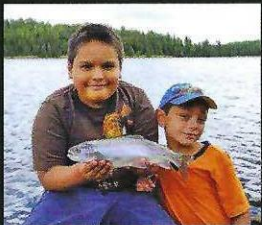


# Outdoor Adventures



Written by Rob Potts



A gentle call to our heart is carried across the whispered winds blowing through stands of Ponderosa Pine as the silver stars danced in the night sky. The White Mountains of Arizona hold a very dear place in the hearts of many Arizona residents. We caught our first fish in one of the pristine lakes or streams. It was the first place we remember seeing an elk, deer, or bear. We have camped, fished, hunted, hiked, and rode horses in this amazing country. It is a place we fondly remember. We recall the adventure, relive the excitement, and anxiously anticipate the next trip. We love this place.

Many children don't have the same privilege we had growing up. They will grow up and become adults bereft of these vivid memories and healthy activities. The good news is that one organization is making these memories, one child at a time. Arizona Outdoor Adventures is a unique non-profit organization that provides backcountry tent camping experiences to at-risk

youth between the ages of 8 and 14. AOA supplies all the camping and fishing equipment, licenses and permits, and food and drinks. AOA's mission is to "To enrich and positively impact children's lives through fun outdoor activities in the peace and quiet of nature." AOA takes advantage of teachable moments during nightly campfire talks or while hiking and fishing to educate children. They use RC Cola as a model to help the kids remember the importance of: Respect (for the outdoors and other people), Responsibility (to care for others and be good role models), Constructive Choices (instead of destructive choices in their lives), and Cooperation (with their family and others in authority).

AOA's founder, Dan Priest, has been a hunting guide in Arizona for over 50 years. Dan now uses his knowledge of the outdoors to reach out to these children, to let them know that there are adults who care deeply for them, and to help them become aware of positive,

nurturing activities that they will likely carry on throughout their lives. Dan runs a series of camps in various locations in the White Mountains starting in mid-May and continuing until mid to late October. The kids sleep in tents, eat camp-cooked meals, enjoy nightly campfires, take jeep rides, explore nature and wildlife, fish, ride horses, and simply absorb the peace and joy of God's creation.

If you have any questions or you would like to support AOA, you can email Dan at [info@azoutdooradventures.org](mailto:info@azoutdooradventures.org) or call him at 602-448-6996. AOA is a non-profit 501c3 which functions solely on the generous donations of those who share a heart for children and the outdoors. Visit the website ([www.azoutdooradventures.org](http://www.azoutdooradventures.org)) to view pictures of the camps, to watch wildlife videos and video footage from actual camps, to subscribe to their newsletter, and to find out how you can help.