

Project Get Outdoors

FALL 2021

www.mnprojectgo.org

A Message from Our Founder

Greetings partners, volunteers, donors and friends! I hope you are healthy and happy and finding time to get outdoors and experience the natural world all around you.

As we know, this past year has been a tough one. COVID has created major challenges for youth-serving organizations. Especially in urban areas, children have lost access to after school and enrichment programs. When they are able to attend, there are new, tougher restrictions. Many parents are rightfully nervous to allow children to participate in large group activities. Youth-serving organizations have had to adapt and be innovative in order to continue to provide services to their communities.

In addition, fundraising has been much more difficult as many foundations and grant-making organizations have temporarily shifted priorities to health-focused programs. Our mission at Project GO is to “facilitate outdoor experiences so kids grow to be healthy and increase environmental stewardship behaviors.” Fostering healthy human development is part of our mission and we are finding our organization does not fit with most current funding priorities.

The reality of this COVID climate is that Project GO fundraising efforts for the documentary film project we began in 2020 have been nearly brought to a halt. We appreciate every donation and grant award we have received over the past year. These dollars have brought us halfway to our \$15,000 goal.

Despite this reality, we have continued our work of connecting low-income youth and children of color to the outdoors through new partnerships and innovative collaborations. Read on to learn more. And thank you for your continued support of Project GO!

Sara Halger



2021 Highlights

- We continued work on the [Legend Hunters](#) film project filming winter recreation activities and youth interviews and working with Riverway Learning Community, a charter school in Winona. Mina Tham, a recent film studies graduate from Winona State University, worked with Riverway summer school students to develop video stories that will be included in the film. [Read more](#) about this awesome project!

Riverway students explore at John Latsch State Park



- Project GO teamed up with [Se MN Park Rx](#) to assemble and distribute [Campus Nature Rx](#) information packets to mental health service providers at college campuses and high schools in Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona and Olmsted Counties.
- We began collaborating with a local group working to enhance awareness of our karst geology in the Driftless region of southeast Minnesota. Project GO is helping supervise a University of Minnesota graduate student who will be developing a marketing and outreach plan for the **DARK Trail** (Driftless Area Karst Trail). [Learn more](#).
- Project GO provided activity backpacks to partners at the [Youth and Family Circle](#) in St. Paul and to the Boys and Girls Clubs of the [White Earth](#) and [Leech Lake](#) Indian Reservations.
- We continued to offer [trainings](#) for childcare providers and presentations at Early Childhood Family Education programs in the region.

Partner Highlight: Southeast Minnesota Park Rx

Southeast Minnesota Park Rx is a regional initiative to connect health care providers to resources and information to empower them to prescribe time outdoors to their patients. Se MN Park Rx facilitates monthly virtual meetings for health care providers and parks professionals to learn from each other about the impact nature has on human health and wellbeing. Se MN Park Rx projects:

- Providers to Parks field day and Walks for Docs events
- Informational display at county fairs, libraries and other locations
- Campus Nature Rx packets sent to area colleges and high schools
- Assemble seasonal [articles](#) for providers to share with patients

To receive the Se MN Park Rx email updates and meeting information, contact greenwood.cassandra@CO.OLMSTED.MN.US.



Mina (front row far right) with Riverway summer school students and staff

Meet Mina Tham, Winona State University grad

Mina is a 2021 Winona State University (WSU) graduate with a major in Film Studies and a minor in Creative Digital Media. During her time in Winona, she was involved with several film courses and class projects as well as interning at Frozen River Film Festival in 2020.

Project GO reached out to WSU to inquire about finding an intern or graduate student to assist with the Legend Hunters film project. Mina was recommended because of her strong work ethic and positive attitude.

Throughout the six-week summer school course at Riverway, Mina visited multiple times to introduce students to the basics of film making and guide them through the process of creating their own video stories. *"It was so much fun seeing all the ideas the kids had and the end results. They have got some serious talent!"*

Allies in Outreach: Youth and Family Circle

Mahmud Kanyare has been Executive Director of [Youth and Family Circle](#) for a decade. As a recent immigrant from Somalia in the sixth grade, his teacher shared that the class would be spending a week at summer camp. Coming from East Africa, Mahmud had never seen a running river or lake. The summer camp experience was profound.

"It felt like something new as many children from Somalia and East Africa are plagued with civil war and cannot truly experience the care-free feeling of American children. That is something all children deserve to experience as it nourishes the soul."

Today, Mahmud and staff and volunteers at YFC mentor dozens of urban youth and provide access to knowledge, experiences, and opportunities previously not available to them, including outdoor nature experiences.



Photo from YFC website

Don't Forget Project GO on Give to the Max Day!



Please remember us on November 18, Give to the Max Day! Thank you for your support!

Contact Project GO

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For More Information

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