

A summer of giving

REI announces its first crop of 2008 corporate giving grants



Big City Mountaineers organizes trips that help under-resourced teens gain a respect for the outdoors.

For Soreya Moody, it all started with a backpacking trip to Yosemite.

After learning about Big City Mountaineers (BCM) through a local youth group, the San Leandro, Calif., high school student participated in several of the organization's week-long mountain adventures for under-resourced teenagers. This summer, she's a paid peer mentor with the organization, thanks to its Teen Leadership Employment Program, supported by a recent grant from REI.

Her advice to other teenagers? "They may like city life, but they'll love the outdoors."

The \$25,000 grant to BCM is just one of about 400 grants that REI will

distribute this year – with a total of \$3.7 million being earmarked for giving in 2008.

All grantee organizations are nominated by REI employees, with a focus on community-based nonprofits committed to conservation, recreation and building youth's enthusiasm and respect for the natural environment.

"Young people from all backgrounds are spending significantly less time outside," says REI corporate giving manager David Jayo. "As a nation, we need our next generation to be future champions for open spaces, waterways and clean beaches."

Some of the other grantees from this round of giving include:

Children & Nature Network: Nature Clubs for Families

After reading about "nature deficit disorder," Virginia dad and teacher Chip Donahue and his young family started a nature club – now involving more than 170 families who meet monthly – and inspired a national outreach project.

Through a \$50,000 grant from REI, The Children & Nature Network will provide families across the nation with a nature club "starter kit" – available on the group's website, with local promotions also planned with REI. The group's goal is to reach more than 15,000 kids. "We know that children who spend time in nature from birth to age 11 are far more likely to forge a lifelong connection to the out-of-doors – including a sense of stewardship," says Dr. Cheryl Charles, the organization's president and CEO.

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Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: Connect Grants

Dedicated to responsible enjoyment and active stewardship of natural places, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics is a long-term REI partner in the PEAK (Promoting Environ-



Grants help fund programs that engage future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

mental Awareness in Kids) program, which has helped more than 500,000 kids learn about responsible outdoor recreation. Supported by a \$25,000 investment from REI, the Connect Grants are creating new partnerships for stewardship education with organizations serving ethnically diverse communities. "Working with REI, we've reached more than half a million young people who are poised to become future stewards of our nation's shared outdoor lands," says Dana Watts, executive director of Leave No Trace. "We welcome the opportunity to further expand our work with youth from diverse backgrounds."

Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC): Youth Opportunities Program

AMC's Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) helps youth service organizations lead at-risk teenagers in explor-

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ing the Northeast's parks and remote natural areas. In addition to a \$20,000 grant supporting the group's training efforts, REI also is donating \$5,000 worth of gear to the program's free "lending library" — where participating teenagers can borrow such essentials as high-quality boots, outerwear and camping equipment.

"With REI's partnership, we're supporting 10 to 20 different trips on a

typical summer day," says YOP director Stefanie Brochu.

These grants allow REI to support organizations that might not otherwise be able to fund programs, engaging future generations of outdoor enthusiasts. Through their outreach, more people are gaining a love of and respect for nature. Stay tuned for more news about REI's 2008 grantees.