

Philanthropic Community Gathers in Silverton to Raise Money for Youth in SOS Outreach

■ Article Provided by, SOS Outreach

Silverton, CO - Over MLK weekend, change-makers from across the outdoor industry gathered in Silverton to rally support and raise funds for over 3,000 young people across the country in SOS Outreach programs.

SOS Outreach is a youth development nonprofit focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outdoors and outdoor industry. Using mentoring and powerful outdoor experiences, SOS engages 3,000 young people annually in a core values-based, leadership development curriculum aimed at building skills for life and bridging opportunities. Since its inception in the Vail Valley in 1993, SOS Outreach has served 80,000 kids and teens across 9 states, 15 communities, and 23 mountain resorts.

“SOS grows opportunity for kids by networking, teaching assertiveness, and instilling self-sufficiency,” says SOS emeritus board member, Andy Littman, “opportunity should not just be inherited, it should be learned & earned.”

To support its far-reaching impacts, SOS hosted its signature annual fundraiser - the MLK Powder Challenge. The event brought together 49 members of the SOS community. Guests were donors, community partners, board members, outdoor industry professionals, and even included 5 SOS participants and alumni. Together the group was able to experience the majesty of the San Juan mountains while raising money for SOS youth.

Guests ripped powder runs all weekend long, enjoying both a backcountry day with San Juan Expeditions, as well as one private, guided day at Silverton Mountain. In the evenings, they were inspired by various speakers, including keynote speaker, Phil Henderson. Phil, both an accomplished mountain athlete and thought leader in the outdoor community, led the first all-Black ex-



Photo provided by SOS Outreach

Change-makers gathering at Silverton Mountain to raise funds.

pedition of Mount Everest in May 2022 with the Full Circle Everest team. Phil is dedicated to increasing equity and access in the outdoors and is driving his mission forward with support of SOS Outreach and through his continued work with Full Circle Everest.

Though there were many, the true highlight of the weekend was the unveiling of the new custom SOS x Nordica ski designed by four SOS participants and alumnae. Of the four, all were women, all under the age of 22, and two were in attendance at the MLK Powder Challenge. Alumnae, Heidi Hernandez and Veronica Saint Jane debuted their collaborative ski design to attendees at the event. This unique ski features a topographic map of Silverton from the town center to the top of Silverton Mountain, a true north compass representing the young female designers, and the SOS Outreach

logo. In partnership with Nordica and Christy Sports, 50 skis were manufactured and will be sold via the Christy Sports website with 100% of the proceeds going directly to supporting SOS youth. During a weekend focused on bridging opportunities for young people, the unveiling of this one-of-a-kind ski drove home the point that with support from the SOS community, the sky's the limit for what SOS participants can accomplish.

“This weekend reinforced the strength of our SOS community when we rally together,” says SOS Executive Director, Seth Ehrlich, “I’m continually inspired by everyone’s genuine dedication towards SOS’ mission and creating meaningful opportunities for young people across the country. I’m incredibly grateful for this impactful event and to the town of Silverton for hosting our community. We can’t wait

to do this again.”

For more information or to purchase the ski, please visit www.christysports.com

SOS Outreach is a national youth empowerment non-profit organization that cultivates a deep sense of belonging in kids and teenagers, unlimited their future potential and impact on our world. Our programs extend from the Cascades and the Sierras to the Rockies and the Midwestern hills, serving more than 3,000 youth each year across 15 locations in 9 states—while offering year-round programming at several of our sites. Our life changing approach champions a curriculum that combines the support of caring adults, the thrill of outdoor adventure, and the grounding of value-based leadership skills kids and teenagers need to become their best, unlimited selves. To learn more, visit: sosoutreach.org

Creative District Open House

■ By Lisa Branner

Last Tuesday, Silverton Creative District hosted a Community Open House to engage local artists and community members in a conversation about the future of the arts in Silverton. With more than twenty people in attendance, the evening provided a much-needed opportunity for the arts community to come together to share their thoughts and dreams while learning more about Silverton Creative District’s mission and work.

Carol Wilkins, the organization’s Chair, started by recapping some history for the group. Founded in 2019, Silverton Creative District (SCD) is a non-profit dedicated to promoting the arts in Silverton and San Juan County for the economic benefit of artists and the greater community. An early goal for the organization was to revive the long defunct Silverton Arts Festival, but with the onset

of the COVID-19 pandemic, planning for the festival ground to a halt. In summer of 2022 they were finally able to resurrect this beloved community tradition, and in spite of inclement weather, hosted a successful three-day festival on Blair Street which featured more than 30 regional artists. In 2022, SCD also partnered with the Town of Silverton to produce the 5th Annual Silverton Summer Sounds Music Series. The four concerts saw combined attendance of more than 1,000 people, and provided an elevated experience with higher caliber talent and a new location in Memorial Park. The summer-long First Friday Art Walk series also continued in 2022, and SCD wrapped up the year with the Mistletoe Market holiday extravaganza at Kendall. In addition to these signature programs, SCD has partnered with numerous organizations including the Ouray International Film Festival, Mountainfilm On

Tour, Silverton School, The Residency Project, The Powderhouse Collective, Silverton Film Office, and many more. They are working to promote the community’s arts scene through their website, an online Community Arts Calendar, and the printed Silverton Arts Map and Silverton Artists Directory, among other projects.

According to Wilkins, SCD’s most lofty goal is to attain Certified Creative District status through Colorado Creative Industries, which is a branch of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. The Colorado Creative Districts program certifies communities that contribute to the state’s economy through creativity, culture, and the arts. The program’s goal is to help communities increase jobs, incomes, and investments in creative places. There are more than 30 certified Creative Districts in the state, including neighboring communities like Durango,

Ridgway, and Mancos. The process of becoming certified is a rigorous one, but once achieved, Silverton will gain access to funding, technical assistance and marketing supports that otherwise would not be available to our local artists and community.

When SCD’s Vice Chair, Lisa Branner, turned discussion to the question of everyone’s future vision for the arts in Silverton, participants were brimming with ideas including public art installations like murals and sculptures, more educational opportunities and workshops, art openings/exhibits, theatre and other performances, collaboration with other communities in our region, an arts trail, more emphasis on the culinary arts, open mic and poetry nights, artist in residency programs, and the creation of a formal performing arts space/arts center, among other suggestions. These concepts will be used to guide SCD’s future efforts and ensure the organization’s work is reflective of the needs and desires of

the community. If you were unable to attend the meeting but would like to share your ideas, you can submit them online at <https://tinyurl.com/silvertonartsurvey>.

The evening wrapped up with an invitation for all local artists and creatives to join SCD free of charge. In the past, SCD charged a nominal fee for membership, but in an effort to be more inclusive and supportive of all of Silverton’s artists, they have waived artist membership fees going forward. Members will receive a free listing in the SCD online artist directory and access to a variety of other opportunities through the organization. Interested parties can sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/scd-membersignup>.

Planning is already under way for SCD’s summer 2023 events, including the evolution of the Arts Festival into a full blown Arts Weekend in September, featuring an Open Studio Tour and a strong focus on local artists. To learn more or get involved visit www.silvertoncreativedistrict.org.