to remember that we've all been able to experience the outdoors thanks to the presence and support of someone else. Community is about more than just having good company when we're on the trail - it's the reason why we're able to be there at all.

Hailey Oppelt



*In our Fall 2021 issue of Mountaineer magazine, errors were present in two captions relating to Liberty Bell. One member took note and offered us a correction:*

*"In the current issue of Mountaineer (Fall 2021, Volume 115, No. 4), I was astonished to read in the captions to photographs on pages 11 and 15 that Liberty Bell is in the North Cascades National Park! Unfortunately, this is not true, regrettably far from true. The Washington Pass Liberty Bell group of peaks was not included in the original park in 1967... These iconic peaks are in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and have no protection from exploitive development. Efforts are now focused on creating a National Recreational Area in the Granite Creek Valley, hopefully to include the Liberty Bell Peaks, administered by the National Park Service providing protection from development."*

*-Ed Henderson, 41-year member and former President*

*We're thrilled when our members express their support for our programs, the natural world, and each other. Thank you Mountaineers for always maintaining the enthusiasm that lights up our community:*



*"Nice to see you spotlight, Larry, although your light is pretty bright! Thank you so much for the, oh, so many times you have helped me out, volunteered with trips, and stepped up to take the lead."*

*-Tina Fox, 5-year member, responding to "Leader Spotlight: Larry Walker"*

*"Wonderful story and recollections from a junior mountaineer who never gave up or gave in. We should all aspire to be like Judy Terry."*

*-June Fitzpatrick, 18-year member, responding to "Retro Rewind: Coming Full Circle"*

*"What a wonderful day to be in the field, experiencing the wilds of Washington and sharing the time with great people. Goats, marmots, ground squirrels, a few birds, tons of flowers, and the quiet beat of the volcano and the geologic history all around. Spectacular!"*

*-Thomas Bancroft, 4-year member, responding to the trip report "Day Hike - Berkeley Park"*



*"We can't wait to be back with youth programs! I'm interested in volunteering with my daughter's group (Explorers) but also available for additional groups, especially to teach climbing."*

*-Elise Willis, 2-year member, responding to "Become a Youth Volunteer"*

*In A Family Affair: The Story of Billee and Jack Brown, we shared the lives and stories of a couple in their late 80s who raised their six children in The Mountaineers and who still hike to this day. They have been sharing copies of Mountaineer magazine with family and friends, including the staff and patrons at their favorite restaurant, where they celebrated their 70th anniversary:*



*"We went out to dinner on our anniversary to Harbor Lights restaurant in Tacoma last night. I gave one copy to the waitress whom we have known for over 20 years and knows us very well. We eat in the bar/lounge and that copy got passed around to a lot of the other diners who read it and congratulated us on our anniversary and the article. One man copied it with his cell phone. I believe a lot of people now know about The Mountaineers. One couple bought us a drink and the waitresses bought our dinner. It was a great unexpected party. We have been frequenting that restaurant for 62 years."*

*Today we went to Paradise and did a short hike with no goal, just to enjoy another beautiful day and the fall colors."*

*-Jack Brown, lifetime member and subject of "A Family Affair"*



**Name** Tom Robey

**Hometown** DC/Chicago suburb/Pittsburgh, but Seattle is “home”

**Member Since** February 2018

**Occupation** Emergency Physician

**Favorite Activities** Backpacking, snowshoeing, natural history

### Lightning round

**Sunrise or sunset?** Sunrise

**Smile or game face?** Smile

**What's your 11th Essential?** My top-secret fish seasonings

**What's your happy place?** Gold Creek Valley on a clear day

**Post-adventure meal of choice?** Chicken Shawarma

**If you could be a rockstar at any outdoor activity overnight, what would it be?** Scrambling

### How did you get involved with The Mountaineers?

Our family joined The Mountaineers when we signed my oldest son up for summer camp, but we didn't really get involved until we joined the Pathfinders youth program. We quickly found The Mountaineers to be a supportive place for kids to learn and challenge themselves. Connecting with this community opened up other opportunities to take classes, lead trips, and get outside in new ways I'd never considered.

### What motivates you to get outside with us?

The Mountaineers has enabled my son and me to learn amazing skills and build strong relationships. I never imagined myself a climber, yet I've developed enough skill that at Vantage this month I cleaned the kids' routes. Whether climbing or summiting a tough route, there's just the right amount of supportive risk-taking to get me dreaming of the next crag or peak. I go places with The Mountaineers that I'd never go on my own.

### What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

As we drifted off on an alpine backpacking trip, one of my sons told me that trip was the highlight of his life.

### Who/what inspires you?

Definitively the backcountry! I am most at peace traversing lush fern gullies, inspecting tiny alpine florets, or taking in the majesty of cloud-shrouded peaks. Getting to these spots motivates my commitment to fitness and mindfulness. Photos capturing either recent or next year's summits on my workstations ground me during shifts and remind me of personal goals.

### As a donor and volunteer-supported organization, The Mountaineers is based on community support. How have you paid it forward, or how have you benefited from someone else paying it forward?

I'm excited to be part of community-building efforts that involve kids and families. I have been a backpack leader for two years and plan easier trips for youth and families. It's rewarding to be part of someone's first overnight backcountry trip. I'm looking forward to helping with the Backpacking with Kids workshop in the spring.

### What does adventure mean to you?

Adventure is the means to connect with nature, and helps me find myself.



# Enlisting Help from an Accountability Partner

By Courtenay Schurman, MS, CSCS, PN2

A great way to stay on track with your fitness goals during the off-season is to enlist help from accountability partners. They can provide much-needed support, encouragement, and motivation when you're feeling stuck or unsure of how to move forward. While a workout partner might meet you at the gym or trailhead, an accountability partner helps keep you on track by discussing how you're doing, where you're struggling, and what you want to accomplish. If you've been pursuing a goal and feel your enthusiasm waning, partner up!

## When to enlist help

Whenever you feel like you're struggling or want added positive pressure is a good time to get help. Starting out, you might feel like you need to check in with your partner every few days as you build a habit, then shift to weekly or monthly. If the first person isn't a good fit, keep searching until you find someone who is. Remember that coaches and teachers are usually paid, while accountability partners are free. Be sure to exchange equally so that the relationship does not become one-sided.

## Who to ask

First and foremost, look for someone you trust. The last thing you need is to reveal your dreams to someone who dismisses them or tries to discourage you. You may enlist a friend, family member, or significant other as your partner, or you may feel more comfortable buddying up with someone from the same gym or club who has reached a similar goal as yours and could offer advice. You might also find a partner through online resources such as Meetup, Reddit, Facebook groups, forums, or focus groups. Participating on Mountaineers trips can be a great way to meet potential accountability partners as well.

## What to ask for

An accountability partner will listen to you, provide feedback, and help you stay on track. They provide external motivation to complement your intrinsic, or internal, motivation. I use an accountability partner for my writing. We email twice a



Serophina O. and Kevin O. on a MAC overnight cross-country ski trip.  
Photo by Carl Marrs.

week, sharing successes from the previous 3-4 days and outlining our goals for the next 3-4 days. By writing down goals and committing to another person, I strengthen my resolve to follow through. I don't want to let her down or confess that I didn't do what I said I would. And in return, I offer her the same support and encouragement.

You can do the same for fitness goals by telling your partner what workouts or hikes you plan to do, what time you'll go to sleep each night, or how many servings of protein you'll consume each day. These goals can be tailored to wherever you want to make process. Accountability partners might also provide motivation through friendly competition. My husband defines competition as "agreeing to perform better," which is exactly what you're looking for. You may compare stats, and you may enjoy a "rivalry," but your end goal is to support your buddy to meet their movement goals.

## Why partner up?

As this magazine issue highlights, it truly does "take a village" to reach our goals. We are stronger in collaborative relationships than we are working by ourselves. It is harder to break promises we make to those we trust and respect than it is to break ones we make to ourselves. Commit to your partner, add your accountability practice to your calendar, follow through, and get to work making changes. Remember, you are not alone! ▲▲

*Courtenay Schurman is an NSCA-CSCS certified personal trainer, Precision Nutrition Level 2 Certified Nutrition Supercoach, and co-owner of Body Results. She specializes in training outdoor athletes. For more how-to exercises or health and wellness tips, visit her website at [www.bodyresults.com](http://www.bodyresults.com) or send a question to [court@bodyresults.com](mailto:court@bodyresults.com).*

*If you'd like more ideas on how to get unstuck, subscribe to Courtenay Schurman's free weekly blog at [CourtSchurmanGo.com](http://CourtSchurmanGo.com).*

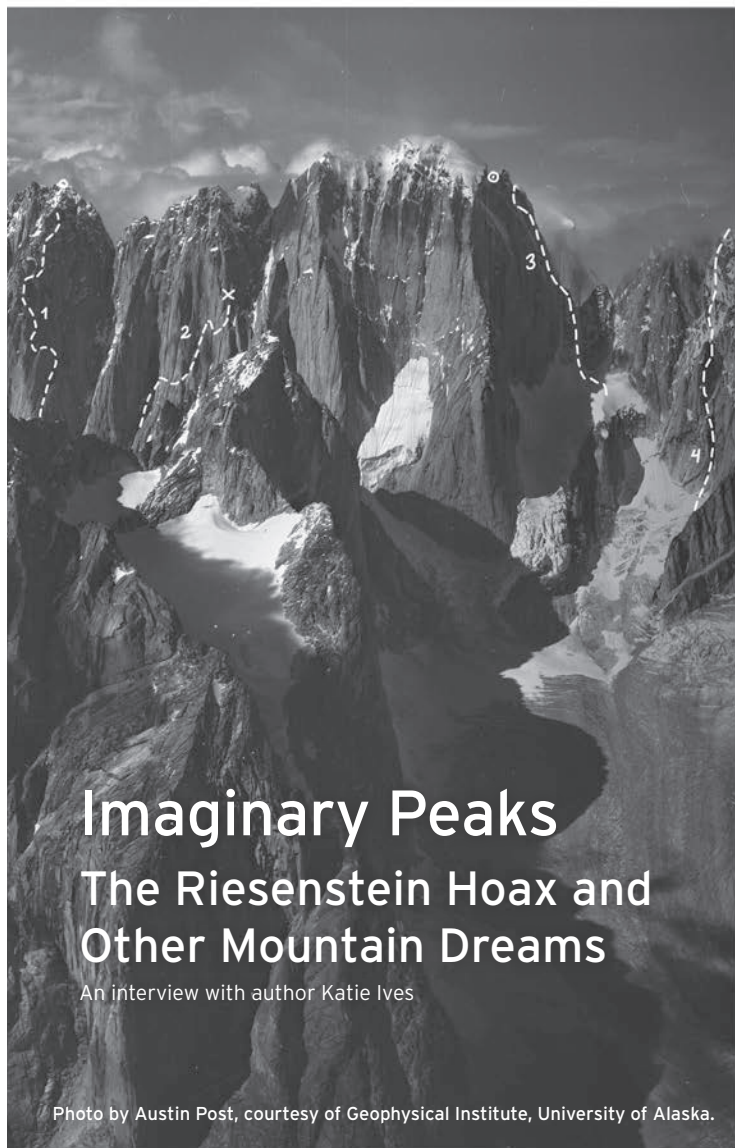
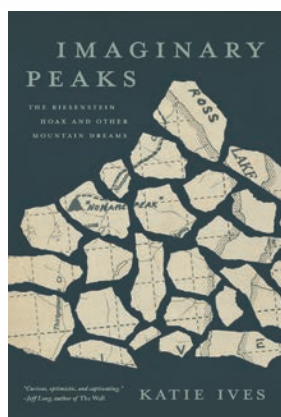


Photo by Austin Post, courtesy of Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska.

**K**atie Ives is editor in chief at *Alpinist* magazine and a well-known figure in mountain literature. Her debut book, *Imaginary Peaks: The Riesenstein Hoax and Other Mountain Dreams* (Mountaineers Books, October 2021), is a true tale of mountain adventure and mystery that uses an infamous deception about a fake mountain range as a lens to explore the fascination with wild places and the lure of supposedly blank spaces on the map. The story ranges from the history of mountain myths and climbers' preoccupation with first ascents, to the complex motivations of the men who plotted the hoax. This includes Harvey Manning, who was one of the most influential and eccentric conservation writers in the Northwest, as well as



a prominent member of The Mountaineers and the editorial committee chair for the first edition of *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*.

**What first intrigued you about the Riesenstein Hoax and made you want to learn more? Why were you drawn to write this book?**

I first came across the story of the imaginary Riesenstein spires in Andy Selters' book *Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering*. Since childhood, I'd had recurring dreams of an invisible high mountain rising from the lowlands of my Massachusetts hometown. Years later, I learned that the nineteenth-century philosopher Henry David Thoreau, who once lived just a few miles from my house, had explored a similar peak, night after night, in his sleep. Something about fantasy summits seems to embody powerful, inchoate longings in many people's minds. And I wanted to gain a better understanding of this persistent allure.

**What's the most surprising thing you learned while working on this book?**

When I began my research, I'd only heard about the Riesenstein Hoax. It was a surprise for me to learn that it was only one of several climbing hoaxes designed by Harvey Manning. It was even more of a surprise to find some humorous letters between Harvey and his friends – in which they'd discussed a few of these elaborate plots – still carefully preserved, tucked away in boxes in the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections.

**Tell us what it was like to research and write about noted Mountaineer Harvey Manning.**

Harvey had saved an astounding amount of his letters, notebooks, and manuscripts – including mere scraps of paper on which he'd jotted down passing ideas. Pieced together, these documents seemed to me like a giant treasure map, suggesting countless ideas for quests to fabulous peaks, both real and imaginary. Before the start of the pandemic, I was able to retrace, on foot, some of Harvey's actual wanderings. During the best of these adventures, I followed a map that his son, Paul, had drawn for me to an unmarked Cascades trail, over a steep pass and through the space between two evergreens that seemed like a portal to another world. There, I found myself in Harvey's favorite alpine basin, surrounded by radiant wildflowers, a snowy dome, and an outer rim of peaks that resembled the walls of a sanctuary. It was like one of the mythic realms that Harvey (and others like him) wrote about, but this one was actually real.

**How do you think place influenced this story?**

The landscapes of the Pacific Northwest, particularly the North Cascades, tend to encourage an awareness of the complexities of exploration history and the possibilities of myth: the many Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories that layer the mountains; the tangles of devil's club, vine maple, and slide alder that form barriers to both climbers and early





Katie Ives. Photo by Chris Weidner.

mapmakers; the dense forests of moss-strung trees that appear enchanted with age, mystery, and shadows; the convoluted topographies that conceal lush alpine basins. All of these elements, I think, helped inspire Harvey Manning's dreams of hidden wonderlands.

#### What do you hope readers take away from this book?

Like the creators of the Riesenstein Hoax, I hope to inspire readers to look more critically and creatively at preconceptions of the "wild," at obsessions with claims of first ascents, and at other assumptions that often shape dominant accounts of climbing history. I also hope to encourage readers to see the potential of the imagination in re-envisioning mountain geographies and in supporting more inclusive ways of approaching cartography and storytelling. As Joan Aiken once wrote, "Why do we want to have alternate worlds? It's a way of making progress. You have to imagine something before you do it."

#### If you were going to orchestrate a hoax, what would it be?

If I told you now, my friends and I wouldn't be able to pull off the hoax later. ▲▲

*Imaginary Peaks* is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center bookstore, online at [mountaineersbooks.org](http://mountaineersbooks.org), and anywhere books are sold.

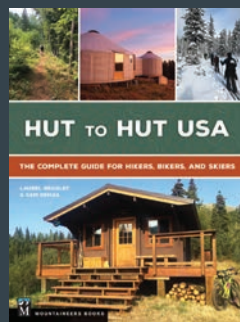


### Mount Rainier National Park: An Artist's Tour

By Molly Hashimoto

From the beloved local author and artist behind *Colors of the West* and *Birds of the West* comes this beautiful look at the natural world of Mount Rainier

National Park. Featuring Molly Hashimoto's watercolor paintings and sketches, *Mount Rainier National Park: An Artist's Tour* follows along the park's main road to provide a delightful journey into exquisite natural beauty. Through natural and park history, evocative personal anecdotes, and Hashimoto's stunning art, readers are treated to a vivid scrapbook of all the park has to offer. Her lush palette captures the park through the seasons in all its glorious details, from the tiniest of wildflowers to the magnificent glacier-covered mountain itself, creating a memorable keepsake for all Mount Rainier lovers.



### Hut to Hut USA: The Complete Guide for Hikers, Bikers and Skiers

By Sam Demas and Laurel Bradley

*Hut to Hut USA* celebrates the opportunities for hut-to-hut hiking, mountain biking, skiing, or snowshoeing at 16 hut systems across the United States. This includes the Appalachian Mountain Club's hiking huts in the White Mountains, the San Juan Huts that allow mountain bikers to pedal from Telluride or Durango to Moab, the Rendezvous Huts for Nordic skiers in Washington's Methow Valley, and more. For the featured systems, the book describes modes of travel, amenities, quality of experience, terrain, required skill level, the route itself, wayfinding tips, booking and cost details, and photographs and maps. This comprehensive, practical guidebook is the first to cover all of the US hut systems, meeting growing interest in hut-to-hut travel.



### Hiking the Oregon Coast Trail: 400 Miles from the Columbia River to California

By Bonnie Henderson

The stunningly beautiful Oregon coast is emerging as the next great long-distance hiking experience, and now there is finally a dedicated guidebook for section and thru-hikers that provides all of the knowledge needed to safely navigate its unique challenges. From trailheads to tide pools, headland routes to bay crossings, and campgrounds to lodgings, you'll find the information you need in this easy-to-use volume. Dividing the trail into five major sections, with information on how to access each start and end point as well as trailheads in between, *Hiking the Oregon Coast Trail* provides detailed descriptions of 34 route legs with mileage, maps, resupply options, itineraries, hazards, camping and lodging options, and more.



# Counselors in Training

By Tailor Dolgin, Associate Youth Programs Manager



Summer 2021 staff and CITs pose for a photo before a rafting field trip. Photo by OAC Staff.

I was the kid at camp struggling with homesickness and cowering from the spiders that visited my bunk. I had friends attend the same camp year after year, become counselors in training (CITs) during high school, and then return to those camps in college as staff. I never understood their connection to camp until I met the CITs at our Mountaineers summer camps. Over the nine weeks of day camp that ran during the summer of 2021, we had nineteen teenagers join us at our Seattle Program Center to help create camp magic.

As someone who didn't grow up as an enthusiastic summer camp attendee, the irony that my role at The Mountaineers is to eat, sleep, and breathe summer camp is not lost on me. And I feel so lucky to be inspired by our amazing CITs now every year. They are a wonderful example of how summer camp shapes its own future and provides community for campers and teens while school is out.

## Expanding the role of a CIT

CITs volunteer to be a part of our camp community, doing everything from belaying campers to helping oversee swimming safety in Lake Washington. They teach bracelet-

making and lead games of "where's my water bottle?" They participate in safety talks, jokes, riddles, field trips, and most importantly, they empathize and engage with campers as their role models.

The CIT program was first introduced in 2013, and many of our CITs are involved as campers for years before they volunteer. As camps have evolved, so has the CITs' role in the program. As we brought in-person camp back this past summer after a year-long hiatus due to COVID-19, we were able to look at our CIT program with fresh eyes.

In the past, campers aged out of our programs after they turned 12, and did not have the opportunity to return as CITs until they were at least 14. We decided this just wouldn't do. In 2021, we invited 13-17 year-olds to join camp as CITs. We also introduced a new type of CIT just for our 13 and 14 year-old volunteers: an All-Time Belayer. An All-Time Belayer's role at camp is exactly what their name implies: they help belay campers anytime they are on campus. Eight intrepid 13 and 14 year-olds volunteered their time this past summer to brush up on their belay skills and support campers on the wall. Seven of the eight All-Time Belayers were campers from years past, a testament to the strength of our camp community.





All-Time Belayer Matilda shows off her rope-stained hands. Photo by Mika McCracken.

Although our All-Time Belayers were helping hands all camp long, they were especially helpful during Advanced Climbing Week, a week of camp where demand for belayers is extremely high. This is the only week of the summer that we set the basalt columns for climbing. The crew of All-Time Belayers were responsible for belaying and cheering on campers while they learned how to crack climb. It was a delight to watch our CITs in action. The All-Time Belayer CITs supported the campers, stepped into and out of belay stations easily, and sought the guidance of counselors when campers had questions.

## Junior Counselors

We also invited teens aged 15-17 back to camp in 2021 as Junior Counselors, filling a role similar to that of CITs in 2019 and before. Each week, Junior Counselors were assigned to work with a camp group and staff counselor. Junior counselors mirrored the staff counselor as they helped with games, safety, teaching, and group management. They worked closely with staff counselors to develop their leadership skills, lead singalongs during morning assemblies, and entertain campers with riddles. Eleven teens applied to be Junior Counselors this past summer, volunteering 40 hours during their scheduled camp week(s). Of the eleven, eight were returning campers and CITs, one was a member of Seattle's Mountaineering Adventure Club (MAC), and two were new to our summer camps.

Several of our summer camp counselors found their way to our CIT program because they were interested in joining

a summer camp community. Many were eager to volunteer for the program because they missed their summer camp community from years past. These teens have been a part of summer camp longer than most of the staff. They have been shaped by the counselors and campers who have come before them, and they found a home within our programs.

## From camper to CIT

Although the majority of our CITs were returners, this past summer was my first time meeting and working with all of them. It was an absolute treat to watch the All-time Belayers and Junior Counselors interact with campers and staff alike. They were goofy, or serious when they needed to be, and absolutely prepared to hop in to help at any point. Several times over the summer, individual Junior Counselors pulled me aside to ask about the job requirements to be a counselor during future summers. As a Camp Director, there are few things more heartwarming than having campers return to your program as teens, ready to shape and support the next generation of campers.

In fact, the only thing better might be seeing those teens come back as staff counselors. Luckily for me, that is precisely what happened this summer. Three of our counselors had been CITs at Mountaineers day camps in the past. And of those three, two had been campers themselves! To see counselors come full circle and contribute to the camp community was truly incredible. Each brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table.

Seeing the depth of love for camp traditions in the campers, counselors in training, and staff counselors who return every year, I understand now how one becomes a serial camper. Summer camp becomes your community, your people, your place to grow, and your home. ▲▲

## GET INVOLVED

Looking to get the teenager in your life involved with Mountaineers camps? Register for teen trips and volunteer opportunities!

- Registration opens February 1 for backpacking and outdoor climbing teen adventure trips.
- Applications for our Summer 2022 CIT Program open in February. Volunteers are accepted on a rolling basis until the program is full.
- Can't wait for summer 2022 to volunteer? Join us as a CIT for February or April Break Camp.

For more information about Seattle Summer Camps and our CIT Program, reach out to our Summer Camp Manager Tailor Dolgin at [tailord@mountaineers.org](mailto:tailord@mountaineers.org).

# REI and The Mountaineers Doing More, Together

By Sarah MacGillivray, Development Manager



Two boys enjoying a day snowshoeing at Gold Creek Pond. Photo by Satish Shanmugasundaram.

For many of us, someone else introduced us to the outdoors for the first time. Perhaps your family took an annual camping trip to the Hoh Rain Forest, a friend convinced you to join a hike up Mt. Si, or a coworker inspired you to get out on the water.

For others, especially young people, it's not always possible to lean on family and friends for an introduction to the outdoors. Many youth rely on community-focused organizations to experience our region's wild places. This year, The Mountaineers is celebrating 10 years of partnership with REI Co-op following the launch of our innovative Mountain Workshops youth program. Since 2011, our two organizations have worked together to make adventures possible for over 10,000 youth who face barriers to outdoor education and recreation. Inspiring a lifetime of outdoor adventure has been part of our ethos from the very beginning. An ethos we share with REI.

## Mountaineers Mary and Lloyd Anderson

In 1929, Seattle local Lloyd Anderson joined The Mountaineers to improve his climbing techniques. His wife Mary Anderson joined in 1932, and they soon became part of a new generation of Mountaineers: the self-appointed

"Climbers' Group," of which Lloyd was elected president. The group launched our first climbing course in 1935, laying the foundation for what's known today as Basic Alpine Climbing. Little did they know that this experience would change the outdoor community forever.

During their climbing courses, Lloyd and Mary were some of the first to learn new ice axe techniques, many of which are still used by Mountaineers today. But the country was just coming out of The Great Depression, and finding high-quality gear for affordable prices presented a significant challenge. The Andersons were determined to find a better way, and ultimately purchased ice axes directly from Austria, with Mary translating the German catalogs. They were purchased for \$3.50 each (including postage), instead of the going rate of \$20, equivalent to over \$325 today.

## The birth of REI

Friends and colleagues in The Mountaineers quickly caught word of the Anderson's operation and wanted to get involved. In 1938, Lloyd and Mary Anderson officially formed the Recreational Equipment Cooperative (REI), with over 100 members by the end of its inaugural year.



REI's commitment to its members and community have yielded steady growth over the years. Presently, REI has over 20 million lifetime members with nearly 15,000 employees in 174 stores - all because of two adventurous Mountaineers and their quest for a better ice axe. When Mary Anderson passed away in April 2017, at 107 years old, she still had REI membership card #2.

Though Lloyd and Mary co-founded the company, it was Mary's business savvy and tenacity that helped make REI what it is today. In her early years Mary overcame polio, enduring lost function of her legs and an iron lung at age six. Overcoming all odds, Mary became a spectacular climber and brought her passion for the outdoors to her students as a grade school teacher.

## The Mary Anderson Legacy Grant

In 2010, Mary celebrated her 100th birthday. To commemorate the occasion, the REI Foundation created the Mary Anderson Legacy Grant to honor her dedication to youth and outdoor access. The foundation announced that the first \$50,000 grant would support efforts that actively engage young people in learning about nature through hands-on engagement and exploration of the outdoors.

*"Mary was like the Mick Jagger of REI. Employees were lining up at her birthday party for the opportunity to hold her hand or to have a conversation. The creation of the grant was a beautiful way to honor Mary and the purpose of REI: to live a lifetime of adventure."* - Sally Jewell, REI former President and CEO (2005-2013)

The timing of the grant was serendipitous, as The Mountaineers was considering undertaking a major organizational transition to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in order to better serve our community. On April 1, 2011, The Mountaineers achieved nonprofit status when 98.7% of voting Mountaineers members supported the change. That same year, The Mountaineers received our first Mary Anderson Legacy Grant.

*"The Mary Anderson Legacy Grant was a great reconnection to The Mountaineers in 2011 after running on parallel tracks for so many years. It was a reconnection point that laid the track for future collaborations to support youth programming."* - Mike Collins, REI former Vice President of Public Affairs (1987-2014)

With the support of REI and the Mary Anderson Legacy Grant, we had the ability to expand on our mission by formalizing our new Mountain Workshops program. The program was designed to break down barriers to the outdoors by encouraging relationship-building with peers, fostering courage and vulnerability, and increasing knowledge and awareness of outdoor principles. By partnering with local youth-serving organizations, we began to offer opportunities for young people to hike, climb, snowshoe, and more - many for the first time in their lives.

*"Mountain Workshops served as a way to create opportunities for youth facing barriers to outdoor recreation to experience our region's wild places. In connecting youth to nature, we hoped to germinate a lifelong appreciation for the outdoors, foster healthy habits, and create future conservation advocates."* - Martinique Grigg, The Mountaineers former Executive Director (2009-2015)



Mary Anderson at her 100th birthday party. Photo courtesy of REI.

## Expanding Mountain Workshops

Over the past decade, Mountain Workshops has grown from supporting 500 youth per year to over 1,500. We've partnered with over 40 organizations, and recently introduced a no-cost Gear Library to provide youth with high-quality outdoor equipment. Since 2011, REI has donated more than \$325,000 to support youth programming at The Mountaineers. In that time, more than 10,000 Mountain Workshop participants have had transformative experiences in areas like the North Cascades, Lake Easton, Mount Rainier, and beyond.

While our achievements are worth celebrating, we will always remember that the outdoors has been a historically exclusive environment. The goal of Mountain Workshops is not only to get more youth outside, but to remove barriers for youth who have been historically excluded from the outdoors.

With a shared mission of equity, inclusion, and serving youth in the outdoors, REI launched a new community-supported public charity to harness the collective power of its 20 million members to fight for an outdoor community where everyone can feel belonging. For the first time in the co-op's 83-year history, the REI Cooperative Action Fund will allow co-op members, employees, and the public to provide financial support to a nationwide network of nonprofit organizations promoting justice, equity, and belonging in the outdoors.

*"With the combined generational thinking and connective tissue REI has with The Mountaineers, we have so much opportunity to do more, and to 'do more' better."* Eric Artz, REI President and CEO (2019-present)

The Mountaineers and REI are cut from the same (waterproof) cloth. We look forward to growing our Mountain Workshops program and annual youth experiences thanks to continued support from this partnership, local organizations, and members like you. Our shared responsibility to the outdoor community relies on strong relationships to help us bring outdoor experiences to youth, and to share the wild places we love. Here's to more adventures, more experiences, and more beginnings. ▲▲



# Breaking Every Halo, with Katja Hurt

By Michelle Song, Associate Volunteer Development Manager



Katja winter hiking on Mount Si with The Mountaineers.  
Photo courtesy of Katja Hurt.

Following the climbing death of a close friend on a non-Mountaineers climb in 2018, Katjarina (Katja) Hurt and a group of climbers came together to uncover the thinking errors that culminated in their friend's death. Their work led Katja to create Breaking the Halo: Empowering Students in Outdoor Education, a course in understanding how leaders' decisions often go unquestioned due to their expert status, also referred to as the "halo effect."

Katja's goal with this course is to explain how to recognize assumptions and help students confront heuristic traps that can lead to dangerous situations in the outdoors. She believes it could make a large difference in our safety if leaders and students are taught about halos and how to confront them. "I teach about the halo effect in honor of [Stephen's] memory. I tell his story and share these lessons as much as I can because I believe he would want me to. He was the kind of man who would give his life for another in a heartbeat, and if it can make a difference and save even one life by changing some of the culture around these types of accidents, then it's worth it."

Katja has been on Snoqualmie Pass's ski patrol for over 14 years, is a fourth generation Mountaineer, and was recently appointed the Olympia Branch's Leadership Committee Chair. Over the past three years, Katja has presented Breaking the Halo for numerous Mountaineers scrambling, climbing, and leadership development programs, as well as for executive leadership teams at various government and local agencies.

We met with Katja to gain a better understanding of the halo effect and how we can avoid heuristic traps.

**Can you describe the halo effect for those who may not be familiar?**

American psychologist Edward Thorndike was the first to document how a person's first impression can place a "halo" of goodness around them. Then Ian McCammon with the National Outdoor Leadership School wrote about heuristic traps. McCammon found that in outdoor groups, a "halo" is typically placed over the leader or the most experienced person. That person is interpreted to be all-knowing and flawless. This leads the group to concede their decision-making to the person upon which the halo is placed. The group becomes hesitant to call attention to the faults they may notice. Instead, they completely defer to the leader. This is dangerous. A halo is a red flag - an indicator of complacency.

**What is the connection between assumptions and a halo?**

We know that assumptions are not always bad. Some assumptions are natural, it's pattern recognition. The assumptions where halos come into play are when we're shortcutting our rational thinking. We jump from point A to point Z, thinking everything's going to flow in between. Halo effects derive from assumptions. When we're blind to the assumption, that's where the halos begin to show.





Katja presenting Breaking the Halo in Richland, WA. Photo by Evan Halladay.

### What are some best practices for dismantling halos?

Start paying attention to overconfidence. Watch your attitude and let that be your guide. Aim to have a partner who can challenge you and give you feedback. I value the friends in my life who disagree with me, who will call me out and question me. These are amazing people to have in my life because they say what I need to hear, not necessarily what I want to hear. People that can have those difficult conversations with you and provide feedback are valuable for breaking halos.

Try not to fall into the traps of complacency. Quiz yourself, do a drill to see if you really do have those skills down. Have a checklist and use it regularly to review all the steps - it's easy to miss a step when you've done it a thousand times.

Be a lifelong learner. I graduated from the Basic Climbing Course in 2018. There was one year the climbing instructors asked graduated students to return and lead the Glacier Skills workshop. I returned as a student instead. I had to admit that I was not ready to be a leader as I didn't remember how to do everything. I was willing to humble myself and grow more as a student. I was intentionally breaking a halo in my life whilst modeling that behavior for others.

### How can we support others who are standing their ground to break a halo?

I love breaking down decision points for people before, during,



Katja presenting Breaking the Halo in Richland, WA. Photo by Evan Halladay.

and after an event. If there's a halo happening, there was a time before and there will be a time after the halo. The best thing to do is prevention. Beforehand, empower your group to call timeouts. Specify how leaders and instructors are not infallible.


After breaking the halo, do a follow-up. Debrief about lessons learned. During the moment when someone is standing their ground to break a halo, tensions can be high. That's also when there can be a lot of risk. When someone breaks a halo, they may be raising their hand during class to share their different view or they may be on a ski hill saying not to cross that slope. It's important for the person receiving the feedback to stop and listen, rather than disregard and push forward. Take the time to acknowledge the person breaking the halo and train yourself to listen, even if you don't agree with the feedback. It shouldn't be a hasty response to silence the individual.

Be an advocate for the voice that no one wants to hear. When someone has the courage to speak up, it's important to give them the chance to speak their piece. You're listening to another perspective and now have a chance to clarify a possible misunderstanding.

### Anything else?

The Mountaineers have been so supportive of my story. It's amazing how much interest there is in embracing this presentation and having these conversations around halos. After Stephen's death, many people assumed I was going to blame so-and-so. I like to think it's been a healing process to recognize the tragedy. Being invited by The Mountaineers to talk about halos the year after Stephen's death was so empowering. It was beautiful to see how The Mountaineers community was willing to trust me and that Stephen's loss was not going to be swept under the rug. To recognize that it was not just a misfortune or a statistic, it was real, and we could come through it together. ▲▲

*Learn more about Katja's mission to break every halo and empower students in outdoor education at [breakeveryhalo.org](http://breakeveryhalo.org). Katja is also the director of the nonprofit Wilderness Chaplains, an organization dedicated to bringing nondenominational crisis intervention to wilderness first responders and the communities they serve. Learn about their work at [wildernesschaplains.com](http://wildernesschaplains.com), or read about her work as a wilderness chaplain at [mountaineers.org/chaplain](http://mountaineers.org/chaplain).*



# The Great American Outdoors Act, One Year Later

## The impacts of public lands investments

By Conor Marshall, Advocacy and Engagement Manager

Heather Lake. Photo by Mountaineers staff.

**L**et's be honest: if our national parks and forests had a Yelp rating, it wouldn't be five stars. Many of us encounter potholed roads, decrepit restrooms, and eroded trails all too often on our outdoor adventures. That's why The Mountaineers has been fighting for years for better funding for our parks and public lands.

But every so often, years of advocacy, timing, and a little luck align to produce a special conservation win. Thanks to advocacy by Mountaineers members and the outdoor community, we're finally receiving new resources to maintain trails, improve campgrounds, and repair roads, bridges, and facilities. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) – which celebrated its first anniversary in August 2021 – is one of the latest examples of how a diverse coalition of outdoor advocates can come together to achieve historic investments for public lands in Washington and across the country.

There are two main components of this new law: much-needed resources to maintain and restore national parks and other federal public lands, and full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These investments will make an impact across all communities for years to come, and it's already started. The Mountaineers is committed to ensuring that these funds are directed towards priority projects in our region, and our conservation team has been tracking implementation of early GAOA projects. There's a lot to be excited about in Washington.

### Restoring what we have

More and more people visit our national parks and public lands each year, but Congress hasn't kept up with enough funding to manage the impacts of increased use. Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act, the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy fund provides \$1.9 billion per year (for up to five years) for deferred maintenance and restoration of our national parks and other public lands. This won't fund all the improvements needed, but five years of projects will make a huge difference.

National parks in Washington alone need more than \$427 million in deferred maintenance. Through the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Fund, federal land managers are already taking advantage of this new funding stream in order to address deferred maintenance needs in Washington. Here are some projects that are already under way in our local national parks and forests as a result of the first year of project funding:

#### Mount Rainier National Park

Mount Rainier National Park (MRNP) plays host to numerous Mountaineers activities and courses and occupies a special place in our organization's history. MRNP was awarded \$2.9 million to rehabilitate the Ohanapecosh campground and sewer collection lines, located among the old-growth forests in the southeast corner of the park. Park service staff were also able to capitalize on National Parks and Public Lands Legacy funding through the first year of GAOA to secure



\$27.7 million to complete the final phase of rehabilitation of nearly nine miles of Stevens Canyon Road, the sole east-west access across the park. These key improvements will go a long way toward enhancing the user experience in Washington's most popular national park.

## Olympic National Park

A project on the list for year two of GAOA funding will rehabilitate Olympic National Park's Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge. The Hurricane Ridge area receives a high volume of visitors annually, and the lodge is the focal point of many visitors' experience. These building improvements will protect the lodge from the elements, improve electrical systems, and bring the structure up to code.

## Washington National Forests

Two region-wide deferred maintenance projects will bring 1,500 miles of priority trails in national forests throughout Washington and Oregon back to standard and replace 40 trail bridges. These funds will support key trail partners like Washington Trails Association as they implement these important trail improvements. Other region-wide projects will replace restrooms, picnic tables, and fire rings in high-visitation areas across the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Gifford Pinchot National Forests.

## Okanogan-Wenatchee and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie

Over the next few years, you'll likely see improvements to heavily-used recreation destinations in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests. Popular trails and campgrounds in the I-90 corridor like the Snow Lake, Annette Lake, and Franklin Falls trails and the Tinkham, Kachess, and Wish Poosh campgrounds will receive some much-needed rehabilitation. Over on Mountain Loop Highway, hikers and picnickers will finally be able to access the Big Four Ice Caves over a new bridge, and the popular Heather Lake, Mt. Pilchuck, and Lake 22 trails are on the list to be improved in the coming years.

## A permanent vision for land and water conservation

You've likely read how the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is one of the most far-reaching and effective tools to conserve land and promote outdoor recreation. Over its more than 50 years, the program has positively impacted parks and public lands in every county and every state throughout the country. Yet despite its resounding success, Congress consistently funded LWCF at approximately half of its authorized funding level and didn't permanently authorize the program until 2019.

The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act finally secured full and permanent funding for LWCF each year, dramatically increasing its impact on parks and public lands. Thanks to GAOA, the Evergreen State will receive more than double its previously allotted funding levels, which means more projects in Washington will be funded every year. Several local projects are already underway, including renovations to Maple Wood playground in Seattle, Sprinker Recreation Center near Tacoma, and Narrows Park in Gig Harbor.



Olympia branch volunteers clearing trail with WTA. Photo by Eileen Haydu.

LWCF is also a key tool to conserve natural landscapes from private development. This year, the Nature Conservancy is on the list to receive LWCF funding to permanently protect Taneum Creek and more than 12,000 acres in the Central Cascades near Cle Elum, promoting watershed health and preserving recreation access.

## Moving conservation forward

We're thrilled that this new, dedicated funding is getting to work throughout the state's public lands to enhance recreation opportunities and the visitor experience. However, these funds don't erase the backlog of deferred maintenance projects. What's more, the Forest Service currently lacks staff capacity to take full advantage of available funds. Since the 1990s, the number of non-fire Forest Service staff has been cut in half. That's why we're ramping up our efforts to advocate for increased appropriations for the Forest Service, so that they can better manage GAOA funding and other conservation priorities.

We've heard directly from lawmakers that community feedback on the local impacts of the Great American Outdoors Act is important for future funding considerations. Our Northwest congressional delegation knows how instrumental outdoor recreation is to public and economic health, our cultures, and our communities. They want to have an ongoing dialogue about how GAOA-funded projects and improvements impact your community and enhance our shared outdoor experience. If you can, we ask that you take the opportunity to thank them for their support of our state's public lands and let them know how these important projects are making a difference.

As you're out on the trail, consider the far-reaching impacts this funding will have on our region and our recreation, and how voices like yours helped make it a reality. Together, we can continue to build a compelling case for increased conservation funding to improve and protect treasured outdoor spaces throughout the region. ▲▲

*We'd love to hear from you: What local impacts are you seeing from LWCF and deferred maintenance projects? Share your story with us about how this important funding is making a difference in your community by emailing [conservation@mountaineers.org](mailto:conservation@mountaineers.org).*

# BELAYTIONSHPIS, PACKMANCES, AND NATURE-LOVES

By Kristina Ciari, Membership & Communications Director



Kristina Ciari and Theresa Sippel not near the summit of Glacier Peak. Photo by Imran Rahman.

**A**s far as blind dates go, meeting at 9,500 feet on Wy'East (Mt. Hood) is about as good as it gets. Our mutual friend Johnny invited Theresa Sippel and I to attempt a summit ski in July of 2013. Going into the weekend, I was hopeful that the team would be successful, but I had no idea I was about to meet my future “skilationship” life-partner.

Our skimance was love at first turn. I admired her deep knee bend and impeccable ski style. Theresa felt drawn to my not-so-subtle pink tutu and gusto for big objectives. We were both committed Turns All Year (TAY) enthusiasts - the silly pursuit to link as many months of skiing in a row as possible. We planned August turns together, then September. We enjoyed the face-shots of winter and began planning for a backcountry skier's favorite time of all: volcano season. She bought a turquoise tutu.

Together we failed twice on Glacier Peak, took a “long two-day weekend” to drive to Shasta, summit, and drive home, and

spent more time on the Muir Snowfield than I care to admit. We learned how to read each other, often communicating without words in the mountains. Our partnership became a critical part of my outdoor identity.

Months bled into years, and we grew to be the best of friends off the slopes too. At 32 weeks pregnant, I gave up my TAY streak at 107 months, and Theresa was the first person I called. When she got married a few months ago, I officiated her wedding with honor. Looking back, the outdoors is what brought us together, but the countless hours in cars and tents are what forged our bond.

People join The Mountaineers to learn new skills, but stay because of the relationships created through the outdoors. To celebrate our community, we wanted to shine a spotlight on your belaytionships, packmances, and nature-loves. These are your stories:





Don and Stacy Sarver, volunteering at Green Mountain Lookout. Photo courtesy of Stacy Sarver.

## Starbucks and beyond

I married a guy I met in a Starbucks.

Don was stirring his caramel macchiato and I told him it might be cheaper if he just ordered a vanilla latte with caramel sauce next time. Our conversation carried into the parking lot and continued while we were in line for *Oceans 12*, a showing we were both attending by happenstance. That was in December 2004. Six months later, we were married at the Starbucks on Upper Queen Anne.

In the time since that fateful day, we've experienced many adventures together, in the outdoors and elsewhere. I love that we're always learning about each other. Don is 6'4 and I'm 5'1. We literally see the world from different angles, and we move through the world differently because of our genders, size, and skin tones.

Don and I both grew up poor and loving the outdoors, but this meant very different things for us growing up. My mom was a widow and an immigrant from the Philippines, so I grew up crabbing and clam digging, but not as sport, as a way to eat. Don also grew up with a single parent, often homeless moving from campground to couch, and he looked to the outdoors as an escape from the reality of his circumstance.

We've volunteered as fire stewards at Green Mountain Lookout and taken the Basic Climbing Course, but one of my favorites was the year we were lucky enough to score a permit to the Enchantments. We won the Colchuck Zone, and made plans to stay two nights, enjoying a day hike up Aasgard Pass.

We arrived at the lake and found a beautiful spot to set up camp, then decided to reward our hard work with a dip in the beautiful alpine lake. We probably spent an hour swimming, enjoying how the sun warmed the top 18 inches or so of the water. The next morning, Don woke up in pain, barely able to move. I was thinking he slept on a rock or something, but as he began to look at his body, he saw his fatal error: he was entirely crispy, like lechon at a birthday party. He was so burned that he could hardly bear to wear his pack, and we needed to leave to get aid. "How did this happen?" I asked. I didn't realize that Don had been cooking his skin the entire swim. This was the day I expanded my knowledge in skin care to include other skin tones.

I'm happy to report that Don made a full recovery, and we still drink coffee together. But now, instead of watching Matt Damon on the big screen (we named our son Linus after his character), we enjoy our coffee while watching the sunrise from our campground. And our packing list always includes sunscreen.

-Stacy Sarver

## Snow in all seasons

Shortly after moving back to Bellingham, I was in need of an adventure companion, as well as a life companion, so I decided to go the digital route and look online. Having an unnegotiable list of standards, I had low confidence I would find a match. But to my surprise I found him on my first search. I took a quick trip from Bellingham to Winters, CA, for our first meeting, and it was a classic case of love at first sight. We have been inseparable ever since.

We immediately hit the trails. Buddy, previously a city dweller with no exposure to the outdoors, was at first a bit timid off the basic trails, especially around cliff exposure and stream crossings. With encouragement, he quickly grew a passion for the mountains, and the mountains became as natural and necessary to him as they are to me.

One of his greatest loves, which we both share, is snow - snow in all seasons. On a typical hike he always remembers the first patch of snow so that he can be sure to stop on the return trip, knowing it is the last snow he will see before his next adventure.

Buddy also enjoys his adventure gear as much as I do. He seems to understand that the gear is there to make his experience more comfortable, and thus more enjoyable. When Buddy dons gear, he is transformed into an adventurer with purpose. His hard shell keeps him dry and stops the snow from clinging to his hair, his boots keep the snow from forming between his pads and building up into snowballs around his feet, and his goggles keep his vision clear. When the gear comes out, excitement ensues. Good times are ahead!

Together we have explored the backcountry and trails of the North Cascades during all months of the year. Buddy is a rock-star on the trail (and pretty much everywhere we go),





Buddy in his element on Heliotope Ridge. Photo by Joe Evenson.

and seems to give everyone else as much joy as he gives me. Seeing the joy he brings others brings me much happiness, but my favorite times are when it's just us in the backcountry, blending into the landscape and enjoying the beauty around us in the company of each other.

- Joe Evenson

## We're just here for a bad time

I think it was late 2018 when I first slid into Amber Chang's DMs. I am not even fully sure why I felt confident enough to befriend her since she is a badass ski mountaineer who, at the time, was planning on skiing all the Washington volcanos in a single season. I had just finished a basic climbing mentorship and hadn't even stepped into ski boots yet. If I had to guess, I think I recognized a similar energy in Amber – a willingness to suffer outside for absolutely no reason.

We started our friendship like you treat a dating app connection: with a bunch of messages to get a feel for each other and to make sure we could spend 12+ hours in the wilderness suffering together. We met up a few times in 2019, but our friendship really took off during the pandemic. Once it felt safe to go outside again, we turned to each other to make ridiculous outdoor plans. We went from four to six-mile trail runs to a 20-mile day quickly thereafter. High on the success of that trip, I texted Amber, "I think I want to do a C2C of Glacier Peak someday." Her response? "What about next weekend?"

We turned around just shy of the summit on that trip, but interactions like that are why I love my friendship with Amber. I am highly anxious and struggle with self-doubt. The second I make a goal, I already doubt my ability to do it, so I make sure to immediately tell Amber. If she knows about it, she is either



Amber Chang and Kaelee Chang on their C2C attempt of Glacier Peak. Photo by Amber Chang

out with me to make it happen or bluntly tells me that I can do it if I put in the work. She isn't one to beat around the bush, so if Amber says I can do it, I believe her. I started skiing at the ripe age of 30 and made a goal to ski from the summit of Mount





The vote, featuring River, Fitz, and Hazy. Photo by Ruth Neilson.

Saint Helens my second season. Amber pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the resort all season and was with me with skis on the summit.

For all our epic adventures together, I also appreciate that we are each other's biggest cheerleaders. Our support for each other extends beyond our shared outdoor goals, and that's arguably the most important part of our friendship.

So, the next time you find yourself wondering if that untouchable person on Instagram would want to be your friend, just slide into their DMs. It might work out better than you think.

- Kaelee Chang (no relation to Amber)

## Discovering mountainlife

Hi Friends - Fitzroy here! I'm a Mountain Dog and I live in the mountains with my human Mom & Dad and my canine big sister River. What I love most in the world is exploring in the wilderness with my Mom. Mom likes to have Adventures so she takes me places where I can show off my Mountain Dog skills - finding the best way to travel over boulder fields, cross streams, and climb higher. River Dog is pretty lazy (she's a Newfoundland - not a Mountain Dog like me) so she rarely goes with us.

One day Mom came home with another dog - my Cousin Hazy. Hazy is a girl like River but she looks like me (only smaller). Mom said Hazy was going to stay with us for a few weeks and it was my job to teach her about being a Mountain Dog. She had never been to the Mountains before.

The first time we had to cross a stream with just a board for a bridge Hazy was afraid to go across because it was so narrow. No problem I said - watch me and then just follow me across. I had to cross a few times before she got up the courage to follow

and then it was easy and she ran back and forth. Soon she was balancing on logs and boldly splashing across streams with no bridges - good girl Hazy!

Before long Hazy was exploring on her own - always with one eye on Mom - and she was happy to follow me when I found a good dog path to travel. The most important thing I told Hazy is this: Mom likes to take pictures so you need to learn to pose for her. When she gets out her camera you have to stay still and smile - don't run until she says ok. And best is to climb up high so Mom can take pictures of us being Mountain Dogs. If there is a big rock or boulder it will make Mom very happy if you climb on top of it and pose for her. At first Hazy was timid about climbing up but I kept encouraging her and then she saw how happy it made Mom when we posed together - she was really getting the hang of this Mountain Dog stuff!

After a few weeks, I realized how much fun it was to have Hazy around. I knew she was just with us for a visit but I liked having a sidekick - especially one who was happy to follow. Then Mom called a Family Meeting. She said she liked having Hazy around (so did Dad) and she wanted to know what Hazy, River, and I thought about having Hazy stay with us for good instead of going back to the City. We had a Vote - Yes or No - should Hazy stay for good? That was my easiest Vote ever - a BIG YES from me. Did I say River is lazy? Her Vote was "Whatever" because she likes to pretend she doesn't care but I know she likes Hazy too. Hazy got to stay!

- Fitzroy Neilson, by way of his mom Ruth Neilson

P.S. Hazy has learned to be a good model too and Mom posts pictures of our Adventures because she thinks we are so handsome. Check us out if you want to see a couple of very happy Mountain Dogs! @mazamadog on Instagram. ▲▲





# MOUNTAINEERS OF INSTAGRAM

By Issy Steckel, Communications Associate

Photo by Komal Sanjeev.

Photos have the power to transport us to a feeling. Often, we are brought back to a specific time, place, and emotion. Like the sunrise shot that reminds you of the pride, gratitude, and exhaustion of an early morning alpine scramble. Or the snapshot of frosted evergreens that takes you back to skiing on a crisp bluebird day. Sharing photos with others also gives them access to these small moments of magic we find in the outdoors. It can offer inspiration to the experienced outdoorsperson to take on a new feat, or reassurance to the novice that they can tackle it, too.

The Mountaineers launched our Instagram (@mountaineersorg) back in November 2014 as a platform for our dedicated community of outdoor advocates, volunteers, and adventurers to find inspiration, meet new people, and connect with the world around us. Since then, more than 150,000 photos have been tagged with The Mountaineers hashtag #OurPNW, spotlighting the natural splendor of the Pacific Northwest and the incredible energy of those who play here.

To celebrate our ever-growing digital community, we chose our top inspirational Mountaineers for 2022. Their humble and awe-inspired shots of the natural world invite us to pause, look closer,

and double-down on our commitment to protect and advocate for the places we love. Read on to find your new favorite feed.

## Komal Sanjeev: @komal\_sanjeev\_

When Komal first visited Seattle in 2015, a friend casually suggested they go on a hike. She has been inseparable from the mountains since. Joining The Mountaineers in 2018, Komal has taken the Alpine Scrambling, Basic Glacier Travel, Trail Running, and Winter Camping Courses (to name a few). "I'm extremely grateful for all the wonderful leaders and fellow climbers I met along the way who helped me become who I am today. I go back every year to help instruct the scrambling course to give back to the community. I love watching students learn new skills, get out of their comfort zone, and discover more ways to enjoy the outdoors."

Komal's favorite thing to do in the mountains is backpacking. "I love the feeling of waking up in the morning to a clear mind and a beautiful sunrise. There are no notifications waiting to grab my attention, no mundane chores to attend to. The mountains constantly remind me how insignificant we are in nature, and how little we need to be happy. I try to bottle those feelings into a picture and narrate my story, hoping I can connect with people who share the same joy."

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**Practice Leave No Trace.** Social media can help us share knowledge and resources, but can also lead to overcrowding, damaging trails and delicate ecological areas. Keep LNT tips in mind as you share your adventures on Instagram and elsewhere.



### Jason Griffith: @hikingsoul

Jason is a seven-year member with the Everett Branch, a Basic graduate, and a leader for Mt. Pilchuck's lookout maintenance and snow/scramble trips.

"I look for the 'magic moment' that captures the mood of the day, whether it's an unadulterated nature scene or a landscape that humans have engaged with. I also prefer a good snow slog over a hot summer day just about always."



### Theresa Silveyra: @theresasilveyra

Theresa is based in Portland, Oregon, and can frequently be found climbing, skiing, or trail running at her favorite local mountain, Mount Hood, or in the North Cascades.

"I divide my time teaching music lessons at a small after-school academy and, as of this year, working as a mountaineering instructor for the nonprofit organization Climbers of Color. I had the honor of co-instructing the first all-women of color mountaineering course on Mount Baker this past summer for Climbers of Color and Trail Mixed Collective. I also volunteer with Portland Mountain Rescue and am currently working towards my AMGA Alpine Guide certification."

### Brendan Moore-Penaskovic: @obi\_wan\_brendobi

Brendan is an Intermediate student with the Kitsap Mountaineers and an avid amateur photographer.

"Me, my wife, and our Australian cattle dog Winnie moved from New Hampshire six years ago to Washington, where we now live on Agate Pass in Suquamish. I'm a software developer by day, but try to make it into the mountains as much as possible. My favorite peak in Washington is El Dorado in the North Cascades, although skiing Mt. Baker is a close second."



**Tip #1: Limit Geo-Tagging.** Tagging locations (or geo-tagging) can result in increased traffic to areas that are delicate and unable to sustain large numbers of people. Limit your geo-tagging to large regions, if at all.





Sunset over Table Mountain. Photo by Sergio Rojo.



"A journey is best measured in friends rather than miles."

-Tim Cahill

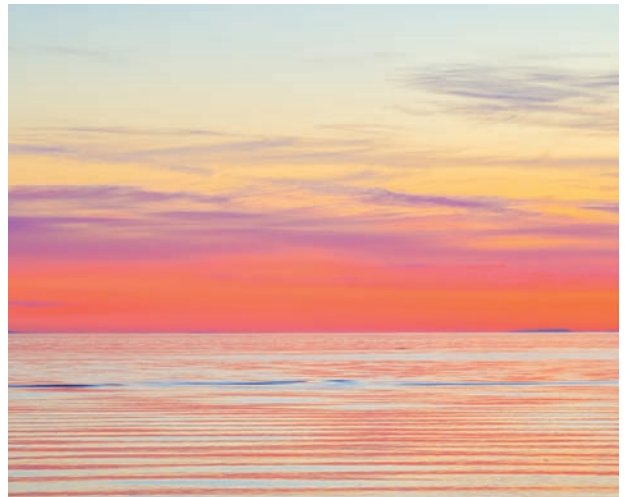




## Erynn Allen: @erynnallen

When Erynn took our Basic Alpine Climbing Course, it forever changed her relationship with the outdoors.

"After taking star shots from basecamp on a climb, I resolved to always have my camera with me. It's worth the weight, I decided. I've learned so much as a member of The Mountaineers this past decade, from the Navigation Course where my relationship with my husband began, to the AIARE 1 Course we took together last winter. Our kid absolutely loves going on Mini Mountaineers outings. I find so much joy in sharing what I see as we tread with care in wild places. I hope how I post reveals an honest and humble approach to navigating the complex relationship that nature has with social media."



## Tom Eng: @nwwander

Tom describes his Instagram account as a photographic diary of his search for truth and beauty in the natural world.

"In my images, I try to reflect the emotion of being there and capture the joy and awe I find in the wilderness. To me, each outing is an adventure, an opportunity to see and experience something new and beautiful. Thanks for coming along on this journey! I'm a hiking, trail running, photography, and snowshoeing leader for The Mountaineers so please join me in real life too!"

## Jonathan Foster: @joanthan.foster

Jonathan Foster is an instructor for the Tacoma Mountaineers Basic and Intermediate Alpine Climbing courses.

"Instructing for The Mountaineers has been a fantastic opportunity to meet climbing partners, share profoundly special experiences outdoors, and pass on what I've learned to others coming into the climbing scene. I am by no means the photographer I wish that I had time to be, but the fortunate byproduct of spending time in remarkable places occasionally means coming away with some special moments, and those are worth capturing. I am content to be a jack of most trades and master of none as long as that means being in the right place at the right time."



**Tip #2: Practice LNT in Your Photos.** You value LNT principles, so be sure to reflect that in your photography. Clean campsites, packed trash, and avoiding delicate or off-limits areas all help to reinforce responsible recreation habits in our outdoors community. Bonus points if you post pictures of stewardship activities!



### Abbey Lee: @abbeyoutside

Abbey is an outdoor enthusiast, user experience designer, and dog mom. She moved to Washington three years ago and has loved every second of living in and exploring this beautiful state.

"I spent the past year learning and scrambling with The Mountaineers, and have had a blast meeting such amazing, inspiring people in this community. I'm super excited to continue leveling up in the mountains, with hopes to continue to grow my technical alpine skills and outdoor photography!"



### Darcy Barry: @darcyrbarry

Darcy became interested in The Mountaineers due to our conservation partnerships and publications, attending our BeWild events to hear authors Joe Riis and David Moskowitz talk about their conservation work and photography. Then in 2018, she took our Intermediate Snowshoeing and Alpine Scrambling Courses.

"I have a lifelong love of nature and enjoy documenting naturalist observations through photography. I approach it as a contemplative process; I slow down to observe, marvel at something new, and experience mindfulness as I capture the moment. I am grateful for The Mountaineers community and the courses teaching skills for exploring wilderness areas safely and ethically."

### Scott Schopman: @mountainchop

Scott and his wife Lisa moved from Maryland to Washington three years ago and have been in love with the landscape and outdoor opportunities ever since.

"This region has changed us, and a major catalyst to that change was joining The Mountaineers. We were fortunate to join the 2020 Basic Alpine Climbing Course where we went from barely knowing how to stake down a tent to walking across glaciers and standing atop peaks in places that previously only ever existed in fantasy stories. I'm so thankful to The Mountaineers for the heights I've reached and the people I've gone there with."



**Tip #3: Encourage LNT Principles in your Posts.** Amplify people and organizations doing good work around public lands stewardship, education, and advocacy. Many of your followers may not be familiar with LNT principles, so take this opportunity to provide information on what LNT is and why it's so important to the future of our wild places.

# FINDING MEANING IN TRAGEDY

## Creating the NIKO Foundation

By Outi Villet, 6-year member and Co-founder/Executive Director of the NIKO Foundation



Niko skinning up Mt. Rainier in the spring of 2017, one year before his accident. Photo by Matti Suokko.

It was a cold February night in 2018. Snowflakes pummeled the windshield as we drove down the empty highway, the darkness pierced only by our headlights. We were both silent on our way to Alpentäl at Snoqualmie Pass. Feelings of dread, horror, and hope flashed through my mind at lightning speed. I ran through every possible scenario as I tried to make sense of what might lie ahead.

Earlier that day, Matti and I had been skiing at Crystal Mountain, enjoying turns in the beautiful powder with our teenage children. Always responsible, Matti's oldest son Niko texted his plans for the day in our native Finnish: "Me mennään treenille Alpentäliin." "We'll go do some training at Alpentäl."

Just 18 years old, Niko Suokko was an outdoor enthusiast with countless hobbies: skiing, hiking, running, soccer, riding snowmobiles and motorcycles, and more. He began riding snowmobiles as an eager 10-year old boy, looking up to his father and developing a passion for backcountry motorsports. They would often dive into projects together, getting their hands dirty with everything from old motorcycles to cars.

Niko's curiosity and high-spiritedness often led him to new adventures. He would surprise family and friends with new challenges he had taken on, like the time he arranged to be a ski instructor at Snoqualmie. At 16, he participated in a half-marathon without any dedicated training, earning fourteenth place in the men's division out of 250 competitors. At 17, he took part in an off-road duathlon while visiting family in Finland, hopping on a bike he'd never ridden before the competition. He was also a surprisingly gentle soul, spending his less adrenaline-fueled moments writing, painting, and caring for his friends and younger siblings. His desire to be active was not driven by a need to impress others, but instead stemmed from the pure joy of experiencing something new. He was brimming with life, competitive and determined, with the potential to achieve anything he put his focus on.

He also had a surprise waiting for him. Niko had received a letter of acceptance into Finland's army's special forces, the paratroopers, for his mandatory military service as a Finnish citizen. Only the toughest and the most talented individuals gain a spot in the program. He was going to be elated.





Niko at Camp Muir before skiing down to Paradise. Photo by Matti Suokko.

## On the mountain

But that day on the mountain, Niko's text triggered an uneasy feeling. His father Matti and I knew how unstable the snow conditions were that weekend. I had been in the Alpentäl valley the week before with an experienced group of Mountaineers practicing advanced crevasse rescue. I remembered the mixed feelings I had hearing the faint echo of a child joyfully shouting, playing near the summer trail to Snow Lake in what I knew was a perfect avalanche chute. They were on the opposite side of the valley from us, and I wished we had a way to tell the adult it was not safe. They may have seen a path traveled by other hikers and snowshoers in days past, following without any idea of the lurking dangers.

My concern returned as Matti was messaging his son, telling him not to go into the backcountry that day. Niko promptly responded to his dad: "We won't go anywhere dangerous." He was known to be reliable. Relieved that Niko agreed to be cautious, we continued enjoying the beautiful powder day.

On the drive back from Crystal, we talked about dinner plans and tried to connect with Niko to find out when he'd be back. He was not responding in his usual, punctual way. What was going on? Feelings of irritation developed. Was he being thoughtless? Perhaps his phone had died, and he was having too much fun with his friend to notice? As time wore on without any contact, worry started to rapidly creep in. The ski slopes were closed and there had been plenty of time for the boys to return to town. After numerous attempts to contact

Niko and several of his friends, we didn't know what to do except to drive to Alpentäl.

After a long, silent trip, we turned off the highway. The night was pitch black, and all we could see in our headlights were faint tire tracks surrounded by massive snowbanks. Snow was already covering the traces of the day's busy winter traffic. I tried to stay positive, but my heart and mind were racing. The short road from the highway up to the trailhead seemed to take forever.

Suddenly my heart sank. We arrived at the end of the road and our headlights revealed a nightmare. There it was: Niko's black car standing alone covered in snow, next to the backcountry ski trailhead. This gut-wrenching image still remains crystal-clear in my mind today. It was a terrible sign.

In that moment, the worst-case scenario became a possibility. Were the boys lost or injured somewhere, unable to move? Huddled in a snow cave or under a tree, waiting for first light? They had all the experience and knowledge needed to survive in an alpine environment. Niko had taken an AIARE I class with us the year before and had years of winter experience from his outings, including many snow camping trips. He wasn't prone to panic and had all the endurance you would expect from a young athlete. We rushed out of the car and onto the start of the trail, yelling into the dark void. We couldn't see any tracks. We listened closely, hoping to hear something back. But there was nothing. The darkness did not respond - heavy snow muffled everything. It was eerily quiet. It was so tempting to



Niko after competing in an off-road duathlon in Finland. Photo by Matti Suokko.

run up the trail and start looking for the boys, regardless of the avalanche danger we knew was there. The feeling of helplessness was overwhelming.

We called 911 and reported them missing. King County Sheriff's Office and Seattle Mountain Rescue (SMR) were quickly alerted. Niko's car didn't give us any more clues on their whereabouts. We were eventually able to reach the other boy's parents, who soon arrived at the scene. They were able to locate the last ping from their son's phone on their phone screen. I looked at the map in terror. I knew that place. Their last known location was at the bottom of a slope, bare of trees and steep enough to slide. I forced myself to remain calm and not to generate more panic. In my heart I truly feared the worst, and hoped for a miracle.

## Search and rescue

Emergency officials and SMR teams arrived at the scene. They had just been recovering an avalanche victim, a snowmobiler who lost his life not far from where we were. You could see the heaviness in their hearts as they assessed the situation. It was still snowing, and the avalanche danger was high.

The Northwest Avalanche Center (NWAC)'s forecast for that day stated: "Travel in avalanche terrain is not recommended as very dangerous avalanche conditions exist. Expect widespread avalanches big enough to bury or kill you. Only travel in the backcountry today if you are certain that you can avoid avalanche terrain."

The search mission was put on hold until first light due to the perilous conditions. It was agonizing to know that two children were in the cold and dark, potentially hurt, with no way to help them. But there was nothing we could do, except wait and return the next day.

Time stood still that night. Each hour felt like an eternity as we waited for dawn to come. Anger and despair dominated our minds as we poured over all of the information we had, and what we didn't. Why did the boys enter that area? Were they still there? Were they injured?

We returned to the trailhead long before sunrise. We had to be there, even if all it meant was waiting in the car for the search party to arrive. At first light the empty parking lot



Niko catching air near Stampede Pass. Photo by Matti Suokko.

turned into a hard-working village, complete with a search and rescue mission control center, numerous vehicles, and dozens of people preparing gear and reviewing plans. The search mission had to be carefully designed as the snow conditions were still highly dangerous, making the mission extremely challenging. The teams we had the privilege of witnessing that day were comprised mostly of volunteers. They accepted the challenge and put their hearts and souls into the search.

Four rescue teams including Seattle Mountain Rescue, King County Explorer Search and Rescue, and the Ski Patrol Avalanche Rescue Team departed from the parking lot and headed towards the area indicated by the last ping from Niko's friend's phone. We were all holding our breath in the parking lot as we waited for news. Finally, the search director got the call from the rescue crew. His face told us all we needed to know.

## The recovery

Two avalanche beacon signals were located by the rescue teams. Both beacons were emitting signals from beneath a horrendous pile of avalanche debris, runout below a large, soft slab avalanche, with a fracture width of 350 feet and a vertical fall of 500 feet. The two beacons had been sending the signal since the day before without anybody around to hear.

Until that point we had clung to a shred of hope that one or both of the boys could be recovered alive. It was only when their bodies were slowly tugged from the snow that this hope finally extinguished. The unthinkable had happened. They were gone.

The rescue team was forced to temporarily pull back in the middle of the mission when another avalanche released naturally and ran within 100 feet of the incident site. More avalanche guards were assigned, and the rescue personnel were reduced to limit exposure. It took a tremendous effort from the rescuers to retrieve the boys' bodies under such unstable snow conditions. The parking lot was filled with despair and horror as we watched the bodies returned in sleds, pulled by exhausted and somber rescuers.



## The aftermath

Two families lost sons, big brothers, grandsons, and cousins that day. Two great friends were gone, and many young adults lost their feelings of innocence and invincibility as well. We said goodbye to two beautiful young men's futures - all of their dreams, desires, and adventures were no longer possible. All that was left on the day of the accident were two avalanche beacons calling out under a dark mass of snow.

In the days that followed, we all went into survival mode. The despairing, bitter emotions were intensified by the many different people affected by the boys' deaths. To me, it felt similar to being on a treacherous glacier with a team you've never climbed with, when suddenly one of the members falls into a crevasse. All the tools that would usually be present - appropriate equipment, training, and finely-honed team dynamics - haven't had a chance to be established. For a challenging mountain expedition, you wouldn't usually choose such a combination. But life doesn't work that way. When crisis strikes, you have no choice but to adapt and do your best to survive.

Within the nightmare, rays of light broke through the storm clouds. Friends stepped up to prepare meals and help with the other children. The impacted schools provided access to counselors to help students cope. A river of flowers and kind notes came streaming in.

Niko's life clearly called for a celebration, not a funeral. His celebration of life and its arrangements, though very painful, were therapeutic. His relatives from Finland shared pictures

and stories from his childhood summers spent with them. Niko's teachers and school friends shared stories showcasing his academic talent, his tendency to always help others, and a few teenage shenanigans. Parents seldom get to hear how good of a friend their child was. Though those stories and discoveries were bittersweet, my heart was humbled to see how big of an impact he had made in so many lives. I wish we didn't need such tragic times to share our feelings.

## The NIKO Program

Niko's dad Matti and I were determined to make something good come out of this tragedy. Soon after Niko's accident, we realized the depth of the gap in avalanche education for teens. Most avalanche education programs are developed for adult audiences and do not consider the known differences between adolescent and adult information processing and educational needs. In collaboration with NWAC, we founded the NIKO18.LIFE memorial fund to carry Niko's legacy forward, with the goal of developing an entirely new approach to youth avalanche education. Supported by the NIKO18.LIFE memorial fund and NWAC, we were able to make this a reality and created the NIKO Program. We are forever grateful to our donors, who allowed us to develop a completely new resource for youth to enjoy the winter backcountry more safely.

## Curriculum

Creating the NIKO Program's curriculum required a remarkable group effort from experts in youth education, adolescent brain development, avalanche/snow science, and risk management. From ages 14-24, the brain functions differently than it does during childhood or adulthood. Notably for our purposes, risk management is more challenging during that time. Though crucial for the development of independence, this biological difference has its drawbacks. The NIKO Program helps students understand these challenges and hopefully develop greater caution through this increased awareness.

Focusing on late middle school and high school students, the program operates over five weeks to give students enough time to fully digest the material, reflect, and incorporate the information into habits. The lessons include topics like human factors and hazards, avalanche terrain, mapping, weather, and team dynamics. Students work through guided exercises while practicing critical thinking, decision-making, and open communication within a team.

The program is designed to use active learning methods and principles rather than one-way lecturing. Students actively solve problems and engage in purposeful discussions on group dynamics, risk evaluation, and more, while building leadership skills and risk management techniques. Students also practice winter backcountry travel skills and techniques during a full-day field outing. The NIKO Program's education sits somewhere between an avalanche awareness course and AIARE I. The curriculum provides students with a base understanding of what someone needs to know to stay away from avalanche terrain, and what additional education is needed before entering avalanche terrain.



MAC students exploring during their NIKO Program field day at Blewett Pass.  
Photo by Carl Marrs.



## Piloted and ongoing programs

The NIKO Program was first piloted in the winter of 2019/2020 with the Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC) in Seattle. Following the successful pilot, we expanded the program delivery to five different locations in the 2020/2021 winter season. Though we had to adapt the way courses were held due to COVID-19 concerns, over 60 young students "graduated" from the NIKO Program, including three different Mountaineers groups.

For the 2021/2022 season, we are providing a program that adapts to different student groups and course providers in addition to COVID-19 safety. We are especially excited to collaborate again with MAC and the Gateway Mountain Center in Truckee, California, with several other potential partner organizations on the horizon.

Learning to recreate safely in the mountains goes far beyond receiving a certification. It's a lifelong journey, offering an opportunity to learn more regardless of your level of knowledge and experience. Parents and friends helping teens to become better team members in everyday life. A community coming together to form a safe place for youth to be curious, openly ask questions, and develop. Regardless of whether you're an expert and hopeful mentor or a first-timer in the world of winter recreation, we'd like to welcome you to the NIKO Program community for a lifetime of learning, sharing, and living life to the fullest. ▲▲

## Get involved

For more information on the NIKO Program or to make a gift of support, visit [nikofoundation.org](https://nikofoundation.org).

For NIKO Program provider opportunities, contact Outi Villet at [outi@nikofoundation.org](mailto:outi@nikofoundation.org).



MAC students after their NIKO Program field day at Blewett Pass.  
Photo by Carl Marrs.

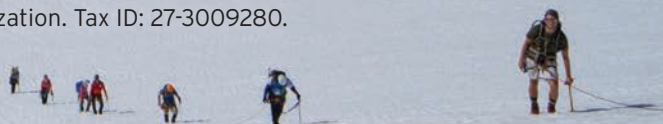
# SUPPORT THE MOUNTAINEERS WITH A YEAR END GIFT

"We feel fortunate to have been lifelong students of the world's greatest teacher, Mother Nature. Supporting organizations like The Mountaineers who help people get outside and benefit from her lessons is an important way we pay it forward for those who will follow in our footsteps."

- Jim Whittaker (77-year member) & Dianne Roberts (honorary member), 10-year donors

This giving season, join Jim and Dianne in making a tax-deductible donation before December 31, 2021. Visit [mountaineers.org/donate/yearendgift](https://mountaineers.org/donate/yearendgift) or mail a check to The Mountaineers at 7700 Sand Point Way, Seattle, WA 98115 to lend your support.

The Mountaineers ®, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Tax ID: 27-3009280.







# GRAB YOUR GORTEX AND GET OUT

By Heidi Walker, 17-year member and Super Volunteer

Sunlight streams through the mist in the forest at Wallace Falls State Park. All photos by Heidi Walker.

**A** galaxy of bubbles and foam swirls on top of my latte as I watch raindrops race down my kitchen window. Two drops catch my attention as they zig and zag along their paths, only to collide and drop to the sill, melting into the puddle awaiting them. I return my gaze back to my coffee and hiking books spread out on the table. There are better things to do on a wet winter day than plan trips for warmer months.

My mother was fond of saying, “Only sugar melts in the rain, and you are not made of sugar.” This was often met with loud grumbles from her daughters who would rather watch cartoons than go outside in the rain. But we would soon be playing hide and seek in a forest or meandering along a beach looking for the perfect agate or seashell, our colorful plastic coats and rubber galoshes the only color on a grey landscape.

During these damp days I learned to appreciate winter in Seattle, no matter how wet and miserable. Even with rain pelting my umbrella and soaking my socks, I like to slow down and let the cool, humid air fill my senses. Have you ever pet a rock covered in saturated moss? Inhaled deep the aroma of wet soil? Listened to the silence of a winterized forest?

If not, I have a few ideas to help you dip your toes in a lowland winter in the Pacific Northwest. If you already have, well, you’re still invited to play. You can do these activities with friends, family, or on your own. I must advise you that winter activities are a lot more fun when shared with someone else, and you might be surprised to find yourself on more wet winter adventures.

Your packing list for these adventures is good rain gear, layers to keep you warm, and a desire to bring a smile to your day.

## Puddle races

Our first game is puddle races. Have you ever watched a leaf floating on a puddle in the middle of a trail? When a breeze brushes across the surface, it pushes the leaf around the puddle in a little spiral dance. Add another leaf and watch them turn and float in a dance, choreographed by nature. While watching leaves float in a puddle can be meditative, if you have a more competitive mind, you can make the leaves race each other. Line up a few leaves, set a finish line, and have your friends join you in blowing them across the puddle. Experiment with different types of leaves and puddles to find the champion of the puddle races.

## Beachcombing

One of my mother’s favorite pastimes in the winter was beachcombing. While she would often stroll along a rocky beach looking for rocks, shells, and other treasures, I would spend the day deeply inhaling the ocean breeze. The aromas of the beach were so different from what I smelled in Seattle or in the forest. The beach had a salty yet cleansing fragrance. I still feel refreshed when visiting the ocean, breathing the purifying air that helps to clean the earth. I have no other advice than to walk slowly, look for interesting nothings on the beach, and breathe. Breathe deeply to clear your head. Breathe deeply to clean your soul.





Two winter enthusiasts explore the beach at McMicken Island.

## Rainy-day picnics

I'll tell you a little secret about me - I love picnics, and rainy-day picnics are the best. You know how any meal after a long adventure is the best meal you've ever had? Picnics in the rain are very similar to that. Many of our parks have picnic shelters that go unused during winter. People just don't seem interested in picnicking in the winter, but I think they're missing out. You'll need to bundle up, but the fried chicken leg, soup, and hot chocolate seem to have more flavor on a cold winter day surrounded by nature than at home.

## Puddle splashing

We're going to go back to puddles here, because everyone remembers the joy of jumping into a puddle and making the biggest splash they could. Now that you're an adult, how big of a splash can you make? You haven't tried it lately? Why not? Jump as high as you can and come down in a splash. Listen to the sound as your feet hit the water. Listen to how the water droplets reconnect with the ground. Then hear the gleeful laughter of your inner child ring through the trees. Compete with your friends or kids to see who can make the biggest splash.

## Hiking

Finally, go for a hike. Our local public lands are often empty during the winter. You can feel the solitude of these spaces reinvigorate your soul. While the forest lies dormant during winter, you can sense the life just below your feet and under your hands as you brush the bark of an old Douglas-Fir. Your senses are awakened and you are reminded that nature sleeps and, in slumber, is renewed. We can join in that renewal as we explore trails we often forget during warmer months when we head to the mountains.

So many adventure opportunities await on these damp days. Dress for the conditions and explore our lowlands to let winter fill your senses. Then, after a day full of wet adventures, you can plan for warmer months with a latte and your favorite hiking books. ▲▲

# The Mountaineers Bookstore Winter Sale

Enjoy some extra purchasing pow this season! | Now-Dec 29, in-store only

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

7700 Sand Point Way NE

Seattle, WA 98115

25% off Books & Maps | 25% off Logo Merchandise  
35% off Book Bundles | 50% off Book "Seconds"  
\$1 USGS Maps | \$2 T-Shirts



# An Introduction to the Global Adventures Program

By Steve Johnson, Cindy Hoover, and Cheryl Talbert  
Past and current Global Adventures chairs and leaders

Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon on the south coast of Iceland. Photo by Steve Johnson.

Since 1969, The Mountaineers has been sponsoring multi-day outdoor adventures around the world through our Global Adventures program. Our members have skied the slopes of Japan, backpacked across Chilean Patagonia, and trekked through the Alps. In the past five decades we've offered 233 separate trips, the hours of which tally up to a cumulative 90 years of non-stop action and adventure. Like many of our activities, the program's beginnings are far more humble than the hustle-and-bustle we see today.

## Program progression

Called the Foreign Outings Committee in the 1970s and 80s, the Outing Coordinating Committee in the 1990s, and the Global Adventures Committee since the early 2000s, this program has always been run by a small group of passionate volunteers. All talented trip planners, seasoned international travelers, and active Mountaineers leaders at home, these volunteers coordinated and led foreign and domestic trips so that our membership had the opportunity to explore the world outside of Washington.

In the early days, outing itineraries could be quite casual as long as they centered on athletic outdoor recreation. Rather than today's detailed description of daily distances, elevation gain, exit options, and risks and hazards, the itinerary was more akin to "go hiking for two weeks in the Austrian Alps, and stay in huts!"

Risk management was less of a watchword at the time, but accidents were avoided by leaders who had the skill and experience to anticipate and avoid hazards. Participants also took responsibility for group safety and enjoyment. What has always made these trips fun and safe - whether a remote backpacking trip or a week of backcountry skiing out of a mountain lodge - is that leaders and participants are capable, know what to do in the outdoors, and take care of each other and the group.

Though initially focused on hiking in Europe, over the years the program expanded to climbing, hiking, backpacking, and

skiing across the world. We've offered treks in the Himalaya, backpacking in Turkey, naturalist and photography trips in Costa Rica, and skiing in the Alps, just to name a few. Our destinations have reflected the activity focus and destination dreams of volunteer leaders, the physical challenges varying from culturally-rich walking days through local villages to high-exertion climbing, skiing, and backpacking itineraries. And we leave with incredible memories and lifelong adventure buddies!

## Planning a Global Adventure

So what makes a Global Adventure different from a regular Mountaineers activity? For Global Adventures, leaders organize most of the trip logistics including ground transport, food, lodging, permits, and services like guides. Leaders post a member fee that covers all of these elements, plus a modest administration fee (a bargain compared with those of most commercial adventure travel!). On a standard Mountaineers domestic trip, each participant organizes and pays for their own logistics. Because of their financial and logistical complexity, Global Adventures require additional review and more approval steps than activities sponsored solely by individual activity committees, with international adventures requiring more oversight than domestic adventures (which include Canada, Mexico, and Hawaii).

## Become a Global Adventures leader

As we look toward the future, there is immense demand for outdoor-oriented, international adventure. Unfortunately, time, busy schedules, and the pandemic have depleted the ranks of our leaders. If you're an active Mountaineers activity leader who loves trip planning, travel, and leading groups, we'd love for you to consider becoming a Global Adventures leader! Contact Global Adventures Committee chairs Cindy Hoover ([cyn@zipcon.com](mailto:cyn@zipcon.com)) or Cheryl Talbert ([cascadehiker12@gmail.com](mailto:cascadehiker12@gmail.com)) for more information.

To view our upcoming trips, visit: [mountaineers.org/globaladventures](http://mountaineers.org/globaladventures) ▲▲



# It Doesn't Always Take a Village

## The case for solo hiking

By Craig Romano, Mountaineers Books Guidebook Author



Craig on a solo snowshoe adventure in the William O. Douglas Wilderness near White Pass. Photos courtesy of Craig Romano.

**G**o to any online hiker forum and after unleashed dogs, playing music, and toting a gun on the trail, the topic of hiking solo is sure to conjure up some strong opinions. What's particularly interesting is that so many of the folks who are adamantly against solo hiking insist that others shouldn't hike alone, either. And while an unleashed dog, music on the trail, or an irresponsible gun owner may certainly have a negative impact on others, a solo hiker is not having an effect on anyone's experience except their own. So why the passionate pleas for solo hikers to partner up?

### The myth of increased danger

Perhaps the number one reason many folks frown upon solo adventuring is its perceived level of danger. Many reason that if a mishap were to occur while traveling in the backcountry, the chances for a successful recovery are far greater if you are with others. And while it's comforting to be among others if something has gone awry, technology today has made it far easier to stay in touch, call for assistance, and be located.

Another passionate argument many make against hiking alone is that it increases the chances that a search party will need to be dispatched. Search and rescue teams will be dispatched regardless of the size of a missing or distressed hiking party. Solo hikers do tend to go missing far more often than groups of hikers, but some of the reasons why may not have as much to do with being alone than other factors, such as overconfidence.

### Accepting risk

Many vocal opponents can at times come across as nannies. They're not comfortable with the idea of heading into the wilderness alone, so no one else should either. They feel that they're looking after your safety. But if the adage of hiking

one's own hike is true, then if someone enjoys being on the trail alone, so be it. If you're a group hiker, don't condemn it. I have encountered far more prepared and experienced hikers roaming the hills alone than many groups I have seen, in which some or all members are ill prepared.

Outdoor sports are risky pursuits. But so is getting into a car and driving to the trailhead. When looking at auto accidents in the US, more than 38,000 Americans died in 2020, and over 4 million more required medical help. Although far fewer people hike daily than drive, it is still meaningful to note that hiking accidents are considerably less, and hiking deaths are quite rare. Still, to go through life and get the most out of it, you have to be willing to accept some risk. How much? It all depends on your comfort level and abilities.

### Safeguards

I've been hiking solo since getting hooked on hiking in my early 20s, after being introduced to it as a teen in organized group settings. I absolutely love hiking with others, and tend to do more of it as I have gotten older. But I still love being on the trail alone and heading into unfamiliar areas, seeking new adventures with no one else in tow. Some of my best and most intense wilderness experiences have been when I was alone.

When I head into the woods by myself, I automatically accept that I need to be more prepared and self-reliant than if I were in a group. I also have plenty of safeguards in place. Regardless of my company (or lack thereof), I always leave my itinerary and possible variations with my wife, leave contact info for the appropriate ranger district, and carry a Spot Satellite Messenger which contains a command that says "I'm OK, I will just be late."





Craig taking notes on Dickerman Mountain on a solo hike in November.

## Increased caution

I minimize my risks by not heading off trail or approaching a stretch of trail that may be hazardous, like a raging water crossing or dangerous snowfield. When I am in the company of others I may feel more confident to push on with these challenges. Of course I can just as easily get swept away in a creek crossing or slip on a steep snowfield if I am with someone else. A good hiking partner, however, can offer another perspective that may help prevent you from getting into a bad situation. When solo, you own all decisions.

However, it's my own confidence and experience that could potentially lead me into a dangerous situation. An article recently published in the SF Gate looked at four high-profile hiker deaths in California this summer. All four of these people were highly skilled and prepared. As this article revealed, many experienced solo hikers get in over their heads. They get into a precarious situation because their experience gives them the confidence to take on more risk. They can become complacent too - rationalizing that because they have negotiated similarly risky situations many times before with success, they will succeed again regardless of current factors. In my younger days of solo hiking, scrambling, and adventuring, I too was guilty of this. A few of my more challenging situations could have easily turned south. I have become much more conservative now in my risk taking, because I absolutely love hiking solo and I want to keep doing it.

## The appeal of going solo

So what is it that I find so appealing about being on the trail alone? For me, the self-reliance and subsequent confidence are a big draw. Building character on the trail and in the wilderness spills over into other aspects of life. Being prepared for travel in a rugged environment over long distances, and being successful in that endeavor, helps put real world situations into perspective.

I love that when I'm hiking alone my entire sense of being is amplified. I hear, see, smell, and sense things that I miss when I'm in a group. In a group you are focused on your hiking partners, oftentimes too engaged in conversation to hone in on what's around you. I have met hikers who have spent years in the woods and have never seen a bear. I saw a bear nearly every week last summer while I was on the trail. I was alone and focused on my environment. And when I'm alone, I'm not talking, which dramatically increases my chances of seeing wildlife. Of course, if you don't want to see bears, keep hiking in groups and talking loudly!

I have hiked in grizzly country alone. It's intense. You must be completely focused on your surroundings and read the land and signs before you. You never feel as alive as when you're constantly aware of every move you make and everything around you. Your senses become keen and you will see, hear, and notice some things for the first time in your life.

I also hike alone for spiritual redemption. And while many folks like to head to houses of worship to pay homage to their deity, I prefer the wilderness. I feel the presence of God in nature. I grapple with existential thoughts when I hike for miles, spending hours alone in the wilderness. Hiking deep into beautiful natural settings puts my mind into a meditative state. It helps me think more clearly about my sense of place and purpose. I have had more than a few revelations while being alone on the trail. Thoreau and Muir did too. Their observations and life experiences would be quite different if they were always tagging along in groups. Hiking alone can be an incredibly intense experience - and maybe that is why some folks shun it. It's far more comforting to be within the presence of others. ▲▲

*Craig Romano is an award-winning guidebook author who has written more than 25 books, including Backpacking Washington 2nd edition, Urban Trails Vancouver WA, and 100 Classic Hikes Washington (Mountaineers Books). Purchase his titles at our Seattle Program Center bookstore, online at [mountaineersbooks.org](http://mountaineersbooks.org), and everywhere books are sold.*





Front page of the *Seattle Times* on February 7, 1916 featured ski jumpers (clockwise from upper left): A. Flakstad, Reidar Gjølme, and L. Orvald.

## Excerpt from Chapter 2: The Big Snow

With its maritime climate, Seattle rarely gets much snow in winter. Snow in town is a novelty that quickly becomes a nuisance because of the city's steep hills and limited ability to clear them. Scandinavians who grew up skiing and who settled in Seattle in the early 1900s were frustrated because snow never lasted long enough to encourage development of the sport here. But events in the winter of 1916 began to change this. That January was unusually cold. Lakes around the city froze over, and during the last weekend of the month, three thousand skaters flocked to Green Lake on a Sunday afternoon. Over a period of three days, 29 inches of snow blanketed the city. The one-day record for snowfall in Seattle, 21 1/2 inches, was established on February 1. At 10:00 a.m. that day, the grandstand at the University of Washington's Denny Field buckled under the weight of new snow. The following afternoon, the dome of St. James Cathedral collapsed. Newspapers reported similar cave-ins all around western Washington. Streetcars were disabled and five-foot drifts clogged residential streets. The Smith Tower, the tallest building in the western United States at the time, hurled rooftop avalanches onto pedestrians below. *The Seattle Times*

# Ski Jumping on 4th Avenue

By Lowell Skoog, Mountaineers Books Author

Written in the Snows: Across Time on Skis in the Pacific Northwest, new from Mountaineers Books, offers a definitive and visually rich history of the past century of Northwest ski culture. In his debut title, renowned local skiing historian Lowell Skoog traces the development of skiing in Washington from the late 1800s to the present, covering the beginnings of ski resorts and competitions, the importance of the Olympic and Cascade mountains, and the friluftsliv, or open-air living spirit, of backcountry skiing. In this excerpt, experience how a record-breaking snowfall in 1916 led to the first-ever ski jumping tournament in the Pacific Northwest.

reported that the city was “in the Clutch of the Snow King.” As Seattle slowly dug itself out during the days that followed, *Times* editorials exhorted citizens to “clean your sidewalks!” and “clean off that roof!” and “clean out the alleys.”

By the end of the week, odd tales of citizens coping with the snow were widespread. *The Seattle P-I* ran a fanciful account of one Henry Steinkopf, who wrote, “For fifteen years I have enjoyed the reputation of being the model citizen of our neighborhood... perfectly lamblike except under great provocation.” Steinkopf, who had never skied before, was persuaded by his Norwegian neighbor to borrow a pair of skis for a trip to the grocer. During the downhill run for home, he lost his groceries, his watch, his cash, and his temper after crashing into Rev. Mr. Lukenwater, the local pastor. “I repeat,” he wrote to the *P-I* editor, “that I lost all that was dear to me save my family because of those deceitful skis.” The story distilled through humor what non-Scandinavians imagined might happen if they tried skiing.

On Sunday, February 6, the *Times* printed an unusual announcement: “Ski jumping and speed skiing today will be introduced to the Seattle public... The committee in charge of the event believes that this is the first display of ski jumping



ever staged in Seattle." Three men worked late Saturday night to prepare a ski jump on Fourth Avenue North, one of the city's steepest streets, in the Queen Anne neighborhood near the Fremont Bridge. "The contest Sunday," explained organizer John Sagdahl, "is in the nature of an experiment. For many years, a number of ski jumpers from Norway who are now businessmen here have been attempting to create interest in the sport without success. We believe that skiing is one of the most thrilling sports in existence, both from the skier's and spectator's viewpoint."

The event was an expression of the distinctly Norwegian ideal of *friluftsliv*, loosely translated as "open-air living." Growing up where snow and skiing were a way of life, the ski-jumpers-turned-businessmen pined for snow-covered hills and the sport of their youth. A once-in-a-lifetime dump of snow in the city was simply too wonderful to waste. The ski jumping exhibition was front-page news on Monday. Warming temperatures, light rain, and sticky snow failed to deter ten jumpers from competing. Reidar Gjolme, general agent of the Norwegian American (steamship) Line, won the event with a leap of 43 feet. L. Orvald was second with 38 feet, and three jumpers tied for third.

The snow didn't last long enough for a planned second exhibition. A rapid thaw flooded Northwest rivers, and the Great Northern Railway cancelled its trains through the mountains due to avalanche danger. Life in the city returned to a soggy routine. For the men who participated in the exhibition, however, the event stirred powerful memories of their skiing youth. In the months that followed, they discussed how they might revive ski jumping and put it on a firmer footing in the region. By the next winter, they had a tentative solution.

Seattle newspapers announced in February 1917 the "First Ski Tournament Ever Held in the Northwest" at Scenic Hot Springs, on the Great Northern line below Stevens Pass. In addition to mineral baths and "an invigorating atmosphere," Scenic offered skis and toboggans for guest use on a small slope carved out of the forest behind the hotel. Five silver cups were put up for the event, with contests for both men and women. The Great Northern Railway offered a special two-dollar-and-eighty-cent roundtrip rate for the tournament. About 150 people traveled from Seattle to watch the tournament.

Nineteen skiers entered the event, traveling from Seattle, Tacoma, and even Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia. They included Thor Bisgaard of Tacoma and the winner of two previous winter's competitions in Seattle, Reidar Gjolme, who had competed on the famous Holmenkollen jump in Norway in 1902. Jumps of 80 to 100 feet were expected, although the newspapers acknowledged that "some of the men who will compete have had many seasons pass their heads since they essayed the flight through the air on skis."

The tournament on February 4 was marred by rain and sticky snow. Gjolme won the meet with jumps of 70, 76, and 72 feet. Birger Normann of Tacoma was second. Due to the difficult conditions, Normann was the only jumper to stand up after his leaps. The highlight of the tournament was a young Norwegian woman, twenty-four-year-old Olga Bolstad, who arrived during the event and asked to borrow a pair of skis. "Although



Olga Bolstad won the first ski tournament held on Mount Rainier; she defeated all the male competitors. Photo by Asahel Curtis courtesy Washington State Historical Society, WSHS.1943.42.40132

an unknown when she arrived," newspapers reported, "she speedily became the most talked-of person in the tourney, owing to her sensational jumping." Bolstad cleaned up the women's prizes and was awarded honorable mention in the men's events for her jumping.

Organizers realized that Scenic Hot Springs was not an ideal location for skiing. At an elevation of only 2,200 feet above sea level, Scenic receives as much rain in winter as snow. Fortunately, Bisgaard knew another option - Mount Rainier - as well as any skier. He had attended The Mountaineers' New Year's outing at Paradise just five weeks before the Scenic tournament and knew that the Paradise Inn would open to the public that summer. At an elevation of 5,400 feet, Paradise often holds snow into July.

After meeting with Thomas H. Martin, proprietor of the new inn, Bisgaard organized an event unprecedented in America: a midsummer ski tournament. The tournament was scheduled for July 29, 1917. Paradise Inn opened before the road was

cleared of snow, and the first guests saw their baggage delivered on sleds. Publicity for the event announced that Olga Bolstad, "the most sensational lady ski-jumper in the Northwest," would be competing. ▲▲

*Written in the Snows* is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center bookstore, online at [mountaineersbooks.org](http://mountaineersbooks.org), and anywhere books are sold.





# Virtual Education Center and Calendar

We're excited to invite you to check out our new Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all of our great virtual learning tools! Find activities, events, and classes held online and browse our educational resources for skills and more.



Conservation & Advocacy



Fitness & Performance



Gear Tips



Leadership Skills



Preparedness & Planning



Technical Skills

## How to Get Involved

### Step 1: Visit [mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center](https://mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center)

This is your first stop to find everything you need for outdoor education and exploration.

### Step 2: Choose what you want to learn

There's so much to explore! With a wide range of topics - from leadership tips to how to coil a rope - there's something for everyone. We also have a special 'Just for Fun' section if you need a laugh.

### Step 3: Decide what kind of learning experience you want to have

Would you prefer to read a blog or complete an online course? What about attending a live webinar with an open discussion? We offer multiple educational formats to choose from so that everyone can find what works for them.

14

Online Courses

## What You'll Find

100+

Educational Blogs

29

Virtual Events & Activities



## How to Sign Up for Activities

### Step 1

Visit our website

[www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org)  
Click on the big green 'Find Activities' button, or hover over the 'Activities' tab and choose 'Find Activities'.

### Step 2

Filter your activity search

Define your search using the filter options in the green column on the left. To view activities by location, choose 'Map' in the upper right.

### Step 3

Select an activity & register

Click on the activity of your interest to learn more. If you like what you see, select the orange 'Register' button. You'll be added to the trip roster and receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Activities **require registration** unless otherwise noted. You will also need a current waiver on file with The Mountaineers to participate.*

## How to Sign Up for Events

### Step 1

Visit our website

[www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org)  
Click on the 'Upcoming Events' button on the left of the main page, or click 'More' and choose the 'Events' tab.

### Step 2

Browse for local events

Scroll down to view our most popular events, or choose a branch or program center calendar for more events in your area. Browse through your options, and click on an event to learn more.

### Step 3

Select an event & register

Many events are free but require you to RSVP via the orange RSVP button. Events that require tickets will have a link for online ticket purchases.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What if I'm not a member?** Many of our activities - especially day hikes and urban adventures - are open to the general public. You simply need to sign up for a guest membership at [www.mountaineers.org/join](http://www.mountaineers.org/join). Guests can participate in two activities for free before joining.

**What are some easy ways to get started?** Sign up for an activity without prerequisites. These includes day hikes, backpacking trips, stewardship activities, photography outings, and occasional sailing opportunities! Also, consider taking a basic or introductory course like Basic Snowshoeing, Introduction to Rock Climbing, Navigation, and much, much more! Visit [www.mountaineers.org/courses](http://www.mountaineers.org/courses) to see what's currently available.

**How are events and activities different?** Activities are primarily daylong outings that require participants to use skills in an outdoor setting. Examples include hikes, naturalist walks, or snowshoeing - in short, you are outside doing something. Events are open to the community, and are primarily opportunities to see presentations and socialize. Examples include summer picnics, branch banquets, and our BeWild speaker series.

**What if I don't meet the prerequisites for an activity?** Some of our technical activities, like climbing and kayaking, have prerequisite skill requirements. If you want to learn the prerequisite skills, we encourage you to take one of our courses. If you already have the prerequisite skills, you might qualify for equivalency. Email [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) and we will help you apply for equivalency so you can participate at the appropriate skill level.

**Why do some activities say 'Leader Permission Required'?** All of our Mountaineers activities are led by volunteers. To assure everyone on a trip has a set of specific skills, some volunteers require you to contact them in advance to participate. Before signing up for a trip that requires leader permission, please contact the leader by clicking on their name in the course/activity listing and sending them an email. You can always email our member services team with questions at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org).

**What if the activity is full?** Sign up for the waitlist! Yes, it works. We have roughly a 10-20% drop-out rate in courses and activities, so spots often become available.

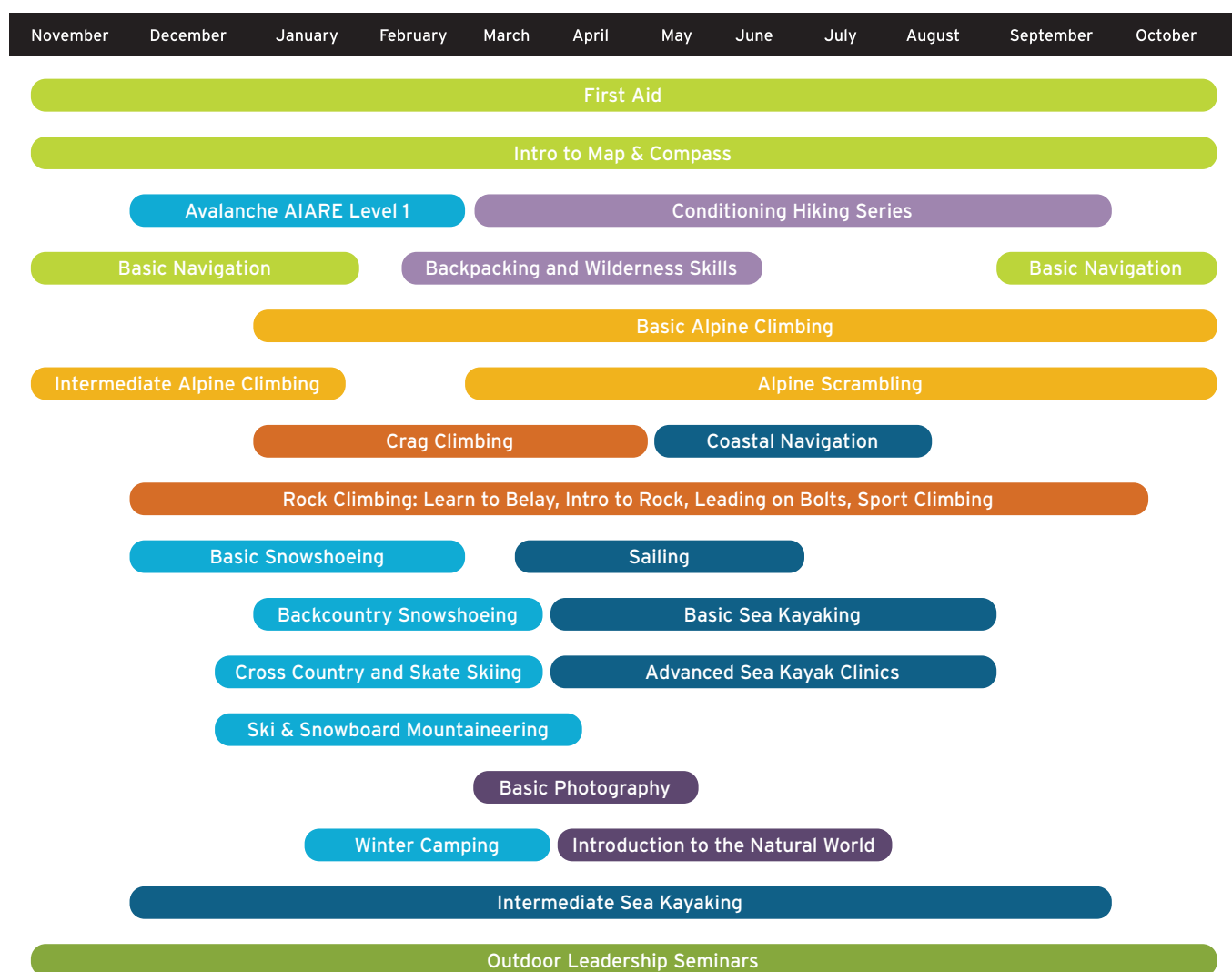




## The Mountaineers Course Overview

The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses every season and some all year round. The same course may be offered by multiple branches, and you can take a course with any branch. Exploring our clinics and seminars is also a great way to refine or expand your existing skills. Practice skills taught in our courses, learn about new techniques or gear, and explore new possibilities within our organization, like becoming an activity leader. Our clinics and seminars are often open to both our membership and the general public.

To learn when our courses are coming, take a look at our course calendar:



You can access all of our offerings online, with up-to-date information on subject matter, materials, and rosters. If you already have the skills covered by one of our introductory courses and want to participate in that type of activity, contact member services at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) to find out how to qualify for equivalency. To see our courses, visit [www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org). We hope to see you outside!

*Due to COVID-19 risks, access to our lodges is extremely limited.  
Please visit our lodge webpages and [mountaineers.org/covid19](https://mountaineers.org/covid19) for more details.*

Open to Mountaineers members and the general public, our lodges provide visitors with unparalleled access to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and more. The Mountaineers is also home to the Kitsap Forest Theater, a historic outdoor theater showcasing two musical productions a year which are open to the public and a family favorite.

**LODGE WEBPAGES** Information about schedules, availability, meals, group rentals, and special events can all be found on the lodge webpages. You can also book your stay online. To access our lodge webpages, visit the direct links listed below or go to [mountaineers.org](https://mountaineers.org), click on 'More' in the top menu, and then click on 'Locations & Lodges' in the dropdown menu.

**VOLUNTEER** Our lodges and the Kitsap Forest Theater are run by dedicated volunteers, and they can use your help! Visit their webpages to learn how you can contribute to the teams that keep our outdoor centers running.



## Baker Lodge

[mountaineers.org/bakerlodge](https://mountaineers.org/bakerlodge)

Our rustic Mt. Baker Lodge is nestled in the spectacular North Cascades and is a beautiful getaway year-round. The lodge is located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker Ski Area and numerous summer and fall hiking trails. We are closed to general booking during COVID-19 measures, but may be available for single-purpose groups. Please direct inquiries to [mtbakerlodge@gmail.com](mailto:mtbakerlodge@gmail.com) or lodge chairs.



## Meany Lodge

[mountaineers.org/meanylodge](https://mountaineers.org/meanylodge)

Meany Lodge operates a rope-tow on our ski hill for ski lessons, cross-country skiing, and snowshoe excursions. This year Meany Lodge will be most enjoyed by those happy to spend the day outside, with bathroom access only and no overnight stays. Visit our webpage to sign up for an upcoming work party.



## Stevens Lodge

[mountaineers.org/stevenslodge](https://mountaineers.org/stevenslodge)

Nestled near the Stevens Pass ski area, this rustic ski-in/ski-out lodge is open to PCT thru-hikers and mountain bikers in the fall, and skiers in the winter. Tired of the hustle and bustle of the big city? Come for a quiet respite to a cabin in the woods, with bunks for the whole family. Several trails are a short walk or drive from the lodge.

## Kitsap Forest Theater

[foresttheater.com](https://foresttheater.com)



Theater inspired by a magical place! Stroll down the forested trail to our breathtaking theater and create a treasured family tradition. Our 2022 shows are uplifting musicals that appeal to everyone - treat yourself to a day away in the forest. Tickets make great gifts and are available online, save on our two-show package.

**Disney's Beauty and the Beast (May-Jun 2022):** Step into the enchanted world of this "tale as old as time" and "be our guest" for this heartwarming tale of true love and transformation, perfect for the entire family.

**Bend in the Road, The Anne of Green Gables Musical (Late Jul-Aug):** This Northwest premier show is a high-energy, family musical based on the beloved classic, *Anne of Green Gables*. This warm, funny musical retains the heart of the original story, and is perfect for all ages.

**Help wanted:** Seeking help with set building, and cooks for weekend rehearsals and performances.



*Due to COVID-19 risks activities, courses, and events may be cancelled or postponed. Please visit [mountaineers.org/covid19](https://mountaineers.org/covid19) for more details.*

The Mountaineers is home to seven branches, each offering a number of courses and seminars. Our branches also host a variety of events like picnics, film screenings, and guest speakers. Regardless of which branch you join, you can sign up for offerings with any branch. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/locations-lodges](https://mountaineers.org/locations-lodges).



## BELLINGHAM

**Chair:** Brian McNitt, [brian@trendmedia.com](mailto:brian@trendmedia.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/bellingham](https://mountaineers.org/bellingham)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** climbing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, scrambling, and stewardship.

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the craggy expanse of the North Cascades. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and more. We're also home to one of the most popular Mountaineers getaway destinations, Mt. Baker Lodge.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## EVERETT

**Chair:** Elaina Jorgensen, [elaina.jorgensen@gmail.com](mailto:elaina.jorgensen@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/everett](https://mountaineers.org/everett)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and stewardship.

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch offers over a dozen programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and regularly host events including monthly open houses and annual gatherings like our Salmon Bake, Gear Grab & Potluck, Annual Awards Banquet, and more. Check our branch calendar for details. Our branch is also known for our unique Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee, which restored and continues to maintain the historic Mt. Pilchuck lookout.

## KITSAP

**Chair:** Debbie Aquila, [dbwave17@gmail.com](mailto:dbwave17@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/kitsap](https://mountaineers.org/kitsap)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** climbing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The Kitsap Branch draws members from throughout western Puget Sound, from Gig Harbor to the Olympic Peninsula, including Pierce, Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam counties. Join us at our program center, conveniently located in Bremerton.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are held in February, May, August, and November. Our annual branch celebration is in October, please join us! Visit our branch calendar for details.

## SEATTLE

**Chair:** Jared Pearce, [jared.pearce@gmail.com](mailto:jared.pearce@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/seattle](https://mountaineers.org/seattle)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, canyoning, climbing, cross-country skiing, exploring nature, first aid, folk dancing, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, photography, retired rovers, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and stewardship.

The Seattle Branch began as the sole club location in 1906 when The Mountaineers was founded. Our Meet The Mountaineers open houses are held about once a month and are a great way for new and prospective members to learn about our many offerings. Our branch is also home to the Seattle Program Center, which features a book store, indoor and outdoor climbing walls, event spaces, and more.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community - no prior experience required. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## FOOTHILLS (I-90/I-405 CORRIDORS)

**Chair:** Alan Davey, [awdavey@hotmail.com](mailto:awdavey@hotmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/foothills](https://mountaineers.org/foothills)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** AIARE avalanche safety, backcountry and downhill skiing, conservation and stewardship, cross-country skiing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, snowshoeing, climbing, and trail running.

The Foothills Branch is the club's newest branch, founded in 2004 and encompassing the eastside communities along the I-90 and I-405 corridors. In addition to our educational and activity programs we host film screenings, guest speakers, stewardship events with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, and other community events. We are also excited to be a close partner with Meany Lodge!

Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our

community - no prior experience required. We invite you to get involved in branch leadership and committees to get our communities outside. Contact the branch chair if you might be interested.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are held every other month (except summer) to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. All branch members are welcome! Visit our branch calendar for details.

## TACOMA

**Chair:** Curtis Stock, [cstock34@msn.com](mailto:cstock34@msn.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/tacoma](https://mountaineers.org/tacoma)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, climbing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, photography, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The second largest of all seven branches, the Tacoma branch maintains its own program center in the Old Town neighborhood of Tacoma, as well as the Irish Cabin property located near Mt. Rainier. A great way to get involved is our Meet the Tacoma Mountaineers event, consisting of a meet-and-greet and a 90-minute interactive presentation giving you opportunities to learn about our history, our website, and how you can get involved.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are held every six weeks to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and general branch business. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## OLYMPIA

**Chair:** Neal Kirby, [neal.kirby@hotmail.com](mailto:neal.kirby@hotmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/olympia](https://mountaineers.org/olympia)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, stewardship, snowshoeing, wilderness skills, and youth & family. Our branch is known for its robust stewardship program.

**EVENTS:** Our monthly speaker series is held the first Wednesday of each month, Dec-Apr.

**BRANCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are held on Zoom the second Wednesday of the month. Members are encouraged to attend. Visit our branch calendar for details.

# Get Involved With Your Branch

**Visit Your Branch Page** Go to [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org) and click on 'More' in the top menu; then click 'Locations & Lodges' and select your branch from the dropdown options. On your branch home page, you'll find branch news, upcoming events, contact info, and more. You can also access your branch page using the direct links listed in the branch summaries.

**Browse Branch Courses & Activities** To see what's available, visit [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org) and click the big green 'Find Courses' button or 'Find Activities' button. You can then narrow your search by branch using the filter options in the green column on the left. Remember, you can sign up for courses and activities offered by any branch.

**Branch Events** With picnics, open houses, banquets, guest speakers, and more, our branches host an array of events for you to get involved. To check out what's next, visit [mountaineers.org/events](http://mountaineers.org/events). From this page, you can select your branch calendar.

**Branch eNewsletters** Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt into these emails, visit [mountaineers.org/profile](http://mountaineers.org/profile). Login, then scroll down and make sure the box next to 'Branch Communications' is checked.\*

**Volunteer** Our branches draw on people with a range of skills and interests to power their programs. Instructors, event planners, admin help, and more are all needed. Volunteering is a great way to plug into our community. Reach out to your branch chair to get started.

*\*The Seattle Branch doesn't have a branch-wide eNewsletter, but several activity committees publish eNewsletters, including climbing, navigation, photography, and naturalists, and many activities have a Facebook presence. To learn more, contact the committee chairperson. To find a committee, input the committee name into our search bar at the top of our website.*

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To learn more, visit [mountaineers.org/membership/benefits](http://mountaineers.org/membership/benefits)

Skiers in the Meany Patrol Race. Photo by Rick Meade.



# The Social Life of Trees

By Issy Steckel, Communications Associate

Photo by Mike Short.

**W**inter in the forest is magical. We are often captivated by the snow blanketing branches, the morning light streaming through the canopy, and the crackling of ice and wood as wind blows into the treetops. But beneath our feet, a secret underground system is constantly at work. Plants are “communicating” with each other in remarkable ways - an essential process to sustaining the health of the ecosystem in every season.

Trees send and receive all kinds of information through a flexible, cooperative, and interdependent network. These messages come in the form of chemical signals that travel between nearby trees to prompt a variety of responses based on changing environmental conditions. For example, trees with extra water or nutrients are able to transfer this surplus to neighbors in need. Distressed trees can warn others in their network, even across species, about the presence of an incoming threat, like invasive bugs or the arrival of a drought. And a dying tree will endow any remaining carbon stores to its favorite neighbors in its final days.

## Hidden networks

To fully understand the story behind the social system of trees, we must introduce another key player: fungi. Underneath the forest floor is a fascinating microscopic network of these spore-producing organisms, more closely related to animals than plants. Every step you take through a forest covers densely-packed fungal threads, which can span hundreds of miles if unfurled.

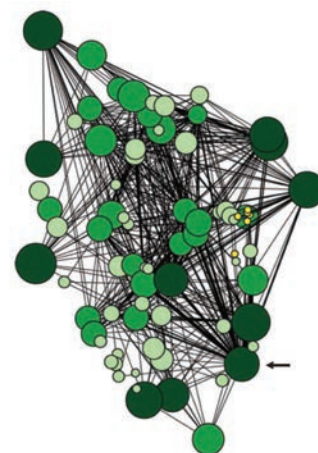
We’ve long understood there to be a symbiotic relationship between fungi and trees. Fungi consume a portion of the sugar that trees photosynthesize from sunlight; energized by these sugars, the fungi collect mineral nutrients from the soil, which are, in turn, absorbed by the trees. Yet recent scientific discoveries indicate that the fungi-tree interaction goes a step further. Fungi actually create the communication network that links trees together.

In healthy forests, mycelium, or the vegetative thread-like part of a fungus, fuse to the root tips of trees to build underground webs known as a mycorrhizal network. The trees, plants, fungi,

and microbes in forests are so thoroughly connected that this network has become fondly known as the “wood-wide web.”

## Mother trees

Deep in the forest, the hubs for arboreal communication are the “mother trees.” As the oldest and tallest, these trees tend to have bigger root systems and associate with more extensive mycorrhizal networks. To create a resilient forest, mother trees take on a supportive and nurturing role for trees in their network. Attuned to the needs of other trees and seedlings, these highly-connected trees detect nearby distress signals and adjust the flow of vital nutrients accordingly. For example, young trees do not yet have long enough root structures to independently retain sufficient water supply. Sensing this deficiency, mother trees soak up additional water from deep within the soil and facilitate its distribution to maintain the steady growth of the forest.



Model showing the linkages between Douglas firs through the mycorrhizal network by Beiler et al, 2010. The mother tree is connected to 47 other trees.

Throughout the winter season, mother trees are on high alert. With fewer hours of sunlight, many saplings struggle to receive enough light under the shaded canopy. Luckily, the height of mother trees means they have more access to available sunlight and can continue to convert this energy into sugar, sometimes generating more than they need for themselves. This extra sugar is redirected through the fungi-based mycorrhizal network to support saplings that are less likely to survive.

The story of a resilient forest is much more than what meets the eye. Next time you wander through the trees, take a moment to think about the world from their perspective. What conversations might be taking place under your boots? ▲▲



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