

Courtney Aber

From: YMCA BOLD & GOLD <caber@seattleyymca.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 9:00 AM
To: Courtney Aber
Subject: BOLD & GOLD September News

If you're having trouble viewing this email, you may [see it online](#).

Share this:    



A NOTE FROM COURTNEY



I've been thinking a lot about beginnings and how important they are. Whether it's a country, a relationship, or an organization, the foundation of things matters.

Passages NW, which became GOLD, was created because two amazing people saw young women struggling and decided to do something to create positive change. Later, BOLD began because a few kind, compassionate people saw young men struggling and decided to address it.

BOLD & GOLD really grew out of smart, empathetic changemakers who were helping make the world a better place. Right now, young people are lost in a new way – they are cut off from the basic human needs of

connecting to others and spending time outside. Thanks to all of you for continuing to build on the foundation of positive change. The world needs you right now, and your effort matters.

Courtney Aber is the National Director for BOLD & GOLD.

BRINGING IT FULL CIRCLE



A couple years ago, Jane Bierman Seibel received an email from a time traveler.

Dalisha Phillips had attended the very first outing offered by **Passages Northwest**, an experiential outdoor program for girls launched by Jane and co-founder **Annie Lareau** in 1996 (*Annie is on the left, Jane on the right, and Dalisha second to right in the photo above*). The two met while Annie, who had a background in arts education, was sailing with her mother on a cruise that Jane, then a naturalist, was working. Soon enough, they were talking about what they could do to get more girls—from all backgrounds—outdoors in the Seattle area. They even dreamed that one day, their program would spread across the country.

Now a 31-year-old graduate school student working at a youth mentorship organization, Dalisha was writing to Jane not just to reminisce about that trip, but also to bring things full circle. **Her experience with Passages helped launched an incredible period of personal growth for her, so much so that she was now helping other adolescents work toward their own potential.**

Jane was blown away. “There used to be a sticker at Passages that read: ‘Find yourself and go there,’ and I loved that phrase,” she says. Dalisha’s email reminded her of the magic of these kinds of outdoor programs. “It gives you an opportunity to find yourself, dig deep into that, and do so in a diverse community—and hopefully take that experience back home with you for years to come.”

What makes this story even more powerful is that those transformative experiences that began in the 90s continue today as our GOLD program, which grew out of Passages Northwest in 2010. Our “Hand Contracts” that help establish group norms? Those began in Passages. “Courage Circle”—a way to not just debrief the day, but actively share and receive positive messages about the ways courage shows up during a trip? You guessed it! And the same thing goes for our bracelets, which Jane and Annie envisioned as a way for participants to carry a physical

reminder of their own internal courage, which they could then refer to when things got tough in school, at home, or beyond.



It all came “full circle” for Jane once again this summer. Her 15-year-old son **Asher** typically heads off to camp once school lets out, but this year, most resident camps had shuttered. Instead, she asked if he wanted to try out a BOLD & GOLD trip.

Asher was down, hoping for a bit of socializing and adventure to break the monotony of pandemic life. He packed off for a week in Washington’s North Cascades and what would become an incredible experience. Days were spent working as a group to navigate the challenges of backpacking along alpine trails and cresting snowy passes; afternoons involved swimming in frigid rivers to cool off after big miles. Evenings were spent sharing conversations with new friends, including one—a young man named **Kelem** (*Kelem is at left, Asher on the right in the photo above*)—who Asher discovered he’d actually competed against on the soccer field while in middle school.

That camaraderie was exactly what he needed after a strange few months spent isolated from his usual social groups, proving once more that the power of making new friends and navigating challenges together while outdoors is timeless—and important.

“I think that no matter who you are, you’ll find a place there. You don’t have to be some certain type of kid—or even a huge nature kid—to really have a great experience,” he says of BOLD & GOLD. **“I’m really happy for the memories.”**

IMPACT: ADOLESCENCE



Adolescence is as much a challenging time of life as it is a wonderful one.

In his 2014 book, *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*, neuroscientist Dan Siegel interprets brain imaging studies that reveal changes in the structure and function of the brain during adolescence, that if harnessed with the proper approach and understanding can create new powers and new possibilities:

- **Novelty seeking** emerges from an increased drive for rewards
- **Social engagement** enhances peer connectedness and creates new friendships
- **Increased emotional intensity** gives an enhanced vitality to life
- **Creative exploration** with an expanded sense of consciousness (conceptual thinking and abstract reasoning) allow questioning of the status quo, approaching problems with “out of the box” strategies, creation of new ideas, and the emergence of innovation

Each of these changes is necessary to create the important shifts that happen in our thinking, feeling, interacting, and decision-making during adolescence. BOLD & GOLD’s focus is on adolescent boys and girls, ages 11 to 18.

Adventure activities (climbing a peak or making a campfire) are paired with a proven youth development curriculum, fifty-percent racial diversity, and recognized benefits of time in nature to give youth a chance to gain leadership and communication skills, create relationships across societal divides, reap proven health benefits of time in nature, and discover that the outdoors is a place for them. But you don't have to take it from us - here's what participants had to say about it:

“It taught me not only how to backpack, but how to thrive in an accepting and supportive group of girls who share similar interests as me. I also loved being able to experience the beauty of the North Cascades

firsthand, and it made me really appreciate how easy it is for me to access all that it has to offer.”

“This program made a positive impact on my life because I made hard choices sometimes, pushed through hard things when I wanted to give up, I made new friends I would not have if I did not come here, and this trip pushed me out of my comfort zone.”

“This was the first time that I have gone backpacking, and it taught me very many life lessons and helped me grow as an individual. Some of the things this trip helped me with is social skills, learning to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations, and the power of disconnecting from my normal life/stressors. It has also helped me become more balanced and happier.”

BY THE NUMBERS

427

In summer 2020, in the midst of a pandemic, BOLD & GOLD programs in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City (newly launched this year!) elevated health and safety practices and worked with local agencies, the CDC, the National Park Service, and local land managers to offer adventures to **427 adolescent boys and girls**.

CONGRATULATIONS!

LOOKING BACK AT SUMMER

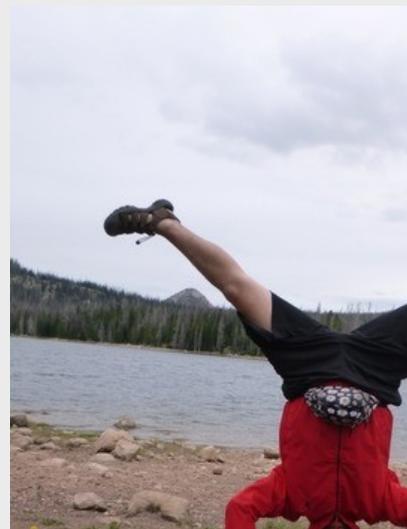
While most sites did not run programs this year, we're all certainly reflecting on a summer that was not what any of us could have envisioned. Some folks may be looking back at how it felt to run trips these last few months, others might be exploring ways to strengthen next year's program, and others may be reflecting on the importance of BOLD & GOLD in a changing world. Whatever you've been thinking about, we'd love to hear it!

Please continue sharing photos and stories about BOLD & GOLD and the program's impact on the young people we serve! **Can you share something from this summer that perhaps illustrates the resiliency that is developed in a program like BOLD & GOLD? Or the beauty of human connection? Or the importance of spending time outdoors?**

Please reach out to [Shawnté](#) and [Courtney](#) if you would like to highlight one of your trip participants in the newsletter, and we'll take it from there!

STAY CONNECTED

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/yboldgold/> // **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/YMCABOLDGOLD>



WHAT WE'RE READING

[The Toll That Isolation Takes on Kids During The Coronavirus Era](#) (Wall Street Journal)

[Taking Up Space](#) (Oregon Humanities)

[Being Mindful in Nature](#) (Childhood By Nature)

[People of Color Have Always Been Outdoors. What Can We Learn From Past Decades of Engagement and Inclusion Work?](#) (Bay Nature)

[In Defense of Ugly Trails](#) (Backpacker)

909 Fourth Ave. | Seattle, WA 98104

This email was sent to **caber@seattlemca.org**. To ensure that you continue receiving our emails, please add us to your address book or safe list.

[manage](#) your preferences | [opt out](#) using TrueRemove®.

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.