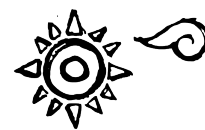




Photograph by: Lupe Sotelo

2019

# UN AÑO OUTDOORS



LATINO  
OUTDOORS<sup>SM</sup>

## MISSION

We inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors and embrace *cultura y familia* as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

## VISION

A world where all Latino communities enjoy nature as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place—a world where the outdoors is a place to share and celebrate stories, knowledge, and culture, while growing leadership and an active community of Latino outdoor users, mentors, and stewards.

*"Gracias por existir!"*

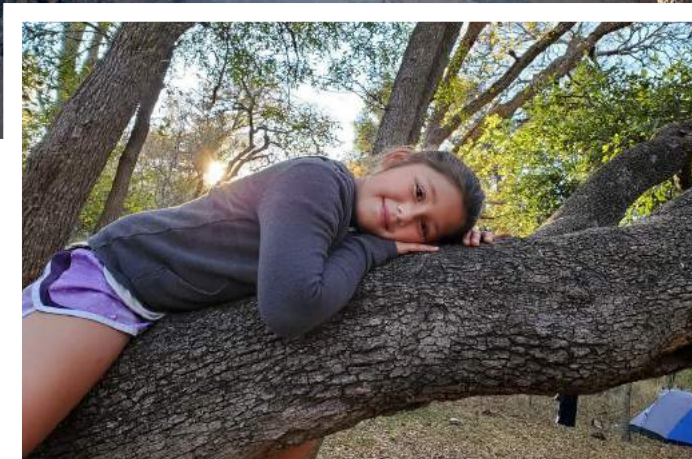
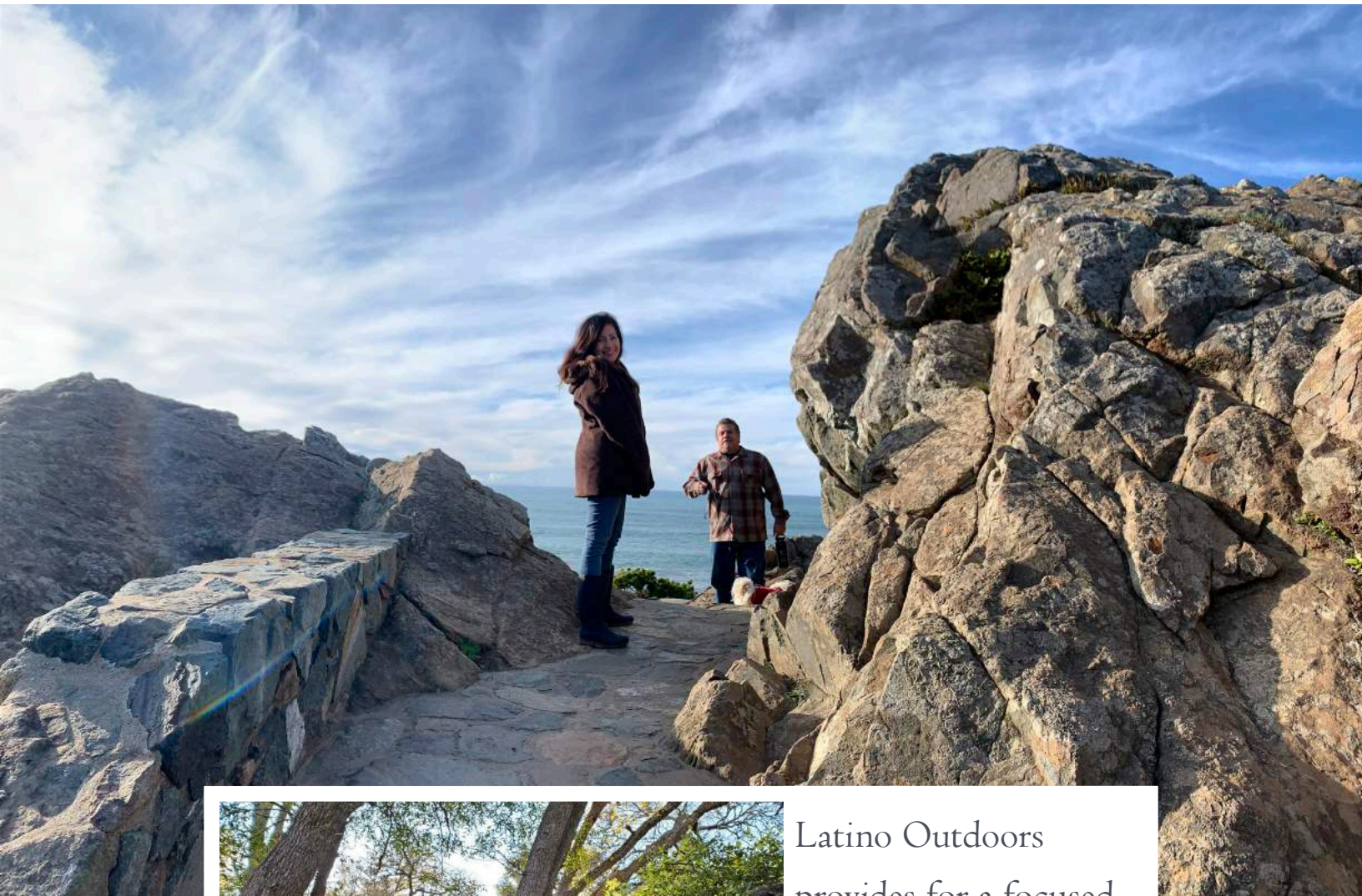
Danielle, Latino Outdoors Supporter, November 19, 2019



Photograph by: Christian La Mont

## ABOUT US

Through our *Vamos* Outdoors Program, Latino Outdoors (LO) offers free outdoor activities and supports people who are receiving their introduction to nature.



Photograph by: Josie Gutierrez

Latino Outdoors provides for a focused conversation on the Latinx experience without being limited to it.

Photograph by: Ruby Rodriguez



Unable to locate Latino-led conservation organizations, Founder José González became motivated to create LO in 2013 as an online blog and networking platform for members of Latinx communities interested in outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation.

He shared his ideas with participants in this new network. Together they began to grow the community, and in the process, built the foundation for LO as an organization. Since 2014, LO has been providing outdoor experiences, along with the accompanying health and wellness benefits, to families and individuals of all ages, growing from a California-based organization to a national movement powered by volunteer leaders.

Latino Outdoors provides for a focused conversation on the Latinx experience without being limited to it. As José explains [here](#), LO is a space for Latinx representation in the outdoors, while also serving as a platform “for the inter-community relationship building that is vital to the growth and development of present and future constituencies that experience and protect our public lands.”

Photograph by: Michael Estrada  
Design by: Dave Brenner

## 2018 RECAP: BUILDING CAPACITY

In [2018](#), LO's founding leadership passed the torch to second generation staff, which made notable progress on key goals for organizational development. Resources and time saving systems for providing greater support to volunteers in program delivery were developed, implemented, and fine tuned. By September of last year, each of the 17 active LO regions at that time was equipped with a 1-year strategic outings plan. The plans served as a vehicle for strengthening outdoor programming and focused on team development, leadership training, and strategic partnerships with kindred organizations. LO also made notable strides in measuring and reporting on impact. The results yielded by these organizational investments in 2018 set the stage for 2019 as a year of flourishing.



Photograph by: Janelle Paciencia



Photograph by: Veronica Miranda

## VAMOS OUTDOORS

This year, [our national network of volunteers/leaders](#) delivered nearly 190 outings for the benefit of 3,300 participants, a 65% increase over what was accomplished in 2018. Youth and children accounted for more than 1 out of every 4 of attendees. Nearly 80% of 2019 outings included participants attending together with members of their family and over 60% attracted participants who were new to the activity. LO volunteers increasingly led varied forms of outdoor recreation, from backpacking to bioblitzes, botanical walks to biking, and beyond, building their own confidence and that of participants in the process.

**With the following words, Cassandra Castillo, a member of our volunteer team in San Diego, painted an image of a 2019 Latino Outdoors outing.**



Photograph by: Mellissa Linton-Villafranco

Our corazones were truly overflowing during this event, strong positive energy was shared all around. The fresh smell of the ocean, the crashing waves, the red cliff formations, the “splash zone” one of our participants found herself in, and the clear vulnerability by some as they placed themselves outside their comfort bubble made for a memorable experience of connection. Folks were fully engaged in the stories and knowledge we were sharing about the Kumeyaay, the flora and fauna, the geology of the area, and the impact of the Spanish explorers. We had our youngest participant yet attend with her parents. Witnessing her excitement and curiosity was inspiring. We had a participant drive down from Palm Springs to experience a Latino Outdoors outing firsthand and convinced her sister, who doesn't do much hiking, to join her in support because she's interested in starting a LO chapter. There was also a woman who brought her “little” Barbara to the outing. It was inspiring to see her dedication to the Big Sister program but even more so Barbara's enjoyment. Several folks also joined us at a nearby fish joint after the outing to continue connecting, exchange contact info, and plan future meet ups. To sum it up, COMUNIDAD showed up strong.

We also witnessed an increase in LO's stewardship-focused programming this year. One of every eight outings during 2019 included a stewardship component. From San Francisco to New York City, Latino Outdoors volunteers and participants pulled invasives, planted natives, cleaned up coasts and riverbanks, and became more rooted in our authentic outdoor selves while caring for the environment. Alma Padilla, from our New York City team, shared the following about a summer ecological restoration event.



Photograph by: Morgan Wordes

This was a great opportunity to contribute to an important, local restoration effort that has visible results. It was very impressive when we were shown the vast marshland that came to exist in the last six years because of volunteers like us. We helped plant over 3,100 clumps of salt marsh cordgrass, together with a team of about 10 high schoolers that work for the Jamaica Bay Restoration Corps as their summer job with the American Littoral Society. We also learned a lot about the natural history of the bay, such as how this is the time of year that ospreys are starting to slowly nudge their fledglings out of the nest (we saw it happen!). We also encountered a female horseshoe crab sitting on top of her eggs, for which she will tolerate being out of the water and in the baking sun for up to a few tide cycles. As a special treat upon our return to land, we had paletas La Michoacana for everyone that helped - so yummy and refreshing! And to top it off, we gave our participants and the two leaders of the ALS a Hydro Flask as a reward for the commitment and hard work, which was a wonderful surprise to all. Overall, this was a great opportunity, and best of all, it planted the seeds for many future collaborations with the ALS, who were incredible hosts.

This demonstration of leadership and committed effort to engage Latinx and other underrepresented communities in the outdoors earned Latino Outdoors the [GreenLatinos Compañer@ Award](#), a recognition reserved for individuals or organizations that are committed allies to Latinx communities in equity, justice, and inclusion efforts.





## LÍDERES OUTDOORS



Photograph by: Veronica Miranda

With the aforementioned achievements from 2018 and sizeable volunteer recruitment on the horizon, we began 2019 highly motivated and ready to provide even more tools and resources to LO volunteers to further their development and help ensure their success as leaders in the outdoors. We rolled out our new Volunteer Policies & Procedures Manual within the first week of January. Soon after, we introduced a versatile and practical English-Spanish brochure, Theory of Change infographic, and a streamlined Outings Framework guide to better communicate our work to volunteers, empowering their growth as LO ambassadors. Then, one by one, we onboarded more than 30 new volunteers throughout the year onto existing regional teams and in new places like Arkansas, Connecticut, and central Oregon to help meet and sustain the growing demand for outdoor programming.

With more than 90 volunteers leading and supporting outdoor programming in 20 locations across the country, Latino Outdoors makes leadership development a core component of its mission. In addition to informational materials, we continued our commitment to providing high quality, in-person training retreats for volunteers, which included the Femme Trans Women's Nature Retreat at Coconino National Forest in Arizona, a multi-day seminar on Positive Masculinity in the Outdoors hosted by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in Wyoming, and LO's annual Leadership Campout, which took place this year at Malibu Creek State Park in southern California.

Training modules at these gatherings included Gender Identity 101, Storytelling 101: Stories About Us By Us, Mental Health & Wellness in the Context of Outdoor Recreation, Outdoor Leadership from a Latinx Perspective, and more. Several were peer-led thanks to LO volunteers with expertise in their respective fields and relevant outdoor leadership experience who generously shared their knowledge with teammates. In fact, many of our training needs can be addressed in-house, doubling the leadership development potential by providing trainers and trainees the opportunity to grow from the teaching and learning experience, respectively. Furthermore, we supported 16 leaders in obtaining or renewing their Wilderness First Aid (WFA) certification and three more volunteers with Wilderness First Responder training.



Photograph by: Veronica Miranda

LO volunteers shared positive feedback around the support they received with WFA and other [training and development opportunities](#). By providing a safe and supportive learning environment that encourages peer mentorship, we find that they are very open about their areas for growth. More confident and well-trained leaders have contributed to the success of *Vamos* Outdoors. They are an asset to Latino Outdoors, our partner organizations, and the communities we serve.



Photograph by: Christian La Mont



## Did you know?

Organizational culture is a big deal at Latino Outdoors. Ours is one that supports dialogue and openness, while celebrating each other as our whole, genuine selves. Openness to learning and improvement by staff and volunteers has been key to our ability to grow. We are guided not only by our shared vision of outdoor equity, but also our commitment to collective healing and growth. This takes work.

In May, we hosted our Femme, Trans, and Women's (FTW) Nature Retreat for LO leaders who identify as such. Originally, this

leadership training was framed as a women's gathering and meant to support Latina leadership. Our non-binary leaders promptly invited us to rethink our framework and consider how we might look at gender from a more fluid, less colonized lens. Honoring the multi-faceted Latinx identity and diversity at all levels is a deeply held practice at Latino Outdoors. Getting out of our comfort zone and working together to cross this threshold will ultimately help us move forward in anti oppression. Among the favorite training modules provided during the FTW retreat were Gender Identity 101 and Unapologetically You, a zine activity.

## YO CUENTO OUTDOORS



Photograph by: Sully Moreno

Latino Outdoors’ storytelling and communications initiative, *Yo Cuento* Outdoors, is a celebration of our ambicultural identities. The Spanish phrase “*Yo Cuento*” has multiple meanings, including “I count”, “I matter”, and “I tell a story.” [Representation matters](#), and at LO we take it upon ourselves to amplify the visibility of Latinx communities in the outdoors, conservation, and environmental education. We do so through our social media channels, website, email outreach, and in-person. As LO joins a growing movement to rethink outside engagement and its potential for contributing towards stronger, more sustainable communities, *Yo Cuento* is our contribution towards the realization of that potential.

From shining a light on [20 notable Latinx](#) activists, advocates, and conservationists to tipping our [hard hat](#) to a group of young Latinas who spent Latino Conservation Week contributing to the stewardship of Mt. Rainier National Park to saluting a [Yosemite National Park Ranger](#) who has dedicated herself to increasing equitable access to parks and other public lands, we helped expand and enrich the outdoor narrative in 2019 with our storytelling and story sharing. Our online audience, which grew by more than 25% over the course of the year, heard from us on topics ranging from camping to [car hopping](#). And they truly heard from an “us”, with over 100 individuals contributing their voices to *Yo Cuento* in 2019. This collaboration in communications was perhaps best exemplified by LO’s [Statement of Solidarity](#) issued in August, the result of a team effort involving volunteers, Board members, and staff. The statement serves as a testament to LO’s belief in the beauty and value of immigrant communities and commitment to the full spectrum of people. Throughout the year, the various voices of *Yo Cuento* were united as one in celebrating diversity and declaring it a core tenet of Latino Outdoors.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

In 2019, we noted a rise in LO-led environmental stewardship projects. At the forefront of this upward trend stands Verónica Miranda, LO's San Francisco Bay Area Program Coordinator. Of her first clean-up of the year, Vero recalls, "This event was originally a restoration project with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy; because of the government shutdown, the event had to be cancelled. LO still showed up to clean up the trails that were filled with plastic." By September, Vero was leading her Bay Area community to Yosemite National Park, some of which were visiting the park for the first time. Because of her, Latino Outdoors was named [volunteer group of the year by Yosemite](#). Thank you, Vero, for moving the needle on LO's environmental stewardship programming.



## MIL GRACIAS, MANY THANKS

An individual's words of encouragement, a collaboration with a community-based nonprofit, a partnership with an outdoor company to get more people outside...it all counts. Latino Outdoors deeply appreciates everyone's support and the various forms in which it is offered. In 2019, Latino Outdoors had the honor and privilege of working together with the following partners, funders, and supporters.

**In all, LO collaborated with about 250 unique organizations and groups this year.**

### [8I8 Hikes](#)

*Andando en Bicicletas y Caminando (ABC)*

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Audubon

[Black Girls Trekin'](#)

Brookside Gardens-Montgomery Parks

Bureau of Land Management

California Department of Fish & Wildlife Service

California State Parks

California State Parks Foundation

Community Nature Connection

*Corazón Latino*

*Cuenca Los Ojos*

Deckers Outdoor Corporation

*Descanso* Gardens Education Department

Dr. Bronner's

Earth Treks

[La Clínica Del Pueblo](#)

[Familias Unidas Ganando Accesibilidad](#)

[Girls to Women](#)

GreenLatinos

Hispanic Access Foundation

[Homeboy Industries](#)

Humboldt State University Center Activities

Hydro Flask

Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy

Latino Community Foundation

LatinoNet

*Los Padres* ForestWatch

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

National Outdoor Leadership School

National Parks Conservation Association

National Park Service

Nature for All

Nike/Charities Aid Foundation of America

North Cascades Institute

Northcoast Regional Land Trust

[Nuestra Tierra](#)

Osprey

[Otay Mesa Detention Resistance](#)

Outdoor Afro

[Outdoor Asian](#)

Outdoors Empowered Network

Patagonia

Potomac Conservancy

REI

Resources Legacy Fund

San Francisco Foundation

Seattle City Light

[Siena Youth Center](#)

Sierra Club

Texas State Parks

The Nature Conservancy

The North Face

The Presidio Trust

The Wilderness Society

TreePeople

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Forest Service

Washington Trails Association

WGBH Educational Foundation

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Youth Outside

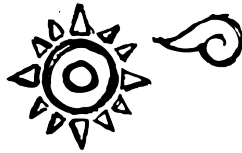
## JUNTOS MEJOR • BETTER TOGETHER



Photograph by: Aurora Perez

Despite our growth since 2013, Latino Outdoors continues to be a community first and an organization second. We are a community that strives for an outdoors that is safe and welcoming for all people, regardless of race, creed, nationality, language, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. We are a community that celebrates diverse forms of outdoor engagement. We are a community that believes meaningful outdoor experiences make us stronger, healthier, and happier.

*Somos comunidad.* Thus, when a supporter like Danielle thanks us for existing, that expression of gratitude extends to an entire community, of which they are a part. So **thank you**, Danielle. Thank you and the many supporters who make up the Latino Outdoors community, including participants who join us outside, the volunteers who lead LO outings, and the people who share their stories of outdoor connection with us all. You give us reason to believe that in 2020 and beyond, we will be even better...together.



Latino Outdoors is a unique Latinx-led organization working to create a national community of leaders in conservation and outdoor education. As part of this work, we are focused on expanding and amplifying the Latinx experience in the outdoors; providing greater opportunities for leadership, mentorship, professional opportunities and serving as a platform for sharing cultural connections and narratives that are often overlooked by the traditional outdoor movement. It is a space for the community to be present, share their voices, and showcase how conservation roots have been ingrained in *la cultura Latina* for generations.

[latinooutdoors.org](http://latinooutdoors.org)