



ELK TRAIL MIX

Fall/Winter 2023

ELK Newsletter

It *is* Multigenerational... – story shared by Lisa Hurd, 2023 ELK ‘n Eggs Parent Speaker

In the last 8 years my family has been a part of ELK, my children and grandchildren have done everything from hiking, participating in Cast a Line – a Family Fishing Event (where my grandson caught his first fish), to camping and community service trips. I know firsthand, you see; I’ve watched my own children grow and develop into the young women they are today. Nizhooni, my middle daughter, graduated from the Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST): Green Valley Ranch (GVR) High School and went on to attend Colorado College, majoring in Environmental Studies. She now works in environmental conservation with the National Wildlife Federation. My youngest daughter, Shandiin, also recently graduated from DSST: GVR High School and is attending Colorado State University’s Civil Engineering program. She aspires to contribute to sustainable housing – and that’s because of her love for nature in her own right, but also her involvement in ELK and participation in their Leadership

Corps program. I believe she will do exactly as she intends.

the air was crisp, and so clean – it was beautiful. I truly enjoyed my time in the outdoors with the kids hiking and exploring because, you know, we’re all kids at heart.



Fish on!

When I think of ELK, I think of children laughing, playing, exploring. Watching grasshoppers, chasing dragonflies, baiting fishhooks, learning how to cast a line, and catching their first fish. Oh, to witness the excitement and wonder of a child exploring the natural world around them, away from their cell phones, TV shows, and video games. It doesn’t matter if they’ve never done it before – with ELK they can. As a parent, and now grandparent, I can tell you it’s multigenerational. I’ve had the pleasure and honor to see not only my children and grandchildren flourish, but yours too. If you take one thing away from this, let it be that ELK is a jewel for our community. It provides the opportunity for our children to explore and

experience nature, and hopefully their personal experience with nature and the outdoors just might awaken them as to how their purpose can impact this enormously beautiful world.

For me personally, I’ll never forget when we stayed in a yurt at Colorado State Forest State Park. It was pure glamping at its finest. The night sky was crystal clear, the stars were so bright,

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Some of ELK's exciting new primary logos and sub-brand logos

A Fresh Look for Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)

We are thrilled to announce a significant milestone in our journey. We have refreshed our ELK identity – while staying true to our values of providing access to, and representation in, the outdoors and careers in STEM.

This rebranding initiative reflects our commitment to better serve our community, enhance our programs, and expand our impact on the lives of young people in the Denver area. The decision to rebrand comes after careful consideration and planning of more than a year and a half, and it represents a fresh start while preserving our core mission of cultivating a diverse community of leaders and environmental stewards by increasing outdoor equity.

Since our founding in 1996, our goal has been unwavering: to dismantle the systems of oppression that prevent young people of color and their families to connect with nature and thrive in the environmental and outdoor community.

ELK's approach to serving these challenges over time has helped create a unique set of programs that address the issues that have existed since our inception. ELK annually serves more than 5,000 underserved youth of color (ages 5–25) and their families through year-round, in-school and after-school, and family programs. Through this brand refresh, ELK will continue to focus on inspiring, educating, and transforming, youth through engaging, educational programs, and experiential activities in nature. The ELK brand is dynamic and will always be committed to following the pathway laid out by the students, families, and northeast community it serves.

Key highlights of this rebranding include:

New Visual Identity: ELK will introduce a fresh and dynamic visual identity that reflects our evolving spirit while honoring our history.

Enhanced Programs: We are excited to continue to activate our ELK Education Center and Open Space Park, serving as a community hub for northeast Denver families and community organizations alike.

Community Engagement: ELK will strengthen its ties with the Denver community, collaborating with increasing numbers of local schools, organizations, and businesses to broaden our reach and impact.

Online Presence: Our revamped website will provide valuable resources, updates, and a platform for the community to engage with our mission and activities.

Stay tuned for exciting updates as we transition into our new identity, and YOUR chance to snag some fun updated ELK swag!

We are grateful for the support of our community, partners, and donors, and we look forward to continuing to rise to the occasion in supporting young leaders and engaged environmental stewards of today and tomorrow.

In unity,



Juan Pérez Sáez
Executive Director

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Hap Legg, 2023 Lifetime Legacy Awardee

ELK 'n Eggs 2023

In September, we celebrated one of our favorite gatherings of friends and supporters at our annual ELK 'n Eggs fundraiser breakfast at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. This year, we honored Smartwool with our "Partner of the Year" award for their commitment to ensuring all young people have access to, and positive experiences in, our beautiful outdoors.

Our 2023 "Lifetime Legacy" award went to Mr. Hap Legg. What do we mean by Lifetime Legacy? We center this award on someone that has added value and support by leaps and bounds to our youth, family, or northeast community. Referring ELK youth from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Early College to ELK programs and activities, in addition to being a consistent pillar of stewardship within our community, Hap Legg is the absolute embodiment of this.

We were also honored to host Lisa Hurd as our Parent Speaker and Evelyn Alvarez as our Youth Speaker – we were so thankful for their vulnerability in sharing ELK's impact on them and their families.

This event raised over \$100,000 in support of experiential, science and outdoor programs and activities for Northeast Denver youth and families. None of which would have been possible without the generosity of our Presenting Sponsor, Amazon, and all of our incredible donors.

Fall Activities Recap



Academy 360 students finding joy at our Montbello Open Space Park

This fall has seen school-based programs ramping up even more. Academy 360 is one of ELK's closest school partners in the Montbello community. These students have been exploring the water cycle, homesteading in Colorado, and egg drop contraptions. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders from Academy 360 visited the ELK Education Center for some on-site programming, including dry land casting and environmental education games. ELK also partnered with Kemp Elementary to deliver a macroinvertebrate study to 5th graders and partnered with local Boys and Girls Club chapters to launch after-school enrichment at different clubs around the Denver-metro area.

We also hosted our very first 2-mile nature photography hike this season. We spent our day at Bear Creek Lake Park, where they had calm streams, clear lakes, and colorful leaves. Students were given mirrors to play with so they could experiment with reflections in their photos. We even had a photo contest, and the winner went home with a \$25 gift card to Canes!



ELK Nature Club student admiring a harvest at The Urban Farm

In the spooky month of October, Nature Club was able to visit Sand Creek Regional Greenway Trail for a few art projects that included mosaics, and clay sculpturing what their ideal outdoor space would look like...There were various Smurf Villages. We also had a chance to visit The Urban Farm, where Nature Club students got a chance to explore the vegetable garden and harvest over 5 pounds of carrots to take home.

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P.O. Box 21679, Denver, CO 80221

Your Donation Matters!

As the year draws to a close, we want to take a moment to highlight an incredible opportunity for end-of-year giving. Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) is making remarkable strides in our Northeast Denver community by providing invaluable access to the outdoors, fostering career exploration, and nurturing a passion for environmental education among youth who are far too often under-encouraged. Your support—whether through donations or spreading the word—could make a substantial difference in making our vision of “a world in which all people are caretakers of themselves, each other, and the natural world,” a reality.



Waiting for a nibble at Golden Gate Canyon State Park

**Make your end of year gift today at,
<https://elkkids.org/donate/>**

