



MISSION: First Descents provides free life-changing outdoor adventures for young adults impacted by cancer and multiple sclerosis, along with their caregivers and healthcare workers from those medical fields.

WHO WE ARE: First Descents (FD) is a recognized leader in outdoor experiential programming and psychosocial supportive care. Through our [FREE outdoor adventure programs](#), coordination of local [Community Adventures](#) and ongoing commitment to providing healthy [lifestyle resources](#), FD improves the long-term survivorship of young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions, including multiple sclerosis. We also [partner with healthcare providers](#) across the country to help them address the unique needs of AYA survivors.

WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE: Our participants join professional adventure guides in spectacular wilderness settings on our core programs across the country, where they learn kayaking, rock climbing and surfing skills in encouraging and supportive environments, exploring challenging and exhilarating ways to thrive beyond their diagnoses, adding life to days and connecting with others on similar journeys. Meals are prepared by professional chefs under the direction of our Chef Manager, a [certified Nutrition Therapy Practitioner](#), and all gear and instruction is included.

Our programs are open to any young adult diagnosed with cancer or MS between the ages of 15-39 who are currently between the ages of 18-45, as well as caregivers and healthcare workers in oncology and MS-related fields who meet our eligibility criteria. To learn more about our eligibility requirements, [click here](#).

Year-round Community Adventures are open to anyone interested in joining other locals on outdoor meetups, and [Out Living It](#) events and community-run projects offer fundraising opportunities at established races such as the Leadville Races Series and the TCS New York City Marathon, as well as the chance for philanthropic efforts at grassroots levels.

HOW AND WHY: Founder Brad Ludden grew up paddling the rivers of Montana's Flathead Valley, which led him in search of first descents on the remotest rivers around the globe. As a professional kayaker, he recognized the impact outdoor adventures had on his own health and well-being. When a beloved aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 38, he saw how little support she received beyond the clinical, inspiring him to create First Descents in 2001 in Colorado. Since then, nearly 11,000 young adults impacted by cancer and MS have benefited from our programming. To date, First Descents has participated in two formal impact studies on our oncology programs, and we are committed to applying similar evaluation methods to our evolving MS, caregiver and healthcare worker programs. Read more about [our impact here](#).

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