



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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### **REI Foundation awards Children & Nature Network \$150,000 grant to grow and mentor national network of young outdoor leaders working to increase outdoor engagement and stewardship**

**MINNEAPOLIS, July 7, 2017:** The REI Foundation has announced funding support for the Children & Nature Network’s Natural Leaders initiative. The Natural Leaders Network trains, mentors and empowers young, diverse leaders to better connect their communities to nature, explore outdoor careers, advocate for positive change in their communities and #OptOutside through a lifetime of healthy, outdoor activities.

The REI Foundation’s \$150,000 grant will support training of a national network of young, diverse outdoor leaders through **Legacy Camp**, the Natural Leaders Network’s signature youth leadership development program—and expand **Fresh Tracks Leadership Expeditions**, an outdoor leadership cultural exchange piloted successfully in 2016.

**Legacy Camp** trains and mentors regional teams of diverse community organizers, ages 18-29, in providing and advocating for equitable opportunities for children and families to experience nature’s many benefits. The intensive, four-day training helps young leaders increase outdoor engagement and stewardship, with a focus on community organizing, civic engagement and using the power of personal narrative to create lasting change in their communities.

**Fresh Tracks Leadership Expeditions** was inspired by President Obama’s nationwide call for bold new programs using the outdoors as a platform for broadening connections to our shared outdoor heritage for young Americans, especially young people of color. This unique leadership development program, launched in 2016 with REI Foundation support, engaged emerging leaders from Los Angeles and Arctic Alaska in a two-week cultural exchange focused on civic engagement, cultural competence, outdoor recreation and hometown stewardship, resulting in life-changing experiences for participants. REI Foundation support for Fresh Tracks in 2017 will help cultivate key partnerships with My Brother’s Keeper Alliance, The Aspen Institute and others—and host a Fresh Tracks Summit designed move this program from pilot program to ongoing implementation.

“We are grateful not just for the REI Foundation’s significant and ongoing financial support, but for their vision and partnership in empowering new generations of outdoor leaders,” said Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Executive Director, Children & Nature Network.

“REI is proud to support the Children & Nature Network in developing young leaders who will create bridges to the natural world for those not traditionally engaged in—or who face barriers to—outdoor activities and lifestyles,” said Laura Swapp, Vice President, REI Foundation.

**About the Children & Nature Network.** *The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is leading an international movement to increase equitable access to nature so that children and natural places can thrive. We power the movement by investing in community leadership, sharing evidence-based resources, scaling innovative solutions and driving policy change. C&NN is a 501c3 non-profit organization. For more information, visit [childrenandnature.org](http://childrenandnature.org).*

**About the REI Foundation.** *The REI Foundation has a long-term goal of engaging and nurturing the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and environmental stewards. The Foundation's focus has sharpened in recent years to engage members of the millennial generation. The Foundation seeks to make the most of its community investments in a way that creates the greatest impact and scale. The REI Foundation is a private corporate foundation funded and operated by REI.*

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