

# Voyager Youth Program

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



### MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on the past year, Voyager's commitment to inspiring youth to lead healthy lives has never been stronger. The decision to expand our programming to include preschool age children has been powerful and exciting. At the heart of this program is our dedicated team of staff who bring a passion for early childhood education and the motivation to make an impact in our community. They understand that each child is unique and are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and inspiring environment for every child.

We are also deeply committed to the growth and development of Ouray County teens. It is our belief that by providing opportunities for leadership opportunities, civic engagement and immersive outdoor experiences, we can unlock their full potential.

None of our work would be possible without community support. Your support, guidance, and belief in our mission are the bedrock of our success. We look forward to continued collaborations as together we shape a bright future for local youth.

- Alex Durham



Inspiring youth to lead  
healthy lives since 1997

Growth  
Connection  
Compassion  
Integrity  
Resiliency  
Fun

# ENRICHMENT

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Launching of this program for three and four year-olds in January was Voyager's biggest success of 2023. The program builds social-emotional skills and positive problem solving, promotes fine and gross motor development, creative learning, and outdoor play. The program establishes routines, responsibility and prepares toddlers for transitioning to preschool and kindergarten. We served 30 children this year. The tots explored around Ridgway, baked mudpies in the outdoor kitchen, made new friends, napped (most of the time), enjoyed circle time, dramatic play and crafting.

*"[Max] told me it was the best day of his life all evening. He said it was better than Christmas and his birthday! I appreciate the care, attention, and love from you and your staff that filled his cup" - Parent*



*"Great activities for kids; different experiences and adventures everyday are awesome. Big big smiles and genuine love for the teachers!" - Parent*

## AFTER SCHOOL & SUMMER

We served 95 elementary-age children, 5-11 years old, during after school hours and on full days during school breaks and summer vacation. In 2023, the After School Program was hosted at the Ouray School and at Voyager's main campus in Ridgway. Voyagers played outside after school, practiced mindfulness, read, did homework, swam at Ouray Hot Springs, played pickleball and build friendships. The Summer Program and full day care were based out of Ridgway but we provided shuttles for Ouray kids to alleviate transportation barriers. They dubbed it "The Magic School Bus." The full days prioritized physical activity, getting outside, learning and fun. Highlights included daily four square games, gardening, swimming, Punkhead Science with Pinhead Institute, gymnastics, cooking, hiking, visiting ranches and museums.



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

## SUMMER ADVENTURES

This summer we added multi-day trips to the regular one-day Adventure Wednesdays. Teens spent 3-5 days climbing and canyoneering around Ouray, rafting the San Juan River, exploring the alpine environment around Mount Hayden Backcountry Lodge, and hanging out in Grand Junction. On Adventure Wednesdays, teens went hiking, jeeping, SUPing, fishing, paintballing, and romping at Get Air trampoline park. The expanded summer programming increased our reach from 29 to 45 unique teens.

## TEEN INITIATIVES

We worked with youth leaders to get input on what they wanted and needed to re-envision new programs. We then engaged the broader community and created opportunities for teens that strengthen peer connections, healthy norms, and teen mental wellbeing. These included monthly craft nights at Dragonfly Creative, weekly Teen Cafe at Ridgway Public Library, summer Art Mentors program, Teen Nights Out (Basecamp bouldering, movies at the Sherbino & the Wright), PeaceJam service projects, activity booths at summer music series and Rally Thru the Alley, as well as Sources of Strength initiatives at local middle schools.



*"This trip was an amazing experience and was very fun. I will add this to my list of amazing summer memories." - Participant*



# COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

The Ouray County Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition has been prioritizing three strategies for supporting local youth: **creating safe community spaces for teens, increasing youth civic engagement, and championing positive youth development.** A great success of 2023 has been the creation of The HUBB, a teen engagement clearinghouse created by teens for teens.

### The HUBB vision is to

- inspire youth to be the CHANGE in their community,
- increase youth VOICE in the community,
- create more service, leadership, advocacy OPPORTUNITIES for youth,
- create SAFE SPACES & ACTIVITIES for youth in their community,
- increase access to HEALTHY CHOICES where youth live, learn, work, and play.



# MENTOR OF THE YEAR

There is a great deal of work that happens behind the scenes to make the magic happen at Voyager. Rob McNutt is one of the unsung super heroes making it possible. Rob Co-Chaired Voyager's Board of Directors for a little over a year and made tremendous contributions in 2023. He brought a broad finance background and nonprofit management skills to elevate Voyager's financial, administrative, and operating systems. His leadership was collegial, astute, and inspiring. His character humble, authentic and of utmost integrity. Voyager's board and staff are deeply grateful for Rob's contributions and wish him all the best back in Idaho.



*Rob McNutt*

# MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS \$1,000+

- |                      |                                     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Addie and Bob Tesch  | Dave and Mary Wood Fund             |
| Mary Aliota          | Faraway Foundation                  |
| Double RL Ranch      | Ouray County Community Fund         |
| Alpine Bank          | Kissinger Family Foundation         |
| Ouray Real Estate    | Mount Sneffels Education Foundation |
| Rob McNutt           | George Gardner Scholarship Fund     |
| Laura and Paul Ricks | AV Hunter Trust                     |
| Scott Plumb          | Telluride Foundation                |
| Citizens State Bank  | Anschutz Family Foundation          |
| City of Ouray        | Rocky Mountain Health Foundation    |
| Town of Ridgway      |                                     |
| Ouray County         |                                     |

## 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Shannon Robinson - Co-Chair
- Rob McNutt - Co-Chair
- Mike Waters - Treasurer
- Addie Tesch - Secretary
- Jill Hepp - Ridgway School Board
- Tom Fedel - Ouray School Board
- Marissa Mathis - Member
- Jenn Peterson - Member
- Kara Rhoades - Member

## NEW MEMBERS

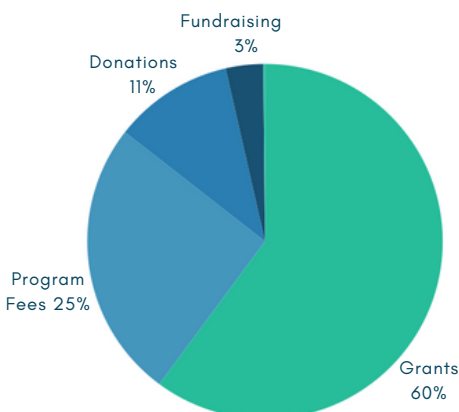
- Krista Javoronok, Andre Bollaert
- Catherine Johnson

## STAFF

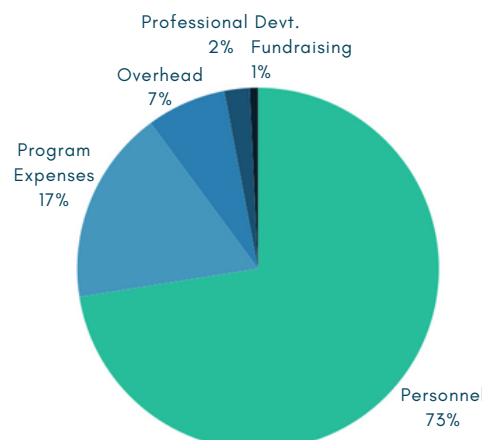
- Alex Durham  
Executive Director
- Madison Gustafson  
Enrichment Site Director
- Cat Geras  
Teen & Community Development  
Manager
- Michelle Melendez  
Enrichment Program Coordinator
- Agnieszka Przeszlowska  
Development & Grants Manager

# 2023 FINANCIALS

## Income \$493,912



## Expense \$486,215



[www.voyageryouth.org](http://www.voyageryouth.org)

280 N Cora St · PO Box 709 · Ridgway, CO 81432  
970-626-4279