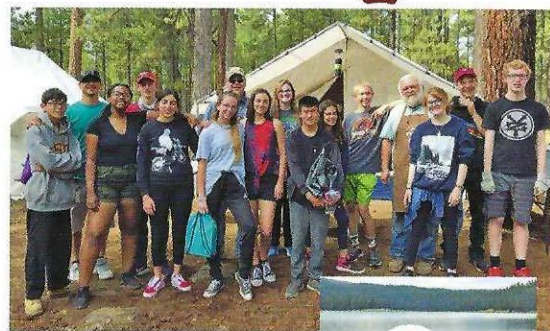
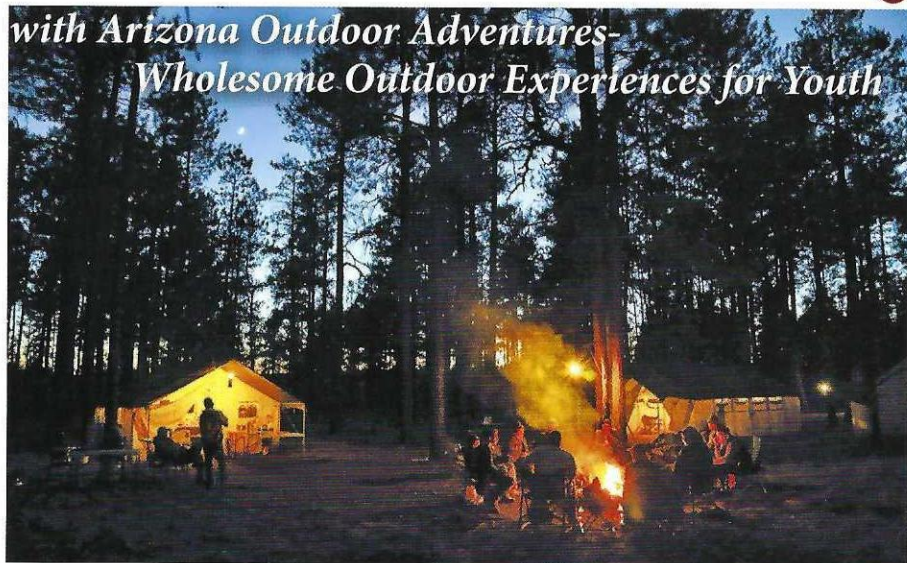


Back Country Camps

with Arizona Outdoor Adventures—
Wholesome Outdoor Experiences for Youth



Our Mission

“To enrich and positively impact children’s lives through fun outdoor activities in the peace and quiet of nature.”



Envision young kids, waking up to the smell of fresh mountain air, hearing nothing but the peaceful sounds of nature and seeing a beautiful sunrise among the ponderosa pine and douglas fir trees. Thanks to Arizona Outdoor Adventures (AOA), hundreds of kids experience the majestic White Mountains of Arizona on camp trips.

AOA began as the brain child of Dan Priest in 1990. Dan, a former hunting and fishing outfitter, said he wanted to, “Get kids outdoors, especially inner city kids like from Phoenix and Tucson.” With a great deal of commitment and hard work from volunteers and youth organizations, Arizona Outdoor Adventures was up and running as a 501(c)(3) in 1996. Priest said, “Once things got started, it went really well.” The mission of AOA is “To enrich and positively impact children’s lives through fun outdoor activities in the peace and quiet of nature.” Activities include fishing, jeep rides and horseback riding, to name a few. There are generally 15 camps each year from June through October.

Dan Priest has countless memories and stories of kids that have attended AOA camps. One story he tells, “I’m in the cook tent early and a boy 11 years old comes into the tent. I said to him,

‘Well, you’re going to be going into fifth grade. You know, fifth grade was one of my favorite years.’ The young kid said, ‘This is the first year I’ve looked forward to going back to school. This is the first time kids will want to know what I did over the summer. I have so many things to tell them about the fish I caught, the elk and bighorn sheep I saw, and the nice times around the camp.’”

Another time he recalled a group of unusually patient kids who fished at the lake all day with unrelenting enthusiasm. During each camp, Priest gives one boy and one girl, who show the most interest, a new rod and reel. This group was so exceptional, he said, “Everybody gets one!”

When those kids returned to the Valley, they formed a fishing club and were planning trips to the Urban Lakes. He adds, “These kids now have something to do that is a lot of fun and is healthy to do the rest of their lives because someone took them out in the outdoors and taught them some basics on how to fish.”

For another boy with a passion for fishing, Priest arranged a fishing trip with Flathead Ed, a well-known fishing guide who holds the state record for flathead catfish. Priest stated, “They

went out all night. He loved to fish and he caught the bug at one of our camps.” Dan believes, “Kids need healthy activities, and it’s important that kids know that adults care about them; that adults will invest in them. It’s a lot of work to raise the money for these camps, but it’s very satisfying. I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t care about the kids. They see that we care deep down, and they know a lot of work goes into these camps.”

To provide this opportunity to as many kids as possible, Priest urges others to begin a program similar to AOA. He concludes, “My final thought is that there has to be other guys like myself that can get something started like AOA and put these small groups of kids together that want to be in the outdoors but don’t have the opportunity to do it. If you’re out there and you really see the importance of it, get it going.”

For more information or to find out how you can get more involved, visit: <http://azoutdooradventures.org>. Facebook: arizonaoutdooradventures. Instagram: azoutdooradventures. YouTube: AZOutdoorAdventures, or call: 602-448-6996. These camps would not be possible without the support AOA has received over the years from various organizations and individual contributions.