



# BIG CITY MOUNTAINEERS

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT





## Letter from Executive Director David Taus

What does success look like? It's a very important question, and one asked over and over by management consultants, program evaluators, funders, and — hopefully — those of us who are immersed in work in which we believe. At its root, the question speaks to a need to recalibrate to shared goals and outcomes. That was BCM's project in 2022.

For the prior two years, success at BCM meant something very basic: survive COVID, understand our role in the larger youth development and outdoor access ecosystem during a moment of global crisis, and provide whatever nature-based experiences we could for youth. Which, admirably, we did. BCM entered 2022 with an opening to return to full programming for the first time

in two years, a staff and Board ready for the challenge, and a one year strategic goal to rebuild a strong foundation for the organization. This idea — a strong foundation — became the centerpiece of what success would look like for the year.

More specifically, rebuilding a strong foundation meant re-investing in the people that make BCM work, re-organizing BCM's systems and structures to be more efficient and effective, and clearly delineating and aligning on goals and outcomes for all aspects of the organization.

What needed to happen for the first point was very clear: for too long, BCM was operating without being fully staffed. It's a big enough lift to run a national organization that operates in seven metropolitan regions with only 10 full time employees (yes, 10! Many people are shocked to learn this), but even more astoundingly, BCM was pulling this off with anywhere between five and eight employees, and with lots of help from our Board and some very generous professional pro bono support. I'm very proud and relieved that by the end of 2022, BCM was fully staffed. And this team is special. Not only in every individual's skill, energy, and passion, but for how the team works together, supports and pushes one another, and constructively strives to improve. The team is what makes our new foundation so strong.

BCM also engaged with a set of systemic and structural improvements in 2022. The centerpiece of this work was the return to a single unified program model, delivered with fidelity in all six program regions. This refreshed model was collaboratively built by BCM's full staff. It has the ability to scale effectively in various contexts and environ-

ments, and is more responsive to the needs and wants of BCM's youth participants and youth agencies than ever before. Specifically, we rolled out a progressive, scaffolded approach to our programming in which youth ramp up with a day experience and frontcountry overnight before going on our signature weeklong backcountry expedition. Investing more deeply in each participant in this way enabled youth to access all the benefits of the immersive experience outdoors more quickly and effectively. 2022 was also the first year where we measured our impact in a new way, and I was gratified to see results come back from our investigations of BCM's influence on young people's self-esteem, self efficacy, empathy, and sense of social belonging. In all cases, youth improved in these dimensions pre-trip to post-trip. Certainly, knowing that BCM creates the conditions by which young people are able to increase their social and

emotional capacities and improve their mental health is a benchmark of success.

The final thread of work in which BCM engaged was to better align our individual definitions of success, and to better coordinate our work with one another. Framing our programmatic impact around the above social-emotional dimensions was a big part of this, as was getting clear on what measures of quantity are meaningful given the new scaffolded program model. Additionally, the organization more formally delineated areas of accountability and responsibility for all staff, board, and contractors. This ensures BCM's various work streams will interact more effectively and efficiently. And finally, we began work on two very important pieces to our strong foundation that are still being polished and honed: an organizational DEI statement and a refreshed Theory of Change. We look forward to sharing both in the fall of 2023.



Rebuilding this strong foundation is what success looked like in 2022. The work in which BCM has been engaged for over 30 years has never been more relevant or more needed. Experiences in nature such as the ones BCM provides are one of the most effective ways to successfully see ourselves as individuals and communities through trying times and moments of transition, especially for those who face disproportionate material, social, and economic barriers to participation and success in their lives. BCM has an incredible opportunity to serve as a beacon in this work; taking 2022 to re-establish a strong foundation will set BCM up to further deepen our impact in the short term, and enable us to make good on plans to scale our program and impact with fidelity and quality in 2023 and beyond.

*David Taus*



**“The work in which BCM has been engaged for over 30 years has never been more relevant or more needed.”**

# Mission, Vision, Values

## OUR MISSION

Big City Mountaineers provides transformative experiences through connections to nature that strengthen life skills and build community for youth from disinvested communities.

## OUR VISION

Inspiring youth nationwide to embrace their self potential.

## OUR VALUES

### Respect

We operate from a place of deep admiration and care for the people, partners and the natural world we work with, seeking to cultivate relationships built on care and reciprocity.

### Inclusivity

We seek to foster a sense of belonging among those who experience barriers to accessing a full and dignified life based on their identities.

### Collaboration

We invite in wide ranging thoughts, opinions and experiences.

### Self-Discovery

We believe in making the time and space for exploring personal development.

# Staff, Board, & National Council Members

## BCM BOARD

John Andriola	Independent Attorney at Law
Deborah Beggan	Helly Hansen/Waypoint Collective
Janette Chien	Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
Jessie George	Georgia's Own Credit Union
Carly Huey	Patagonia
Mitsu Iwasaki	Trust for Public Land
Drew Kern	EWM Realty International
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Margaret Morey-Reuner	Quality Bicycle Products
Elyse Rylander	Quality Bicycle Products
Paul Thompson	Hiebing
Christian Weaver	Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund
Janelle Woodward	McKay Shields LLC
Rachel Worth	Holman Automotive

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Chris Ball	Ball Properties
Nathan Ballard	Keegan & Coppin Co, Inc.
Beth Cochran	What's Up PR
Michelle Fleming	Mystery Ranch
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Larry Lanham	Strive Health
Kay Merseth	Harvard Graduate School of Education
Scott Schreifer	XL Construction
Thad Walker	Lario Oil & Gas
Justin Welsh	Unify Consultants

## BCM STAFF

Mena Ayazi	Communications & Events Manager
Bailey Denmark	Director of Development
Maggie Lacwasan	New England Regional Program Manager
David Lee	California Regional Program Manager
Megan Parkinson	Minnesota Regional Program Manager
Sal Prado	Colorado Regional Program Manager
Fred Sproat	National Program Director
Chloe Schaub	National Operations Coordinator
David Taus	Executive Director
Khadijah Tividad	Pacific Northwest Regional Program Manager



# Financials

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
<b>ASSETS</b>					
Cash and Cash Equivalents	638,993	708,873	611,130	568,615	466,939
Investments	199,279	240,968	211,715	52,302	19,434
Contributions and Grants Receivable	388,935	72,914	54,016	61,109	190,444
Prepaid Expenses and Other	3,000	3,170	11,663	6,229	4,970
Inventory	359,032	297,178	252,766	347,876	309,281
Property and Equipment, Net	204,220	124,044	125,739	127,433	115,984
Investments - Endowment	199,279	240,968	211,714	114,108	92,004
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,798,529</b>	<b>\$1,447,147</b>	<b>\$1,267,028</b>	<b>\$1,277,672</b>	<b>\$1,199,056</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>					
LIABILITIES	44,336	36,021	183,154	45,073	66,404
NET ASSETS					
Undesignated	826,105	910,678	624,537	814,478	596,607
Board Designated for Endowment	29,465	35,158	32,193	-	-
Investment in Property and Equipment	204,220	124,044	125,739	127,433	115,984
Temporarily Restricted	684,403	341,246	301,405	290,688	320,061
Permanently Restricted	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,754,193</b>	<b>\$1,411,126</b>	<b>\$1,083,874</b>	<b>\$1,232,599</b>	<b>\$1,132,652</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,798,529</b>	<b>\$1,447,147</b>	<b>\$1,267,028</b>	<b>\$1,277,672</b>	<b>\$1,199,056</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES</b>					
<b>PROGRAM</b>					
Contributions and Grants	1,051,087	849,425	744,843	871,483	956,031
Government Grants	-	-	10,000	32,334	22,142
Program Income	102,444	4,650	770	22,386	26,420
In-Kind Support	347,786	256,138	218,728	333,031	338,963
Other Income	(45,937)	23,908	15,304	25,106	(11,522)
<b>Total Program</b>	<b>\$1,455,416</b>	<b>\$1,248,933</b>	<b>\$989,718</b>	<b>\$1,284,340</b>	<b>\$1,332,034</b>
<b>ADVENTURE FOR SOMEONE</b>					
Contributions	126,889	191,900	54,814	219,649	242,441
In-Kind Support	-	-	-	56,602	172,245
<b>Total Adventure for Someone</b>	<b>126,889</b>	<b>\$191,900</b>	<b>\$54,814</b>	<b>\$276,251</b>	<b>\$414,686</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
Program Services	1,006,902	804,185	882,001	995,914	992,821
General and Administrative	80,832	68,613	42,316	58,096	79,058
Fundraising Expenses	136,742	65,688	90,596	136,954	128,624
Adventure for Someone	126,889	175,095	178,344	269,680	356,819
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,224,476</b>	<b>\$1,113,582</b>	<b>\$1,193,257</b>	<b>\$1,460,644</b>	<b>\$1,557,322</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$343,067</b>	<b>\$327,252</b>	<b>(\$148,725)</b>	<b>\$99,947</b>	<b>\$189,398</b>



**“At peace. Immense calm washing over my body. But also electrifying, feels like you’re connected to something so much larger and more complex than yourself.”**

# 2022 Youth Programs

In 2022, BCM emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic with a full season of program activities in each of our regions of service across the country.

In order to increase access to the benefits of immersive time spent in nature, BCM made a strategic pivot to serving youth via a progressive, scaffolded program model. This structure provides more hours in the field per youth by adding both day and overnight experiences in preparation for our signature weeklong backcountry expedition.



**73 TOTAL TRIPS**  
INCLUDES 28-DAY TRIPS, 16-OVERNIGHTS, 29-EXPEDITIONS (40.3% INCREASE FROM 2021)



**22,746 HOURS YOUTH SPENT IN FIELD**  
(54.4% INCREASE FROM 2021)



**225 UNIQUE YOUTH SERVED**  
**965 YOUTH DAYS**  
(37.1% INCREASE FROM 2021)  
**5592 PROGRAM HOURS**  
(83.3% INCREASE FROM 2021)

**90 ADULTS SPENT A TOTAL OF 611 DAYS WITH BCM YOUTH**  
(45.8% INCREASE FROM 2021)

**237 PROGRAM DAYS PROVIDED**  
(68.1% INCREASE FROM 2021)

**23 YOUTH AGENCY PARTNERS**  
(9.5% INCREASE FROM 2021)

# Youth Demographics

Youth participants on BCM trips are described as coming from disinvested communities or holding marginalized identities.

**OUR FINDINGS**





- 85.7% OF BCM YOUTH PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFY AS BIPOC**
- 66% OF BCM YOUTH REPORT RECEIVING FREE OR REDUCED RATE LUNCH AT SCHOOL (AN INDICATOR OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS)**
- 50.6% OF BCM YOUTH IDENTIFY AS FEMALE**
- 6.1% IDENTIFY AS NON-BINARY**

# Impact

2022 was the first year BCM implemented a new methodology for measuring our program's impact, focusing on four social-emotional dimensions in youth participants: Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Empathy, and Sense of Social Belonging.

We chose these dimensions because they are well-established as key indicators of wellness in mental and social-emotional health research and correlate highly with success in other important aspects of a young person's life. Additionally, existing instruments of measurement for these dimensions have proven to be valid and reliable for the specific populations BCM serves.

By comparing youth participants' pre- and post-series scores, BCM is able to track progress in these dimensions. In 2022, BCM youth showed post-trip increases in average series scores in all four dimensions, and scored higher on three of the four measures when compared to peers who did not participate in the full suite of BCM's programming.

 <p><b>Self Esteem</b> Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE)</p>	 <p><b>Self-Efficacy</b> New General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)</p>	 <p><b>Empathy</b> Adolescent Measure of Empathy and Sympathy (AMES)</p>	 <p><b>Sense of Social Belonging</b> Sense of Social Fit Scale (SSFS)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCM participants showed an increase of <b>7.2%</b> in average self-esteem scores</li> <li>• BCM participants, on average, scored <b>5.7%</b> higher on the self-esteem scale than peers who did not participate</li> <li>• Over <b>75%</b> of participant responses were positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCM participants showed an increase of <b>15.8%</b> in average self-efficacy scores.</li> <li>• BCM trip participants, on average, scored <b>10.6%</b> higher on the self-efficacy scale than peers who did not go on BCM trips</li> <li>• Over <b>80%</b> of participant responses were positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCM participants showed an increase of <b>16.6%</b> in average empathy scores</li> <li>• BCM trip participants, on average, scored <b>13.2%</b> higher on the empathy scale than peers who did not go on BCM trips</li> <li>• Most gains were observed in participants' cognitive empathy (<b>6.5%</b>) and affective empathy (<b>4.6%</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCM participants showed a <b>5.6%</b> increase in average sense-of-social-belonging scores</li> </ul>



**"I realized I am ready for anything and its pretty fun to lead. The world is a beautiful place with nature and creatures."**



Big City Mountaineers' work is made possible, in part, thanks to generous funding and support from various foundations, corporate sponsors, and private parties who share in our mission to provide transformative experiences in nature for youth from disinvested communities. You can find more details about BCM and our impact at [bigcitymountaineers.org/impact](https://bigcitymountaineers.org/impact)

# Sharing the Gift of Nature

by Alex K Kniess, BCM Volunteer

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, some of my earliest memories are of hiking, camping, and backpacking. The sense of ease I felt outdoors has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. So after an inspiring summer thru-hiking the Pacific Crest Trail with my brother, I went looking for opportunities to share the gift of nature with others. After considerable research, I found Big City Mountaineers. I was drawn to its mission and wanted to be part of it.

I quickly submitted an application to volunteer, and was thrilled when the team invited me to join an expedition in California's Point Reyes National Seashore. Although I was comfortable backpacking, I felt nervous about volunteering. Would the students welcome me? Would the program be as good as it seemed? Luckily, BCM's exceptional training put my mind at ease.

Soon, I found myself at the trailhead with a group of eager students. Despite some trepidation, they made a commitment to each other: to embark on this brand new adventure with openness and bravery. After helping a couple of them adjust their packs and figure out their trekking poles, we headed out. As they would all week, the guides kept us motivated with fun games as we hiked and got to know one another. That night, two students learned to cook up the best curry I'd ever had on the trail. I was



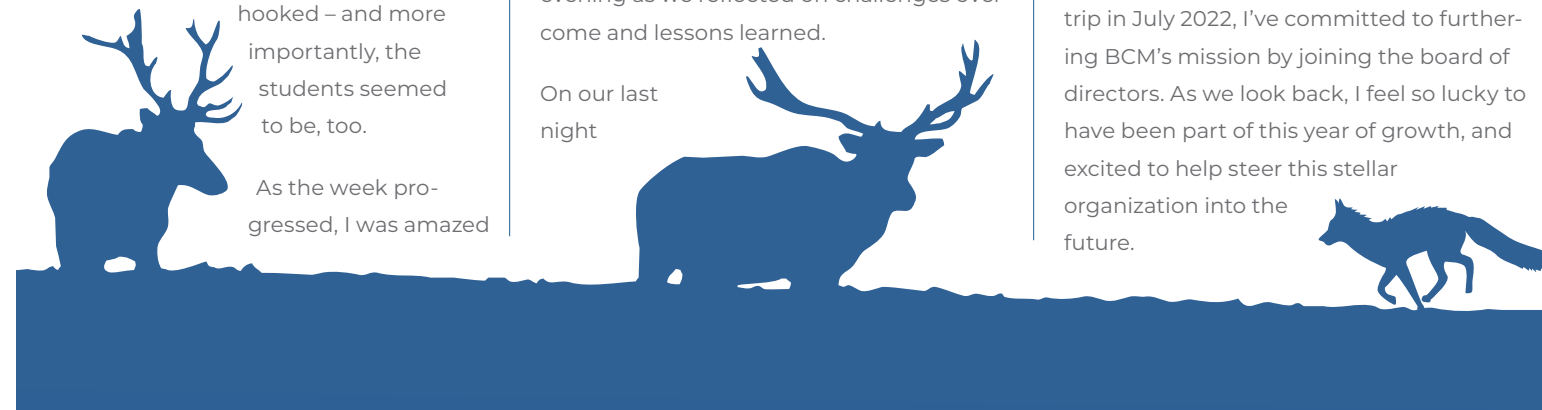
at the transformation I saw. Nerves and fear gave way to confidence and a budding sense of belonging. The BCM program was working. The curriculum had a role in this, and so did the graciousness and courage of the students themselves. But it was also the power of time spent outside – something many of these students were feeling for the first time. We gasped together as we gazed up at shooting stars. We stood in silence as a gray fox bounded between grazing tule elk. We laughed and shared stories each evening as we reflected on challenges overcome and lessons learned.

On our last night

together, we participated in a BCM tradition of creating "summit flags." Each of us took turns sitting silently while receiving words of gratitude and memories from the rest of the group. The guides scribbled these affirmations onto special flags we each got to keep. Mine hangs in a place of honor in my home.

I hope our week together in the wilderness will pay dividends for the students in the years to come – as I have found with my own early experiences in nature. Since my trip in July 2022, I've committed to furthering BCM's mission by joining the board of directors. As we look back, I feel so lucky to have been part of this year of growth, and excited to help steer this stellar organization into the future.

hooked – and more importantly, the students seemed to be, too. As the week progressed, I was amazed



# Student Moments

The shared experiences and emotions of our student trips impact the lives of our participants long after the adventures themselves.



**"My relationship with nature changed because I care and respect it even more! The animals got cuter and the trees got bigger."**



**"In the beginning of the trip, I felt a bit uncomfortable because I'm too used to the 'city life' but it got better after a while and it became freeing. It made me feel a bit relaxed."**



**"I loved the greenery and being able to get away from the city and my devices."**

# Brand Partners

Brand Partners are integral to the work of Big City Mountaineers. They provide both in-kind gear donations and financial support, and stay in relationship with BCM through volunteer support on programs, holding fundraising events, and raising awareness with their audiences.



## \$25,000 +



## \$10,000 +



## \$5,000 +

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Birch Island Charitable Fund

Nemo Equipment

Cocoon

Salewa USA

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Mathematica

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Stanley PMI

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Vista Outdoor

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Terminal 4 Recreation Area

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Zpacks

American Mountaineering Center

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Holman Automotive Services

The North Face

The Boston Consulting Group

Adventure Bowls

# Individual Donors

We are genuinely humbled and inspired by our individual donors' generosity. We are thankful to have a community of supporters who care deeply about ensuring that everyone — regardless of their circumstance — has access to experiences in nature, and the personal growth those can inspire.

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Thank you for choosing Big City Mountaineers and turning your energy and passion into opportunities for the next generation!



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