

The Grand Partnership of WOW Colorado

by Ken Sherbenou

As stated before, the WOW program is a collaborative effort by 35 active Partners from federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, community based organizations, and businesses and corporations, all who are dedicated to the program's success. Partners include: The African-American Leadership Institute, DOI Bureau of Land Management (BLM), The Denver Housing Authority, NorthStar Elementary School in Adams County School District 12, USDA Forest Service, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and State Parks, the Disney Corporation, Denver Parks and Recreation, Denver Kids, Leave No Trace, Outdoor Kids, GSI Outdoors, the Coleman company, CARENET Americorp operating out of Commerce City, Division of Wildlife, the Denver Zoo, Tree Climbing Colorado, ESPN, Genesee Outdoor Experiential Center, the I Have A Dream Foundation at Sanchez, Pioneer, and Columbine Elementary Schools, Golden Gate State Park, the Buck Foundation, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, EarthForce, and Central Elementary School in Adams County School District 14.

Our current active Host Sites essentially recruit the campers, transport the youth to and from the campsite, purvey a minimal amount of supplies (about \$100 per camp), and contribute 1-2 Counselors to represent the Host Site at the camp (a more detailed description of these responsibilities can be found in enclosure #5-"Host Site Agreement"). These include The Denver Housing Authority, NorthStar Elementary School in Adams County School District 12, Skyland Community Alternative High School, Denver Parks and Recreation, Denver Kids, Leave No Trace, CARENET Americorp operating out of all 7 Elementary Schools in Commerce City, I Have A Dream Foundation at Sanchez, Pioneer, and Columbine Elementary Schools, EarthForce, City of Englewood, Foster Elementary, Smedley Elementary School, Federal Heights Elementary, Escuela de Guadalupe Elementary School, Fairview Elementary School, Monaco Elementary School, Tarver Elementary School, and Central Elementary School in Adams County School District 14.

Partners currently active in the providing quality educational and experiential programming include USDA Forest Service, Leave No Trace, DOI Division of Wildlife, the Denver Zoo, Tree Climbing Colorado, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, ESPN, Genesee Outdoor Experiential Center, and Golden Gate State Park. The USDA Forest Service supplies environmental education pieces to be conducted by the WOW staff. The Leave No Trace Non-Profit organization educates Counselors about Leave No Trace principles as well as provides educational literature and activities to teach these principles to the youth who attend our camps. The DOI Division of Wildlife contributes programming about observing, understanding, and respecting wildfire while camping. This is done primarily by 3 instructors during the nature hike. The Denver Zoo presents an interactive program about Colorado Wildlife replete with real animals the campers can observe and in some cases touch. This program, Raptor's Revealed, is very interactive and peaks the student's interest. Tree Climbing Colorado teaches youth skills in ascending a tree via aid climbing up a rope, to reinforce appreciation for outdoor endeavor. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science provides an astronomy program at night, to take advantage of the best classroom for Astronomy education. ESPN makes a trip possible for WOW campers to attend the ESPN X-Games in Aspen, Colorado to give the youth a new and great experience as well as to promote the WOW program. And lastly, the Genesee Outdoor Experiential Center runs a high-ropes challenge course, where certified instructors lead WOW campers in progressively challenging group and individual initiatives. All of these Partners contribute their programming and services free of cost, with the exception of the Genesee Outdoor Experiential Center and Tree Climbing Colorado who charge a nominal fee paid through the WOW budget and to a lesser extent, our Host Site Partners.

Partners that contribute equipment and material include the DOI Bureau of Land Management, The African-American Leadership Institute, USDA Forest Service, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and State Parks, the Disney Corporation, the Coleman company, GSI Outdoors, DOI Division of Wildlife, the Denver Zoo. Our primary supplier of the required equipment is the

DOI Bureau of Land Management. Each summer the BLM procures approximately 500 new Coleman sleeping bags and 500 new Coleman flashlights to be given to our participants. The BLM also supplies us with 10 new Teflon sets, 12 new Coleman 8-man tents, sleeping pads, 100 new quality rain suits, a Sport Utility vehicle, gasoline to ensure WOW is a mobile camp, and a large trailer for equipment transport. The African-American Leadership Institute provides an office for the administration and fiscal management of the WOW program. This includes computers, conference rooms, fax and copy machines, and every other essential office amenity necessary to plan, execute, and evaluate the WOW program. The USDA Forest service supplies a warehouse at the Denver Federal Center to serve as a base for our operations as well as WOW water bottles to be distributed to campers, to reinforce the lesson on the importance of hydration during outdoor appreciation. The Disney Corporation furnishes educational material like WOW journals and promotional items like WOW T-shirts and pins. The Coleman Company sells the WOW program its tents, stoves, sleeping bags, and flashlights at cost rates saving the WOW program thousands of dollars every year. GSI Outdoors also sells the WOW program camping equipment at cost rates like all of our cookware. And lastly, the DOI Department of Wildlife and the Denver Zoo distribute educational material to our campers to reinforce the lessons they learn at WOW camps.

Financially, the WOW program is supported by a collection of grants. Its primary funding source is the BLM, which allocated \$25,000 for the summer of 2006 for operating costs. Our fiscal agent, the non-profit African-American Leadership Institute, also secures grants from various community foundations like the Buck Foundation contributing \$3,000 for the summer of 2004, and from other state or national Corporations like PacifiCare. Disney also contributes financially from time to time, like donating \$5,000 in the summer of 2003.

These funds are spent on food, campsite fees, cost of program leaders, equipment costs like sleeping bags and tents, the salary of the Camp Director and associated payroll taxes, additional camp equipment needs, and miscellaneous costs.

Another key Partner is the African-American Leadership Institute. In addition to providing offices for WOW to operate from, the AALI serves centrally in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the program. Our Executive Director, Linda Williams, is also the President of the AALI, and she has a hand in everything WOW does. The AALI acts as our fiscal and administrative agent, submits grants on behalf of WOW, utilizes their community Partnerships to benefit the WOW program, and works to publicize the program to win additional support.

As is apparent from this diverse list of Partners and their unique contributions, WOW operates on the principle of community collaboration, principles we advance during our camps. Every current Partner fulfills an essential niche, like the DOI Bureau of Land Management or the Disney Corporation or the African-American Leadership Institute. Through the confluence of the diligent efforts and contributions made by all the Partners listed above, WOW is made a great success.