

REPORT
of the
GoWild Northeast
Metro Coalition



GIVING KIDS A CHANCE TO GO WILD



Kids grow better *outside.*

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Four to seven minutes of unstructured play each day—is that enough for kids? Absolutely not! And here at the GoWild Northeast Metro

Coalition, with a substantial grant from GOCO's Generation Wild program, we're making sure kids in our area have big opportunities every day to get outdoors and play.

As the grantee serving the largest number of youths covered by any GOCO Generation Wild grant, how are we affecting our four neighborhoods? Life-changing outdoor experiences are happening every day in Aurora, Commerce City, and Denver, due to the collaborative work of five governments and seven nonprofits.

Along with chances to experience nature, GoWild is creating pathways to jobs for the youth of four nearby neighborhoods. A report on the progress of GoWild follows.



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At the City of Aurora's Morrison Nature Center, kids from surrounding neighborhoods have an up-close encounter with a bull snake.

Our Origins



Along Sand Creek, with the wildlife it supports, students are provided memorable learning experiences.

When a grant opportunity emerged from Great Outdoors Colorado to engage youth from low-income communities with the outdoors, neighborhoods surrounding the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge were among the first to respond. Neighbors, non-profits and governments in Commerce City, Montbello, Northwest Aurora, and Northeast Park Hill met to create a sustainable pathway to outdoor activities and jobs for kids in their communities.

Two years of planning with seven nonprofits and five governments resulted in a

GOCO grant for three years, to provide

outdoor programs, pathways to jobs for youth, and park improvements in the four neighborhoods.

Our Partners

Our partners in GoWild include seven nonprofit organizations: **Bluff Lake Nature Center**, **Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver** (Vickers, Suncor, Boston and Broncos chapters), **Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)**, **Groundwork Denver**, **Mile High Youth Corps**, **Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership**, and **The Urban Farm**. Those organizations are joined by five governmental entities—**City of Aurora**, **Commerce City**, **City and County of Denver**, **Barr Lake State Park**, and the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**—to provide jobs and programs for the youth from the four neighborhoods.



What spells success for GoWild and our neighbors?

Here's how we spell success for our earliest months of funding as the GoWild Northeast Metro Coalition...

Working Outdoors...

Our twelve partners hired 80 high school youths to work outdoors in the last two summers. Those youth built 21 garden beds, weeded 21



garden beds, collected over 400 bags of trash, pulled invasive weeds on 80 acres of public lands, spread hundreds of pounds of native seeds on public lands, and engaged in many hours of leadership training.

Meanwhile, 15 post-high-school youth corps members provided information and taught classes to visitors at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge —totaling over 1,000 hours of contact with the public. Those same youth reached

out to thousands of other youth about jobs and programs as part of the GoWild NEMC project.

Each summer more than 2,000 neighborhood families attended the GoWild in Your Park events that included climbing walls, horse-drawn wagon rides, Zumba in your park, plus food and information about other GoWild NEMC programs in Denver, Aurora and Commerce City.

Community Activities...

What is success to youth from the four **Boys & Girls Clubs** in our neighborhoods? Those youth get to pick from over 80 program events each year, including outdoor rock climbing, snowboarding, paddle boarding, and birdhouse building! Boys & Girls Clubs in our four neighborhoods saw over 800 kids enjoying the great outdoors in 2018. Those youth enjoyed over 2,265 programs including snowboarding, ice skating and hiking.

Aurora Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) served 2,329 youths and their families from June to October 2018—hosting camping at Aurora Reservoir, conducting hikes at Star K Ranch, and carrying out raptor education. During January and February of 2019, 1,822

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Aurora youths were able to learn about opportunities to get outdoors!

Nature Adventures...

Meanwhile, some 3,000 elementary school youth came to Bluff Lake for field trips—clocking over 8,700 hours of outdoor environmental education. The interns for Bluff Lake Nature Center and The Urban Farm worked over 800 hours learning new skills in preparation for a career in outdoor education.

More than 680 hours of fun in the sun were clocked by over 200 GoWild families at Bluff Lake Nature Center on their Family Nature Adventure Days.



Read What Our Kids and Neighbors Are Saying About GoWild and its Year-Round Fun...

What are our kids and families saying about their experiences with GoWild?

"I can measure trees and see how old they are." "I can go on trips I never thought I would be able to go on."

"I will look into other fields of the outdoors to keep job options open. I also will do volunteer work."

"I will continue caring for the environment and people in the communities in which I live in. I will make sure people understand why littering is bad and why we need a clean space."

"I will take care of my community and take care of trees."

"I will be a leader and represent ELK because I have learned so much will share all I know about the environment."

What's in store for the future of GoWild NEMC?

During Year-3 of our GOCO grant, we will fund field trips to the Refuge for more than a thousand elementary school kids participating in environmental education. The Urban Farm will reach 900 summer camp youth from northwest Aurora. Groundwork will pay 50 high school youth to work in the environment.

What can you do? GoWild NEMC will continue programming and jobs with your help. Contact GoWild NEMC for more information, at kkramer@gowildnemoc.org



As the Denver Metro Area grows, opportunities for kids to ride a horse are rare. However, thanks to GoWild, kids in participating neighborhoods get to ride all year round at The Urban Farm.



Kids learn rock climbing, thanks to GoWild's grant-funded programs.

A GoWild Experience

Here's how an opportunity to GoWild unfolds: A busload from the Suncor Boys & Girls Club in Commerce City arrives on a field trip at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge—less than three miles from the club's facility. Children are amazed when a bison walks in front of the bus—and then get to hike around a lake where they encounter deer and ducks.

Most of these children have never been to the Refuge—although they live within five miles of the entrance.



How often do kids from the Boys & Girls Clubs in the four neighborhoods get to ride a horse?...or have a chance to pet a goat? Thanks to The Urban Farm, all year long!

Working With Schools

Teens in our four surrounding communities camp out in three National Parks in Colorado, thanks to Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) and the youth council they host for students from all four neighborhoods.

S'mores around the campfire

Community elementary school teachers provide a great outdoor education by arranging a field trip to Bluff Lake Nature Center, for an experience learning about wetlands.

What can a teen do on a summer night? Thanks to GoWild, older kids enjoy *Teen Night in Your Park* or *GoWild In Your Park*, provided by Commerce City Department of Parks, Recreation and Golf with participation from all the GoWild partners. How about indoor and outdoor rock climbing? Boys and girls from all four neighborhoods learn to rock climb, thanks to GoWild's grant-funded programs.

Administrators needing an engaging after-school program find one in environmental education, thanks to the Next Generation Partner program at Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, which provides curriculum and a teacher, made possible by GoWild. If a local school can't provide buses for a field trip to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, school bus funding is arranged by GoWild.



Aurora neighbors love hiking in the "wilds" of Star K Ranch, after enjoying a nature program at the Morrison Nature Center, operated by Aurora Open Space specialists. Youth from Montbello find they have close access to an amazing rock climbing wall in a new neighborhood park being completed by ELK and Denver Parks and Recreation.





A work experience with a park ranger can be made possible through the Mile High Youth Corps Program.



Our coalition and partners hired more than 100 youth to work in environments that teach outdoor and leadership skills.

Jobs With a Future

How can a teen make enough money in the summer, learning leadership skills, and work with fellow teens outdoors? Teens can join the Green Teams at Groundwork Denver, funded in part by GoWild.

A youth interested in a career in conservation or public lands management can serve with the Mile High Youth Corps — and get paid for the experience, creating a powerful vision of what can be a rewarding career.

What's Next...

What's in the future for GoWild? The GoWild NEMC and our partners are preparing to hire an additional 100 youth to work in environments that teach outdoor and leadership skills.

Two thousand more youth will be provided with programs that deliver opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. And 40 youth will become new members of GoWild's Youth Council. More than a thousand programs will be offered through the grant to youth from ages five to 25.

These efforts have already started to grow a new group of environmental leaders in our four surrounding

communities. The youth of today are providing hope for the future of our planet.

