## EXPLORERS

In its tenth year, the Explorers program steered more elementary students than ever before to unique nature locations around Richmond each month. Second through fifth graders from our community's most disadvantaged neighborhoods were transported from their city block to inspiring green spaces to bring their classroom science concepts to life in nature. From learning about their impact on the James River at Belle Isle, to identifying tree species at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, to understanding animal adaptations at Pocahontas State Park - students sped off on the road to exploration and discovery that's crucial to a child's academic and character development during these young formative years.

- 3,102 Total Number of Students Served in 2018
- 21 Outdoor Locations
- 8 Schools Served in 2018
- 97% Positive experience in nature for the students
- of students maintained a grade of B or higher in science
- of teachers reported referring to lesson plans following the field trip

I learned new things and always paid attention during Blue Sky Fund trips - every time we came back to school, we wrote about the things we learned."

- Kay'Niemah Hilchman, 5th grade, Fairfield Court ES

# UUTUUUK ADVENTURE CLUBS

Middle school students pushed to new limits each week in our Outdoor Adventure Clubs (OAC), overcoming the challenges and uncertainty of activities often beyond their comfort zone. Students met I-2 times per week to cycle through outdoor adventure sessions such as hiking, rock climbing, biking, paddling, and then parked at destinations beyond the city for an overnight camping trip each semester. Middle school can be a turbulent season with stormy weather, no matter your circumstances - through OACs, the outdoors provide an outlet for students to gain confidence in their ability to rise above challenges with the support of staff trained to manage trauma. Middle schoolers navigated the changing tides at First Landing State Park and scouted out summits in the Blue Ridge Mountains, crossing plenty of adventures off their map within the city as well.

- Total Number of Students Served in 2018
- 23 Outdoor Locations
- Partner Sites in 2018
- 27 Weekly Outings Per Club
- Students showed increases in resiliency according to the Child & Youth Resiliency Measure

I first volunteered at Blue Sky to share my passion for rock climbing, but I found that the real joy is helping these kids embrace moving out of their comfort zones to try something new and scary. The joy is in how they face their fears, how they cheer each other on. It's in the triumph on their faces when they top a route and their determination to try again when they don't. It's what they take away from the rock wall: not just stronger muscles, but stronger minds and a stronger sense of self, the tenacity they need to face the world."

- Sarah Fite, 2018 Volunteer of the Year

# OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Our Outdoor Leadership Institute (OLI) students traveled the furthest and spent the most time in nature - driving 300 miles to Grayson Highlands State Park for five days of wilderness immersion while summiting Mount Rogers. OLI is a year-long leadership program for high schoolers that intentionally brings together students from diverse backgrounds and sets their wheels in motion to become inclusive and service-oriented community leaders. The program started in the summer, ignited by team-building and leadership sessions that fuel the outdoor expedition, followed by monthly sessions throughout the school year to complete community service projects. Thirteen students graduated from the OLI program in June and were inducted into the alumni family, which embarked on an epic adventure to bike from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. along the Chesapeake and Allegheny Canal.

- Total Number of Students
  Served in 2018
- Expeditions
   Grayson Highlands State Park
   C&O Canal and the Great Allegheny Passage
- 336 Total Miles Hiked
- 2,970 Total Miles Biked

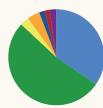
enriching urban youth with experiential outdoor education

- 200+ Hours Spent Outside Per Student
- 60+ Hours of Community Service Per Student
- 21 Highschools Across Richmond Represented

Nature makes me feel so much more relaxed and I become the best version of myself."

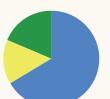
- Hannah Sjovold, Douglas Freeman HS

### FINANCIAL



- Income
  Grants: \$250,950
- Individuals: \$379,620 ■ Board: \$22,480
- Events: \$33,468Corporations and Churches: \$11,088Earned Income: \$34,038
- In-Kind: \$17,147

  Total Revenue: \$748,791



Programs: \$503,545
General Management: \$113,041
Fundraising: \$140,375

Total Expenses: \$756,851

2019 financials as reported an audited year and statements of revenues and expenses

## BLUE SKY FUND TEAM

We are endlessly grateful for our dedicated team of both volunteer Board of Directors and staff that work tirelessly to push the Blue Sky Fund mission forward and change the lives of an ever increasing number of children in our community.

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\*Full-time staff in bold



# WE'RE ON THE ROAD!



# OUR NEXT DESTINATION

Blue Sky Fund is on the road to more exciting outdoor adventures in 2019! In both the elementary and middle school space, we've aligned with the community-wide focus to ensure that ALL children in Richmond - no matter their race, gender or zip code - experience quality out-ofschool programming opportunities to support a positive educational experience. We're also doubling the capacity of our leadership program for high schoolers, with a goal to serve 40 students in this year-long immersive experience.

Hop aboard the Blue Sky Fund bus to help underserved youth across Richmond discover inner growth through outdoor adventure! Get involved this year in the following ways:

- » Make a donation with ongoing impact by setting up a recurring monthly gift online at www.blueskyfund.org/donate
- » Support our annual #BlueSkiesAhead online crowdfunding campaign
- » Register for our annual Hike For Kids fundraiser - always the last Saturday in October
- » Experience the transformative power of our outdoor programming firsthand by signing up to volunteer at www.blueskyfund.org/getinvolved/volunteer
- » Increase the impact of your gift by registering for your corporation's matching gift program

www.blueskyfund.org | @blueskyfund

Our work would simply not be possible without the support of generous community partners and volunteers, donating their time, energy and resources to help Blue Sky Fund's vision come to life.

**Partners** 

Adventures in RVA Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School Armstrong High School Bellevue Elementary School Blackwell Elementary School Boys and Girls Club of Metro Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation ChildSavers Chimborazo Elementary School Church Hill Academy Church Hill Activities and Tutoring (CHAT) Communities in Schools of Richmond Elkhardt-Thompson Middle School ERM Group Inc Fairfield Court Elementary School Franklin Military Academy Friends of Bryan Park George Mason Elementary School Henderson Middle School Henrico County Recreation and Housing Families First James River Association James River Park System Kayak Richmond Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Lucille Brown Middle School Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School Miles Jones Elementary School Neighborhood Resource Center

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**Volunteers** 

125 volunteers 712 volunteer hours \$19,032.63 Value of Volunteer \*Based on VA 2017 average hourly rate of volunteer hours at \$26.75/hour

New Kent Forestry Center

Randolph Macon College

Oak Grove – Bellemeade Elementary

Next Up RVA

Peak Experiences

School

Thank you to our generous donors

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I support Blue Sky Fund because experiences in nature build confidence, competence and resilience. These also orient young people to the natural world, which is fundamental to their longterm wellbeing... One can never be sure just how investing in our youth will influence their futures, but there is no doubt Blue Sky's enrichment will have long-lasting positive impact!'

Fall of the James Group - Sierra Club

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A LETTER FROM BOARD PRESIDENT With your generous support, Blue Sky Fund rolled into its eleventh year in 2018, cruising to exciting new places with students across Richmond. Your passion for youth, education, and the outdoors has propelled Blue Sky in a strong direction to make a meaningful impact on the kids in our community - without you, our buses would be parked, students' learning stifled, and parks around town void of youthful energy. With each dollar donated or volunteer hour served - you are fueling a child's inner growth by going places to enjoy blue skies.

Blue Sky's core focus remains exposing urban youth to unique natural locations beyond the confines of their often concrete bubble. Each month, the Explorers program transported 3,102 elementary school students from their drab classrooms to 21 natural locations within the Greater Richmond Metro Area to enhance their comprehension of science concepts. In our Outdoor Adventure Clubs, 231 middle school students rotated through weekly sessions of activities such as hiking, biking, climbing and paddling at 23 spots around town to develop confidence in overcoming challenges of new adventures. Our year-round high school leadership program of 37 students traveled to far-away destinations of Mount Rogers, the C&O Canal and the Great Allegheny Passage to be immersed in wilderness and unearth leadership skills along the way.

While this year brought a leadership change, our 3,370 students - the most students that Blue Sky Fund has ever served in one year - spent more time outside than ever before, experiencing over 1,000 total hours of outdoor programming delivered in a safe and supportive environment. Our journey has only just begun - we are en route to transporting even greater numbers of kids in need to the outdoors to experience the power of nature - and we hope you'll continue supporting us along this road.

Happy Trails, Matt Perry Blue Sky Fund Board President (2017-2018)

# MSSIGN

Blue Sky is on a mission to provide transformational experiences for urban youth through outdoor education.

We will give every young person the opportunity to discover themselves by actively engaging the natural world.

# PROGRAM GOALS

- Help children achieve academic success, especially in the sciences, through active outdoor education that is appropriate for their current science curriculum.
- **2** Develop character and leadership through outdoor experiences that expand horizons, increase confidence, and build collaboration skills.