



Inspiring youth to make
positive decisions for healthy
and successful lives.

courage

discipline

integrity

wisdom

compassion

humility

Organization Overview

SOS Outreach, founded and headquartered in Colorado's Vail Valley, is a national youth development nonprofit utilizing outdoor experiential learning to inspire positive decision making for healthy and successful lives. Every SOS program incorporates the five core values of courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion. SOS mentors help students define and practice these core values as they provide a consistent adult presence for students who may not otherwise have a positive role model in their lives. Targeting kids with poor grades, low attendance and behavioral issues, SOS intervenes in situations that typically lead to high school dropout. SOS teaches a year-round, multi-year progressive curriculum beginning with the five-day introductory Learn to Ride program, continuing with the four-year University curriculum and culminating when students return to SOS in a junior mentor capacity. Throughout the curriculum, SOS students focus on outdoor experiential learning, character development, values-based leadership training, and social justice advocacy.

Fast Facts

- SOS Outreach works with 5,000 participants annually over 20,000 program days.
- SOS operates at 37 winter resorts in 11 states.
- Youth participants completed 6,650 hours of community service across 250 individual projects in 2011/2012.
- SOS Outreach has a higher conversion rate than beginner ski and snowboard lessons: one in four program participants become lifetime snowsports enthusiasts—a key point in an industry that is struggling overall (RRC Associates).
- SOS Outreach has brought more minorities into winter sports than any other charity.
- SOS has raised \$7 million in cash donations and additional in-kind services bringing a total of \$20.5 million to the program since its inception in 1993.
- Due to its success, SOS has attracted a first-class board of directors including Harvard's Dean of After-School Education and executives from K2 Sports, Vail Resorts, and Intrawest.
- SOS Outreach incorporates pre- and post-program participant surveys to measure outcomes and ROI.

www.sosoutreach.org | 970-926-9292

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SOS Outreach Program Results:

- 60% of college-age past participants surveyed were currently enrolled in college, compared to a 2011 Pell Institute study reporting 28% of high-school seniors from high-poverty schools continuing to college.
- 78% of youth participants anticipate attending college.
- Graduates of the SOS programs engage in significantly more aerobic exercise and organized sports than peers.
- SOS participants score higher than their peer group on measures of self-esteem.
- Participant surveys show statistically significant increases in six areas:
 1. Value on achievement
 2. Positive attitude towards the future/future expectations
 3. Sense of acceptance and belonging
 4. Identification of neighborhood resources
 5. Identification of interested and caring adults
 6. Liking/perceived competence in activity
- Research demonstrates that youth with risk factors in their lives are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, are more prone to suicide or teen pregnancy, and are more likely to drop out of school or resort to violence. SOS programs provide positive influences in kids' lives to counter these risk factors, including a greater value in staying in school, going to college and identifying caring adults. Research results demonstrate that the organization's programs greatly reduce the likelihood of its youth engaging in harmful behaviors.

"We celebrate the simple vision of spreading the love, so that the next generation might do the same. As an adult, when I hear the definitions of wisdom or courage provided by students, or about the service projects SOS Outreach participants do, when I see those core values put into action, it makes me a better person. My goal is that others will feel the same." Arn Menconi, executive director and founder, SOS Outreach

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Mission:

Inspiring youth to make positive decisions for healthy and successful lives.

History & Programs:

SOS Outreach began as the Snowboard Outreach Society in 1993 in order to introduce underprivileged youth to the mountains through snowboarding. Now, 19 years later, SOS has grown in numbers, expanded across many different individual sports in winter and summer, and incorporated a youth development, leadership training, and adult mentorship curriculum into its programs. In 2009, SOS finalized a merger with *Meet the Wilderness*, a 34-year-old organization that taught life skills, teamwork, and leadership to youth through summer activities. The merger ensured that SOS could provide year-round leadership development programs.

SOS offers outdoor activities including snowboarding, skiing, backpacking, camping, hiking, rock climbing and mountain biking. Each of these adventure sports is designed to foster self-confidence, cultivate life skills and demonstrate to students the importance of giving back to the community. SOS Outreach bases its programs on the theory that participants can effectively connect learned skills in nature and outdoor sports to their own lives. As a part of the program, youth are mentored by adult volunteers from the community who help participants understand and practice the SOS core values (courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion), give back to the community, and learn values-based leadership skills.

During the 2011 program year (May 1, 2011 – April 30, 2012), SOS served 5,003 underserved youth through 20,530 total program days.

SOS' target population includes underserved youth aged 8-18 who face a variety of risk factors, including low-income backgrounds, family conflict or substance abuse, single-parent households, behavioral or academic struggles in school, and/or involvement in the court system.

SOS saw the following demographic breakdown of youth across all programs during the 2011-2012 program year:

- 58% of participants self-identify as an ethnic minority.
- 61% of participants reported having a household income of less than \$40,000 per year.
- 48% of participants had no health insurance or were enrolled in Medicaid.
- 40% of participants live in situations other than two parent households.
- Gender: 58% Male, 42% Female

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Program Offerings and Goals:

SOS offers a progressive, values-based curriculum, which offers students up to 10 years of outdoor experiential learning, character development, values-based leadership training, and social justice advocacy. Participants are paired with a positive adult mentor to complete activity days, service learning projects, and leadership workshops. Activities build on the lessons and skills learned the previous year, creating SOS' positive outcomes.

Program Year	Goals and Projects	Number of Participants 2011-2012
Adventure (one day)	Introduce a new outdoor sport	2136
1st Year (Multi-Day)	Introduce SOS core values Practice new outdoor adventure sports	2073
2nd Year (University 1)	Continue to learn and practice new adventure sports Implement SOS core values in daily life Set and achieve personal, academic, and athletic goals with SOS mentor Introduce service learning opportunities	390
3rd Year (University 2)	Continue to learn and practice new adventure sports Implement SOS core values in daily life Set and achieve personal, academic, and athletic goals with SOS mentor Has a choice of service learning opportunities	182
4th Year (University 3)	Continue learning and practicing new adventure sports Implement SOS core values in daily life. Set and achieve personal, academic, and athletic goals with SOS mentor Address local issue by planning and completing a community outreach project Begin focusing on advocacy and leadership skills Attend health workshops	107
5th Year (University 4)	Continue learning and practicing new adventure sports Implement SOS core values in daily life model them for younger students Set and achieve personal, academic, and athletic goals with SOS mentor Continue focusing on advocacy and leadership Attend vocational workshops	78
6th -10th Year (Jr. Sherpa)	Model SOS core values for younger students Assist SOS mentors with group management Participate in intensive leadership training series	37

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Masters (Year- Round)	Participate in both summer and winter sports Increase exposure to mentorship and core value training with over 30 days of activity annually	113
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ACROSS THE NEWS--HIGHLY TOPICAL ISSUES HAVE SOLUTIONS VIA SOS:

- In the wake of increasing school violence, we've identified many students who feel like "outsiders," report being bullied, or are in trouble for related at-risk behaviors. How does SOS alleviate/change these feelings and behaviors among participants? We have additional information and statistics to back up your story.
- Youth obesity rates are a critical national issue, and are rising astronomically. How do we fix this? SOS has proven success in promoting healthy lifestyles, driving participants towards more activity. We can discuss how we achieve this success.
- The nation's youth are exposed to drugs and alcohol at an alarming rate. What gives SOS participants the tools to succeed while their peers succumb to addictions? We have testimonies from participants to support your story.
- Higher education is a key factor in determining success, but only 28% of students from high-poverty schools continue to college. SOS has created an environment where 78% of all participants anticipate obtaining higher education. SOS can develop an outline that demonstrates how and why.

OUR NATION'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC: BUSINESS, MEETINGS AND INDUSTRY ISSUES

- SOS provides a model which boosts the number of repeat skiers/riders, especially among a diverse ethnic population. With America's growing percentage of Hispanic/non-Caucasian residents, SOS creates a new audience for the industry. Story line: How this is a critical new client for the industry.

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- The SOS story is compelling enough to bring together people within the snowsports industry who would generally not collaborate. Our board of directors includes some of the biggest influences in the industry: how can this carry over to other collaborations, raising the overall success of snowsports numbers?

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