**ICO at a Glance**

Begun in 1971 by the Sierra Club’s San Francisco Bay chapter, ICO promotes appreciation and protection of the natural environment through wilderness adventures and environmental education.

**Today, 50 groups nationwide serve more than 11,000 young people on 845 outings and service trips.**

Participants include low-income inner city youth and adults, as well as the physically challenged; people who would not otherwise have access to safe, enjoyable outdoor experiences. Three part-time staff and approximately 400 volunteers run the program.

“Studies show that, almost to a person, conservationists or any adults with environmental awareness had some transcendent experience in nature when they were children.”

*Children & Nature Report 2008*

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**ICO for the Future**

ICO helps develop interpersonal skills and self-esteem by linking participants from different cultures and providing outdoor skills training and leadership opportunities. It also builds support in urban communities for environmental protection as participants discover the beauty and value of wild lands.
“As a kid growing up in Oakland, I had no idea what the outdoors was all about.”

Then, at 15, Duong participated in an ICO rafting trip and that’s when the outdoor bug bit him. Through high school and college, he continued to participate in ICO, eventually becoming a volunteer rafting guide.

In 2007, he underwent training to become an official ICO leader. He now leads youth on day hikes, overnight camping, and is working toward leading backpacking trips. Bill also currently co-chairs the Sacramento ICO group.

“Over time, as you take kids out, you see their eyes open to the outdoors. It’s great knowing they’re having the same types of experiences that changed my life as a kid. Experiencing nature and the outdoors was totally missing from my life at that age.”

“This trip changed my life. I mean it – changed my life. I’m going to get swimming lessons; I’m going to learn how to swim and I’m going to do all this water stuff.”

– Participant, San Francisco Bay ICO

ICO in Partnership

ICO volunteers partner with selected schools and community agencies – such as after school programs, youth groups, and rehabilitation centers – serving people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Without ICO, many of these groups would not have the opportunity to actively engage in the outdoors.

“It made me see how courageous I really am and how capable I am of challenging myself.”

– Participant, Houston ICO

“Adults who come back again and again to work with the kids give them the message that they are worthwhile. The youth not only benefit from the activity you do with them, but also grow in their self-esteem.”

Sister Pat Bober, C.S.J.
St. Teresa of Avila, Archdiocese of St. Louis

Sierra Club – Inner City Outings – www.sierraclub.org/ico
To learn more about ICO and how you can support our nationwide program, please contact: Debra Asher, ICO National Administrator at (415) 977-5568 or debra.asher@sierraclub.org