



BYEP LAUNCHING 10TH YEAR OF SERVICE TO LOCAL YOUTH

By Dave Granger

2010 witnessed the best year to date for Big Sky Youth Empowerment (BYEP). This local scholarship-based mentoring organization offers creative programs for at-risk teenagers. Combining outdoor adventure and character education, BYEP seeks to decrease problem behaviors while providing a catalyst for youth to reach their potential.

During 2010, over 200 youth and 100 adults applied to the 17 seasonal mentoring programs. In addition to nine years of service in Belgrade and Bozeman, BYEP expanded to Big Sky, thanks to a generous grant from the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation. BYEP's adventure-based group mentoring program is youth-centered, educational and thrilling.

The 2010 winter program granted scholarships to 54 youth partici-

pants—the largest cohort yet. 27 adult mentors and seven youth mentors (veteran youth ages 18 to 20) provided excellent guidance for nine groups of six youth. Once again, Big Sky Resort generously provided the optimal setting for empowerment through skiing and snowboarding. The summer program awarded scholarships to 48 local youth. Summer programs included indoor and outdoor rock climbing, whitewater rafting on the Yellowstone and Gallatin Rivers, a professionally guided day trip to Yellowstone National Park, and unparalleled high ropes challenges at the Yellowstone Club. All of the seasonal outdoor activities were bolstered by weekly workshops focused on the Character Education curriculum: teamwork and trust, identity and consumerism, effective communication, conflict resolution/healthy relationships, drug and alcohol education, sexual reproductive health and environmental/community stewardship drive the core competencies which expand participants' knowledge and perspective.

The 2011 winter program launches January 10. This season, BYEP will again have the largest cohorts of youth participants (60), youth mentors (12) and adult mentors (28) to date. Two supervisors will assist the program director with weekend

adventures and weekly workshops on character education. It's shaping up to be an awesome winter in Southwest Montana, and the collective enthusiasm in BYEP is palpable.

Check out BYEP at Big Sky Resort on February 5-6 for the 3rd Annual Billy Poole Memorial Collaboration. This event connects professional skiers and snowboarders including Julian Carr, Rachael Burkes, Drew Stoecklein and Jamie Pierre with BYEP groups for an incredibly inspirational weekend in celebration of the life of professional skier, Billy Poole.

Big Sky Youth Empowerment is extremely grateful for its volunteer mentors. During a 14-week program, BYEP mentors donate over 150 hours of volunteer service to local youth. The impact is profound. Please contact BYEP today at byep.org or by getting in touch with Founder and Executive Director, Pete MacFadyen, at (406) 539-0399 and pete@byep.org.

Dave Granger has been Program Director of Big Sky Youth Empowerment for four years.



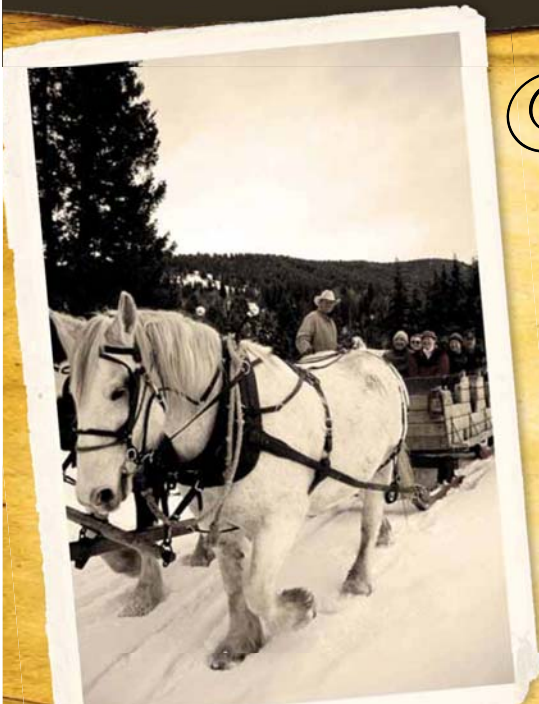
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