

Rocky Mountain News

Hike for Youth benefits nonprofits

By Janet Reese, Special to the News
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Are you eager to lace up your hiking boots and hit the trails? Consider "Hike for Youth," a hike-a-thon on June 10 at Golden Gate Canyon State Park, located 16 miles northwest of Golden.

Unlike a marathon, you don't have to train for this non-competitive event that is designed for all ages and abilities. A desire to have fun in the outdoors is the only requisite.

Hike for Youth benefits six Denver/Boulder area youth agencies: Butterfly Hope, cityWILD, Colorado Mountain Club--Youth Education Program, FrontRange Earth Force, Mile High Youth Corps and Thorne Ecological Institute.

"We help six small, grass roots agencies through this one event," said Shanda Vangas, development director for Mile High Youth Corps. "Proceeds will be divided among the benefiting agencies to support their youth programs."

Since the first Hike for Youth was held in 2004, the event has grown with more hikers, volunteers and refined hikes, said Vangas. "This year, our goal is to register 500 hikers and raise about \$50,000. We are making this a very family-friendly event and hope to have parents, children, youth groups, corporate teams and hikers of all ages involved."

Philip Ferranti founded Hike for Youth. He funds this annual event through the Ferranti Foundation, which he created to support nonprofit groups. Ferranti lives in Palm Desert, Calif., and spends summers in Boulder.

An investor, avid hiker and author of several hiking books, Ferranti said, "I began donating money to nonprofits that help kids in the Boulder/Denver area. The more organizations I found, the more I wanted to support. I called an informal meeting of the groups and said I would like to help. I had a good idea of a hiking-oriented event that would work and pitched it to the group."

Before starting Hike for Youth, Ferranti initiated "Hike for Hope," a hiking event held in Indian Canyons of Palm Springs to support women's cancer research at the City of Hope Cancer Center in Duarte, Calif. "The hike-a-thon concept has universal appeal as a fund-raising event," he said.

Hike for Hope raised more than \$1 million in eight years. Ferranti wanted a similar event for Colorado and Hike for Youth was the answer.

“In it’s third year, I would like to see Hike for Youth expand along the Front Range and the Western Slope,” he said.

Proceeds from the event help to maintain trails, benefiting all hikers. Urban youth from Mile High Youth Conservation work on trail maintenance at Golden Gate Canyon State Park as part of its conservation service projects. “Money raised helps to purchase project tools, crew transportation, environmental training classes and habitat restoration,” said Vangas.

An added value of Hike for Youth is the health benefits it offers participants. Ferranti espouses the benefits of hiking in his book, *Hiking! The Ultimate Natural Prescription for Health and Wellness*. He said, “Hiking helps reduce stress and clarify thinking. Hiking can help you dramatically loose weight, firm and tone, build cardiovascular and aerobic conditioning, strengthen muscles and energize your body at a very high level.”

Hike for Youth celebrates youth, the outdoors, and creates public awareness for outdoor youth programs, Ferranti said. “It’s an affirmation for helping young people.”

Hikes

Hiking trails in Golden Gate Canyon State Park wind through green mountain meadows, lush aspen groves and pine-covered hills with great mountain vistas.

Hikers can register for easy (2.75 miles), moderate (4 miles) or difficult (6.7 miles) hikes on the Burro and Mountain Lion loop trails. All hikes start at the Nott Creek trailhead/parking lot at the east end of the park. A separate, easy hike is offered on a quarter-mile interpretive trail at the visitor’s center. Specialty hikes are available for hikers with dogs, small children or accessibility needs.

Check-in time for those registered for easy hikes is 9:30 a.m.; moderate hikes, 9 a.m.; and difficult hikes, 8 a.m. All hikes end at noon for a fun after-hike party at the Red Barn group picnic area.

“Bring extra clothing, water, sunscreen, a hat, and snacks,” advised Brenda Porter, CMC education director. “Hike volunteers who know the trail will be available to lead groups of 8- to-10 hikers. Friendly, leashed dogs are welcome to participate, too.”

Hike for Youth registration

- Cost: \$10 for ages 5-17, \$25 for adults. Kids ages 4 and under are free.

- Online registration by credit card and mail-in registration forms is available on the Hike for Youth website: www.hikeforyouth.org
- Deadline for online registration is June 8. Limited on-site cash or check registration, 8:30-9:30 a.m., event day.
- After registering, hikers will receive a confirmation and detailed directions to Golden Gate Canyon State Park. Volunteers will greet hikers as they arrive at the entrance booth and provide parking information. The Colorado state parks visitor's fee is waived for participants.
- All hikers receive a gift bag and are invited to an after-hike party to enjoy food, beverages, prizes and live music.
- Hikers are encouraged to raise \$100 or more in pledges for any or all of the six benefiting agencies. Prizes will be awarded to top fundraisers.
- Golden Gate Canyon State Park: www.golden.gate.park@state.co.us.

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