

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE THROUGH
OUTDOOR EDUCATION



BlueSkyFund.org



[@BlueSkyFund](https://www.instagram.com/BlueSkyFund)





MISSION

Providing transformational experiences to urban youth through outdoor education



RESILIENCE

Our three core programs are designed to strengthen the “7C’s of Resilience”* in students impacted by adverse childhood experiences:

- **Explorers:** Coping and Competence
- **Outdoor Adventure Clubs:** Confidence and Control
- **Outdoor Leadership Institute:** Connection, Character and Contribution



VISION

Blue Sky Fund helps children from low-income Richmond neighborhoods improve academic achievement, especially in the sciences, through active outdoor education with the support of staff trained in trauma-informed care. Students’ innate character and leadership abilities further develop through outdoor experiences that expand horizons, increase confidence, and build collaboration skills.



*“7C’s of Resilience” as developed by Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg

THERE ARE BLUE SKIES AHEAD FOR ALL OF US

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

To our loyal Blue Sky supporters,

Thanks to you, over 4,000 Richmond children experienced ongoing opportunities in 2019 to learn and grow in nature, while also strengthening their resilience to overcome challenges on their path. With your support, Blue Sky Fund continues to work at the intersection of racial equity in the outdoors, nature-based science education and empowering children impacted by adverse childhood experiences.

We strive for a future in which all young people in Richmond can thrive. Resilience is a common thread through Blue Sky's three core programs. Blue Sky serves as a guide for children navigating the "7C's of Resilience" to strengthen their skills in adapting to change and continuing to develop amidst challenges. These skills include competence, coping, confidence, control, character, connection and contribution.

At a time when the resilience of our community is being tested, and the gap has widened even further for low-income children in accessing equitable learning opportunities and safe outdoor experiences, the need for experiential outdoor education is more important than ever.

While our students remain at home during Richmond Public Schools' closure, we have launched a [#ThinkOutsideWithBlueSky](#) outdoor learning series for families to engage their students at home or in any outdoor space.

As we look to the future, please consider investing in our students' resilience today by making an online gift that will support repurposing our expertise to serve children remotely as well as relaunch of our experiential outdoor programming in the new school year.

With Gratitude,



Eleanor Kootsey
Blue Sky Fund Executive Director



Debbie Edwards
Blue Sky Fund Board President



Please consider investing in our students' resilience today by making an online gift.

DONATE NOW

EXPLORERS

GRADES 3-5

LEARN MORE

GOAL



The Explorers program teaches an experiential science curriculum that improves students' academic performance, increases students' access to nature, and provides meaningful support to classroom teachers. At the request of Richmond Public Schools, the Explorers program expanded from eight to fourteen Title I elementary schools in the Fall of 2019.

COPING AND COMPETENCE

Beyond engaging in hands-on science lessons, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade Explorers strengthened their resilience skills of competence and coping through team-building activities that empowered them to better understand how to respond and recover when they experience challenges.

IMPACT

This program is great. I think my kids have learned so much today. It is wonderful to connect what they are learning [in the classroom] to real life. The team building aspect is also so important for them. I really liked how we started the day off empowering them. I am excited for this year.

-Ms. Coogle, Elizabeth D. Redd Elementary School 4th grade teacher at Three Lakes Park

3,808

Total Number of
STUDENTS
Served in 2019

1,870

Students served from
JAN-JUN

1,938

Students served from
SEPT-DEC

20
NATURAL
SITES

15
HOURS IN
NATURE
Per student

14
TITLE 1
SCHOOLS SERVED

50%

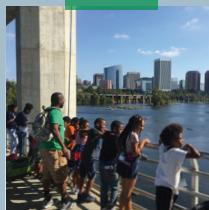
Of students improved to a
GRADE B
OR HIGHER

89%

Of teachers planned to
REFER BACK TO
LESSONS IN THE
CLASSROOM

88%

Of students Expressed that they
CARE ABOUT THE
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CLUBS

GRADES 6-8

LEARN MORE

GOAL



Outdoor Adventure Clubs increase students' access to outdoor recreation activities that are designed to build confidence, control and resilience, as well as provide supportive mentorship to encourage academic success and reduce the likelihood of risky behaviors.

CONFIDENCE AND CONTROL

Middle school students participating in Outdoor Adventure Clubs unlocked confidence and control through the physical and emotional challenges of outdoor adventure. Students gathered once or twice a week to move beyond their comfort zones in trying outdoor skills such as hiking, paddling, biking, rock climbing, and geocaching, as well as enjoyed an overnight camping trip each semester.

IMPACT

You're letting us just be kids. We haven't done this since elementary school.

-Lucille Brown Middle School student

204

Total Number of
STUDENTS
Served in 2019

120

Students served from
JAN-JUN

84

Students served from
SEPT-DEC

8
**NATURAL
SITES**

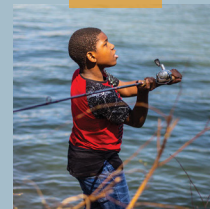
130+
**HOURS IN
NATURE**
Per student

10
**SCHOOLS
SERVED**

38%
Of students maintained
or increased
**PERSONAL
RESILIENCY**

47%
Of students maintained
or increased
**PERSONAL
CONFIDENCE**

67%
Of students maintained
or increased
**ENVIRONMENTAL
AWARENESS**



OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

GRADES 9-12

LEARN MORE

GOAL



The Outdoor Leadership Institute is a year-long program for students from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds designed to build unity, leadership and service through a five-day wilderness expedition and monthly community service projects.

CHARACTER, CONTRIBUTION, CONNECTION

Through the Outdoor Leadership Institute, a multicultural group of high school students developed their character as leaders while overcoming outdoor challenges, contributed back to the local community in monthly service projects, and forged social connections that they may not have otherwise had access to through a shared outdoor experience.

IMPACT

I feel like one thing I learned on the trip to Mount Rogers is to listen more and to be more open to hearing other people's opinions.

-Alfred Pleasants, Highland Springs High School, 10th grade student

48

Total Number of
STUDENTS
Served in 2019

19

Students served from
JAN-JUN

29

Students served from
JULY-DEC

5

**NATURAL
SITES**

25

**SCHOOLS
SERVED**

200+

**HOURS IN
NATURE**
Per student

28

**MILES
HIKED**

50%

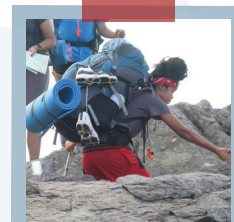
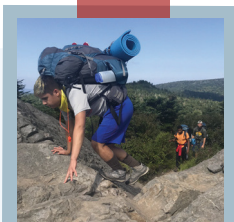
Of students maintained
or increased
**PERSONAL
LEADERSHIP**

90%

Of students maintained
or increased
**COMMUNITY
SERVICE ATTITUDE**

60

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS
COMPLETED**



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*Full-time staff in bold



VOLUNTEERS

87 volunteers
675 hours worked
\$18,562.50 Value of Volunteer Hours

*Based on VA 2018 average hourly rate of volunteer
hours at \$27.50/hour

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Overby-Sheppard Elementary School
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Pocahontas State Park

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Robinson Theater Community Arts Center
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Science Museum of Virginia
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VCU Aspire Program
VCU Rice Rivers Center
Virginia State Parks
Westover Hills Elementary School
Woodville Elementary School
YMCA Camp Thunderbird



I grew up in Gilpin Court and this area of the City of Richmond pales in comparison to when I grew up there. Our student population needs more support emotionally and physically. Blue Sky makes the difference each time we actively engage our students with hands-on activities along with enthusiasm most needed for this population of active learners. I am looking forward to giving my time, talents, and finances to enhance the positive impact Blue Sky delivers to our students.

- Ashley Singleton, former staff and volunteer

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Mr. and Mrs. Horace Richardson
Matt and Rachel Ridenour
Darlan Rieth
Betty Ring
River City Rotary Club
Hailey Rivera
Lusanna Ro
Kelley Robb
Ra'meer Roberts
MaryAnn Roberts

Buck Robinson
Catherine Roche
Steve Rogers
Emma Rogers
Rosa Roncales
Marc Rondeau
Shelly Rose
Hunter Ross
Justin Ross
Rachel Roter
Jim and Amy Rothey
Jackie Rothey
Allison K. Rouse
Lindsey Rowe
Matt Rowe
Julia Rowell
Cash and Susan Rucker
Lisa Ruggles
Cory Rutledge
Sharon Sage
Laura Saginario
Kelsey and Dave Salley
Mozdheh Salour
Ms. Jennifer Sampson
Sandstone Realty, LLC
Nikki Sayre
Larry and Emily Scarborough
Erika Schlichter
Rebecca Schmidt
Haze Schmolderness
Jim Schneider
Steph Schools
Vincent Schuler
Dave Schwartz
Ella Schwartz
Maureen Sciortino
Brent Scott
Hunter Scott
Micah Sedillos
Jonathan Seigel
Nora Seigle
Isabel Seigler
Katherine Sertal
Nancy Seubert
Lynn Seuffert
Jamie Sexton
Andre Shannon
Joy Shaw



DONORS CONTINUED

Up to \$249

Carmen Sheppard
The Sheppard Family
Joey and Kate Sherrard
Kateri Shreve
JoAnn Shriner
The Shugart Family
Sidor Family
Heidi Siegmund
Elise Sjogren
Jack and Kirsten Slagle
Katherine Slusher
Quincy Smick
Susan E. Smith
Lorna Smith
Gray Smithdeal
Ned Smither
Mark and Katye Snipes
Linda and Eric Sorenson
Cierra Sowers
Julia Sowers
Lori Speagle
Shayne Spears
Jared Spiers
Catherine Sprinkle
Bhargavi Srirangapurapu
Michael Stafford
Christopher Stanford
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Tierney Stark
Steele Property Group
Susan Steitz
Elizabeth Stern
Sara Sternbach
Jackie Stevens
Natalie Stickel
Jon Stoller
Brett and Haley Stonecipher
Debra Stoner
Taylor Stronsky
Julianne Suder
Alex and Eileen Sugarman
Tyler Sumner
Sunday Table Company
Alison Sural
Ashley Sutton
Barbara Swan
Laura Swanson



Allison Sweet
Chung-Chee Tai
Martha Tallent
The Tassie Family
Chelsie Taylor
Andrew and Tiffany Hall Terry
Roy Terry
Jane Terry
Douglas Thomas
Ken Trantham
Travel Like Shante
Paige Trivett
Heather Trivett
Audrey Trussell
Frances Turc
Kathleen and Marshall Turner
Sarah Turse
Jacobb Van Scyoc
Phillip Vane
Meghan Varner
Veil Brewing Company
Matt and Elizabeth Viele
David Vinson
Virginia Association for
Environmental Education
Ava Wagner
Gareth Wakeman
Ebony Walden
Walkabout Outfitter
Greg Walker
Landon Walker
William Wallace
Ben Walters
Megan Walther
Allison Walton
Jim Wark
Matthew Warren
Kathy Watson
Adrianne Webb
Eric Webster
Spencer Wehde
Stephen and Stacey Weir
Jake Weir
Mr. Randy Weis
Josh West
Melissa West
Charlie and Anne Westbrook
Deborah Western

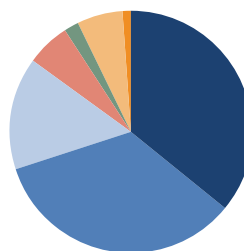
Melissa Westlake
Sally Wetzler
Mr. and Mrs. Wheatley
Philip Whisenhunt
Ben White
Sara White
Amy Wilkinson
Todd Williams
Brad Williams
Linda Williams
Bridget Williams
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Williams Mullen Clark & Dobbins
Ante Wind
Leslie Winston
Richard Wintsch
Mr. and Mrs. Joshua D. Wishnack
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Kelly Wombold
Chris Wong
Ann Wood
Mina and Robin Wood
Ali Woodworth
Jennifer K. Wright

Raghav Wusirika
Sun Yoon
Geoff and Jami Young
Courtney Young
Jennifer Young
Robert Young
Harvey Youssef
Abigail Zeiler
Lori Zwart
Elizabeth Zwart
Eric Zwemer

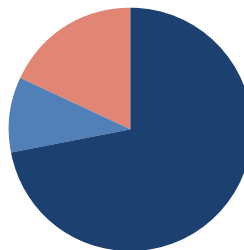
FINANCIALS

2019 financials as reported on audited year end statements of revenues and expenses



■ Grants: \$273,484
■ Individuals: \$254,834
■ Board: \$112,920
■ Events: \$47,196
■ Corporations and Faith-based organizations: \$13,864
■ Earned Income: \$47,960
■ In-Kind: \$11,733

Total Revenue: \$761,991



■ Programs: \$576,553
■ General Management: \$78,226
■ Fundraising: \$143,311

Total Expenses: \$798,090

Though expenses exceeded income in 2019, Blue Sky has a healthy cash reserve and is not in debt. During the organization's 2020 strategic planning, we are addressing sustainable growth and organizational structure.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED THIS YEAR

Join Blue Sky in empowering underserved youth across Richmond to strengthen their resilience through outdoor adventure!

SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTER

GIVE MONTHLY

Make a donation with ongoing impact by setting up a recurring monthly gift online at www.blueskyfund.org/donate

DONATE

Support our repurposing efforts so that Blue Sky may continue to serve children now and be ready to relaunch our programming when schools reopen

PARTICIPATE

Register online this summer for our annual Hike For Kids fundraiser on November 7th

VOLUNTEER

Experience the transformative power of our outdoor programming firsthand by signing up to volunteer at www.blueskyfund.org/get-involved/volunteer

STAY CONNECTED



@BlueSkyFund

