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News and Notes from Sierra Nevada Journeys

October 2009

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Sierra Nevada Journeys is the leading provider of experiential and science education in the greater Reno/Tahoe area. A registered Nevada non-profit corporation, its vision is to empower youth through positive risk taking and experiential leadership, science, and outdoor education. The organization offers educational opportunities for students and teachers in grades K-12 through in-class, after-school, weekend, summer camps, and residential outdoor school programs. More information on this - and other - programs can be found on our website (see Quick Links below).

Quick Links

[Our Website](#)
[Journeys Window \(a
 weblog\)](#)
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Message From the Director

Dear Friends,

Greetings and Happy Fall! Students are back at school, and already, fall programming is in full swing. So far this fall, Sierra Nevada Journeys has already brought outreach opportunities to 607 students through in school and after school opportunities. Sierra Nevada Journeys is changing and growing: our staff has grown to 20 full time employees, including 10 AmeriCorps VISTAs, we've moved to larger office space in Reno, and expanded into California with a Sacramento office and a Director of California Outreach. Thanks to your support, we've also been able to increase our reach to students, educators, and the community, having served more than 6,000 students so far in 2009. One teacher this summer wrote to us about our programming, saying "even as a teacher, I learned so much about Science, the environment, and my students. I was amazed at how much each child was given the opportunity to grow into a leader." Another student noted that by the end of the week, Sierra Nevada Journeys began to "feel like...my family." Through your support, and the support of our community, Sierra Nevada Journeys will continue to empower students and teachers in Nevada, California, and beyond. Thank you for being a part of the journey!



Warm Regards,
 Jonathan Mueller

California Students Empowered Through Experiential Education

Sierra Nevada Journeys opened its first satellite office in Sacramento this fall. The expansion to the west side of the Sierra is being done in partnership with and funding from the Sierra Health Foundation. Sean Hill, Director of California Outreach, is the man behind the mission to empower youth in Northern California.

"We're excited to provide California students with the hands-on, engaging brand of education that creates lasting memories and inspires them to want to learn," Jonathan Mueller, Executive



Director of Sierra Nevada Journeys said. "Sean Hill brings a wealth of experience in outdoor and environmental education and we look forward to the tremendous impact he'll have on Northern California's youth.

Sierra Nevada Journeys' in-school and after-school programs that have been delivered in Northern Nevada for the past three years teach students about the world around them through the lens of science education. They have been translated to California state standards and are currently being tailored to fit the unique needs of schools in the Sacramento area. Aside from aligning SNJ curriculum to California standards, Sean is building relationships with teachers, parents, and administrators in the Sacramento City Unified and Twin Rivers School Districts and has already booked educational programs, partnered with three California non-profits, and will be hosting community meetings in November to find out how to best serve the Sacramento area.

"I am excited to be a part of the Sierra Nevada Journeys team." Sean Hill reported. "It's an incredible opportunity to increase student access to powerful learning experiences here in Sacramento, and to get more people outside experiencing the natural world."

Sean has also created a partnership with the Sacramento Valley Conservancy for Sierra Nevada Journeys' Classrooms Unleashed Program, in which Sacramento area youth experience and explore the Deer Creek Hills Preserve through engaging field studies.

Please join Sierra Nevada Journeys in welcoming Sean as he inspires and creates new opportunities for students in California. Sierra Nevada Journeys-California is located at Sierra Health Foundation's offices at 1321 Garden Highway, Sacramento, CA 95833.

Program Update

High Ropes Challenge Course Takes Students to New Heights

"I can't do it," shouted a student from Alyce Taylor Elementary School. "Yes you can," her classmates responded encouragingly. The student was hesitant to leave the zip line platform of the high ropes challenge course at Grizzly Creek Ranch, but with the help of her classmates she soared.



This fall, Sierra Nevada Journeys in cooperation with Project Discovery began incorporating the high ropes course into Journeys Outdoor School curriculum to provide a unique team-building opportunity for youth.

"The High Ropes course empowers youth by encouraging them to take positive risks and work with one another to accomplish a goal," said Nick Pretasky, vice president of education at Sierra Nevada Journeys. "It's amazing what type of teamwork results when an individual's success is dependent upon the participation of their fellow classmates."

The students begin with basic teamwork activities before progressing to the high ropes course which includes elements like a climbing wall and a zip line. After watching the students participate in the ropes course, the parent of a 6th grade student from Alyce Taylor Elementary School wrote

the following quote on a program evaluation.

"I loved the life lessons we learned through the ropes course. Kids need more exposure to these kinds of life lessons and skills. I would not have believed how much the kids changed in just a few hours if I hadn't heard and seen it myself."

Outreach Continues to Empower Youth

The autumn temperatures may be decreasing, but the number of students served by Sierra Nevada Journeys is increasing. This fall, Sierra Nevada Journeys has served 607 students in six different schools through in-school and after-school programming.

"The outreach team is working diligently to provide quality programming for our students," said Outreach Manager Joanna Furgiuele. "We are in the process of revising current curriculum and working to add new curriculum to our programs."

Fall in-school programs are covering a variety of topics including leadership development, the solar system, and watershed science. The after-school Wondrous Women of Science program has an all-time high number of participants. In addition, 44 students from Minden Elementary School attended a Classrooms Unleashed field trip to Spooner Lake. Sierra Nevada Journeys also provided the children's activities for the 2009 Childhood Cancer Awareness Event hosted by the Northern Nevada Children's Cancer Foundation.

Sierra Nevada Journeys is currently booking programs for the Spring. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Joanna Furgiuele at 775-842-2693 or by emailing joanna@sierranevadajourneys.org.



LIFE Conference Attracts Record Number of Attendees

Sierra Nevada Journeys hosted the Lamoille Institute for Educators Conference in August at Camp Lamoille near Elko, NV. More than 70



people attended the event which was double the amount that attended in 2008. This year's theme was "Growing Change: Empowering Educators to Do More with Less." The five-day event was an exciting opportunity for educators to learn kinesthetic, place-based activities that they could use upon returning to their classrooms.

Memorable events included a tour of local ranch properties, a hike to Lamoille Lake, and an educational evening program on astronomy. Sierra Nevada Journeys would graciously like to thank the steering committee, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection and Northeastern Nevada Science Project for helping make the event a success!

Donor Developments

Sierra Nevada Journeys received a few noteworthy grants in the past few months and wanted to notify donors and partners about them. Sierra Nevada Journeys was awarded a Youth Service America award to

continue a service learning project with Dilworth Middle School as an Energy Impact School. As part of Sierra Nevada Journeys' Adventure Science Clubs, Dilworth students will learn about energy and its effects on earth, will measure energy use at Dilworth, and brainstorm potential school improvement projects (eg. a recycling program, composting, school garden, updating lighting infrastructure). Students will present their ideas to teachers, parents and administrators, and the school community will decide on the students' Energy Impact Project for their school.

REI has awarded a grant to support the Classrooms Unleashed program to ensure that more classes are getting outdoors to learn firsthand about the watersheds, flora and fauna that make up our area's most beautiful locations. By exploring the outdoors, science lessons truly come to life for students. In addition to bringing classes outdoors, the REI grant and Sierra Nevada Journeys programming will also encourage whole families to get outside and learn about their surroundings together, truly bringing science lessons home.



The Environmental Education and Training Partnership awarded two grants to Sierra Nevada Journeys' professional development program for teachers. One grant is to provide workshops and conferences to teachers throughout the state, and the other is to correlate the Project Learning Tree's early childhood and secondary modules, as well as additional preK-8 modules, to Nevada state standards.

In early October, Sierra Nevada Journeys' work in empowering youth went directly to the source with empowering nine AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers with a grant writing workshop. VISTA volunteers will be able to add grant writing to their cadre of real-world experiences, as well as build capacity for Sierra Nevada Journeys and Envirolution, by bringing in some needed grant funding.

If the philanthropic spirit of these stories has been contagious and you'd like to invest in empowering youth through experiential education, please consider giving to Sierra Nevada Journeys. You can give online at <http://www.sierranevadajourneys.org/get-involved/donations/> or by sending a check to 1301 Cordone Avenue, Suite 200, Reno, NV 89502.

Volunteer Opportunities

Sierra Nevada Journeys is currently working to improve its volunteer programs. As a growing organization, we understand the importance of connecting with members of our community, sharing our vision, and taking advantage of the valuable insights that community members have to offer. Sierra Nevada Journeys is fortunate enough to have several UNR students working with the outreach team on its school programming, and we have also compiled a network of high-school students who are interested in helping in some capacity. In upcoming months, we hope to extend these opportunities to, not just students, but all passionate, dedicated, and hardworking individuals who are interested in making a difference. Some volunteer opportunities will include, but are not limited to: coordinating fundraising events, promoting our organization to the region's educators and administrators, hosting events, and facilitating In- and After-school programs at local schools. For more information or to get involved, visit the volunteer page of our website, <http://www.sierranevadajourneys.org/get-involved/volunteer-with-snj/>, or email darcey@sierranevadajourneys.org.

Upcoming Events

November 7, 2009 from 8:00 AM- 5:00 PM: Explore Your Watershed Workshop: Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, .5 CEU Credit Available, Teachers and non-formal educators are invited to attend. For more information, please contact Laurie Gray at laurie@sierranevadajourneys.org or call at 775-355-1688

November 14, 2009 from 10:00 AM- 2:00 PM- Communities Unleashed at Galena Forest State Park. This will be a free event. Please bring a sack lunch and a water bottle. Snacks and hot drinks will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Darcey Lewis at darcey@sierranevadajourneys.org or call at 775-355-1688

February 12-15: Sierra Nevada Journeys will be hosting the 28th annual Residential Outdoor Environmental Education (ROEE) Conference this year at Camp Galilee on the beautiful shores of Lake Tahoe. Space is limited, so early registration is encouraged! To register online, visit <http://www.sierranevadajourneys.org/professional-development/roee-conference/> or, for more information, email info@sierranevadajourneys.org.

February 16-18, 19-21, 22-26, and March 1-5, 8-11, 12-14, 2010: Winter Journeys Outdoor School will be taking place in 6 sessions (including 2 weekend sessions) this year at Camp Galilee, on the shores of Lake Tahoe in Glenbrook, NV. Students will learn winter ecology and survival, among many other subjects, during this winter adventure program. The last day to register is January 15. Please contact Adam Yarnes for more information at adam@sierranevadajourneys.org, or 775-560-1813

February 24-27, 2010: Our Places Tell Stories- Lead the Way: Engage, Empower, and Embrace through Environmental Literacy. This year's conference features author Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods." The conference will be held at the Springs Preserve in Las Vegas, NV. For more details, please visit www.enviroedexchange.org

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