Gottdiener Makes Half-Million-Dollar Gift to NOLS

Lander, Wyo.—Thursday, June 22, 2023—The National Outdoor Leadership School announced today that business leader and NOLS Trustee Noah Gottdiener and his wife Maria Morra have made a $500,000 gift to the school.

“This is an exceptional gift at a critical time for the school,” said NOLS Interim President Sandy Colhoun. “Noah’s leadership across many decades has made a powerful impact on our school and this latest gift is a testament to both his commitment to and passion for the NOLS mission.”

Noah’s unrestricted gift allows the school’s leadership discretion in how the funds may be spent, maximizing their ability to respond to the school’s changing needs.

The executive chairman and chair of the board of directors of financial advisory company Kroll, Noah’s philanthropic legacy at NOLS spans three decades. In addition, he has served on NOLS’ board of trustees since 2017, accepting and retaining the role of treasurer and Head of the Finance and Investment Committee.

Noah’s connection to NOLS began in 1976, though, on a 30-day course in the mountains of Wyoming.

Growing up with little exposure to the outdoors, Noah learned about NOLS through a college roommate. He completed a Wind River Wilderness course in the summer between college semesters, an experience he calls transformational.

“I grew up in Brooklyn in a lower middle-class home with little exposure to nature,” Noah remembered. “My parents were hard working Holocaust survivors, and they encouraged me to be a strong student in the local public schools I attended. My best memories were in my very early years when my family would summer in a bungalow colony in the Borscht Belt of the Catskills, where my father worked as the head cook.”

His hard work in school paid off, and Noah was admitted to an Ivy league university, where he met students from very different cultural backgrounds than his own. “It was in college that I had my first real exposure to nature as my roommates introduced me to rock climbing, a sport they had learned at their New England prep schools,” Noah recalled. After that, he enrolled on his first NOLS course.

“Looking back, almost every day was a transformational experience—putting our tent up in the midst of a fierce mountain storm, sleeping on top of Wind River Peak, crossing a raging mountain river, or simply cooking a great NOLS recipe,” Noah said. “It’s difficult to convey what an awakening that summer spent in the Winds was for me. That I could navigate through those magical mountain scapes, climb its peaks, fish its rivers—it was all truly overwhelming.”
Noah returned to Wyoming the following summer, and took a course to become a NOLS instructor, all before forging a long career in financial services. “I would not be the person that I am, nor would I have the skills that I have needed were it not for NOLS,” he said.

“Noah and Maria’s generosity and dedication to NOLS are a reminder of how this community relies in support of one another” said Interim President Sandy Colhoun. “We could not be any more grateful to Noah and Maria for this gift.”

About NOLS

Established in 1965, NOLS is the leader in wilderness education. What began in a small cabin in Wyoming’s Wind River Mountain range has evolved into a global, multifaceted nonprofit school offering a proven leadership curriculum through expedition courses, wilderness medicine certifications, risk management training, and custom education solutions for organizations. Today, NOLS operates 14 campuses worldwide and provides classroom instruction in over 40 countries. The NOLS community includes over 800 active instructors who teach a variety of outdoor skills from mountaineering and sailing to wilderness medicine that empower students to step forward in their lives. To learn more about NOLS or to apply for a course, visit www.nols.edu or call 800.710.6657 to speak to an advisor.