

Inspiring Adventures and Service; Your Outings Leaders

The mission of the Sierra Club is: “To explore, enjoy, and protect wild places of the earth, to practice and promote the responsible use of the earths ecosystems and resources, and, to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.”

The trained Outings Leaders of the Sierra Club embrace these elements of the Sierra Club mission as they work to bring you inspiring adventures and the opportunities for earth-based service here in the Eastern region of Missouri. They also have a lot of fun.

So who are these leaders, what training do they have, how do they choose which outings to offer, and what goes into creating those offerings?

All Outings Leaders are Sierra Club members who have a desire to help others deepen their relationship with the earth, and understand that outings provide an avenue to do so. The outings they sponsor range from led hikes, backpacking trips and water adventures, to park and forest development and restoration, to opportunities to attend legislative or other important environmental meetings.

In addition to their own personal background which may include specific knowledge of nature, guiding, or activism, everyone completes several steps of training before joining the ranks of outings leadership. These steps begin with learning more about the Sierra Club itself such as its history, challenges, and triumphs. From there an outings leader learns how to choose, structure, and organize an outing. Elements such as: diversity, outreach, accessibility, and safety are important aspects of consideration and preparation for an outing, and all leaders must obtain an extra certification in First Aid or Wilderness First Aid.

When the outing involves offering “dirt time”, that is, bringing Sierra Club members onto the land for walking, hiking, or water activities, there are a several specific steps an Outings Leader completes. Initially, an Outings Leader carefully chooses a potential site for the outing by visiting the site and checking for the feasibility of offering an outing at that location. Once they determined that the site is suitable, the Outings Leader creates and submits a proposal about the activity. The proposal is reviewed by the Outings Committee Chair. Finally, the activity is submitted as an outing that is available for Sierra Club members and friends.

Ideally, the Outings Leader is able to connect personally with each potential participant as they sign up for their outing. Then, just prior to the outing, the Outing Leader will once more visit the outing location and check to ensure the pieces of a successful outing have remained in place. Finally, the Outings Leader is responsible for making sure all participants are welcomed, registered, have appropriate gear for the outing, and are available for any difficulties that arise.

The Outings Committee is pleased that our region is bringing new faces, talents, and ideas to outings. Rick Armstrong, a seasoned Outings Leader who has personally promoted the training of new leaders exclaims, “*It has been most gratifying that at least 10 new leaders have been trained during the past two years! New energy! New ideas for outings!*” Events such as Forest Bathing, yoga, off-trail map reading, and in-depth discussion of important environmental issues are now consistently being added to the events offered through the Outings Committee, as well as new opportunities for both local and out-state trail work.

Being an Outings Leader and preparing an outing takes time and effort, but Outings Leaders appreciate their role in the overall mission of the Sierra Club and enjoy both meeting those that participate and the satisfaction that comes with a successful event. Annie Russell, new to being an Outings Leader, explains her decision to start leading outings; *"It's wonderful to see people connect with nature in a sensory, experiential way. I can see their enjoyment of the surroundings and feel their moods lift."*

In return for the services provided by an Outings Leader, they ask you partner with them by doing these three things when signing up for an outing:

- 1.) read the description carefully to make sure the outing fits your interest, your schedule, and where appropriate, your physical conditioning,
- 2.) sign up for the event in the manner outlined in the description of the event, and,
- 3.) notify the Outings Leader as much in advance as possible if you are unable to attend.

Adventure, service, inspiration, camaraderie...your Outings Leaders look forward to being with you through a wide selection of outings, helping you connect even more deeply with the Sierra Club mission and the Earth.

For more information about becoming an Outings Leader, please contact Outings Leaders Chairs David Campbell at: davecampbell9009@gmail.com, or John Feldmann at: johnfeldmann.msn.com.