



# 2025 IMPACT REPORT



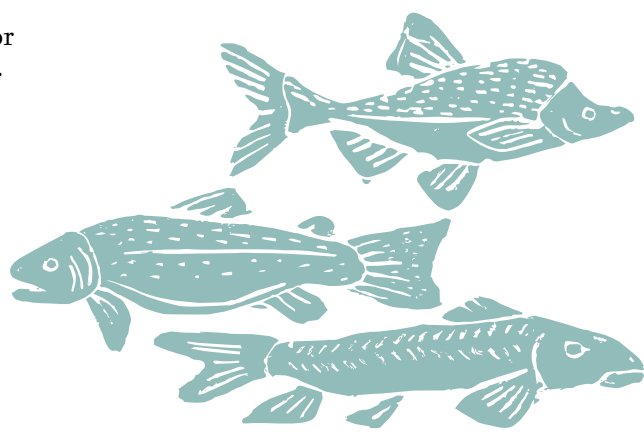
**GRAND  
CANYON  
YOUTH**  
*discover your nature*



**MISSION** Grand Canyon Youth offers educational outdoor expeditions that connect young people to the transformative power of the rivers and canyons of the Southwest.

**VISION** We envision a diverse and equitable world where all youth are empowered to live with purpose while discovering and caring for self, community, and the natural world.

**VALUES** Connection • Adventure • Curiosity  
Respect • Intention • Responsibility



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- Angela Keith, *Chair*
- Susan Spinelli, *Vice Chair*
- Heidi Hansen-Sobek, *Treasurer*
- Carol Haden, *Secretary*
- Ian Austin                Helen Ranney
- Linda Jalbert            Pats Shriver
- Kate Mahady           Marieke Taney
- Scott Pettitt

**GCY STAFF**

- Emma Wharton, *Executive Director*
- Chantal Mosman, *Assistant Director*
- Margeaux Bestard, *Field Staff Director*
- Clare Magneson, *Development Director*
- Cassandra Roberts, *Expedition Director*
- Justin Gallen, *Logistics Manager*
- Erin Widman, *Expedition Manager*
- Kelli Young, *Bookkeeper*
- Haile Nelson, *NAU Workstudy*



**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In service to our mission and values, GCY would like to acknowledge that we are located on, and visit, the ancestral homelands of the Diné (Navajo), Havasu Baaja (Havasupai), Hoputuh Shi-ni-mu (Hopi), Hwal-Pai (Hualapai), Dilzhe’e (Western Apache), Wipukpa (Yavapai), Nuciu (Ute), and Numa (Paiute) Peoples, past and present. We recognize with gratitude the people who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and the vibrant Native communities who make their home here today.

**LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Block Print Artist: Oscar Landa Samano



**Dear GCY Supporters,**

A few weeks ago, I woke up on the banks of the San Juan River to the distinctive cry of two peregrine falcons careening overhead. As I watched them carve across the pink sky, I reflected on the previous day watching youth learn to row boats for the first time, awkward, curious, and determined. What an allegory for these current times where we are collectively navigating historic drought and trying to move downstream, all while paying attention to the voice of the natural world. The future of the incredible places Grand Canyon Youth operates is uncertain, and we are committed to staying curious as we learn to adapt, educate, and collaborate to stay true to our mission serving youth.

2025 was a successful year; we connected more youth to the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon than any previous year, provided introductory kayaking experiences for 5th graders on the Verde River, and continued to share the rugged beauty of the San Juan with youth. We more deeply explored the value of screen-free immersive experiences. We fostered new and long-time relationships to provide Indigenous youth access to their ancestral lands. While the future is always uncertain, the positive impact of connecting youth to the rivers and canyons of the Southwest is not. I see it in the faces of youth learning to row on the San Juan, where difficult things are worth doing and can provide a reminder for us all to keep doing our best to get downstream.

In appreciation,

*Emma Wharton*

Emma Wharton, *Executive Director*





# TAKING A BREAK FROM TECHNOLOGY

GCY Speaks is an innovative evaluation project that GCY has been working on for over 5 years with NARBHA Institute and Northern Arizona University (NAU).

In collaboration with Rea Antoniou, a PhD student from NAU, GCY implemented a new study to better understand the value of youth experiencing screen-free time on the river. **Youth reported shifts away from smartphone-mediated communication and toward embodied presence, curiosity, and deeper human connection.** GCY also piloted a group scrapbooking project as part of a curriculum enhancement that encourages team cohesion and personal reflection. Learn more on our blog, The Ripple Effect, at [gcyouth.org/blog](https://gcyouth.org/blog).

## RIVER TIME INCLUDES...

Art • Science • Music • Cooking • Scrapbooking • Hiking  
Paddling • Games • Camping • Stargazing • Teambuilding



Block Print Artist: Simon Bessler



"I don't need to always look perfect and know how I look."  
– Vera, youth participant



"I loved getting away from my phone and connecting with the river and the sun."  
– Claire, youth participant



"I appreciate that GCY trips are no technology. It gives students the opportunity to experience life without a phone."  
– Laura, parent of a participant

# 2025 SEASON REPORT

**846** youth engaged in **4,037** days outside

**61** educational expeditions successfully completed on the Verde, San Juan, and Colorado Rivers

**26** collaborators, including **15** local groups

**44%** of youth served identify as non-white

**46%** of field staff are GCY alumni

**70%** of program costs covered by grants and supporters like you! (Less than 30% paid by youth)

Provided youth a  
**RECORD NUMBER**  
of days in the Grand Canyon!







## PADDLING WITH GRAND CANYON HIGH SCHOOL



GCY began sharing transformative river expeditions with students from Grand Canyon Unified School District nearly two decades ago. This spring, another group of Grand Canyon High School (GCHS) teenagers and their science teacher, Forrest Radarian, joined GCY on a 4-day “Diamond Down” expedition on the lower Colorado River. This trip has become a much anticipated annual capstone experience for these youth.

Forrest and GCY co-create a curriculum that fits within the semester’s educational goals and engages youth with game-based programming and reflective journaling. This year, a National Park Service employee joined the expedition to facilitate a hands-on vegetation project. Over the years, a wide variety of community experts have joined this expedition, introducing youth to career fields in biology, geology, land management, and more. Ellis, a recent youth participant, shared “I learned to trust skilled adults.”

Grand Canyon High School is a rural Title 1 school located within Grand Canyon National Park, serving

diverse youth whose families are mainly employed by the National Park, sometimes seasonally, often related to the tourism industry. Although these youth live on the South Rim, it is unusual for them to have explored the canyon by river. GCY provides that deep learning and intimate connection to their own backyard. Forrest shared, “I’ve had several youth say this was the first time they really understood what being at Grand Canyon meant.”

GCY and GCHS have worked very hard to keep this expedition affordable for youth and their families through grants and fundraising. Collaboration and support from Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon Conservancy, the school, and other funders continue to make this expedition possible.

“The GCY trip is what my students live for every year,” said Forrest, “They look forward to being with one another in the backcountry, learning about the Grand Canyon, having fun in the water, and simply staring up at the stars. Spending time together on the river is so meaningful to them and has a lasting impact.” One of Forrest’s students, Sophia, a GCY alumna and now employee, shared, “GCY has changed my life forever!”

## GRAND CANYON HIGH SCHOOL TRIP TESTIMONIALS

### What students are saying...

“I learned not to take things for granted. You only live once, and you need to cherish these adventures.”

– Andrew, GCHS participant

“I learned how to be a better team player. The guides showed us that everyone contributes and each person has equal value to a team.”

– Eleanor, GCHS participant

“I learned more about what a geologist does. I got to explore my own backyard where I grew up. I want to be outside more.”

– Jasmine, GCHS participant



### From a guide...

“Forrest engages the youth and fires up their enthusiasm for every activity he plans. He also knows when to let them frolic in the mud or play the guitar and sing for hours. His passion for his students and his work is admirable and his students are truly fortunate to have him as a leader. He’s a teacher whose guidance will shape his students for life.”

– Jen, GCY trip leader





# THANK YOU 2025 DONORS!

**\$10,000+**  
Allegretti Foundation  
Anonymous  
Arizona Community Foundation of Flagstaff  
Arizona State Parks & Trails  
Eddie Arrowsmith  
Bryant Charitable Giving  
Catena Foundation  
Scott Engle  
For Good  
GeoFamily Foundation  
Grand Canyon Conservancy  
Grand Canyon Fund  
Hualapai Game & Fish 🦋  
Tom Jones & Betty Mobbs  
National Philanthropic Trust  
National Recreation Foundation  
Northwest River Supply 🦋  
Orr Family Foundation  
Patagonia  
R Entertainment  
R&A Import Auto  
Raintree Foundation  
United States Bureau of Reclamation  
United States Geological Survey 🦋  
United Way of Northern Arizona  
Vanguard Charitable  
The Wharton Foundation  
W.L. Gore & Associates  
1% for the Planet

**\$5,000 - \$9,999**  
Arizona Raft Adventures  
Pattie McDaniel Boyer & Ron Boyer  
Brady Family Foundation  
Branded Bills 🦋  
City of Flagstaff Beautification, Arts & Sciences  
Coconino County Board of Supervisors  
DAFgiving360  
Paul & Joann Delaney  
Alida Dierker  
Federal Work-Study for NAU Students 🦋  
Fratelli Pizza  
HS Lopez Family Foundation  
Kahtoola  
Jim & Joyce MacKenzie 🦋  
Marc & Rose Hospitality  
Nackard Pepsi Bottling Company  
Navajo Nation 🦋  
Philip J & Carol J Lyons Foundation  
Rosenberger Family Charitable Trust  
RSF Social Finance  
Sally & George Ulrich  
Jeff Wheless 🦋

**\$1,000 - \$4,999**  
Anonymous  
Arizona Gives  
Artisan Metal Works  
Avi Kurganoff Memorial Fund  
Ralph Baierlein  
Beaver Street & Lumberyard Brewing  
Benevity  
Randi Berkowitz & Jon Regosin  
Beverly T Goldman Charitable Fund  
Scott Borocz & Lisa O'Connell  
Laura & Archibald Brown  
John & Nancy Cassidy

Ceiba Adventures  
Dan & Karla Clader  
Marlene Conklin  
Genevieve Conley  
Patrick & Susan Conley  
Diversify Whitewater  
Sue Durling  
Elliott Family Fund  
Margaret Erhart  
Leah Evans  
Teresa & David Evans  
Sally Falkner  
Karen Fella  
Fidelity Charitable  
Kelly & Bill Gallen  
G Comer & Ida May Bates Charitable Fund  
Todd & Nancy Gillenwater  
Grand Canyon Expeditions 🦋  
Greg Heinzinger & Kerstin Pfann  
Roger & Mary Hostetler  
David & Patricia Hudspeth  
John Karon  
Joseph Koenig  
Ann Kramer & Stewart Aitchison  
Mark & Rosie Lamberson  
Kenneth & Dorothy Lamm  
Carlie Lines & BC Rimbeaux  
John & Nancy Lowe  
Will Lytle 🐟🌊  
Sheila Mackell  
Amber & Dustin Maggard  
David Maren  
McKelvey-Daugherty Family Foundation  
Garrett McLean  
Morgan Stanley Gift  
Mother Road Brewing  
Mountain Sports Flagstaff  
NARBHA Institute  
National Bank of Arizona  
Natural Channel Design Engineering  
Pahler Family Trust  
PayPal Giving Fund  
Philip & Angela Weatherill Family Fund  
Sparky Plassman  
Richard & MaryLynn Quartaroli  
Rebecca Rand 🐟🌊  
Helen 🌟 & Wayne Ranney 🌊  
Renaissance Charitable Foundation  
Riddle Family Foundation  
Roberts Family Foundation  
Run Flagstaff  
Bonnie & Michael Saxton  
Keith & Pieter Schaafsma  
Susan Schroeder & Gary McNaughton  
Sea of Love Beneficence League  
Katy Sechrist  
SEI Giving Fund  
Jennifer Sisco  
Snow Mountain River  
Sofranac Family  
Susan 🌟 & Tony Spinelli 🌊  
Charles Stricker  
Tavi Stutz  
Thrivent Charitable  
T Rowe Price Charitable  
Wildland Trekking Company  
Dania & Daniel Wilson  
Howard Wolk

**\$500 - \$999**  
Absolute Bikes  
Jonathan Adams & Susan Spicer  
Anonymous  
Aspey, Watkins & Diesel Law  
Theodore Avery 🐟  
Bonnie Baker  
Brett Bennett & Karen Grant  
Alice & Robert Berger  
John Blaustein  
BlueChannel 🦋  
David Boehmer  
Jerry & Mary Breckenridge  
Page Buono & Harlan Taney  
Mari Carlos  
Gay Chanler  
Scott Christy 🦋  
Cinch Home Services  
Elizabeth Collins 🌊  
George & Becky Congreve  
Karen & William Cordasco  
Crest Insurance Group  
Donna Drakoulakos  
Engage Coaching & Consulting  
Ep Fund 🌊  
Rebecca & Doug Foster  
Grand Canyon River Guides  
Carol 🌟 & Alan Haden  
Jill Harrison & David Johns  
Impact Assets  
RJ Johnson & Teri Merz  
Cheryl & Steve Jonas  
Rebecca Conley Kirby  
Jim Knaup  
Lancaster Leadership 🦋  
Judy Lewis  
Mike Loven  
Craig McMurray  
Doug & Martha Miller  
Steven Moul & Jane Oski  
Mountain View Pediatrics  
Marjory Musgrave  
Peter Necheles  
Parch NA Spirits Company 🦋  
Pegasus Technology Services 🦋  
Mira Petersen  
Parker Phillips 🐟  
Joanne Polayes  
Mary Poore  
Emily Rand 🐟🌊  
Raymond James Charitable  
Rivers & Oceans  
Shelley Robinson & Tom Buscher  
Joseph Salay & Elizabeth Harding  
Clare Schneider & Drew Barringer  
Sierra Rescue International  
William Smart  
Linda Stedman  
Heather Stephenson  
Caitlin Thompson  
Teresa Tidwell 🌊  
Jonathan Torrez  
United Way of Salt Lake  
Franklin Wetherell  
Nathaniel White  
Robin Wolk & David Klein

**\$250 - \$499**  
Amy S Martin Photography 🦋  
Jessica Atwell  
Ian Austin 🌟  
Emily & James Bauerle 🌊  
Daniel Biles  
Amy Bonney-Hoffman  
Yann Bosch 🐟  
Kevin Boyce 🌊  
Emma Barnes Brown  
Noa Bruhis & Jon Rezabek  
Greg Caporaso  
Clarkdale Kayak Company 🦋  
Gretchen & Dennis Cosgrove  
Mark Daniels  
Suzanne Eiseman  
Eliza Frazer & Barry Hood  
Amy & Michael Fredrick  
Kathleen Freel  
Bill Gerraughty  
Deborah Goggin  
Nancy Goulson 🌊  
Patrice Horstman & Lulu Santamaria  
David & Heather Jackson 🌊  
Linda Jalbert 🌟 & Kelly Rowell 🌊  
Andrea Kane  
Melissa Kohner  
Melissa Lachowitz  
Lara Gomora Design 🦋  
Clell Lewis  
Cliff Loucks 🌊  
Kate Mahady 🌟 & Michael Collins  
Jainee McCarroll  
McClanahan Family Fund  
Cabell & Patrick McCormick  
Joe Mega  
Moe Riverworks 🦋  
Alan Molise  
Chantal Mosman  
Kip Moyer  
Julie Munger & Abigail Polsby  
Anne Napier  
Outdoors Unlimited 🦋  
Martha Peale  
John Platt  
Erica Rackley  
Realty Executives of Northern Arizona  
Gwen & Ernie Rodriguez  
Shelly Roepke  
Janet Sands  
Rosie Schmidt 🐟  
Dennis Smoldt & Emma Wharton  
Althea & Peter Staks  
Bruce & Laurie Steinhaus  
David & Susan Stillely  
Tom & Kate Stohlman  
Tetyana Tanyuk  
Shayna Thomas  
Jack Weiss

- 🌟 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- 🌊 MONTHLY WATERSHED DONORS
- 🦋 IN-KIND DONOR
- 🐟 GCY ALUMNI

## Family-Owned Outfitter AzRA Advocates for Youth River Access

Arizona Raft Adventures (AzRA) has been supporting Grand Canyon Youth for two generations! AzRA’s founder, Rob Elliott, donated a San Juan River permit to Grand Canyon Youth (GCY) in 2005, expanding GCY’s youth program offerings across the Southwest. “The return on investment of supporting GCY has been beyond measure,” said Rob, “How can we measure a child’s newly found love of nature, or another child’s developing empathy borne out of helping a younger child, or a third child’s desire to become a biologist after learning about river ecology through GCY? The benefits are monumental.”

“The return on investment of supporting GCY has been beyond measure.”



Photo credit: Rob Elliott

Support from AzRA continued when Rob’s daughter and her husband, Alex and Fred Thevenin (pictured at left), began running the business in 2008. AzRA supports Grand Canyon nonprofits in multiple ways, including offering a donation-matching program to passengers and staff. AzRA is also a long-time business sponsor for GCY’s annual storytelling fundraiser, River Tales. “Supporting organizations that strengthen our community’s connection to the outdoors strengthens our society as a whole,” said Fred.

AzRA passengers donate the majority of the gear found in GCY’s FREE river gear lending library. Families make one stop to get their youth fully outfitted for their trip with gently-used donated items. Reusing river gear– including river sandals, splash gear, and sun hats– helps reduce the environmental footprint and cost of our expeditions.

“AzRA and GCY fundamentally believe that familiarizing young people with nature and recreation is the foundation of nurturing a generation to care deeply for wild spaces and public lands,” shared Fred. In past years, AzRA worked with GCY to connect visually impaired youth to the river. Since 2022, a GCY collaboration between AzRA, Grand Canyon Expeditions, and Grand Canyon Trust’s Rising Leaders Program has connected over 80 Indigenous youth with their ancestral homeland. The experience is shaped by Indigenous knowledge-holders who join the expedition, guiding youth to become leaders in their own communities. “We are proud of all our collaborative trips and look forward to nurturing additional Indigenous youth programs in the future,” said Fred.



Photo credit: Katie Woodard



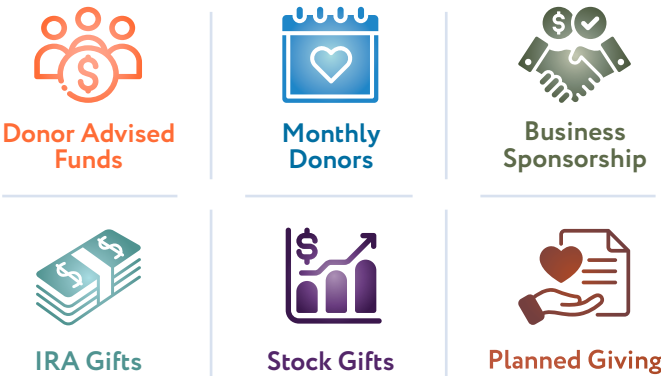


## Looking Downstream

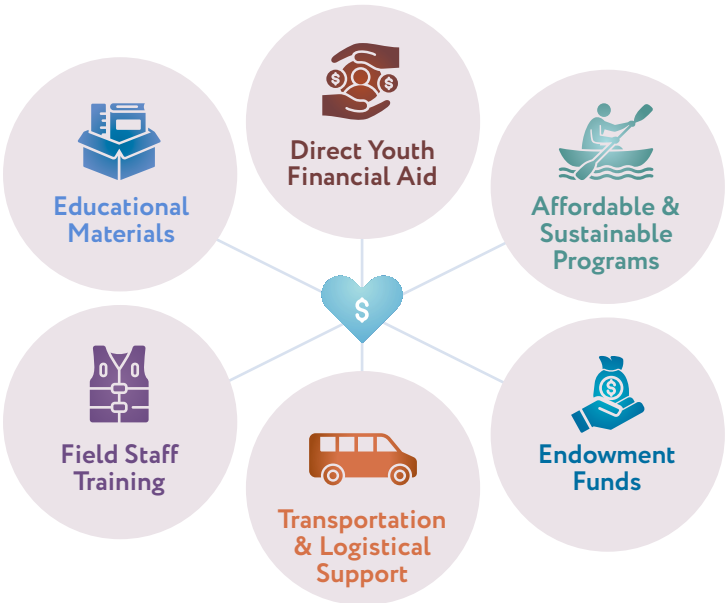
In this time of economic and environmental uncertainty, your ongoing support is helping GCY mitigate the impacts of government budget cuts and rising costs. Our board and staff are supporting your efforts through thoughtful and proactive decision-making. One of our organizational strengths, a skill learned directly from running rivers, is our ability to stay flexible and respond to changing circumstances. Thank you for your belief in the positive impact of getting youth outside. Together, we remain focused on successfully serving youth with high-quality, inclusive, educational expeditions.



## WAYS YOU GIVE



## WHAT YOUR DONATIONS SUPPORT



# 2025 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## 2025 Statement of Revenue & Expenses

| Revenue                                              |            |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Program fees (including direct financial aid) .....  | \$ 750,408 |
| Grants .....                                         | 640,147    |
| Contributions (individuals).....                     | 321,666    |
| Contributions (businesses).....                      | 43,943     |
| In-Kind contributions .....                          | 111,297    |
| Special event (net of direct costs) .....            | 49,589     |
| Investment income (net of fees).....                 | 57,519     |
| Merchandise sales & other (net of direct costs)..... | 6,760      |

**Total Revenue** **\$1,981,329**

| Expenses                                       |            |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Payroll & payroll taxes.....                   | \$ 929,684 |
| Expedition food, transportation, permits ..... | 250,974    |
| Direct financial aid awarded .....             | 134,203    |
| Insurance & background checks.....             | 93,117     |
| Outfitter services (including in-kind).....    | 66,940     |
| Supplies (expedition, safety & office) .....   | 60,065     |
| Contracted services.....                       | 55,988     |
| Employee benefits .....                        | 53,239     |
| Depreciation .....                             | 47,365     |
| Occupancy (utilities, maintenance) .....       | 22,371     |
| Interest (building loan).....                  | 21,728     |
| Professional fees (audit, legal, etc) .....    | 20,814     |
| Printing & postage .....                       | 13,728     |
| Merchant & bank fees .....                     | 11,179     |
| Training & conferences .....                   | 7,762      |
| Database & website.....                        | 6,060      |
| Other .....                                    | 2,757      |

**Total Expenses** **\$1,797,974**

**Net Revenue over Expenses** **\$ 183,355**

For more detailed information, please see the 2025 Audited Financial Statements & Independent Auditor's Report at [gcyouth.org](http://gcyouth.org).

**423** YOUTH RECEIVED A RECORD **\$134,203** IN DIRECT FINANCIAL AID

Individual Financial Aid requests more than doubled in 2025 and continue to remain high. The **Jane Arndorfer Fund** and **Laura Fallon Memorial Fund** are helping to assist with a portion of this increased need.

## Balance Sheet at December 31, 2025

| Assets                                          |              |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Cash & equivalents .....                        | \$ 1,173,441 |
| Receivables & prepaid expenses .....            | 35,677       |
| Investments .....                               | 337,960      |
| Property & equipment (net of depreciation)..... | 1,051,197    |

**Total Assets** **\$2,598,275**

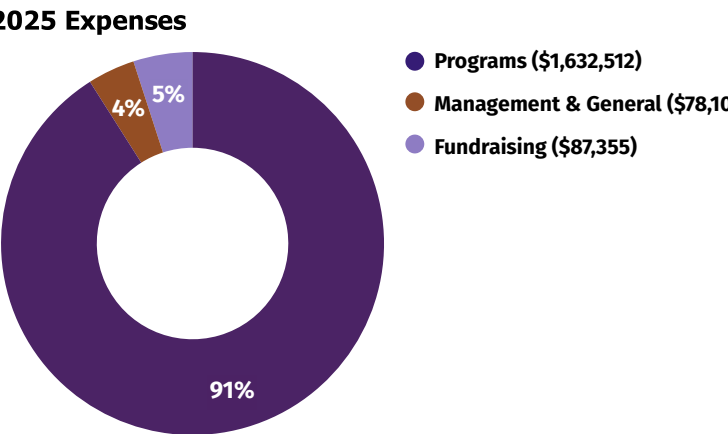
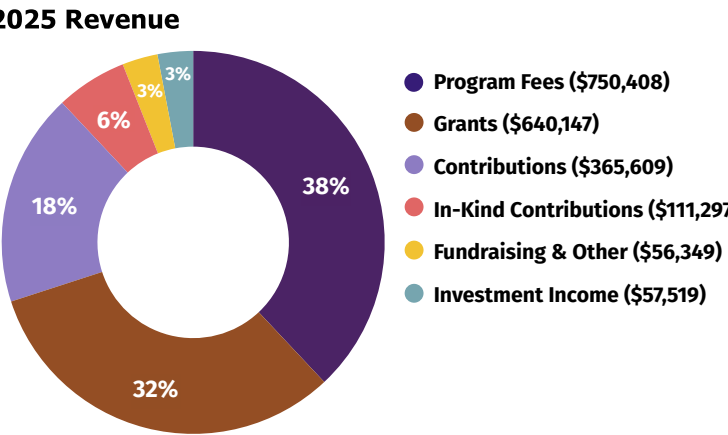
| Liabilities                                        |           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Accounts payable & accrued expenses.....           | \$ 15,419 |
| Expedition deposits for 2026 received in 2025..... | 62,302    |
| Building loan .....                                | 503,372   |

**Total Liabilities** **\$ 581,093**

| Net Assets                              |              |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|
| Without donor restrictions.....         | \$ 1,588,056 |
| With donor restrictions (programs)..... | 266,528      |
| Board Designated Endowment Fund .....   | 27,074       |
| Donor Designated Endowment Fund .....   | 135,524      |

**Total Net Assets** **\$ 2,017,182**

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** **\$ 2,598,275**





# LOVE NOTES TO GCY...

"Each day on the river taught me something new about myself. Whether it was discovering strength I didn't know I had, learning to trust my team, or simply appreciating the present moment. I learned to focus on the things that actually matter.

Thank you for believing in young people like me and for making adventures like this possible. You made an extraordinary impact on my life!"

– Abigail, 2025 youth participant

"Your guides made this a completely extraordinary trip for my two sons. They came back glowing and brimming over with stories. Both spilled with excitement on the drive home. They talked for two, maybe three, hours straight when they got home and had even more stories at dinner time. GCY's guides shared precious information about the geology, history, and wildlife, all while being generously open to hearing my sons' opinions, thoughts, and interests. Remarkable!!!"

– Parents of participants, Kai and Aiden

"I truly believe that the river reveals our truest selves. It draws us out of the routines and disconnection of everyday life and reminds us that we move through the world together, not isolated, but connected. Without your generous support, running that incredible river would have been immensely difficult, if not impossible. For that, I am profoundly thankful."

– Lolana, 2025 youth participant

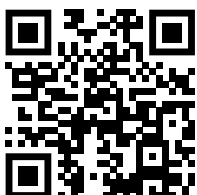


Keep track of what we are up to!  
Subscribe to our blog, The Ripple Effect:  
[gcyouth.org/blog](https://gcyouth.org/blog)

Follow us on social media!



Love all the alumni art throughout?  
Purchase an alumni sun hoodie featuring youth art created on the river: [gcyouth.org/merch](https://gcyouth.org/merch)



Scan to donate

Join our growing community of donors at [gcyouth.org/donate](https://gcyouth.org/donate). Thank you for your ongoing support!

2131 N First Street  
Flagstaff, AZ 86004  
928.773.7921  
[gcyouth.org](https://gcyouth.org)

