



2018 UN AÑO OUTDOORS





“Our November Outing was a beautiful Fall-weather hike through horseshoe-shaped Rinconada Canyon at Petroglyph National Monument. The canyon is actually a volcanic escarpment where local Pueblo peoples have been coming since time-immemorial. Some of the petroglyphs we saw were created at least 1000 years ago. We also saw petroglyphs drawn or

or carved by Spanish colonists and more contemporary sheep farmers. It was interesting to see the contrasts between Spanish religious symbols and words juxtaposed with Pueblo religious symbols and documentation of what they observed around them. We took turns reading informational signs aloud to the group and everybody left with a renewed sense of place, historical context, and appreciation for the lives and cultures that have interacted in this sacred space.”

—Roma Castellanos, LO Albuquerque Program Coordinator

The outgoing year showed Latino Outdoors to be many things. LO is a network of individuals committed to connecting people with nature and the outdoors, especially those from some of our most underrepresented communities. LO is also a comunidad, in and of itself, one that strives to offer support and opportunity for its members to enjoy the plethora of wellness benefits that outdoor recreation offers us. Additionally, many people consider LO a movement, one that is consciously and conscientiously working at the intersection of people and the environment to advance equity in the outdoors.

VAMOS OUTDOORS

In 2018, LO volunteers and staff organized and carried out 110 outings for the benefit of 2,000 participants, across thirteen states plus Washington DC. Participants included children, youths, adults, seniors, native Spanish speakers, 1st-time hikers, campers, backpackers, and others who were new to certain outdoor activities. Approximately 3/4 of these outings included family participation. The large majority of LO outings were day hikes, and we also organized backpacking, biking, birding, camping, climbing, ecological restoration, kayaking, running, sailing, and snow hiking activities. Several outings were organized around specific themes, including body positivity, gratitude, health, nature photography, mother/daughter camping, and womxn's empowerment.



JUNTOS WE ARE MORE

The LO team grew in 2018. Our Vamos Outdoors Program made its debut in Albuquerque, central Florida, and San Diego, while new volunteers strengthened existing teams in places such as Flagstaff, Los Angeles, San Antonio, San Francisco Bay Area, and Tucson. LO's presence on the East Coast is also strong thanks to active, committed volunteer leaders in NYC, the greater DC area, central Pennsylvania, and aforementioned Florida.



INVESTING IN OUR VOLUNTEER LEADERS



@Veronica Miranda

In April, we hosted a leadership training at Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve in California to model our new outings framework for our Program Coordinators. The framework weaves the most important components of our work into every LO outing: connecting people with one another and the outdoors, the process of accessing the outdoors, and the policies that impact our public lands. Our design encourages community-building with a place-based approach that focuses on self-empowerment by teaching outings participants how to replicate outdoor experiences on their own.

In September, we held our annual Leadership Campout, a gathering and training of LO volunteers from around the country, at Big Basin Redwoods CA State Park. We are still buzzing with excitement as we step into perhaps one of the event's most important outcomes: a 1-year strategic outings plan for each of our 17 regions to make a focused and concerted effort towards the goals outlined in our 2020 Strategic Plan. Additionally, longtime LO partner and supporter, REI, provided an introductory risk management training session, while LO leaders provided peer-to-peer training and instruction on Leave No Trace principles, outings safety planning, outdoor programming for families with children, and cultural relevance in the outdoors through storytelling.

Throughout the year, LO sponsored several volunteers with training and development, including wilderness first aid certification, front-country leadership instruction, and participation in outdoor recreation-related conferences.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Undoubtedly, LO's most valuable contributors are our volunteers. Being a volunteer-driven organization allows us to keep our finger on the pulse of the outdoor movement and remain responsive to community needs. As the on-the-ground leaders of our *Vamos* Outdoors Program, these dedicated individuals reflect the people they serve outdoors in culturally meaningful ways. This ground-up approach towards outdoor equity continues to be what we pride ourselves on, and our commitment to volunteers is everlasting.

One such volunteer is Jennifer Adams, who in November completed her first year as LO San Francisco Bay Area Regional Coordinator. Not only did she build on the region's previous success, in particular by leveraging LO's partnership with Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, but she did so while completing her undergraduate studies in Evolutionary Biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Watching Jennifer organize and lead transformative outdoor experiences while highlighting her culture and heritage inspires many, including her mother, who witnesses the enrichment it brings into Jennifer's life. She admires Jennifer for her ability to bring people to nature and nature to people, so much that she began to join her daughter on these outings. Jennifer finds enjoyment in her ability to push her mother's boundaries, such as bringing her along for camping excursions in Yosemite National Park. In turn, her mother entices her friends to come out too.

On another front, Jennifer expresses deep gratitude for the positive impact her experience with LO has had on her journey to higher education. She explains that without the outdoor leadership and community engagement experience she's received as a LO volunteer, she would have had a very difficult time in her field work as a student. Her comfort and familiarity with experiences such as camping enabled her to fully immerse herself in her outdoors work as a student. Jennifer didn't have this experience growing up, but got it from LO just in time. Now, she wants to be the one taking students out to provide them with the same advantages she had. She also reaches out to professors to help them understand where students are coming from. Understanding the basics empowered her to enjoy her experience to the utmost.

GROWING STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL RAÍCES

In April, Luis Villa joined us as LO's second-generation Executive Director, focused on building infrastructure and sustainable growth. With the leadership of Luis and Ruby Rodríguez, Operations Manager and Outings Program Director, LO made notable progress on key goals for organizational development, including timesaving systems that provide greater support to volunteers and collect valuable outings program data. We've since been hard at work on building our capacity to meet and sustain the demand for our outdoor programming.



LO leadership staff also includes the National Support Team, a core group of volunteers, each of whom stepped into a specific organizational role in order to provide guidance and support to our network of volunteers. Together, LO's Executive Director, Operations Manager/Program Director, and National Support Team resulted in increased capacity to perform the work of developing and guiding each outings program region in order to establish the consistency that is necessary for lasting impact.

NEW AND RENEWED PARTNERSHIPS/SPONSORS

The community that is LO extends beyond our volunteers, outings participants, Board members, and staff to include our partners, individual donors, funders, and other supporters. LO would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all persons who contributed in different ways during the year, as well as to the following 2018 supporters and collaborators:

Bay Area Wilderness Training
California State Parks
cityWILD
Community Initiatives
Community Nature Connection/MRCA
Conservation Colorado Education Fund
Corazón Latino
East Bay Regional Park District
Environmental Protection and Information Center
Every Kid in a Park Program
Florida State Parks
Hispanic Access Foundation
Humboldt Area Foundation
King County, WA
La Finca del Sur
Lampert Byrd Foundation
Latino Community Foundation
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Montgomery Parks-Brookside Gardens
National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)

National Park Service
One Blood Initiative
Outdoors Empowered Network
Park Rx America
Patagonia
REI
Saguaro National Park
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Seattle Aquarium
Seattle City Lights
Shaver's Creek Environmental Center
Texas Parks & Wildlife
The San Francisco Foundation
US Forest Service
Warrior Institute
Washington Trails Association
WGBH Educational Foundation

VAMOS OUTDOORS IN 2019

Despite all that was new in 2018, some very important things remain the same: Latino Outdoors continues to be led by volunteers, Board members, and a staff with a deep, personal commitment to our core values of comunidad, familia, cultura, service, and access. We all share a firmly held belief in our mission to 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. And as we did during 2018, we will work hard in 2019 to improve and find new ways to be more successful, including securing resources to expand into new parts of the country and to build a core support staff for the benefit of LO's volunteers, outings participants, and the outdoor equity movement. As we prepare to step into the new year, we could not be more proud of our growth and development as leaders of change.

If you believe time spent outdoors is time spent healing and growing, if you value the connection between nature and all people, and if you support the next generation of environmental stewards, consider making a year-end gift to Latino Outdoors.