

THE

# Leader

Summer 2009 • Vol. 24 • No.3

For Alumni of the National Outdoor Leadership School

BY RACHEL HARRIS, PAGE 10

EXPEDITION SKILLS  
FOR THE FINAL  
FRONTIER

NASA & NOLS

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Their Country

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THE LEADER IN WILDERNESS EDUCATION







## THE Leader

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*The Leader* is a newsletter for alumni of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), a nonprofit school focusing on wilderness skills, leadership, and environmental ethics. Published three times a year, each issue is mailed to approximately 50,000 NOLS alumni and an additional 10,000 prospective students. NOLS graduates living in the U.S. receive a free subscription to *The Leader* for life.

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### WHO'S THIS?



Recognize this person? The first 10 people to figure it out will receive a free NOLS t-shirt. Call the Alumni office at (800) 332-4280.

Last issue's answer to "Who's This?" is Kevin McGowan, a field instructor since 1979 and NOLS Rocky Mountain's outfitting manager since 1999.

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



NOLS Teton Valley students spend time doing trail work during their course. an area of the Big Horn Mountains.

Like most nonprofit organizations, service is fundamental to the NOLS mission. In our case, we execute our mission in order to "serve people and the environment." The NOLS community—alumni, staff, students, and donors—tend to feel passionately about educating and developing people and also protecting our wild lands. We achieve our mission through several avenues including conducting research, publishing books, developing curriculum, and having an active public policy department. While all of those avenues are important, the most important avenue for furthering our mission is through training and educating students.

At this time of year, our focus on students is always obvious. Students arrive from around the world and gather, often nervously, at the Noble Hotel in Lander, on the farm in Alaska, along the Yukon River in Whitehorse, and at many other NOLS operating locations in both the northern and southern hemispheres. They head out into the backcountry, and after weeks, or months, they return to our bases with increased skills and confidence, greater leadership ability, and a deeper understanding of our wild lands and their relationship with those lands.

NOLS has always focused on teaching and training over other ways of advancing our mission. Paul Petzoldt, the founder of NOLS was an experiential educator at heart. We are believers in that old Chinese proverb from Guanxi, who wrote, "When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people."

In order to maximize the effectiveness of our mission, we rely on many staff, volunteers, partners, and foundations. Our numbers swell in the northern

summer months as passionate staff arrive and go to work in the mountains, in classrooms, in the issue room, or on rivers, ocean, or the telephones. In the May issue of *Outside* magazine, NOLS was recognized for the second year in a row as one of the top 30 companies to work for in the nation. Key to winning this honor is the dedication, passion, and commitment to service shared by our staff and volunteers.

Throughout the year we also partner with other nonprofits to serve people and the environment. In many cases these nonprofits direct students to us that would benefit from a NOLS education. Still others help provide scholarship support, which provides a NOLS education to a more diverse student base. Finally, our alumni and donors provide essential support to further our goals and make it all happen.

This issue of *The Leader* has several articles that focus on service projects and, primarily, on the lives of service carried on by NOLS alumni. As you will see, that service takes place in numerous different ways, including the work our graduates did to serve the Hubble Telescope and, with it, service to astronomy, science, and our understanding of the universe. Perhaps you were involved in a service project on your NOLS course. In addition to our primary service of education, NOLS has students busy pulling weeds and maintaining trails as part of their education. Read up on what projects our bases are undertaking this year in our Branch Notes on page 19. Our graduates are also found contributing to military service or making unique contributions to the business community, while also carrying forward the leadership and values they learned at NOLS.

We are pleased to share a few of these stories and regret that we are not able to share the more than 150,000 other stories of service carried forth by all of our graduates. I am always proud to see how our alumni distinguish themselves in leadership positions and carry forward a commitment to service. Thank you for all you do, for NOLS and the NOLS mission.

John Gans, NOLS Executive Director

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One NOLSie who is out of this world! NASA astronaut John Grunsfeld shows his NOLS pride on the recent mission to the Hubble Telescope.

## The World Is Crawling With NOLSies

### Debriefing Leadership Week

BY WILLIAM ROTH, NOLS SOCIAL NETWORK ENGINEER

For an entire week in May, NOLS alumni came out of the woodwork to exercise their leadership prowess and spread the good word of NOLS. Leadership Week was seven days jam-packed with ways grads could promote leadership skills and inspire life-changing experiences through wilderness expeditions. Each day was paired to a specific NOLS leadership skill, and our marketing team and alumni around the world (and out of this world!) gave presentations, handed out catalogs, and wrote in to our blog about their NOLS experiences. We even caught a few people wearing their wind pants to school and work in a proud display of NOLS-hood. We weren't

disappointed. You reviewed NOLS books on *Amazon*, signed up for *Facebook* groups, requested more catalogs to distribute, and yes, we love urban wind-pant wearers.

As I monitored the social network airwaves, the biggest success of this year's event had to be the amount of inspiring stories grads shared about the impact NOLS had on their lives. "I learned I could always depend on my knowledge and skills to get out of trouble; to be a leader," said Baja Sea Kayaking grad Maggie Nichols. Other NOLS grads, young and old, on this planet and off, chimed in too.

Grayson Lookner, a 2003 Spring Semester in Mexico grad, wrote about the current challenging job market using the NOLS expedition as a metaphor, a language we completely understand. "I tend to take the broader view and look at my whole life like an expedition, these are just a few lay-over days due to poor weather or an evacuation, and soon we'll be packed up and moving on again, and in the end this will just make the whole experience richer."

NASA astronaut John Grunsfeld posted his NOLS leadership story from the shuttle, after completing repairs to the Hubble Telescope. He has taken four courses with NOLS as part of his NASA mission training in addition to his first course in 1974 when

he was in high school. (Read more about NASA and NOLS on page 10.) We even saw one college essay from a Baja Ocean Semester grad who says, "NOLS made me the person I am today." We hope you were accepted to the college of your choice, Devon!

This was the first time we have tried a weeklong event, and just like any NOLS course, we have debriefed it, learned our lessons, and have started planning for next year's blowout event. Focusing on alumni hosted events and meet-ups will be our goal, and we will soon send out a call-to-action looking for folks up to the task. Events like movie night with a short NOLS slideshow on your local campus, technical clinics in climbing and kayaking, and Leave No Trace seminars will scatter the globe, promoting the NOLS mission and outcomes and celebrating our alumni, so that we may, for another 44 years and more, continue to be the leader in wilderness education.

*Next year's NOLS Leadership Week dates are February 21–27, 2010. For information on participating in bigger and badder ways, contact our word-of-mouth coordinator, Kary Sommers, at [wom@nols.edu](mailto:wom@nols.edu). But you don't have to wait until then! You can read the leadership stories mentioned above at <http://nols.blogs.com/leadershipweek> and add your story to the mix at any time.*

## Still One of the Best Places to Work!

BY JOHN GANS, NOLS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'm pleased to announce that NOLS was named to *Outside* magazine's "Best Places to Work" list for the second year in a row ([www.outsideonline.com](http://www.outsideonline.com))! NOLS was the only nonprofit and the only Wyoming organization to make the list of 30 companies from across the nation. The magazine conducted extensive confidential surveys based on benefits, compensation, job satisfaction, environmental initiatives, and community outreach programs designed to identify, recognize, and honor the best employers in the country. We are one of only ten companies that have made the list in both of the past two years. I'm also pleased to see a couple of NOLS partner organizations in that list of ten, including Patagonia, Clif Bar, and Natural Habitat Adventures. I was also pleased to see our staff survey results showed improvement in nearly all areas from the previous year. This is truly a credit to and achievement for all of the staff and volunteers at NOLS. Thank you for building this great place to work!





**WILD SIDE OF MEDICINE**

## Serve the Mission Remembering Why We Volunteer

BY TOD SCHIMELPFENIG, WMI CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

Decades ago, when I was interviewing for my first position on a rescue service, I was asked why I wanted to join. I answered that it was important to my work as a NOLS instructor to have first aid experience. College was boring and I craved the excitement.

Across the table, the department's officer, looked at me and said, "Then this is all about you." It was one of those moments where someone gives you a gift, a self-awareness, that changes your life.

People with Wilderness First Aid (WFA) training and Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification (and a NOLS field course) are well prepared medically to serve with search and rescue teams, on trail crews, as backcountry rangers, trip leaders, guides, and outdoor educators.

One of the attractions of fire fighting, ambulance, or search and rescue work with this type of

medical training is the excitement and challenge. We like working under stress. We want to know we can perform under pressure. We want to use our skills to save lives.

Yet emergencies are uncommon and much of this work is mundane. A concept we include in the leadership, teamwork, and communication curriculum woven through WMI's courses and that we instill in our students coming to us for skills to work as a first responder is to "serve the mission."

On a search or a rescue we're sometimes assigned boring tasks. Someone else cares for the patient with the dramatic injury, gets to rappel from the helicopter, or searches the area with a high probability of a find. We care for the patient with the routine or manageable problem, carry the litter, or hump the equipment. It's not glamorous or exciting, but these are vital roles, and it's our job, and good expedition behavior, to see these through to completion.

Anyone who has lead a search or rescue operation knows that freelancers, people who do what they find personally stimulating rather than what is needed for the mission, undermine the team. Paul Petzoldt was speaking to this concept when he said

***"In emergency services good leaders and good expedition members keep their plans and actions focused on caring for the patient, or finding the lost person. After all, that's the mission."***

he never trusted a selfish guide, that is, a guide who climbed for him or herself, not for the client.

In emergency services good leaders and good expedition members keep their plans and actions focused on caring for the patient, or finding the lost person. After all, that's the mission.

## Real Life Drama A Course Takes Action

The Wilderness Medicine Institute (WMI) teaches medicine for times when there are few resources, limited assistance, and challenging decisions to be made in remote environments. Here is a story from NOLS alumnus Barrett Betz that occurred while his NOLS semester was on their rock climbing section in Red Rocks, Nevada.

*"My coursemates and I were gathering up climbing gear ready to commence the day's activities, when a man came running towards us. 'Help! Help! My friend just fell!' Instinctively, all of us started bounding over the rocks trying to reach the fallen hiker. Our instructors, Ravi and Anna, were the first ones on the scene. 'Call 911!' I heard Ravi shout. This was no 'scenario' taking place in the comforts of Three Peaks Ranch during our wilderness medicine training. This was a real life rescue, and the twelve of us, who had recently become certified Wilderness First Responders, were called into action.*

*The patient had been sitting on the edge of a twenty-foot cliff. No one knew what caused her to slip, but she lay on her back with Anna's hands providing spine stabilization while Ravi performed a thorough head to toe exam. She was verbally responsive with a hauntingly elevated respiratory rate.*

*Eight members of our team aligned ourselves on either side of her, getting information to 'beam' her onto the backboard. I took a step back and absorbed what was going on around me; my questions about what a real life rescue would look like were answered. Everyone's face presented a blank expression, but all of our eyes were wide open and focused.*

*The communication and teamwork amongst us was pristine as we moved the patient over the jumbled rocks and sandy inlets. As we wove and dodged these obstacles, four men in blue paramedic shirts and one police officer met us. 'Who was with this girl?' asks the officer. The young man who ran to us for help raises his hand. He was the girl's blind date.*

*The scene was now flooded with the sounds of walkie-talkies, respiratory machines, and the decision to call in a rescue chopper. The sixteen of us turned the job over to the paramedics, and retreated onto the surrounding rocks to become concerned bystanders."*

### MEDICINE QUIZ

**Which of the following are accepted treatments for envenomation from North American rattlesnake bites? (Answer on page 13)**

- |                                                     |                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. Use a suction device to remove the venom.        | C. Use a constriction bandage.       |
| B. Keep yourself and the patient calm and evacuate. | D. Cool, but do not freeze the limb. |

### WILDERNESS MEDICINE INSTITUTE OF NOLS



## OFTEN IMITATED, NEVER DUPLICATED



If you spend any time in remote locations, you need wilderness medicine training. For 18 years, the Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS (WMI) has defined the standards in wilderness medicine training. With a wide range of course and certification opportunities, our graduates travel into the backcountry prepared to act with confidence, make complex decisions, and manage emergencies.

To find a course near you, contact us at [www.nols.edu/wmi](http://www.nols.edu/wmi) or (866) 831-9001.

### FEATURED COURSE

## WIND RIVER RANGE EXPEDITION FOR PHYSICIANS

August 29–Sept. 6, 2009  
Lander, WY

### EARN CMEs WITH NOLS!

Join WMI of NOLS for a week of wilderness travel in Wyoming's spectacular Wind River Range. Your expedition begins with a hands-on wilderness medicine module that presents the latest information on wilderness treatment and evacuation practices.

You'll apply this education and experience the NOLS wilderness skills and leadership curriculum as you travel through stunning scenery, fly-fish, and make a summit attempt on Wind River Peak. Daily scenarios will test both your wilderness medicine knowledge and your improvisational skills. Through joint sponsorship with the Wilderness Medical Society, physicians may earn 16 hours of category one CMEs for participation in this program. For more information or to register visit [www.nols.edu/wmi](http://www.nols.edu/wmi).





## ISSUE ROOM

# Service at NOLS

## Connecting Students to the Land

BY JEN LAMB, NOLS PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR

My introduction to federal land and the web of resource management agencies that oversees it occurred while cleaning up errant campfire rings on a NOLS course in the Wind River Mountains in 1988. Growing up outside of Boston, my exposure to public land was limited to visiting ski areas in New Hampshire and Vermont. But since I was focused on the skiing, the land and its management never really crossed my mind, except to consider how steep the terrain was or how good the snow cover.

Twenty-one years later, my most vivid memories from that month in the Winds include my experience as “leader of the day” when my group got lost (and found) and the service work we completed to eradicate the fire rings inside designated wilderness areas. That work turned what might have remained a 28-day hike through anonymous beautiful places into a life experience that connected me to public land in a new and significant way. Suddenly I had a stake in these amazing lands and understood that I had an opportunity to affect their future.

I’m fairly certain that my experience is not unique. We hear from many graduates that the service projects they participate in are some of the most meaningful and eye-opening hours of their time at NOLS. Their connection to the land becomes stronger and they gain an understanding of who manages it, how, and why. Many return home and make service a key component of their lives.

While not a highly visible or formal part of a NOLS education, service is a valued component of many wilderness courses. We don’t talk a lot about

*We hear from many graduates that the service projects they participate in are some of the most meaningful and eye-opening hours of their time at NOLS.*

it. We don’t tally the hours spent in service mode (though we plan to in the future), and we don’t highlight it in our course descriptions. Still, NOLS students and instructors perform a lot of service (for a snapshot of this work check out the Branch Notes on page 19 of this issue). And we know from post-course evaluations that students learn a lot from the opportunity. Our core values of leadership, education, community, and wilderness come together in the realm of service.

With the inauguration of President Obama last January came an opportunity to reinvigorate our commitment to service, spurred on by the new administration’s ambitious agenda. A national day of service scheduled on Martin Luther King Day (the day before inauguration), launched the President’s message. The President’s transition team framed his intent this way: “President-elect Obama will ask Americans to do

more than just offer a single day of service to their cities, towns, and neighborhoods. He will ask all of us to make an ongoing commitment to our communities. Never has it been more important to come together in shared purpose to tackle the common challenges we face.” When I read this message, it struck me that this theme is the core of every NOLS course.

We are excited to enhance our service work and put more energy into formalizing its place in our curriculum and tracking our progress. We are also eager to help connect NOLS graduates to service opportunities in their home communities. What can we do to respond to the administration’s call to action? First, we have set a goal to perform 7,590 hours of ser-

*The act of service...takes time, energy, and commitment. But the rewards are great.*

vice in 2010. Quantifying our contribution to service means that we will track what we do. Tracking what we do, in turn, will encourage us to continue to improve, since we only manage what we measure.

Second, we have joined a national coalition of nonprofit organizations that seeks to expand service opportunities and make service a national priority. This coalition, called ServiceNation, launched an initiative in September 2008 with the goal of developing a powerful policy agenda that will bring service to scale by building a national grassroots movement to launch a new era of civic engagement and idealism. ServiceNation leaders believe that “it is time to call on our country’s most valuable resource—its people—to mobilize against our most difficult challenges. We envision a nation in which citizen service is a central strategy in addressing America’s most pressing needs in education, the environment, public health, fighting poverty, disaster relief, and in sharing American ideals and idealism with the rest of the world.

By engaging citizens in a lifetime of service, we will make service a defining ethic of what it means to be an American.”

By connecting to this national movement, we hope to both formalize our internal service programs and help our 150,000+ graduates engage in meaningful service around the country.

The act of service, whatever the type, takes time, energy, and commitment. But the rewards are great. Last summer, in partnership with the Student Conservation Association and the Forest Service, the NOLS alumni department piloted a new alumni service course, with the intent to bring graduates back to the land and the community they connected with long ago. The small but mighty team built a new section of a major trail high in the northern Winds.

The work was hard—moving large rocks, boulders, and earth to create a new tread surface—but the learning and the opportunity to enjoy the mountains and cement lasting relationships was great. We didn’t finish the trail by any means, but we made a great contribution. This summer, we’ll go back to the Winds to build another section of this trail. The more people we engage, the more we can accomplish. Will you join us?

For more information about ServiceNation, visit [www.servicenation.org](http://www.servicenation.org). For more information about the NOLS Alumni Service Trips, visit [www.nols.edu/alumni/trips](http://www.nols.edu/alumni/trips).

## SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE



## Trash Your Can

BY PAIGE HEALY, NOLS  
PUBLIC POLICY INTERN

During the week of Earth Day, April 20-24, NOLS Headquarters and NOLS Rocky Mountain participated in a “Trash Your Can” waste management challenge. NOLS staff members and alumni voluntarily gave up their personal trashcans in exchange for a comparably sized recycle bin. Our goal was to reduce the amount of trash NOLS creates by facilitating a climate where recycling is more convenient than “trashing.”

NOLS Facebook members from across the nation were excited about the idea. Many people took the concept and participated in their local community. Slaton Whatley, one such member, wrote, “I’ll be representing South Georgia. At least one person in Valdosta will be trashing their can!”

NOLS staff members were excited about the challenge, too. Jeanne O’Brien, NOLS public relations and partnerships manager, thought we should extend the program from one week to two. Lou Gordon, NOLS admissions officer, told me she didn’t want her trashcan back at the end of the week, saying, “When the trashcan is under my desk it is too easy just to throw things away, working without a trashcan really helps me to recycle.”

As a result of the Trash Your Can campaign we doubled the amount of food waste NOLS Headquarters composts in a week, increasing from 1.5 five-gallon buckets to over 3. By moving our trashcans out of reach we also eliminated enough waste to reduce our trash take-out by 4 industrial sized trash bags in one week (down from 8 bags per week).

At NOLS Rocky Mountain four people decided they no longer need their trashcan. Greg Fleming, interim evacuation coordinator, said, “Wow! What a positive, eye opening event; a great concept that worked very well. It was amazing to see that the reduced number of ‘community’ (departmental) trashcans did not fill up. My can has been trashed, FOREVER!”

*Thanks to everyone who participated in “Trash Your Can” for their great work! Please contact the NOLS sustainability department at [sustainability@nols.edu](mailto:sustainability@nols.edu) if you have questions or suggestions about recycling and how to trash your own can!*

## WILDERNESS QUIZ

Name the bill signed by President Obama that placed wilderness protection on over 2 million acres of previously unprotected wildlands.

(Answer on page 9)



# SERVING "THOSE WHO SERVE"

BY RACHEL HARRIS



Courtesy of Karen Hartzigeorgiou

Andy Tormey admits that the hardest day of his Naval Academy Leadership Expedition with NOLS was also, hands down, his favorite. With dwindling food and twelve miles between them and their designated re-ration spot, his group had to cross a snowy mountain pass or go back the way they came and wait another three days for more food.

"I was leader of the day for my group and we started the day already behind schedule," says the 22-year-old Naval Academy lacrosse captain. "We were mentally and physically exhausted, and looking at this 12-mile hike in the mountains did not improve our mental attitudes. I tried to keep the day like any other, stopping for breaks periodically, but it soon became clear that this would be impossible."

They pushed on to the pass without breaks, the rest of the hiking group splitting the weight from an injured student's backpack to lighten his load and prevent further injury.

Beginning their final part of the climb up the pass, the group thought they were in the clear, until they en-

countered snowy and icy slopes that were impassable. Disappointment ran through the group. They were forced to retreat and set up camp for the night before backtracking to where they had started the day before, even further away from their re-supply.

"After feeling so good about our day and coming so far, to have it snatched away from us was unbelievable," Tormey said. "Over the next few days we all learned about how far we could push ourselves."

Those few days that he and the rest of his group figured out an alternate route to their resupply and worked together to get there, are the ones Tormey views as the most significant experience of the expedition and one he will never forget. He knew the course would be challenging, however he never expected to be pushed to new limits.

"Nothing in the wild cares if you are tired, sore,

or mentally exhausted.

You have to push through the pain if you want to make it," he said. "The same can be said about the military."

Like Tormey and his classmates from the Naval Academy, many men and women in the military have taken or led NOLS courses, enabling them to build on their previous leadership training in the challenging and unpredictable wilderness environment.

## NOLS AND THE U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY

NOLS Professional Training has been working with

**"NOTHING IN THE WILD CARES IF YOU ARE TIRED, SORE, OR MENTALLY EXHAUSTED, YOU HAVE TO PUSH THROUGH THE PAIN IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT. THE SAME CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE MILITARY."**



# NOLS PROVIDES PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

the United States Naval Academy (USNA) for six years. Former director of Character Development at the U.S. Naval Academy, Captain Bob Schoultz (U.S. Navy, Retired), pioneered the relationship between the Naval Academy and NOLS.

CAPT Schoultz was looking to offer midshipmen second class, also known as rising juniors at the Academy opportunities for practical leadership experience during their summer training block. All rising juniors have summer training requirements to develop familiarity with Naval operations and build professional skills they will need as Naval officers. CAPT Schoultz and NOLS Professional Training worked together to design the NOLS-USNA Leadership Expedition program, a challenging and adventurous option to apply what they learn about leadership at the Academy.

"In 2004, we were able to run an experimental program," said CAPT Schoultz. "The Naval Academy endorsed the course, supported the objectives and gave them the time. We initially had about 34 students sign up to take three different courses. After those courses, midshipmen's enthusiasm about how much they had learned increased the demand. The next year the program grew to about 55-60 students and it has been growing ever since. In 2009, we are up to 135 midshipmen [attending NOLS-USNA Leadership Expeditions]. The leadership, resilience

**"PEOPLE HAD VERY HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF ME. THE STRENGTH OF MY NOLS EXPERIENCE HAS PUSHED ME THROUGH IT ALL. I WAS PUT IN THE LEADERSHIP POSITION WITH THE MARINES BECAUSE OF NOLS, WHICH TAUGHT ME WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LEADER, TO WORK WELL WITH A TEAM, AND TOLERATE ADVERSITY."**

and self-confidence that students learn on a NOLS course are applicable to serving in the military or any demanding job that requires teamwork."

Mike Dobrinen, a rising junior at the Naval Academy, fresh off a NOLS Alaska Naval Academy Leadership Expedition this summer, agrees. "NOLS is the Naval Academy in fast forward for a month. A lot of the leadership skills at NOLS go hand-in-hand with what we learn at the Academy, but we don't have the opportunity to directly experience it. At NOLS we got to use that time to practice."

Dobrinen's coursemate Nick Green, also a rising junior, adds that expedition behavior was a key lesson that will help him as a squad leader at the Academy, living and working with all the same people throughout the next year. "I learned to have foresight

of how decisions can affect the bigger picture and to have compassion for my teammates," said Green.

## OPERATION PURPLE PROGRAM

"Kids Serve Too." That's the motto of the *Operation Purple*® camp, an initiative of the National Military Family Association. NOLS program coordinator Kat Smithhammer and J Regner of the National Military Family Association, who is also a recent NOLS Semester in the Rockies graduate, teamed up to offer a leadership skills summer expedition for the teen-aged children of deployed military personnel.

"When a parent or parents serve in the military, it affects the *entire* family," Kat said. "Students on the courses learn several things. First, we want them to realize that they are not alone. There are tons of kids who are going through the exact same thing, having a parent or both parents in service. Secondly, we want to expose them to something new, help them develop communication and leadership skills, make friends, develop a peer network, and have a good time. It is important for them to know that they serve too."

The National Military Family Association has been hosting *Operation Purple*® camps for five years, sending kids for free thanks to a partnership with the Sierra Club. NOLS is unique to the camp in the sense that it is the only remote backcountry expedition *Operation Purple*® offers. Participants travel in the wilderness for nine consecutive days and curriculum is structured around the idea of resilience, key leadership skills such as communication and teamwork, and building campers' leadership capacity for the future.

## NOLS INSTRUCTORS SERVE

After years of teaching NOLS students, former instructor Dan Taslitz followed his dream and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.

"I always had a commitment to service," he said. "After 10 years as a NOLS instructor, it hit me that I was 34 years old and this was my last chance to serve. I was ready to try something new, but I wanted to keep that commitment to challenge and personal growth."

Relinquishing his instructor position, Taslitz headed for the Special Operations as a U.S. Marine force reconnaissance team leader. "We operated all over the world and it was a very demanding but rewarding environment. I worked with a great group of guys in small teams, not unlike NOLS courses."

Taslitz says that his time at NOLS shaped who he is in many ways and shaped everything he does and how he relates to people. The military put him in a similar position that being a NOLS instructor did. Since he felt prepared physically, he was able to focus on the emotional and mental aspect of the training, allowing him to take on a leadership role quickly.

"People had very high expectations of me," he said. "The strength of my NOLS experience has pushed me through it all. I was put in the leadership

position with the Marines because of NOLS, which taught me what it means to be a leader, to work well with a team, and tolerate adversity. They provided me with a foundation of experience for pushing the envelope mentally, emotionally and physically in a demanding environment. My experiences with NOLS and the Marines have crossed over in many ways."

Buddy Gurnari is another NOLS grad and in-

**"THESE TWO EXPERIENCES, NOLS AND THE MILITARY, HAVE PROVEN TO GO HAND IN HAND. YOU HAVE TO ALWAYS BE ON TOP OF YOUR GAME."**

structor with military experience, but he comes from the other direction, having served in the U.S. Air Force before coming to NOLS.

"I wanted to lead trips for NOLS because I wanted to continue teaching outdoor skills and leadership as I had done while I was an Air Force SERE [Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape] specialist," Gurnari said. "I think it's important to teach what NOLS has to offer because those people who do not choose to enter military service should [also] learn the basics of leadership and self-reliance."

## THE EXPEDITION METAPHOR

"If you look at how an expedition functions, that says it all," Taslitz said. "It is effective to look at roles people play in the group to move towards a positive, effective outcome."

For Taslitz, this aspect of group dynamics overlapped in many ways between NOLS and the Marine Corps. Each individual NOLS course is a complex combination of leadership, followership, and courage. The military and NOLS as a whole are larger extensions of this intricate arrangement.

NOLS is proud to provide an experiential practicum that compliments and supports the training provided to the men and women serving our country in the military. Whether this unique group experiences NOLS or the military first, the outcome is the same.

"These two experiences, NOLS and the military, have proven to go hand in hand," Tormey said. "You have to always be on top of your game. If you're not, then your weakness will be exposed. When you're walking on the cliff of a mountain and you lose focus for a brief second and step on an unstable rock, you could fall and get seriously injured. The same can be said in the military, being an officer in charge of many troops, one slip up can cost someone's life."

"I tell my fellow midshipmen that [NOLS] will be one of the greatest experiences of their lives," Tormey said. "No matter what course you take, the lessons are the same. You cannot put a price in the experience gained on this trip."



**ALUMNI PROFILE**

# Against the Odds

## Cancer Survivor Climbs for Research and Remembrance

BY RACHEL HARRIS

Jeff McAbee's wife, Amy, was sitting on the front steps of their new house when he returned home from work. The red roof, wood siding, and wraparound porch were only made more picturesque by the potted plant hanging next to her.

"It was June, a beautiful time of year here in Vermont," Jeff said. "We had just bought this house, our first home, and I was thinking about mowing the grass. But when I saw her, I could tell something was wrong."

Amy's frightened and tearful face spoke for itself. At that moment, she didn't look like the over-all-clad, bouncy Amy who Jeff had met and fallen in love with years earlier. "I have cancer," she said.

On June 12, 2007, Amy received a devastating call from her doctor. She learned that at age 32, she had breast cancer. Amy had always been healthy, active in and out of doors, and considered herself strong, but the diagnosis completely shook her world.

"I [was] the first in my family to discover the journey of cancer," Amy said. "I use the word journey because that is what these past two years have been. I decided to attack each phase of my cancer treatments as if I was on a backcountry expedition—not looking too far ahead and focusing on what challenge was directly in front of me. This strategy I learned trekking through the mountains of Alaska in 1998 on my NOLS expedition."

Relying on the 28 days spent in the northern Talkeetna Mountains during her Alaska Backpacking course, Amy endured two additional surgeries, accelerated fertility treatment, endless tests and scans, six weeks of radiation, and eight weeks of chemotherapy.

"A year ago, Amy sat in a chair at the hospital and let a nurse inject her with a chemical so nasty that the nurse wore protective clothing, gloves, mask, eye protection, the whole getup," Jeff said. "Sitting in that chair she knew that over the

course of the next few weeks, her hair would fall out, her nails would thicken and harden until they fell off, her food would taste like rancid butter, and she'd sweat through the night barely sleeping."

Helping her through it all was the self-reliance her NOLS course provided her.

"I no longer [found] myself thinking, 'I can't do that...' Anything is now possible, and I face these challenges with grace, humility, and confidence."

One particular day of Amy's NOLS course stands out in her mind and it was this experience that she would call upon many times as her life became shaped by cancer.

"Our group had hiked miles down a river only to find our crossing too swollen from the rain that was falling heavily all morning," Amy said. "This caused our team to turn around and hike back to where we started in order to cross the river safely."

The return trip added several hours to the group's day, exhausting them.

"Finally, we were able to cross, we were wet and cold, I looked across the massive valley that lay in front of us and spotted another group miles away," Amy said. "I was deflated to think we still had so far to go and we would still need to push further to reach camp. When we finally arrived that evening, I remember feeling elated, and amazed that I was able to push myself so far physically and emotionally that afternoon."

Amy often recalls that day for support, thinking that everything happens for a reason.

"Amy draws on her inner strength every day," Jeff said. "Her strength is based on her confidence. And she found her confidence on her NOLS expedition, and increased it further battling cancer."

Amy's NOLS course as well as her battle with cancer has made it clear to her how much she loves and values being in the wilderness.

"Time spent in nature continues to provide me with a rejuvenating strength and an opportunity to pause and focus on what is in front of me at that moment," Amy said.

When Amy is in the mountains, she feels connected to nature and a world that is greater than herself. Through this feeling of relative human

insignificance, she is continually gaining strength and insight into her personal life.

Six months after completing chemotherapy, this exact feeling inspired Amy to join the Breast Cancer Fund's Climb Against the Odds. The 29-member group composed of both cancer survivors and supporters climbed Mt. Shasta in northern California at the end of June in an effort to raise money for breast cancer research.

"The opportunity provided me with the chance to focus on something I love doing," Amy said. "Rather than focus on what I have lost, it has allowed me to thrive and focus on building my

*"Rather than focus on what I have lost, it has allowed me to thrive and focus on building my body and spend time in the mountains."*

body and spend time in the mountains." Amy was able to raise over \$11,000 for her cause and trained five days per week in preparation.

"Amy worked with a friend and personal trainer on her strength and conditioning," Jeff said. "We've gone on lots of hikes in our neighborhood; we have a nice high point behind our house that takes us about an hour to summit. And we eat a lot of ice cream."

While the climb itself was important to Amy, she tried to stay focused on the deeper meaning behind it all.

"It is so much more than the few days spent on the slopes of Mt. Shasta," Amy said. "It is about joining others to celebrate what we have accomplished, to honor those we love who are fighting this disease, and to remember those who we have lost."

Amy, along with 20 other climbers, successfully summited 14,162-foot Mt. Shasta on June 24, 2009. After a night of rest, the group celebrated their success of completing the climb and raising over \$450,000 with friends and family. For more information visit [www.breastcancerfund.org](http://www.breastcancerfund.org).



Courtesy of Amy McAbee



## ALUMNI PROFILE

# To Serve People and the Environment

## Taking the NOLS Mission to Capitol Hill

BY MEREDITH HAAS, FORMER NOLS WRITER/EDITOR

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution in America, we have prospered by technological advances using fossil fuels and natural resources to build better transportation and communication systems, homes, and even food. A consequence of these advances, however, is presently one of the hottest topics of debate—global climate change. Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee are at the forefront of new legislation that directly addresses the issues of national energy policy, resource management, and energy needs.

NOLS grad Phil Barnett oversees and manages 80 staff members working to pass new energy policy in the United States. “The Committee has the responsibility to craft energy legislation that will create new clean energy jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and cap carbon emissions to address global warming,” he said. “My job is to help Chairman [Henry A.] Waxman develop proposals that can win broad support in Congress.”

Greg Dotson, an attorney by training, is currently working with Phil to pass global warming legislation. “We’re trying to build consensus for action because there is no binding legislation to address global warming,” he said. “We have good clean air laws but they don’t address global warming well. We need to adopt a domestic law, which will be important to bring to the international negotiations.”

One piece of legislation that Phil and Greg are currently working on, and one that’s generating a lot of attention, is the Waxman-Markey Bill, formally known as the American Clean Energy and Security Act. Released by Chairman Waxman and Edward J. Markey of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee in May 2009, the bill is aimed at reducing U.S. greenhouse emissions by over 80 percent by 2050.

“We’re trying to advance legislation that moves the country toward a clean energy future and economy,” said Greg. “We’re optimistic about the opportunity to be successful.”

One of the challenges, Phil says, is explaining to the public why this piece of legislation is important,



Former NOLS instructors Phil Barnett (left) and Greg Dotson (right) work for the U.S. House of Representatives on Capitol Hill.



especially when attention is primarily focused on the economy. “When unemployment is high and major companies are going bankrupt, attention is naturally focused on restoring our economic growth,” he said. “Both energy and health legislation are key elements of the President’s plan for revitalizing our economy.” Facing these challenges and working with an array of people from different backgrounds and agendas requires certain skill sets—skill sets that Phil and Greg attribute much to their time at NOLS.

“One lesson I took away from NOLS is that you can often make better decisions by carefully framing the question, and then drawing on your fellow team members’ experiences and expertise to find the best an-

***“The Committee has the responsibility to craft energy legislation that will create new clean energy jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and cap carbon emissions to address global warming.”***

swer,” said Greg. “My NOLS experience also affirmed for me my ability to tough it out when necessary in order to be successful at the end of the day.” This kind of leadership has earned Greg recognition as one of the top ten energy staff members on Capitol Hill.

“NOLS has helped me become a much better communicator,” said Phil. “In my role it’s important to listen and make well-informed, timely decisions because things move quickly in Congress.”

Prior to their current positions, Phil and Greg’s professional ties began at NOLS. Having their first NOLS experiences separated by more than a decade, both agree that their experience is a large part of their motivation and inspiration that led them down similar paths.

“NOLS has had an enormous impact on my values and aspirations. The school taught me a love of the outdoors, which led me to a career in environmental law,” said Phil.

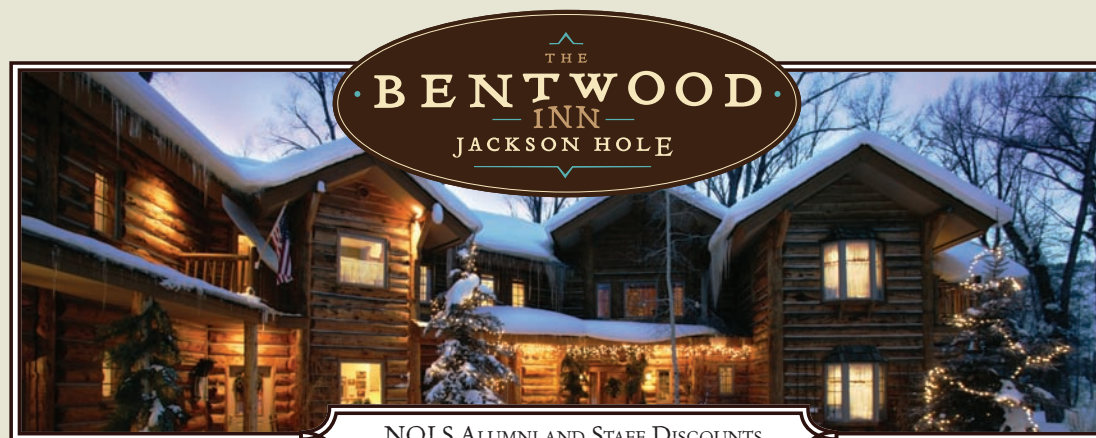
“The decision to study environmental law started on my student course,” Greg said. “I remember the feeling of being in areas that hadn’t been degraded and thinking they should be protected.”

Phil and Greg met in Wyoming during NOLS’ 23rd anniversary in 1988 when Phil was a board member and Greg an instructor. Knowing Greg’s background and similar interests, Phil contacted Greg when an environmental attorney position opened and, for the most part, the rest is history.

When Phil and Greg are on the Hill campaigning for better energy policies and protecting the environment, they are demonstrating the true NOLS qualities of wilderness ethics and leadership, living examples of the outcomes of the NOLS mission. Phil and Greg serve people and the environment. We couldn’t ask for more.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee please visit <http://energycommerce.house.gov>.

LUXURY RIGHT IN THE HEART OF THE TETONS



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Hey NOLS alumni and staff! Stay with us in one of our deluxe rooms with jetted tub, personal fireplace and our “heartly and sumptuous” breakfast with a wine and cheese reception nightly. Mention you’re a NOLS grad or staffer when you book and receive a 15% discount (some restrictions apply). Details online: [WWW.BENTWOODINN.COM](http://WWW.BENTWOODINN.COM) or (307) 739-1411

### WILDERNESS QUIZ

**Answer: A** (question on page 5)

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 combines 170 different bills that will place protection on millions of acres of wilderness, safeguard more than 1,000 miles of rivers, enlarge the national trail system, and keep habitat and recreational areas safe from extractive industry.





# NASA & NOLS

## EXPEDITION SKILLS FOR THE FINAL FRONTIER

BY RACHEL HARRIS

**A**stronaut Dan Tani sat in his kayak with his field of vision filled by the enormous face of an Alaska tidewater glacier. A few tour boats had passed by earlier that morning as his NOLS course navigated along the coast of Prince William Sound, but now they were experiencing something those tourists would not. “My arms got me to this place,” Tani thought. “I am honored to experience this place in this way.”

The reverie didn’t have a chance to last long as the group realized they needed to move on to camp. A 12- to 14-mile day already under their belts, the group was looking forward to dinner and a good night’s sleep followed by a rest day. What they didn’t expect was that they would have to double that mileage before they would have the chance to relax.

As the pod of kayaks arrived at the planned campsite in a steady rain, their spirits sunk. The area was a huge bog, a fragile ecosystem not conducive to camping.

Drawing on the leadership skills they’d been learning since the beginning of the course, the group now had to make a decision as the long Alaska summer day crept into evening. Although there was plenty of light by which to keep paddling, the group had hoped to get off the water soon.

“At the time, it was easy to moan and groan about it, but we just needed to make a decision,” Tani remembers. “We ended up paddling 22 to 24 miles in all that day as we backtracked to one of our original campsites. We almost didn’t think it was possible.”

After scouting four other “no go” campsites it was late when the group arrived, tired and wet, to set up camp, cook, and debrief. It had been a tough day, with little going as originally planned except the forecast for persistent precipitation, yet the group handled the adverse and uncertain conditions competently and gracefully.

“I just remember laughing a lot,” Tani said. “Everyone was grumbling, but we had so much fun because we all knew we were in it together. We all knew the leaders of

the day were doing the best they could. In the end, we got to our destination safely and had a ton of fun.”

And it was a good thing they did work so well as a team. This particular NOLS course had a specific objective on their sea kayaking course. This group of men and women was part of a NASA shuttle crew that was sent on the expedition to develop leadership and teamwork skills in preparation for an upcoming space shuttle mission, STS-120.

### PARTNERSHIP WITH PURPOSE

Astronauts exploring space are on the ultimate wilderness expedition. The fundamental skills learned on a NOLS course—expedition behavior, planning, decision-making, wilderness medicine, communication, cooking, self care, team care, leadership, and followership—are all very applicable, and essential, to space travel and to a high-functioning crew of astronauts.

“The NOLS curriculum is a great starting point, a foundation on which to build the space flight elements,” said John Grunsfeld, NASA astronaut and four-time NOLS grad. “I’ve seen my colleagues who have been through our NOLS programs at NASA apply the NOLS lessons during training and spaceflight. It has been a winning combination.”

The NOLS-NASA relationship has its roots in 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down. NASA sought to forge a partnership with the former Soviet Union in order to send American astronauts to the Russian Mir Space Station, forming the first extended space-stay program for American astronauts. Incidentally, “Mir” is Russian for “peace.”

“It’s different to go on long expeditions than on shorter missions,” NOLS Director for Leadership John Kanengieter said. “Originally NASA was looking at another organization to train NASA astronauts for these types of expeditions, but then astronaut John Grunsfeld told them to check out NOLS. So we submitted a proposal and ran

a pilot program in 1999. It was a success and now NOLS has [run 30 courses and] trained over 90 percent of NASA astronauts.”

The NOLS curriculum for NASA does not differ significantly from regular course curriculum, but does place a greater emphasis on leadership skills such as communication skills and tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, and less of an emphasis on outdoor skills and environmental studies.

“Team building is really important for shorter shuttle flights,” Tani says. “NASA uses NOLS as a means to teach employees about themselves and what a team is. The crew that took me on my space station mission in 2007

**“I’ve seen in my colleagues who have been through our NOLS programs at NASA apply the NOLS lessons during training and spaceflight. It has been a winning combination.”**

had done a course together as well, and we all became fast friends. We still have stories that we share to this day.”

The NOLS curriculum on the NASA Leadership Expeditions is designed to complement the impressive amount of mission training the astronauts have prior to the course. NOLS’ model of expeditionary leadership is relevant to any team functioning in complex and dynamic situations. “This kind of training is important because we are not just talking theory, but giving the astronauts a chance to get out there as a team, to see how they interact and work together under stress and fatigue,” Kanengieter said.

Astronauts John Grunsfeld and Dan Tani are prime





**Top:** The STS-120 crew during a long day of paddling and route-finding in Alaska on a NOLS Leadership Expedition in 2006. **Middle:** NASA's NOLS grads, and a few additional crew members, enjoy life without gravity. **Bottom:** NASA astronaut and two-time NOLS grad Scott Parazynski, along with the rest of the STS-120 crew, worked tirelessly to repair the International Space Station solar panels. "For most people involved, it was the technical highlight of their careers," said astronaut Dan Tani.

# IER

examples of those who transfer NOLS skills to new situations and experiences. Grunsfeld, in particular, knows what it is like to deal with adversity and uncertainty. With countless space flights under his belt, he is no stranger to exploring the unknown.

"I've always longed to go explore the wilderness," Grunsfeld said. "In middle school I began to go on Sierra Club outings with a friend of the family and rock climbing on the cliffs at Devil's Lake, Wisconsin. I vicariously enjoyed the exploits of 'real' explorers in the pages of *National Geographic* and the films of Jacques Cousteau and others, including the astronauts."

When Grunsfeld was a kid he would sketch rockets and mountains in the margins of his notebooks, thinking he might like to be an explorer of the wilderness, here on Earth and beyond. "It was a kid's dream at a time when the U.S. was sending people to space for the first time. As a young boy, I played astronaut because they were the heroes of that time."

Now he has flown missions to study stars using multi-million dollar Space Shuttle telescopes, visited the International Space Station, and upgraded the Hubble Space Telescope on three different missions. He says that he still uses the leadership skills he learned on his NOLS courses, as well as the technical skills.

"NOLS taught me that keeping current in leadership and technical skills is a continuous learning challenge. My first NOLS course gave me the confidence to approach new endeavors with the basic tools to succeed in working with other like-minded explorers."

When dealing with sticky situations in space, Grunsfeld says he often treats the problem as he would any problem in the wilderness. "I have a very consistent approach to spaceflight and my expeditions in the outdoors," Grunsfeld said. "I've applied the lessons learned in both directions."

Tani has been on two NOLS Leadership Expeditions,

a backpacking course in the canyons of Utah in addition to the sea kayaking course in Alaska.

"I didn't know anything about NOLS before I went on my first course in 1999," Tani said. "A 10-day backpacking expedition seemed fun, but I had never really been on a trip like that. I was 40 and had never heard of followership. I also didn't have many expectations for the academic part of the course. Overall, it was physically exhilarating and helped me better understand the idea of teamwork. The experience was invaluable."

## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Just three months after their NOLS sea kayaking course in Alaska, the crew that Dan Tani was a part of was able to put that invaluable experience to the test.

Ready to tackle any last-minute emergencies that could arise on their International Space Station mission, the crew of engineers was called into action suddenly when one of the solar wings that powers the International Space Station tore while being deployed.

"During the unfurling, the sun went behind the arrays, making it very difficult to watch," Tani said. "At that very moment, the guide wires on the array snagged and became tangled." By the time the crew stopped the panel from unfurling, there was a fresh two and a half-foot hole on the gleaming gold surface of the \$5.6 million panel.

"This was a very serious problem," Tani said. "The arrays needed to be fully deployed for them to be rotated to point them to the sun so that they can produce the maximum power [for the space station]."

Hundreds of NASA engineers shifted into high gear, throwing the original flight plan out the window and working to figure out a safe way for the astronauts to repair the solar array.

It sounds like a routine repair, but there was a tricky twist. The solar panels could not be turned off and were generating 120 volts of electricity while NASA astronaut

and fellow NOLS grad Scott Parazynski worked to repair the panels while hooked to the end of a 90-foot arm and boom with an extension. If Parazynski were shocked during repairs, he would be over half an hour from medical help.

In true NOLS style, the team rallied to deal with the situation at hand, drawing on the leadership skills they learned on their course. Using wire and pieces of aluminum along with homemade tools, Parazynski and the rest of the crew successfully repaired the panel joint and surface damage.

"This repair was the type of activity that would take over a year to design and would typically require over a year of crew training—and we did it with three days of procedure development and zero crew training," Tani said. "The trust between the ground and the crew—and among the crew—was critical."

The astronauts had spent countless hours practicing planned space walks safely on the ground prior to the launch, but were not trained to deal with this specific situation. Instead of being overwhelmed, the crew looked at the challenge as an adventure.

"It was pretty stressful, but there was that same sense as on our NOLS course that we were doing it together," Tani said. "We were laughing and joking the whole time. That difficult day [in Alaska] became one of the strongest threads in the fabric of our relationship. Having the memory of that day helped."

*All solar panel repair details are from [www.abcnews/go.com](http://www.abcnews/go.com), [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com), [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov), and the NASA Office of Communications and Public Affairs.*

*NOLS Professional Training offers innovative, customized NOLS courses for businesses and organizations, focusing on any aspect of the NOLS curriculum—leadership, technical skills, risk management, or environmental studies. For more information on NOLS Professional Training or the NASA program, please call (800) 710-NOLS ext. 3.*



**Q & A**

Courtesy of Marco Johnson

## Who's Counting?

### Q&A with Marco Johnson, Senior NOLS Field Instructor

BY LIBBY GADBOIS, NOLS ALUMNI INTERN

At NOLS, field experience is measured in weeks, not nights. But if you were to count by nights, senior field instructor Marco Johnson would have a whopping 4,200 spent under the stars. That's 600 weeks, an honor that earned Marco NOLS' Staff Award in 1995 and the Master of Outdoor Education award (at 400 weeks) in 2001. Marco has touched the lives of innumerable NOLS students and doesn't show any signs of stopping. Here are the reasons why.

#### What first inspired you to get involved with NOLS?

I was a 1981 Spring Semester in the Rockies student and, like most NOLS students will tell you, the course was a life-changing event. I worked in outdoor education honing my skills for four years before applying to my Instructors Course. I've been working for NOLS ever since.

#### What do you do when you're not in the field with NOLS?

I take my own trips—climbing, sea kayaking, or mountaineering. I train for and run ultra marathons.

I also like to do house projects because it means I'm at home in Lander, which doesn't happen a lot.

#### You've also work with NOLS' Wilderness Medicine Institute as an instructor—do you think learning first aid skills affects students' ownership and responsibility for each other on course?

Definitely. WMI graduates take ownership in dealing with their own and others' medical issues. As an instructor, I have a much greater comfort level with students who have a WFA or WFR than those who don't.

#### What role should NOLS play in the protection and preservation of our wilderness classrooms?

I think NOLS' role in the protection of wilderness areas is multi-faceted. NOLS uses the land and wilderness areas in question, we have a legitimate voice with which to go to lawmakers. We have reason for saying how we feel and why we feel that way, and NOLS' reputation gives us the credibility to be taken seriously. We also bring students into these areas and provide them with the knowledge and experience to go out and advocate for these areas on their own. Many of our students become the future decision makers and leaders.

#### Word is that the instructors will sometimes play pranks on each other in the field by throwing something extra in someone's pack. Have you ever participated?

The funniest thing anyone ever put in my pack was probably in Patagonia. A colleague put Vogue's fashion edition in my pack—it likely weighed three glossy pounds. (I left it in an outhouse.)

#### What would you say has been your most rewarding experience over the past 24 years?

When students come up to me and say, "Look what we can do ourselves."

#### What keeps you motivated to continue living and working in the wilderness with NOLS?

Working in education is the best job anyone could ever have, and I've always been incredibly passionate about the outdoors and experiential education. Most of all, though, what's kept me here are the people. An amazing group of people works for NOLS and I'm thrilled and proud to be a part of this community.

#### In what ways have you seen NOLS change? What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing NOLS in the future?

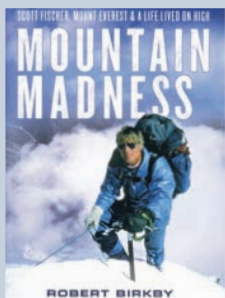
Most obviously, NOLS has grown. NOLS has also become more involved with public policy and earned respect on regional, national, and international levels. Our publications are referenced and known. The level of expertise and professionalism of our staff has also grown. We've put more effort and resources into systemizing what we teach. The leadership, climbing, sea kayaking, and whitewater curricula have had a positive impact on the whole experiential learning community. We're putting similar effort into our environmental science curriculum, which is quite exciting.

The biggest challenges facing NOLS are probably the preservation of our classrooms and our ability to deal with unpredictable economic climates. Thankfully, NOLS reacts well and has done an amazing job dealing with what's been thrown at us so far.

NOLS' biggest opportunity is to continue strengthening its position as a leader in wilderness education. The strength of our curriculum has made us an example for other outdoor programs. NOLS Professional Training and WMI also offer great opportunities for the school because they allow us to reach more people who have not done a traditional NOLS catalog course. This makes for a wonderful community that's expanding in incredible ways.

#### MARCO BY THE NUMBERS

Years as an instructor: **24**  
 Years as an EMT: **20**  
 Weeks in field with NOLS: **600** (More than any other NOLS instructor. That's over 11.5 years!)  
 Students taught: **1,777**  
 Weeks spent in a sea kayak: **225**  
 Weeks spent on feet: **375**  
 Courses worked: **131**  
 Most courses led in one year: **9**, including 2 semester courses  
 Miles run: 20 ultra-marathons, which is about **2,000 miles** (not including training miles!).  
 Bowls of mac-n-cheese eaten: **Too many!**  
 Bowls of hot cereal eaten: **None!**  
 Craziest thing he's done on a course: **Walked 50 miles in 34 hours, in plastic boots and with a full pack, for an apple pie.**

**BOOK REVIEW**

## Mountain Madness

### Scott Fischer, Mount Everest & A Life Lived On High

By Robert Birkby, © 2008 Citadel  
 ISBN 978-0806528762, \$16.95

REVIEW BY LIBBY GADBOIS, NOLS ALUMNI INTERN

NOLS has a laundry list of famous alumni—from John F Kennedy Jr. to CNN's Anderson Cooper—but few have reached such levels of inspiration and intrigue as one of NOLS' original students and instructors, Scott Fischer. While Scott may be known best by the wider public for his tragic death in the famous 1996 storm on Mount Everest, he is remembered by friends and family as a generous and warm-hearted mountain man, driven by his passion to climb to the greatest peaks in the world.

Robert Birkby, in the biography *Mountain Madness*, documents the early days and life of Scott Fischer leading up to, but not climaxing with, his final climb on Mount Everest in 1996. Birkby highlights Fischer's experiences with NOLS throughout the book, giving a detailed outline of his early climbing years and eagerness to learn. After graduating from high school Fischer was a proud NOLS instructor—spending summers in the Wind River Range of Wyoming teaching students his newfound passion to scale jagged rock to incredible heights.

Throughout the length of the book, Birkby does not emphasize Fischer's death up in the frozen sky of Everest or analyze his actions on that fateful day, but instead focuses on the beautiful nature of his spirit and the inspiring way he led his life. Birkby paints Scott's story with a brush stained with the sadness of losing him but with gratefulness of having known him so well.

*Mountain Madness* is a tribute to a man whose dreams kept him moving upward his whole life—a man who lived closer to the sky than many ever will. As Fischer once said, "You're either cruisin' or you're bummin'. Cruising's a lot more fun, so you might as well cruise."



FIELD NOTES

Long-Term  
Impacts  
of Outdoor  
Education  
*A NOLS and University  
of Utah Research  
Partnership*

BY MEREDITH HAAS, FORMER NOLS WRITER/EDITOR

All NOLS courses, regardless of course type or length, target six learning objectives for students: communication skills, leadership skills, small group behavior, judgment in the outdoors, outdoor living skills, and environmental awareness. But how do participants on NOLS courses apply these concepts or skills years after course completion? In 2002, NOLS partnered with the University of Utah to investigate this question as well as other factors in wilderness and adventure education: from how students apply their skills to their daily life to the effects of age and course types on learning transference.

The most current study aims to find out what NOLS graduates believe they learned in their experience that remains useful to them one to ten years after the course.

Conducted by PhD and associate professors Jim Sibthorp and Karen Paisley, NOLS instructor and PhD candidate Nate Furman, PhD candidate Scott Schumann, and NOLS curriculum manager John Gookin, this two-phased study sampled NOLS alumni from every course type from 1997 to 2006 in order to determine what students were learning, how they were learning, what lessons transferred beyond the course, and what the mechanism of transference was (e.g., student-peer interactions vs. student-instructor interactions.).

How and what a student learns depends on the complex interactions between participants, leaders, program elements, program goals, and educational settings and contexts. For example, variable weather and terrain conditions, in addition to living in a small group for extended periods of time, add new elements and stresses to the “classroom.”

How learned skills are applied after the course depends on individual lifestyles. “Someone who is involved in outdoor education may value the outdoor skills they learned on a course more than an attorney who may have a greater value for leadership skills in comparison because it depends on how relevant, or applicable, it is to your life,” said Furman, explaining the difference in responses of participants on an instructor’s course compared to other course types.

Based on the first phase of interviews from NOLS alumni who were asked what they learned from NOLS and what lessons were still being used or valued, learning transference from participation in wilderness education was broken down into several broad categories: group dynamics and development, self-systems, personal values, and wilderness skills. “Time can affect what is transferred,” said Sibthorp,

explaining that someone who had taken a course 10 years prior won’t recollect what they learned on a course as sharply as someone who had taken it only a year prior. “We wanted to see what was transferred and the longevity of that transference.”

Several themes identified under these categories included communicating effectively, working within a team, conflict management, self care, the ability to plan and organize, tolerance for adversity and self-confidence were identified under self-systems, in addition to changes in perspective, environmental ethics, and technical skills of backcountry living and traveling. Participants rated the importance and NOLS’ role in each learning area. For example, responses showed that while NOLS played a bigger role in teaching outdoor skills than self-confidence, participants felt that self-confidence was a more important value.

Ratings also reflected course types—semesters, adventure courses, instructor courses, 23-and-over

*How and what a student learns depends on the complex interactions between participants, leaders, program elements, program goals, and educational settings and contexts.*

courses, and classic monthlong courses. For example, “outdoor skills is a larger function of the 23-and-over and professional (instructor and outdoor educator) courses who are seeking to learn specific skills,” said Sibthorp. “It’s a function of age.”

This study found support for learning involving outdoor skills, changes in life perspective, appreciation for nature, self confidence, self-awareness,

group leadership, an ability to function effectively under difficult circumstances, and teamwork. Of these, an ability to function effectively under difficult circumstances, leadership, self-confidence and, to a lesser degree, teamwork were perceived to be the most valuable lessons in everyday life.

“What is most impressing is the impact instructors have,” said Paisley, noting that respondents attributed most of what they had learned to their instructors, largely due to their effectiveness in curriculum delivery and role modeling. “Instructors are an iconic piece of the course.”

The next phase of study is delving further into the mechanisms of transference. The study found that group dynamics, in addition to instructors, played a key role in learning transference. “We recognize the diversity of mechanisms involved, so we can’t say we’re only going to teach this in this way because it’s not going to reach everyone,” said Sibthorp. “We’ll be taking a closer look at the role of instructors and group dynamics in achieving student outcomes.”

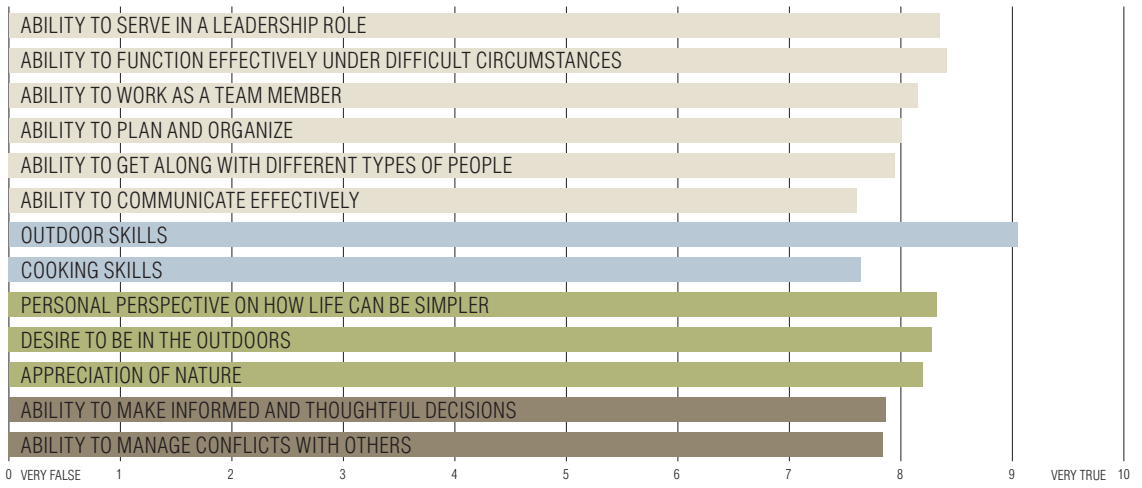
Full background and results of NOLS’ student outcomes research can be found here:

Sibthorp, J., Paisley, K., Furman, N., & Gookin, J. (2008) Long-term impacts attributed to participation in wilderness education: Preliminary findings from NOLS. *Research in Outdoor Education*, 9, 86-102.

Paisley, Karent, et.al. (March 2008). *Student learning in outdoor education: A case study from the National Outdoor Leadership School. Horizon: Newsletter of the Association for Experiential Education.* Journal of Experiential Education, Vol. 30, Issue 3. [http://www.aee.org/horizons/Practitioners\\_Corner.htm](http://www.aee.org/horizons/Practitioners_Corner.htm).

For further questions or comments, contact NOLS curriculum manager John Gookin at [john\\_gookin@nols.edu](mailto:john_gookin@nols.edu).

NOLS WAS CRITICAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY...



Based on typical reponses from alumni of wilderness, adventure, and semester courses. See the full study for complete results: Sibthorp, J., Paisley, K., Furman, N., & Gookin, J. (2008) Long-term impacts attributed to participation in wilderness education: Preliminary findings from NOLS. *Research in Outdoor Education*, 9, 86-102.. <http://www.outdooredcoalition.org/research08.htm>

MEDICINE QUIZ

Answer: B (question on page 4)

The treatment for envenomation is anti-venin, so the best field practice is evacuation and getting the patient to a hospital. Treatments trying to remove venom (e.g., using suction); sequester venom in the extremities (e.g., using ice, constricting bands, or tourniquets); or deactivate venom (e.g., using ice, electrical shock, or meat tenderizer) have never been shown to be effective and may harm the patient.



RECIPE BOX

# Field Tested, Grad Approved *Cheesy Solution for Leftover Fish-Fry Batter*

BY RACHEL HARRIS AND LIBBY GADBOIS

NOLS grads Alexander Waters and Edward Hill sent us this recipe after their Wind River Wilderness course and we thought it looked like the perfect backcountry power food. The recipe evolved when their cook group had leftover batter after a fish fry. To avoid wasting the extra, they added some flour and balled it up into their first delicious Goopy Cheesy Hushpuppies batch.

When we asked them if they repeated the recipe after their initial trial, Alexander responded, “Heck yeah we did! Every time we had fish, we had to bust out the hushpuppy recipe, and with Edward being a master fisherman, fish made a repeat appearance on our mountaintop menu.”

*Got a great backcountry recipe? Send it to leader@nols.edu along with your name, NOLS course, and where the recipe was created. If your recipe is chosen, you'll get a copy of the NOLS Cookery!*

## Goopy Cheesy Hushpuppies (serves 2 to 3)

### Ingredients:

1 part cornmeal  
1 part white flour  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp pepper  
1 tsp allspice  
1 Tbs butter  
1 cup water  
¼ block cheese  
oil for frying

**Directions:** Mix all dry ingredients in mixing bowl. Add water slowly, mixing dough into an almost-sticky consistency. Form dough into golf-ball sized balls, rolling between palms of hands.

Cut cheese into squares small enough to fit into dough balls. Insert cheese squares into dough balls, rolling so no cheese is visible from outside of ball, and flattening into small, but thick, pancake shapes.

Heat butter and oil in fry pan. Fry for approximately 5 minutes on each side, until dough is flakey and golden brown. Season with salt and pepper.

**Variation:** To spice up the dough you may consider experimenting with garlic salt, tomato base and oregano or basil, jalapeño bits, or chili powder!



Above: Tested and approved by NOLS HQ Interns Libby Gadbois and Rachel Harris. Left: (Top) Ingredients prepped and ready for assembly. (Bottom) Dough and cheese, when combined, provide a hearty meal worthy of a second batch.

GEAR ROOM

# Dispatch From NOLS Alaska *Lightweight Gear For the Masses*

BY JASON CARMICHAEL, NOLS ALASKA EQUIPMENT ROOM MANAGER

In a time when everything you hear in the gear world is “lightweight this” or “lightweight that,” how do you weed through all the advertisements and the rumors to find the right piece of gear that is not only lightweight, but also comfortable and able to withstand the harsh environments that we recreate in? Hopefully we can shed some light on two of the more important pieces of gear in your arsenal that can accomplish just that: tents and backpacks.

Your shelter might very well be the most important piece of gear you have. It has to protect you from snow, wind, rain, and sun, and it has to do it day in and day out. For those harsher environments, Swedish tent maker Hilleberg has a few options that are not only durable and roomy, but also considerably lighter than most of their counterparts. The Nammatj 3 (\$615 SRP) weighs only 5.7 pounds, and the extreme lightweight version, the Nallo 3 (\$595 SRP) weighs a mere 4.6 pounds. The Hilleberg website suggests the Nallo Ultralight line of tents for “those



The Nallo 3 ultralight tent made by Hilleberg is the ultimate lightweight tent weighing in at a mere 4.6 pounds.

needing the lightest weight tents that still offer all-season, all weather functionality. This includes wilderness photographers, professional climbers, hunters, and other adventurers who have to carry large amounts of gear.” The Nammatj line is designed with a smaller footprint and is “immensely popular with extreme users, such as polar travelers looking to save weight, mountaineers doing remote routes in the highest ranges, professional guides, and military Special Forces teams.”

With a state of the art durable lightweight tent, we will also need a pack to carry it in that lives up to the same standards. Two new packs on the market that are up to snuff are the Osprey Escalante and the GoLite Odyssey (\$200 SRP). The Escalante was designed with programs like NOLS in mind, and is currently only available to such programs. They have minimized the extras and created a simple, comfortable pack that weighs only 5.5 lbs in the 105-liter

size. The Odyssey takes things even further. While you have to give up a little bit of comfort and durability, you still get a 90-liter pack that weighs just 3.5 pounds.

So what does all this mean? It means that we have to break tradition and get with the times. With the new technologies and innovations in the outdoor gear world, we can go farther and faster than we ever have, and we can do it comfortably and without feeling helplessly tired at the end of the day. By cutting the weight of two of the biggest items on your camping gear list, the tent and the backpack, you can go a long way toward light and fast.

*Write to leader@nols.edu and share your gear thoughts, questions, and opinions. If it ends up in print, we'll hook you up with a NOLS t-shirt or hat.*



FIELD NOTES

# A Benchmark for Lifetime Fitness

## Three Easy Steps Post NOLS

BY DAVID T. ALLEN, M.D., NOLS ADVISORY COUNCIL, AND CHAD HENDERSON, FORMER CO-CHAIR, NOLS ADVISORY COUNCIL

NOLS courses provide an incredible opportunity for self-discovery and personal enrichment. Although most of the emphasis is placed on leadership and technical skills, for many NOLS

students, the completion of their course defines a peak of physical fitness and nutritional health. With considered choices a NOLS experience can provide valuable insights and baseline for a lifetime of health and fitness.

One way to capitalize on an expedition's weeks of backcountry training is to take a few simple, specific personal measurements that can serve as lifetime fitness benchmarks.

How do you know if you are physically fit? No one can tell by just appearance alone; you have to test your level of fitness to know your status. The ultimate form of cardiovascular testing may be the oxygen-uptake treadmill stress test, but there are many much less expensive options to test your level of fitness. All of these tests require some form of measured exercise.

The first step is to measure yourself at the completion of your NOLS course and twice yearly from then on. Measure:

- Height and weight
- Blood pressure
- Resting pulse
- Personal best time to walk or run a mile

Then compare your walk/run time with the table at right. You'll easily see how your fitness compares with age bracket norms. We know that most of us spend the first 25-30 years of our lives believing that we are immortal, and therefore we never worry about health status. But when fitness is measured, most people peak in performance between ages 19 and 25, and then almost all begin to slip down the slope of physical decay before reaching the age of 30!

The second step is to make lifestyle changes as necessary to achieve the goals that you have established. Your NOLS expedition may have improved your measurements—so incorporate changes to keep that hard-earned fitness. With a little attention to an exercise routine that includes 45–60 minutes of sweat at least 4 or 5 days a week we can maintain ourselves at remarkably good levels of fitness for a lifetime.

Step three is to measure your status on these key parameters at least twice a year at a regular interval. Consistent measurement will help keep your numbers from creeping and help to build and maintain healthy exercise behaviors that many people acquire on their NOLS expedition.

If we take the opposite pathway and ignore our health status—following the crowd in self-destructive lifestyle choices of under-exercising and over-eating—we will accelerate our rate of decay. Most individuals are not even aware of the physical performance capacity that they are losing, and that is why it is so important to know what to measure and how to maintain those measurements. Of course, the other option is just keep taking NOLS courses.

DR. DAVE'S SURVIVAL TABLE\*

To foster a sense of personal accomplishment, animal names are used for each level of fitness—we can all aspire to be the fastest animal possible! The numbers are minutes per mile at your best walk/run pace.

	Age:	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Cheetah	male	6	6.3	6.3	6.7	7	7.5
	female	7	7.5	7.5	8	8.6	9
Impala	male	6.7	7	7	7.5	8	8.6
	female	8	8.6	8.6	9	9	10
Thoroughbred	male	7	7.5	8	8	8.6	9
	female	8.6	9	9	10	11	11
Grizzly Bear	male	8	8	8.6	8.6	9	10
	female	9	10	11	11	12	13.3
Greyhound	male	9	9	9	10	11	12
	female	11	11	12	13.3	13.3	15
Wolf	male	9	10	11	11	12	13.3
	female	12	13.3	13.3	15	15	17
Fox	male	10	11	12	12	13.3	15
	female	13.3	15	15	17	17	20
Raccoon	male	11	12	13.3	13.3	15	17
	female	15	17	17	20	20	24
Tortoise	male	13.3	25	17	17	20	24
	female	20	24	24	30	30	40

\*adapted with permission from the non-profit Cooper Institute, Dallas, Texas

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Contact the NOLS Alumni office via telephone (800-332-4280) or email ([alumni@nols.edu](mailto:alumni@nols.edu)) to find contact information for any of your classmates or to submit your information for the next issue of *The Leader*.

**GRADS FROM THE '70S****Helene Verin, WRW 08/03/70**

Helene recently published a book titled *Beth Levine Shoes*. Check it out!

**Willy (SIC 05/26/71) & Tina Cunningham (MSC 04/11/74, SIC 05/06/74)**

Willy and Tina will be expecting their third grandchild this coming January. Willy works in the NOLS Alumni department at the NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming, and Tina works in NOLS' Noble Hotel kitchen next door.

**Alice McCauley, ADV 07/20/71**

After viewing a NOLS TV show, Alice McCauley attended a course in the Wind River mountain range the summer of 1971. Until the first day of the course she had never worn hiking boots, never lifted a backpack, and never slept in a tent. NOLS remains in her memory one of the best opportunities she has ever had.

**GRADS FROM THE '80S****Katrina Reed Lande, FSR-2 09/03/86**

Katrina is now married with two daughters and is currently training her Labrador to be a therapy dog.

**Bill Green, AKM 06/23/89, DEN 06/09/93**

"Wild" Bill Green is now married with three kids. He is currently raising chickens and a huge tortoise in Alaska and growing his own veggies. Bill also founded the "World Manliness Headquarters."

**GRADS FROM THE '90S****Brian Reynolds, AKM 05/12/90**

Brian is hoping to make a Grand Teton Traverse in the future and then possibly try Denali.

**Kevin Ewing, NCM 07/18/90**

Kevin has continued his environmental law career and loves to go outside with his wife and two kids.

**Jordan Summers, OEC 08/06/90**

Jordan is currently writing a guidebook on trails around the Lake Tahoe region that will be out this fall. He will also be hiking the John Muir Trail from Yosemite to Whitney this September.

**Geoff Richardson, SSB 01/05/93**

Geoff has backpacked in Torres del Paine, Chile, backcountry skied in Colorado, trained for mountain bike race season in Winter Park, Colorado, and is currently planning trips to the Denali and Annapurna region on Nepal.

**John Shaw, SSW 02/04/97**

John is currently an assistant professor of management at Mississippi State University.

**GRADS FROM THE '00S****Kate (Poulter) Rosok, FSR-2 08/21/00**

Kate just finished her first year of teaching Earth Science and is currently living in Minneapolis.

**Phil Magistro, JSPA-2 01/30/04**

Phil just finished a five-day circumnavigation of Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands, which he said was "simply amazing!"

**Gerard Ganey, AKM 05/12/04, WOE 01/11/09**

Gerard is guiding for a therapeutic wilderness program. He recently returned to Alaska for the first time since his course to packraft in the Talkeentnas.

**Kate Tande, WSW 09/12/04**

Kate is living in Walker, Minnesota with her husband Ben. They have a two-year-old boy named Joe and are the proud parents of six new sled dogs that they look forward to running this winter.

**Rachel Harris, IDAS 07/08/06, AKX 06/14/07**

Rachel is currently the NOLS Publications intern at the NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming. She will be headed to Barcelona this fall to study journalism, oceanography, and Spanish. Rachel will return to Colorado College to finish up her last year and a half of college after her time abroad.

**Sam Chambers, FSR-9 09/11/06**

Sam is currently living in Breckenridge, Colorado, competing in snowboarding competitions and riding gnarly powder and big mountains as much as possible. Shred, Sam!

**Louis Tenebruso, FSBO 10/08/07**

Louis is currently teaching sailing and kayaking skills at Hooper Sailing Club in Madison, Wisconsin. Aye aye, Captain Louis.

**Libby Gadbois, FSBO 10/08/07**

Libby is currently the NOLS Alumni intern at the NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming. She'll be leaving late this August to head to Fiji where she will be doing anthropology field work and learning to surf. Hang ten, Lib!

**Liz Godwin, AKM 07/12/07, GAN 07/28/08**

Liz has been a skydiver for over a decade, and a few months after her first NOLS course she made the U.S. Parachute Team! She will be competing this July in the World Games. Congrats Liz!

**Andrew Davis, SSR-3 02/13/08**

Andrew is currently working for The North Face and rock climbing every week. He will be starting school at The Evergreen State College for Environmental Policy and Studies in the fall.

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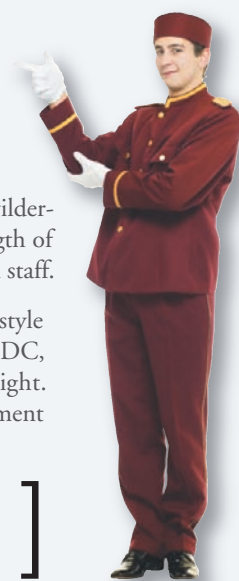
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## NEW ADDITIONS

**Brendan (SIC 05/28/98) & Lindsey Madden (PWS 07/03/96)**

Brendan and Lindsey welcomed a 6 lb, 13 oz baby girl named Clare Lucy into the world on May 2. The blue-eyed, dark-haired go-getter is tentatively planning to take her instructor course in the spring of 2033.

## IN REMEMBRANCE

**Cindy Feldman Garaj, FSR-1 09/10/90**

Cindy passed away this past May and wanted contributions to be made in her memory to NOLS or to the Cindy Feldman Garaj Memorial Fund for the benefit of her children's education.

## MARRIAGES

**John Kemp (SIC 06/09/88) and Aimee Collins, NOLS in-town staff**

Aimee and John tied the knot this summer on May 31 in Colt State Park in Bristol, Rhode Island. The happy couple will be settling in Lander, where they met in 2005 when Aimee was a Rocky Mountain intern.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Mollie Chapman, WSPS 01/18/08**

After reading the story, "NOLS is in the air...or is that love?" in the Spring 2009 issue, I thought I would write to share my story. In January 2008 I flew to Patagonia for the NOLS Sea Kayaking

course, where I ended up meeting my fiance, Claude. We too were able to learn things we wouldn't have seen in an urban setting. Seeing him handle difficult situations with a clear head and a kind heart made quite an impression on me.

We had some unique challenges though: I was living and working in California and Claude was taking a sabbatical before returning to his native Switzerland. Fresh off the NOLS course, we had the perspective, tranquility, and courage to follow our hearts.

After two months of emails and Skype, Claude came to California to visit me. We spent many weekends in the mountains and several months later I had a plane ticket to Switzerland. Now I am living in Switzerland with him and we are planning our wedding for this summer in California and our honeymoon next winter in Patagonia. We can definitely say that our NOLS course changed our lives.

**Lindsey Martin, FSB 09/30/03**

I love the NOLS network...I also ended up marrying a guy I met on my NOLS trip and we just celebrated our second anniversary. He is going into Environmental Law due in large part to his experience with NOLS. Our trip was definitely life-changing!



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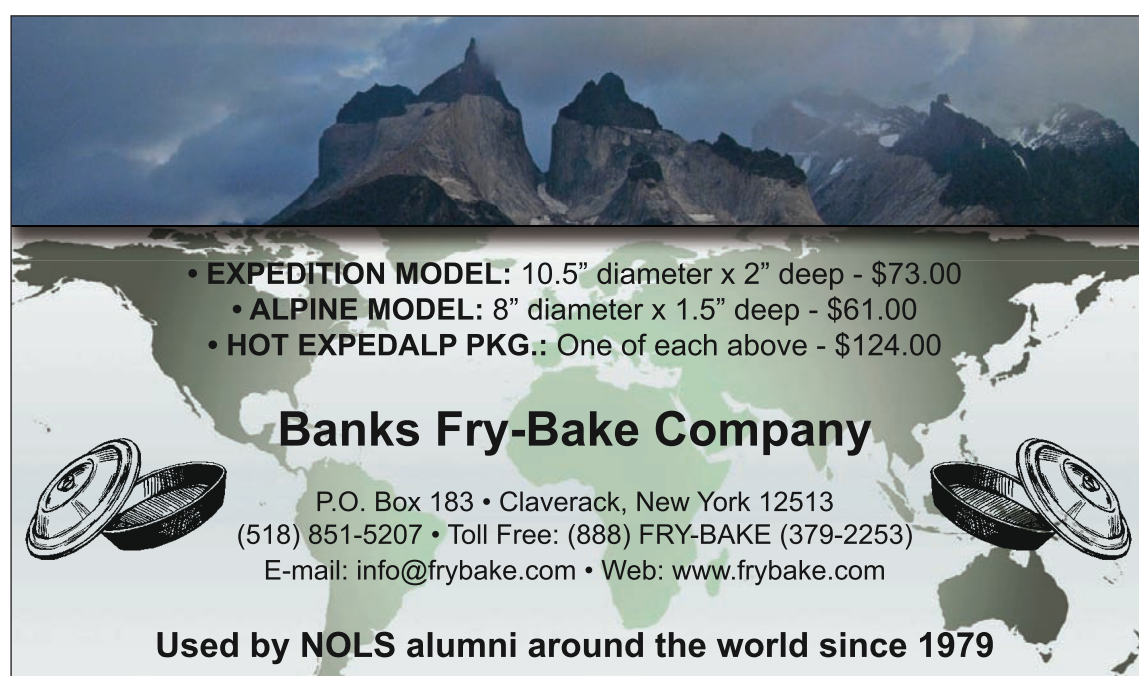
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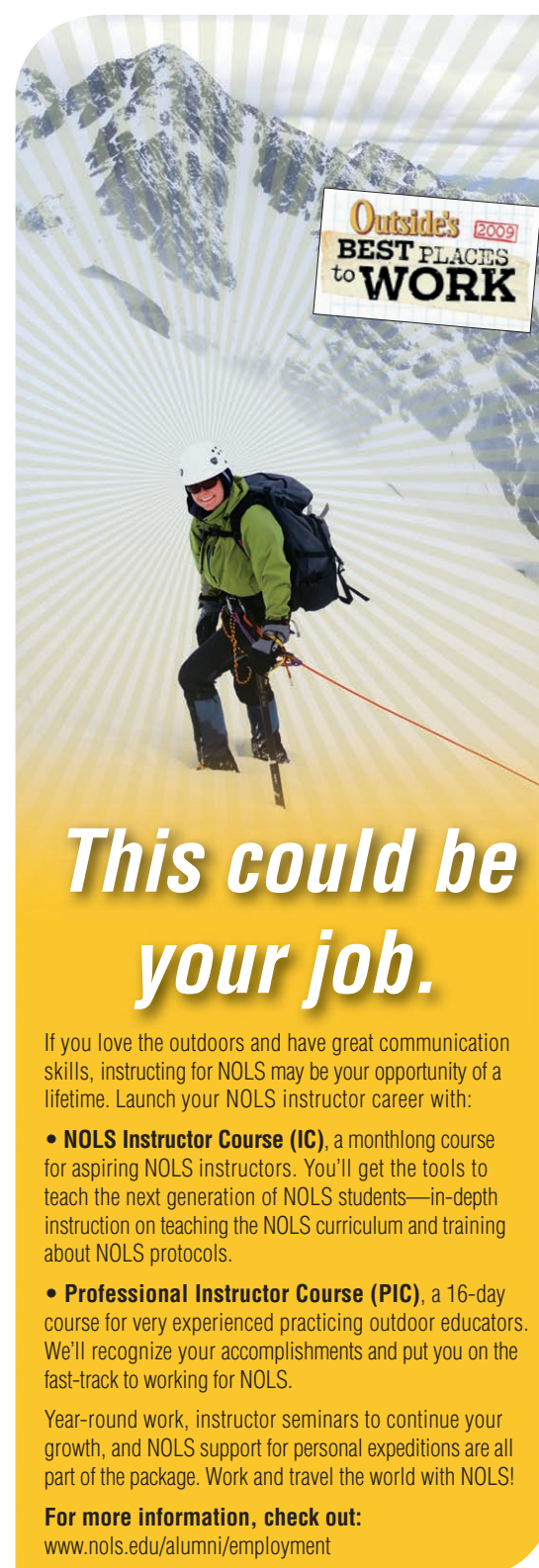


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**ALUMNI HAPPENINGS****Alumni Trips**

A month may be too much to ask from the boss, so the NOLS Alumni office offers shorter backcountry trips that are specifically designed for our alumni. We encourage our grads to bring family and friends along on these weeklong expeditions to reconnect with the school and introduce others to their NOLS experience. These trips have the same top-quality instructors but the atmosphere is a little more relaxed. Customized trips are also available. Call us to design your dream adventure.

**FISH & PHOTO**

**August 10–16, 2009 | Cost: \$1,275**

We've combined three great educational elements into one outstanding trip—we'll practice (or learn) fly-fishing, add some professional photo instruction to improve your travel photography, and we'll tap llamas to help carry the gear. All in one of the country's most scenic and trout-filled mountain ranges. We'll work together to create a narrative of our trip through photography.

**ALUMNI SERVICE**

**August 16–22, 2009 | Cost: \$500, subsidized by NOLS!**

It's a unique time in the country and we've teed up a unique trip to match. This alumni trip focuses on service—building and repairing trails, campsites, and other backcountry infrastructure. This trip isn't all work, though. We'll make time for fly-fishing and perhaps even a walk-up peak ascent.

**ALASKA SEA KAYAKING**

**August 16–22, 2009 | Cost: \$1,375**

Prince William Sound offers spectacular views of booming tidewater glaciers and abundant wildlife. This 7-day trip focuses on basic sea kayaking and coastal camping skills.

**BAJA SEA KAYAKING & WHALE WATCHING**

**February 6–15, 2010 | Cost: \$1,585**

Get a break from the long winter, no matter what skill level, and join us paddling along some of the most beautiful and inaccessible beaches on the Sea of Cortez in Baja California. We'll teach new skills and polish existing techniques in a convivial, adult-paced coastal desert environment. Explore with us on this trip that includes sea kayaking on the Sea of Cortez and whale watching on Laguna San Ignacio.

**ROCK CLIMBING AT COCHISE STRONGHOLD, ARIZONA**

**February 27–March 5, 2010 | Cost: \$1,430**

If stunning granite crags get your pulse racing, consider attending our rock camp at Cochise Stronghold in southern Arizona. It's the perfect sunny classroom and playground for NOLS alumni, friends, and family. To maximize climbing time, we'll base in a rustic area campground. Tailored for climbers of all experience levels, this seven-day camp focuses on technical skills.

**Upcoming Reunions**

Reunions are a great way to reconnect with NOLS and network with alumni in your area. Want to find a climbing or paddling partner? This is the place to do it. Join us, check out a great presentation, enjoy some refreshments, and maybe even score some sweet gear in our raffle. NOLS and WMI grads, friends, family, and everyone interested in the school are welcome.

**OCTOBER 15, NEW YORK | PATAGONIA SOHO**

See images from NOLS instructor Rob Walker's 6-month, 1,850-mile kayak traverse of Chilean Patagonia.

**OCTOBER 24, AUSTIN, TX | PATAGONIA**

Join us for an evening of camaraderie, outdoor adventure images, and good eats.

Watch for more events in the fall, including Minneapolis, Chicago, Jackson Hole and more. See [www.nols.edu/alumni/reunions](http://www.nols.edu/alumni/reunions) for more information or to RSVP.





## BRANCH NOTES

## Student Service Projects Around the NOLS World

## NOLS TETON VALLEY



- In the summer of 2008, NOLS Teton Valley partnered with Teton Valley Trails and Pathways (TVTAP) and the Forest Service to organize a series of trail work days. Students enrolled in the Adventure combination courses spent a half-day with employees of the Forest Service and TVTAP and put in an elaborate system of check dams, water bars, and trail closures in an area of the Big Hole Mountains. The purpose of these improvements was to prevent further erosion and to prevent the formation of new unauthorized trails.
- Building on the success of last summer, TVTAP submitted a grant proposal for the NOLS/TVTAP partnership to fund a series of three projects this summer. The grant was awarded and students will work on further trail improvements including short reroutes of trails as well as building several bridges to span water crossings. Students enrolled in the combination hiking and rafting courses will be working on these projects along our in-town employees.

## NOLS ALASKA

- In cooperation with Chugach National Forest, our sea kayaking courses are participating in a service project that will be monitoring the condition of campsites in Prince William Sound. We are excited to be providing this service to the National Forest in their efforts to promote Leave No Trace.
- Our garden is in full production. This year we have five families from the community that have joined us in our project by joining our CSA (community supported agriculture). Each family receives a supply of vegetables and herbs

once a week throughout the growing season. The garden project will also be donating garden items to several local nonprofits as we have excess.

## NOLS MEXICO

- We are sponsoring clean-up campaigns in Sierra de La Laguna together with CONANP (National Commission for Natural Protected Areas)
- Our in-town staff created and pursues the clean-up on beaches near the branch in Conception Bay.
- Our Spanish-language programs subsidize hiking and sea kayaking courses for local educators, making the high-quality environmental education accessible for communities all over Mexico.

## NOLS ROCKY MOUNTAIN



- In the name of conservation and LNT, virtually every RM course participates in the cleaning and rehabilitation of illegal backcountry camping sites in the Shoshone, Bighorn, Custer, or Bridger-Teton National Forests. Fire ring dismantling and trash removal from the forests are the most common goals.
- For almost 15 years, RM river courses have participated as “weed warriors” to primarily eliminate the tamarisk from river corridors in Dinosaur National Monument. All courses on the monument participate, which to date is over 1,300 students.

## NOLS PATAGONIA

- Patagonia Year students work with Conservation Patagonia to help create national park land through conservation projects like removing fences from old *estancias* (ranches).
- Students also spend four to five days working with Conservation Patagonia to protect and restore wildland ecosystems and biodiversity in Patagonia.

## NOLS SOUTHWEST



Almost every course at NOLS Southwest incorporates a service project. To date, students have participated in:

- Cave restoration in Carlsbad, New Mexico
- Historic building restoration in the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
- Roadside clean-up in Tucson, Arizona
- Fence installation for a climbing parking area, graffiti removal from popular climbing sites, and the construction of a group campsite in the Red Rock National Conservation Area..
- Trail and fence building to minimize social trail to and from climbing sites in City of Rocks National Reserve.

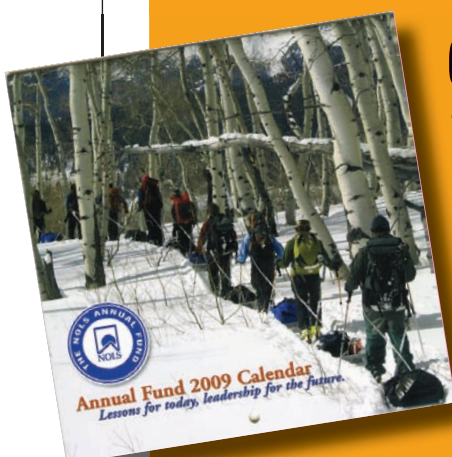
## NOLS NEW ZEALAND

- Over the last two years, students hiking in the Lake Sumner area of the 30,000-acre Hurunui Mainland Island have been helping the Department of Conservation (DOC) save critically endangered orange-fronted parakeets from extinction. They learn about the complex ecological relationships between introduced predators and New Zealand’s native birds and join DOC staff as they monitor bird and predator populations and maintain predator traps. Each valley within the Mainland Island has several trap lines, all of which need regular checking and re-baiting. The student’s hard work is rewarded with the knowledge that they are helping to save a bird species that some ecologists thought would not see the new millennium. The downside is that the students are unlikely to ever see the orange-fronted parakeets they are working to save.

## Calendar Photo Contest Results

The 2010 NOLS Annual Fund Calendar hits mailboxes in November! The calendar is mailed each fall to many recent course graduates and *all* of our generous Annual Fund donors. Every summer a call for photos goes out to our grads via email and 16 stunning pictures are chosen from the submissions for the calendar. This year, the lucky winning photographers received headlamps generously donated by Petzl. The result of the contest is a beautiful calendar featuring many iconic NOLS vistas and activities that we hope remind folks of their course 365 days of the year. The calendar also reminds donors of the power of their gift and hopefully inspires others to make a donation supporting the NOLS mission. Watch your inbox for the contest next summer!

Gifts to the NOLS Annual Fund are the main source of scholarship funds at the school. With the support of generous donors, we were able to give away more than 400 scholarships last year! The more Annual Fund calendars we are able to send, the happier we are, so if you didn’t get one last year, get online and make a donation at [www.nols.edu/eDonate](http://www.nols.edu/eDonate) and you will be sure to be on our list.





**BELAY OFF**

# Paying Forward a Niche or a Knack

## The Unexpected Service Rewards of NOLS Training

BY WILLIE YOUNGER, OEK '03

I'd suspect that most, if not all, of us who are lucky enough to call ourselves members of the NOLS alumni or staff have a well-developed vision of the "ideal" utilization of our school-enhanced knowledge and skills. Yet, I'd further predict that only a small number of us actually reach this state of outdoor leadership nirvana, which I'd define as that place and time where one can joyously commune with nature and their higher power while simultaneously serving the lofty goals of improving the human condition and/or the environment. However, in my personal quest for a rewarding outlet for my kayaking passion, I blindly fell into the most bountiful of circumstances. Or, perhaps I was divinely led to them?

Whatever the driving force might have been, I now more fully appreciate Douglas Adams' poignant reflection, "I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I ended up where I needed to be!" For in examining the winding path I followed since completing my NOLS Pacific Northwest Outdoor Educator Sea Kayaking course, I now feel I've arrived at a place of boundless glory and anticipation.

My story begins where my 2003 NOLS-led expedition through Canada's enchanted Discovery Islands ended.

Over the years following this magical experience, I've stuck the blades of my paddle in many waters—both physically and metaphorically speaking. I dabbled in introducing both youth and adults to the benefits of kayaking through basic skills programs my wife and I initiated. I led, without pay, a modest series of coastal and river expeditions for adventure-seeking couch potatoes and computer jockeys. I loyally served as team captain (a.k.a. logistical ground support) for an endurance river racer whom I suspect has a bizarre death wish. I even helped

facilitate some ecological survey work in shallow tidal waterways by providing my boats, my personal knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Gulf Coast, and my familiarity with the landscapes and water-scapes of the area as needed for navigation purposes. But although these were often fun and exciting, none of these endeavors gave me even a tiny fraction of the satisfaction that I've received since I began assisting with the fundraising efforts of local causes and non-profit programs in the summer of 2007.

In August of last year, I was asked to donate an item for auction by a terrific group that has dedicated itself to getting mentally and physically challenged individuals involved in exciting outdoor activities. After a brief mental inventory of what I might contribute, I surprised both the fundraiser's

*I eagerly encourage each member of our NOLS family to consider and then pursue ways to serve those causes that emotionally or spiritually float their boat.*

organizers and myself by announcing I'd give them a day-long coastal kayaking adventure for four. Of course, this meant I'd be expected to provide kayaks (singles or tandems), safety gear, guide services (me), and a gourmet lunch. As a bonus feature, I threw in special along-the-way interpretations of estuarine biology and ecology since my profession is that of a university outreach marine educator.

It soon became routine for me to invest my time and effort in the form of these package deals, supplying each recipient with a visually descriptive mini-poster and certificate to display at their live

or silent auctions. And, over the span of twelve short months, these offerings raised several thousand dollars for local charities, civic projects, and people in need. To date, those benefiting include the county library system, the county nature center, the Red Cross, an uninsured cancer victim, a community latchkey kids program, and Outdoors Without Limits, the organization serving the disabled that I previously mentioned.

Just think about it! Where else could I help advance the fundraising goals of such worthy interests and provide my wife with a legitimate excuse as to why I spend so many Saturdays indulging my aquatic obsessions?

As we'd say down here in Texas, y'all (sic) could also share the education and experiences that NOLS, with the help of Mother Nature, so abundantly showered on us. So, I eagerly encourage each member of our NOLS family to consider and then pursue ways to serve those causes that emotionally or spiritually float their boat. Imagine a *pay-it-forward* scenario involving staff and alumni that ultimately was endorsed or perhaps even managed by the NOLS organization. This causes me to envision a tsunami of charitable service producing an unparalleled increase in awareness of, and appreciation for, NOLS which is fueled by this warm and personal giving of ourselves (versus rather impersonal donations of cold hard cash).

*For guidance on how to embark on your own pay-it-forward outdoor education journey or to get tips on balancing volunteer time with skills you have, contact Willie Younger, Extension Marine Education Specialist at the Texas A&M Floating Classroom Program: P. O. Box 18, Matagorda, TX 77457 • (979) 863-2940.*

(Below) Younger utilizes the skills he learned on his NOLS course and his background in marine biology to lead groups of kayakers to raise money for various causes, satisfying his aquatic obsession.



Courtesy of Willie Younger