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Venture Outdoors Announces the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition
Pittsburgh Non-Profit Working Towards Equity in Outdoor Recreation Industry

PITTSBURGH, PA: Venture Outdoors is proud to announce the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition, a collection of over 40 organizations that are taking action to change Pittsburgh's outdoor industry. The Outdoor Inclusion Coalition, generously supported by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, works to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in outdoor spaces through educational tools, mentorship and employment programs, and engaging members in the community who have had limited access to outdoor experiences.

Venture Outdoors began forming the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition in the fall of 2019, now led by Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Marcus Shoffner. Through research and outreach, Shoffner observed that other organizations from the non-profit sector were expressing the desire to make an impact on how outdoor recreation is seen. Findings also show that many community members are unable to enjoy the outdoors because of barriers like fear of safety, financial inequities, disproportionate access to local greenspaces and more.

"There is a need to evaluate and develop a commitment to inclusionary practices such as effective hiring and job distribution channels, accurate workplace policies, adequate staff training, and appropriate community engagement while measuring all internal practices," said Shoffner. "Additionally, it is our responsibility to reduce the opportunity gap for marginalized communities and establish instances where an individual can see themselves in the industry beyond a participant."

The Outdoor Inclusion Coalition is currently focusing efforts on examining internal nonprofit policies and procedures as well as creating a space for mentorship and employment within the outdoor industry by providing young people with the development of industry specific technical skills, guidance on opportunities, employment networks, coaching and advancement opportunity.

"We are proud of our 20 years of work to create outdoor experiences in Southwestern Pennsylvania," said Valerie Beichner, Venture Outdoors President & CEO. "However, we must acknowledge that many individuals still feel unsafe in outdoor environments and are frequently harassed and harmed while enjoying outdoor experiences. We are dedicated to ensuring everyone has equitable access to outdoor places and experiences. These new tools and the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition will be the guiding force to create systemic change toward an equitable outdoor industry."

Venture Outdoors has been working with several partner organizations via an advisory committee on the creation of the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition including Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Grow Pittsburgh, Carnegie Museum of Natural History and Bike PGH.

ABOUT VENTURE OUTDOORS: Venture Outdoors is a 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA. We aim to create more equitable access to outdoor experiences and provide more than 45,000 outdoor experiences

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annually through youth, community, senior programming as well as Kayak Pittsburgh. For more information regarding this statement contact Communications Director, Ebony Montgomery, at Ebony@VentureOutdoors.org.

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