



trekkers

ANNUAL REPORT



2023/2024



Dear Trekkers Friends,

Thirty years ago, our founders and caring volunteers took a group of local students on the first-ever Trekkers expedition. In 1994, no one could have predicted that Trekkers would develop into a thriving organization, known statewide for our uniquely effective youth development practices and principles.

In celebrating this milestone year, we have reflected a great deal on what our amazing community helped us build, and what we continue to forge together. We are so proud of the progress we've made and the students who inspire us, year after year.

This year, in particular, as we approach the culmination of a three-year capital campaign and prepare to welcome a terrific new executive director, has been a time of growth and change. Our students prove that change builds resilience, and resilience equips us to embrace new opportunities. Trekkers students spend six years building meaningful relationships with mentors and peers. These relationships help students become more resilient, aspirational, empathetic, and connected to their community.

Throughout our evolution as an organization, the heart of Trekkers remains the same: We put relationships first. We always have, and we always will.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey with us. We look forward to venturing ahead with you by our side!

In Community,

Kathleen Meil
President of the Board

Kate Elmes
Deputy Director



"My experience as a student in Trekkers changed my outlook on the future.

If I were to look through the lens of my twelve-to-fourteen-year-old eyes, I don't think I'd ever have imagined where I am now. I live life with so much more intention and drive, and I owe a lot of my personal growth to that journey."

Liam Burlingham '25 (top left)
Trekking Student Board Member



2023-24 PROGRAM SNAPSHOTS

10th grade Team Crag at Cave of the Winds (*below*) and volunteering at Rio Grande Farm Park, CO (*right*)



12th grade Team Sequoia's 36-Hour Solo in the Berkshires (*right*)



9th grade Team Katmai and Urban Trekkers students building shelters in the woods, NJ



OUR SIX-YEAR "STEPLADDER" MODEL

A student's journey with Trekkers includes a "stepladder" delivery system that allows for the time and space to adapt to developmental needs and interests. The graphic below shows some of the student-driven learning opportunities available in each grade.

Over the years, students develop meaningful relationships with their peers, Trekkers' mentors, and the wider community. The Trekkers model embraces student voice and choice, promotes outdoor recreation, expands worldviews, and encourages civic responsibility.



ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Midcoast Community Collaborative (MCC) Receives Major Grant

In 2023, Trekkers became MCC's fiscal sponsor to help the organization formalize a dynamic structure. In April, the City of Rockland was awarded a \$450,000 grant through the Office of Justice Programs Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to fund MCC's work in supporting the needs of at-risk and system-involved youth. Trekkers proudly supports this work as an administrative and programmatic partner. Staff serve on MCC's steering committee, and Trekkers Training Institute (TTI) has provided training to MCC's members. Serving as a fiscal sponsor has created a new stream of earned revenue that aligns with our goal of diversifying revenue.

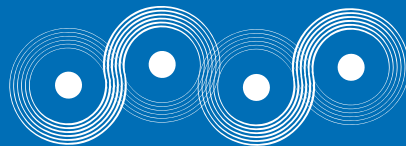


Historic Community Project Funding Secured

Trekkers won a \$921,250 grant through the FY24 federal appropriations bill, championed by U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree and Sen. Angus King. This funding will come to us through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development office and will help to transform Trekkers' land and the current office building in Rockland into a thriving community hub for youth development and home base for our training and youth programs.

The Road Ahead Campaign

December 2024 will mark the end of our three-year capital campaign, The Road Ahead Campaign for Trekkers' Future. The campaign's goal is to build the infrastructure necessary to prepare Trekkers and our students for whatever the future holds. This infrastructure includes a building renovation, a new bus shelter and bus, support for the Training Institute, and a new Board Designated Fund. A central component of the campaign is a generous matching gift challenge. Thanks to the incredible generosity



The Road Ahead

CAMPAIGN FOR TREKKERS' FUTURE

of the MOSI Foundation, Evelyn and Gerry Isom's family foundation, all new and increased gifts to the campaign will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$25,000 per family, through December 2024.

New Evidence of Trekkers' Long-Term Impact

Seeking to better understand Trekkers' true long-term impact on students as compared to peers, this research was a collaboration with the Data Innovation Project and University of Southern Maine's Catherine Cutler Institute, RSU 13 Oceanside High School, and PEAR. Findings included:

STRONGER ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Trekkers students showed lower rates of chronic absence, higher GPAs, and higher likelihood of entering and completing a post-secondary education.

STRONGER SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

Trekkers participants showed greater strengths in adult and peer relationships, ability to control emotions, express empathy, and self-reflect.

IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME

Key resilience indicators increased for Trekkers participants, especially in areas of trust, assertiveness, and critical thinking.

More findings at trekkers.org/impact



"The implications of these results are even more profound in the post-COVID era, in which we see skyrocketing mental health needs among youth, coupled with ever-increasing social media usage and online modalities for school and work. Our study provides evidence for policymakers and practitioners working in this area to chart a course forward based on supporting long-term youth resilience building efforts such as Trekkers."

- Sarah Goan and Madison Burke
Data Innovation Project Researchers

ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Staff Transitions

This year marked bittersweet transitions for Trekkers as our longtime executive director and program director headed off on new adventures. After a transformational eight years as our Executive Director, Amie Hutchison joined the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation as a Community Partner. Brandon Leppanen (née Caron) left Trekkers after nearly ten years to serve the community as St. George Town Manager. Both Amie and Brandon credit their experience at Trekkers as pivotal to success in their new positions and express confidence and excitement around our new leadership and future programs. Thank you, Amie and Brandon, for everything you have done for Trekkers!

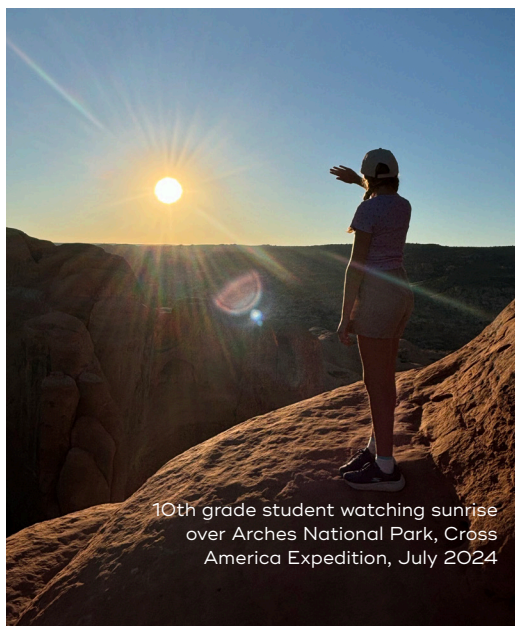
Alternative Education Program with RSU 13

In 2023, RSU 13 asked TTI to provide weekly experiences and mentorship for its alternative education program, NOVA. During the school day, students and TTI engaged in several community service projects, explored nature, and built solid relationships. This greatly benefited the students and allowed Trekkers to work with a population that may be underrepresented in our core programs. It was such a success that both RSU 13 and TTI worked hard to secure resources for the partnership's continuation in 2024-2025.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee has made significant strides. We revised and implemented several new policy initiatives, including an updated Gender Identity Policy and a new Communication Rubric. The Committee also cultivated partnerships with likeminded organizations at local and national levels, including the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). Our partnership with NCBI will result in invaluable anti-bias and leadership training.



10th grade student watching sunrise over Arches National Park, Cross America Expedition, July 2024

CREATING COMMUNITY

At Trekkers, we create community through cultural immersion and acts of community service, as well as by amplifying voice and choice within teams. Every team from 8th through 12th grade has built a team charter, written a values

contract, and made consensus decisions about where to go and what to do. With a platform to voice opinions, each team feels a sense of agency as they observe their impact on the world.



10th grade Trekkers students meet with Urban Trekkers, Rural Exchange Program 2023

Here's what Trekkers students say:

83%
report improved
relationships with peers

80%
report increased
empathy toward others

86%
are more
action-oriented

"I'm going to live life to the fullest and get through the tough stuff!"

- 10th Grader



11th grade Team Wobbegong visits Biddeford, Short Trek, February 2024

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Trekkers students build resilience when they encounter challenges and actively push themselves outside their comfort zone. This can mean rock climbing through a fear of heights, having the courage to share opinions with

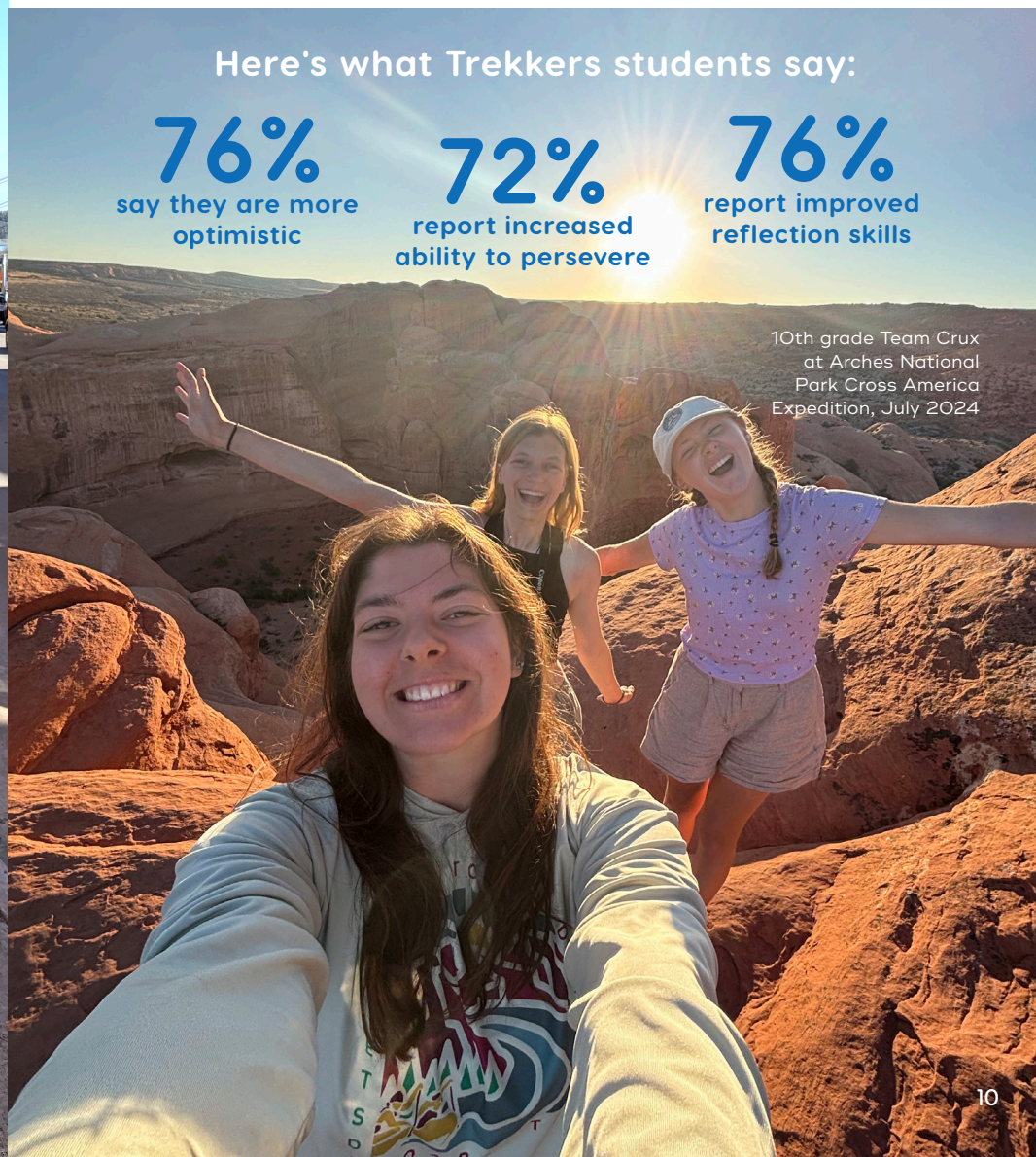
a group, or taking time to reflect before acting. As our students transition into adulthood, they are equipped to navigate challenges with confidence, adapt to new environments, and persevere in the face of adversity.

Here's what Trekkers students say:

76%
say they are more optimistic

72%
report increased ability to persevere

76%
report improved reflection skills



10th grade Team Crux at Arches National Park Cross America Expedition, July 2024

"It has allowed me to shift my outlook and understand I'm not stuck on the path that I'm on."

- 11th Grader



10th grade Team Crag at Great Sand Dunes National Park, Cross America Expedition, August 2024



Students on 11th grade Team Wobbecong in Quebec City, True North Expedition, April 2024

DEVELOPING ASPIRATIONS

Trekkers encourages students to see a world of possibility when they think about their future. Teams explore various pathways to success (college, career, and other options) and also discuss ways to make life fulfilling. Students visit Canada and see themselves in another country. They hear from people with a variety of perspectives: Buddhist monks living in a Vermont temple, and small business owners following their passions. 11th and 12th graders are invited to become Student Leaders. With mentor training and opportunities to practice in community leadership, they can apply what they learn.

Exposure to Professions & Skills

- Alumni Professional Panel
- Life Priorities Brainstorm
- Resumé Writing Workshops
- College Visits

Here's what Trekkers students say:

86%
report increased
interest in learning

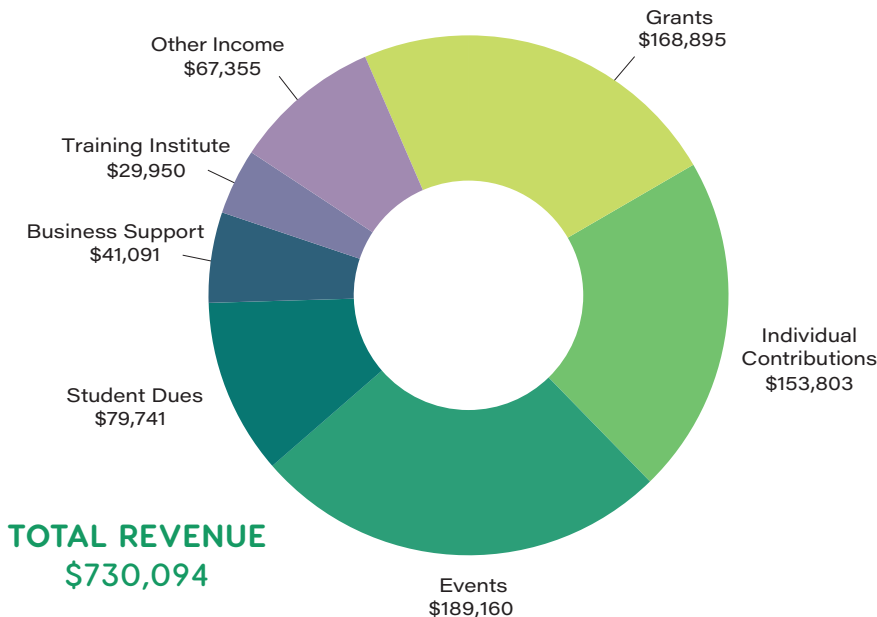
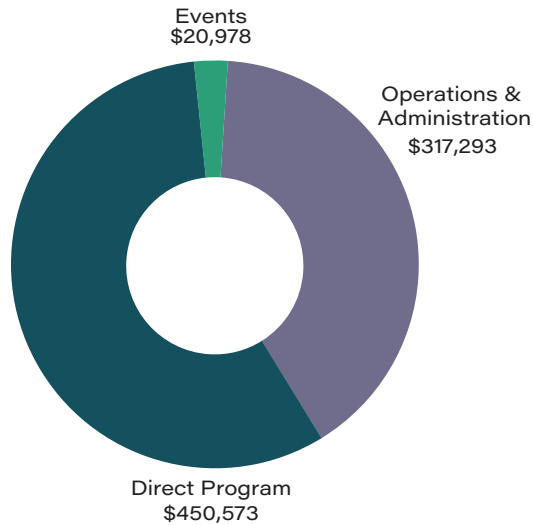
64% report
increased
academic
motivation

89%
report improved
critical thinking skills

FY23/24 FINANCIAL REVIEW

Trekkers is in a solid financial position, with both operating and capital campaign funds. However, in FY24, our operating revenues fell short of budget due to several anticipated grants that were not awarded. As our capital campaign wraps up by the end of 2024, we anticipate an increase in individual giving. With a strong finance committee and strategic alignment for sustainable growth, we're confident in long-term stability. We're proud of our diverse revenue streams and a passionate network of funders who ensure Trekkers can continue meeting the evolving needs of students, families, and our community.

TOTAL EXPENSES \$788,843



TOTAL REVENUE \$730,094

WAYS TO GIVE

Join Trekkers in investing in young people and the future of Maine!

Donate Today

Donate online at trekkers.org/donate or by mail: 325 Old County Road, Rockland, ME 04841

Monthly Gifts

Trekkers' Compass Club is a meaningful plan for helping local youth chart their future. An automatically deducted monthly gift in the amount of your choosing provides Trekkers with the consistent support we need so we can do the same for our students.

You can set up an automatic, recurring gift at trekkers.org/donate or by calling (207) 594-5095.

Carpenter Legacy Circle

Adding Trekkers to your IRA, will, or life insurance policy is a wonderful way to leave a legacy and impact the next generation. If you are interested in naming Trekkers as a beneficiary, please call us at (207) 594-5095.

For more information on ways to give, please call (207) 594-5095 or email Kate Elmes at kate@trekkers.org.

Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathleen Meil, President
Eric Waters, Treasurer and Trekkers Parent
Alyssa Landrith, Secretary and Trekkers Alum
Bryson Cowan King, Campaign Chair and Trekkers Alum
Makaila Hickey, Trekkers Alumna
Laura Miller, Trekkers Parent
Melissa Carr
Anya Felton, Current Trekkers Student
Liam Burlingham, Current Trekkers Student
Jack Carpenter, Emeritus Founding Member

STAFF LEADERSHIP

Stephanie Welch, Executive Director
Kate Elmes, Deputy Director
Diane Sternberg, Training Director
Teresa Valdepeñas, Communications and Impact Manager



Cultivating the inherent strengths of young people
through the power of long-term
mentoring relationships



Lucy the Trekkers Bus on expedition in Utah with 10th grade Team Crux, July 2024. Front cover: Students from 7th grade Team Alpine at Acadia National Park, Acadia Adventure Expedition, May 2024

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