



# TRAIL Mix

Fall/Winter 2016



2016 Urban Rangers at CSU Mountain Campus

## My ELK Experience



Luz Ortega, 19, is a Community College of Denver (CCD) student with an infectious smile and a passion to give back to the community. Luz has been involved with ELK for two years as a

youth participant and more recently as a part of our Urban Ranger summer employment program. This summer, Luz participated in several camping trips with ELK, including an adventure to the Grand Teton National Park and a memorable 7-day backpacking trip with

fellow Urban Rangers and Big City Mountaineers. Luz says of her backpacking experience,

**I loved being able to hike long distances and push myself to reach my goals while being in a smaller group to bond and encourage one another to keep going.**

Speaking of goals, Luz is planning on transferring to a university with a focus on non-profit management while utilizing her bilingual skills. Luz began her interest in the non-profit world with volunteer work for local churches and the Boys and Girls Club, where she was referred to ELK. ELK continues to be part

of her inspiration to give back to her community, "What I've always loved about ELK is the special way that they reach people in different communities. People need to have options and different chances of doing things. If I hadn't been exposed to non-profits through organizations in my community, I might not be interested in non-profit careers. These opportunities have given me so much experience in life and each young person should be able to have that." When Luz isn't attending school, working part-time, or exploring with ELK; she finds time to enjoy volunteering, reading, painting, dancing, and has even tried fencing.



Groundbreaking Ceremony for the ELK Education & Community Center and Montbello Open Space Park

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## BuildELKsHome Pride, Partnership, People, Possibilities

I'm so proud of the progress we are making on building the ELK Education & Community Center and Montbello Open Space Park. The restoration of the open space and building of a community and education center in Montbello will provide students, families and visitors with a destination to learn, to play, to share and to discover. We are halfway to our fundraising goal and our preliminary site plans are being reviewed by the Denver development and parks department.

Our partnerships on this journey continue to grow. Latest to add support is the Great Urban Parks Campaign in a collaborative initiative of National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and the American Planning Association (APA). We thank the foundations including Boettcher, Coors, Gates, Colorado Health, Beveridge Family and Piton who have invested in this project. We also like to thank our public partners including Great Outdoors Colorado, Natural Resource Damage Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, and Denver Parks and Recreation, and our corporate partners including, FirstBank, Citywide Banks, Majestic Realty, Newmont Mining, Suncor, and Xcel that have come forth with capital commitments as well.

I must give special thanks to our project partner, The Trust for Public Land, for their financial support and belief that everyone deserves easy access to places to connect with nature. Our design team of Project One, Anderson Hallas, Mundus Bishop, Chevo Studios and Sky Blue Builders are providing us with expertise to plan, design and build our future home in Montbello.

The people who give me the most inspiration are our youth. Their love for their community and their families fills me with hope. For dedication, I look no further than the ELK staff who work tirelessly for our youth and families. They continue to provide outstanding environmental education programming, mentoring, service and fun! Their work is providing promise for a new generation of leaders.

Build ELK's Home offers so many possibilities for ELK and the far northeast Denver community. The community values diversity, a growing economy, and a commitment to education and natural open spaces. ELK's home will be a destination for people looking for opportunities to explore outdoors, to connect to other communities, and to teach our next generation of students of the true possibilities of Colorado and all it has to offer.

For Our Youth,



Loretta Pineda, Executive Director



## Partnership HIGHLIGHT

# A Resounding YES on SCFD!



Many thanks to SCFD (Science Cultural Facilities District) for supporting ELK again this year with an award of over \$100,000. We could not do what we do without the support of SCFD.

## Support ELK on Colorado Gives Day!

On Tuesday, December 6, 2016, thousands of donors will come together to support Colorado nonprofits.

Check out our donation page at [www.ColoradoGives.org/ELKKids](http://www.ColoradoGives.org/ELKKids) to provide thousands of youth with science education, outdoor experiences and career exploration programs!

You can also always support ELK through our online donation page! <http://www.elkkids.org/content/donate>



## Collaborative HIGHLIGHT

For the past year, ELK has been a happy collaborator (one of thirteen within our coalition to be exact) of GOCO's (Great Outdoors Colorado) Inspire Initiative. The Inspire Initiative aims to excite Coloradans, particularly young people, to appreciate, enjoy, learn about and steward our great outdoors. This initiative asks for the support of local community coalitions to work with neighborhoods to develop



parks, trails and programs with the intention of getting youth and their families into their local community green spaces, eventually expanding their exploration into the backcountry.

Check us out on Facebook @gowildnortheastmetro



Nicole Jackson speaking at the 2016 Sustaining Watershed Conference.



Nicole Jackson and Casey Davenhill, Executive Director, Colorado Watershed Assembly



## Celebrating One of Our OWN

ELK Alumna Nicole Jackson was recently given the honor of Keynote Speaker at the 2016 Sustaining Watershed Conference. Hosted by the Colorado Watershed Assembly, Nicole shared the stage with James P. Doyle, Chief of Communications and Legislation, Intermountain Region, National Park Service. Both spoke to the benefits and inherent social good of publicly available lands, the importance of inclusivity, and the "Next 100 Coalition."

The Sustaining Watershed Conference expands cooperation and collaboration throughout Colorado in natural resource conservation, protection, and enhancement by informing participants about new issues and innovative projects through invaluable networking. In 2016, the conference held in Avon, Colorado was focused on what is needed to help ensure long-term sustainability for river health, public education, and organizational management.

Nicole spoke about her connection to the outdoors and her work at Denver Parks and Recreation as an Irrigation Technician and Horticulturist. Nicole takes great pride and care in doing her part within the management of natural areas in far northeast Denver. The areas feature native vegetation, wildlife habitat and community connections. Nicole has been involved in planning a pollinator garden and various restoration projects in the natural open spaces. Nicole attended Community College of Denver and is pursuing her advanced degree at the University of Phoenix.

# Colorado's Natural Leaders – NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP



Yesica Chavez and Luis Benitez,  
Colorado Outdoor Recreation Office



This fall, two ELK students, Yesica Chavez and Chris Urias participated in Colorado Legacy Camp in Keystone, CO. The Colorado Legacy Camp is a partnership between the Children Nature Network/Natural Leaders Initiative and Great Outdoors (GOCO) Inspire Initiative. Students from several Colorado communities received training in community organizing and leadership, and received information on the growing movement to connect children and families with the outdoors. Speakers included Juan Martinez, Children Nature Network; Jackie Miller, GOCO, and Luis Benitez, Colorado Outdoor Recreation Office. Look for more news from our Natural Leaders as they advocate for places, programs and pathways as part of the Inspire initiative.

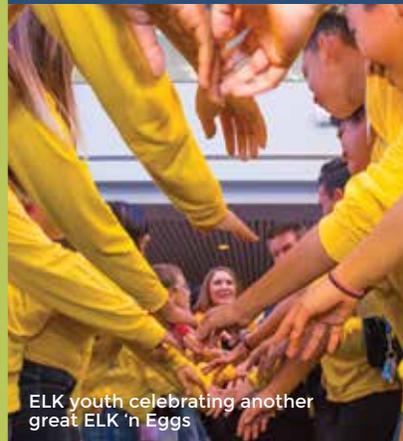
## Pollinator GARDEN

This year, ELK's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students from KIPP Montbello created an incredible pollinator garden on campus to call their own! With the materials donated by generous ELK Board Member, Joedy Arnold, our KIPP students were tasked with establishing a vision for their garden. After much debate, our youth decided on some of the following seedlings that would quickly sprout: Bluestem, Silkweed, Butterfly Flower, Mexican Grass, Timeless Orange, and Rolly's Favorite. Besides our youth, ELK's first-ever pollinator was lovingly tended to by ELK volunteer, Diego Molinar. **Stay-tuned for our next season of growth!**



KIPP students posing with their garden

## ELK Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



ELK youth celebrating another great ELK 'n Eggs



Scott D. Sampson, Ph.D., Loretta Pineda, ELK Executive Director, and Dondre Smallwood

ELK was joined by community leaders, supportive Colorado businesses, elected officials and over 280 Coloradans to celebrate its 20th Anniversary at its 7th Annual ELK 'n Eggs Breakfast at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science on Friday, October 7. At the breakfast, ELK recognized legacy leaders and updated supporters on ambitious future plans to expand programming and services to the Northeast Denver community. ELK co-founder and Denver City Councilwoman Stacie Gilmore presented Dr. Scott Sampson, long a champion of ELK during his time at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science but currently serving as president and CEO of Science World British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C, with Environmental Learning for Kids' 7th Annual Lifetime Legacy Award. The successful breakfast ended with over \$70,000 raised from 280 attendees through table sponsorships and an energetic paddle raiser facilitated by master of ceremonies and former Denver Bronco, Reggie Rivers.