Outdoor Industry, REI And The Fund Team Up With Mayor Bowser To Give Park Experiences To Every 4th Grader In Washington, D.C.

Timed with the National Park Centennial, the specialty outdoor retailer, outdoor advocacy groups and the Mayor work together to get every kid in D.C. to a park.

Boulder, Colo.; Seattle, Wash.; Washington, D.C.—REI, national specialty outdoor retailer and consumer co-op, has partnered with the Outdoor Foundation, Outdoor Industry Association, The Conservation Fund, and Mayor Bowser to ensure every public school 4th grader in Washington, D.C. has a powerful national park experience this year. Via Parks4Kids, an initiative of the Outdoor Foundation and the Outdoor Industry Association, and the support of the Mayor’s office, approximately 3,300 4th graders in the District will have the opportunity to visit a nearby national park.

Organized and managed by the National Park Trust and supported by the Mayor, the park trips will include visits to Rock Creek Park, C&O Canal, the National Mall and Prince William Forest Park. The partnership effort will support the broader ‘Every Kid in a Park’ initiative, which was announced by the White House this year and has the goal of providing an opportunity for every 4th grade student in the country to visit a national park or other federally managed lands and waters nationwide. The Parks4Kids program, launched in January by Outdoor Foundation and Outdoor Industry Association, engages the entire outdoor industry, other sectors and the general public in a nationwide effort to get more kids to parks.

“Thanks to the generous support and leadership from a wide range of partners, we’re thrilled that every 4th grade student in our nation’s capital..."
will have a meaningful park experience – resulting in an important new alliance of outdoor enthusiasts and champions,” said Chris Fanning, executive director of the Outdoor Foundation. “Building on the momentum and success of this effort, I hope that other cities, companies and foundations will work with us to replicate this exciting and impactful model.”

“I want to thank REI for their commitment to DC, and for giving our young people greater exposure to our parkland,” Mayor Bowser. “We have some of the nation’s most beautiful parks in and around Washington, DC, and I am thrilled that our 4th graders will experience the wonder and beauty of the great outdoors.”

Support for this initiative is just part of REI’s commitment and investment in Washington, D.C., as the company opens a flagship store in the District later this year.

“At REI we believe a life outdoors is a life well-lived. So today we’re thrilled to support the nationwide effort to ensure every 4th grader gets into a park at least once this year,” said Marc Berejka, REI’s director of government and community affairs. “During the Centennial year of the National Parks and with our new D.C. flagship store opening later this year, it’s particularly special for us to sponsor outdoor experiences for the District’s public school 4th graders. We hope that with these many, many young steps into parks this year, we’ll see many more lovers of the outdoors emerge in the years to come.”

This year, in celebration of the National Park Centennial, every 4th grader across the country has access to a free park pass. On average, it costs only $10 to give a student a park experience. And yet, many cannot afford to get to parks nor have the gear and equipment to recreate there. That’s where programs like Parks4Kids come in. Individuals and organizations interested in helping get more-kids-to-parks can visit www.parks4kids.info and choose from over one hundred projects in need of support.

“Connecting young people to nature is one of the most important investments the conservation community can make. The return on this investment, in terms of health, productivity and future support for public funding for conservation, is unmatched. The Conservation Fund is thrilled to provide critical support for this effort,” said Larry Selzer, president and CEO of The Conservation Fund.

The local partners are actively working with others in the community to build on this initiative’s exciting momentum.
"In this centennial year of the National Park Service, we are delighted to on this historic opportunity to get every 4th grader connected with their local national parks. Our parks are wonderful outdoor classrooms and great places for outdoor recreation. D.C. is very fortunate to have many different types of parks around the corner and across town," stated Grace Lee, executive director, National Park Trust.

"Today marks a crucial step toward our goal to get all 4th grader across the country to a National Park," said Amy Roberts executive director, OIA. "By bringing our children to the country's National Parks, we are introducing them to recreational opportunities which will serve them for a lifetime."

For the remainder of 2016, the National Park Centennial, 4th graders across the country will be granted free entry to any National Park or federally managed land.

Outdoor Industry Association
Based in Boulder, CO, with offices in Washington, D.C., Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the leading trade association for the outdoor industry and the title sponsor of Outdoor Retailer. OIA unites and serves over 1200 manufacturer, supplier, sales representative and retailer members through its focus on trade and recreation policy, sustainable business, market & consumer insights and industry trends. For more information, visit outdoorindustry.org or call 303.444.3353.

Outdoor Foundation
The philanthropic arm of Outdoor Industry Association, the Outdoor Foundation is dedicated to inspiring the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. Through youth engagement, community grant-making, and groundbreaking research, the Foundation works with partners to mobilize a major cultural shift that leads all Americans to the great outdoors. In just five years, the Foundation has invested $4 million into 785 not-for-profit and college programs that have connected 200,000 young people to the outdoors.

The Conservation Fund
At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 7.5 million acres of land.

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