

## WE HAD A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER PROGRAM AND WE'RE CLOSING THE YEAR STRONG!

**Joy. Growth. Impact.**  
A renewed sense of community.

In 2021, the Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) organization was reminded why what we do matters so much. In the best of ways.

**Joy:** Programs this year have had a strong and much awaited return. ELK students and families spent a wonderful summer back in the outdoors and with the people they care about most. Programs centered on many of the

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activity's students have missed most - from fishing and hiking, to touring Star K Ranch with their families and completing service projects in the communities they love and live in. As we look toward winter programming, we are forever reminded to never take these beautiful experiences together for granted.

**Growth:** In late summer/early fall, we were thrilled to welcome four new team members - Juan Pérez Sáez as our new Executive Director; Jada Bonner as our new Manager of Finance and Operations, and Samantha Gilmore and Jeremy Sifuentes as Education Coordinators. As our team grows, and our skillset continues to diversify, we look forward to using our collective talents to bring new and engaging lessons and activities to our far northeast community.

**Impact:** The impact we have on the students and families we serve is truly transformational. With much excitement, we look forward to more adventures in the outdoors this winter and into spring with activities to come such as ice skating, ice fishing, and a family winter hike. These programs will undoubtedly create memories that will last a lifetime.

**A renewed sense of community:** This year, we celebrated 25 years of service to the far northeast community. Now that we're



ELK YOUTH EXPLORING STAR K RANCH

25, it's only fitting we're moving into our own place!

After significant collaboration, partnership, and input for ELK youth, families, and the broader Montbello community, our ELK Education and Community Center is on its way to fruition. This will be a place for learning, for comradery, and for enjoyment of our outdoors. We look forward to welcoming each and every one of you to our new home in Spring, 2022.

A message from Juan Pérez Sáez, Executive Director

# CLOSING A MILESTONE, AND SEEING THE NEXT ONE IN THE HORIZON



Back in July, I received the formal offer to join Environmental Learning for Kids as their new Executive Director. The vote of confidence from the Board of Directors and the team encouraged me to be the best version of myself. We rolled up our sleeves and got to work with a commitment to building upon the legacy of 25 years of creating an inclusive and diverse community of inspired environmental leaders and stewards of Colorado's grand nature and centering the leadership that young people could have in their own communities.

So much has happened since I joined. It has been a very exciting summer and fall. As an organization, we continue to be committed to the wellbeing of the youth and families who find fulfillment within our programs. We are following guidance from state health authorities to ensure we stop the spread of Covid19, while we offer such a needed space for our community to experience the outdoors, learn about the sciences, and use our programming as an outlet for youth to express themselves, connect to nature, and discover their full potential.

We are wrapping up our 25th anniversary with a new website, a fully staffed team, and strengthened partnerships with new and old friends. In a time where a lot of focus has been put on how we can connect more racially diverse communities to the outdoors, we have a history of 25 plus years successfully doing just that.

Our future looks brighter than ever. The Education Center is under construction, and we are gearing up to culminate another significant part of our journey. We are expecting to offer new programming in this space, which combined with all the programs that we already offer, will lead to a significant increase of program hours for next year.

We tend to measure our success and progress by tracking demographics, number of participants, programs, and events. However, I like to see us as a space for joy. Think about the collective joy from students, and their families. The joy of becoming the success story that we picture in our minds. Let's continue co-creating the space for joy centered on our values of life-long learning, diversity and inclusiveness, outdoor experience, and development of our communities full potential.

For the present and future generations,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Juan Pérez Sáez'.

– Juan Pérez Sáez | Executive Director

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# ELK N' EGGS AND 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

2021 marked a huge milestone for the Environmental Learning for Kids organization. This year, we hit 25 years of serving far northeast families that are far too often, underrepresented in the fields of STEM. 25 years of introducing young people to our beautiful outdoors. 25 years of exposing students to learning and leadership within their very own community.

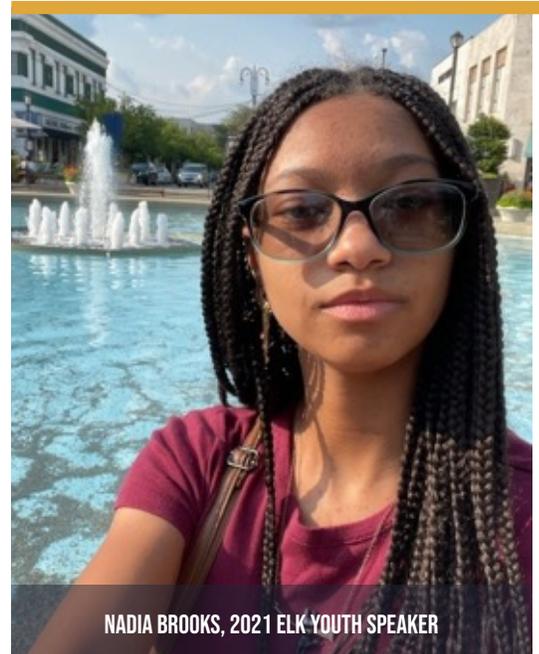
We celebrated this achievement at our annual ELK'n Eggs Fundraiser Breakfast. Taking place virtually for the 2nd year in a row, this always impactful event commemorated how the ELK family has grown exponentially over these last 25 years and looked forward to all our adventures to come.

We were so happy to host Representative Leslie Herrod as our paddle raiser for this year's event. Her contributions to the Denver community are boundless. We honored The VF Foundation as this year's Celebrated Partner and Andrea Smith as this year's Lifetime Legacy Awardee. Their work and personal influences on the Denver community continue to inspire.

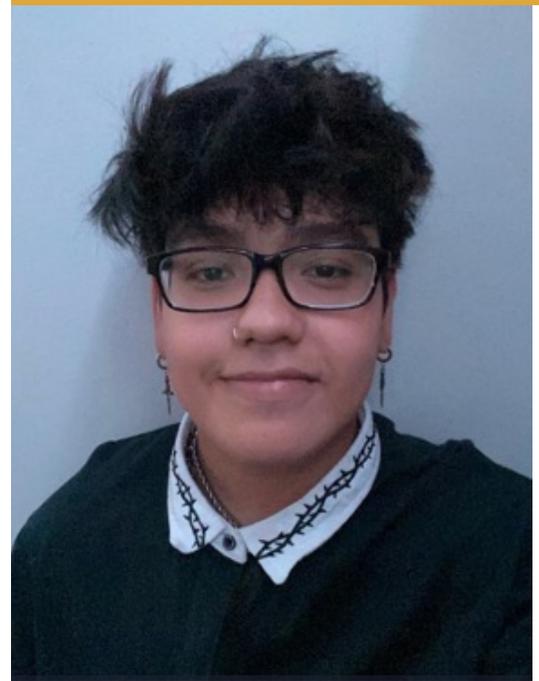
Our student speakers for this event were Nadia Brooks and Juan Huizar, two of our incredible Urban Rangers. It was a true gift to have their stories shared to us by them. Their journeys are a constant reminder of why the work we do is infinitely important.

Many thanks to our Bald Eagle sponsor, evo, and the rest of our incredible sponsors for making this event possible.

To learn more about the ELK organization and our upcoming winter programming, visit [www.elkkids.org](http://www.elkkids.org).



NADIA BROOKS, 2021 ELK YOUTH SPEAKER



JUAN HUIZAR, 2021 ELK YOUTH SPEAKER





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## 5-4-3-2-1 THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS!

Not only for a New Year, but for a new home for Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)! After 25 years of being in the far northeast community, we are finally getting a place of our own – the ELK Education Center in Spring, 2022 .

Through a series of community meetings, ELK coordinated with the broader far northeast Denver community to hear their thoughts and vision for the ELK Education Center and Montbello Open Space Park. Community members are excited, happy, and looking forward to gathering as a community.



The New Year brings new opportunities and now is the chance to help our ELK family and community grow. Today, please partner with us by making a gift to support ELK and welcome our youth and families to a community hub, in their neighborhood, a place we can all call home. Gifts can be made at [www.elkkids.org](http://www.elkkids.org).