

# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

**2026**



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# OUR MISSION

Rocky Mountain Ascent provides outdoor recreation opportunities to underserved youth, families, and young adults. We encourage youth toward self-actualization through positive adult mentorship, life-skills development, & self-challenge. We are committed to nurturing a sense of value & purpose in each individual.

## Population

Our programs are catered to three major categories of children and families:

- Children in group homes
- Children and families in foster care
- Children and families who are unhoused

## Retreats

Our retreats run every weekend from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon for groups and families. They include adventure activities like high and low ropes course, tomahawks, and kayaking, as well as wellness activities like sauna/cold plunge, yoga, and art. Our retreats are all-ages.

## Respite

We are working on getting licensed as a foster home to provide respite camps for foster youth. This summer we plan to host a group of foster children once per month to teach an outdoor curriculum and provide more consistent support. Due to licensing and safety requirements, volunteers are not allowed on property during these trips (team bonding trips will be offered to volunteers during these times).

## Internships

Our internship program is for young adults who are transitioning out of the foster care system (age 18-22). They perform similar work duties to volunteers, and receive additional support to gain their footing as they transition into adulthood. Similarly to volunteer sessions, internship sessions are one month.

# CODE OF CONDUCT

Every person we welcome into our mission contributes to the energy of the space. Please help us maintain a space for healing by adhering to the following code:

## RESPECT

We see the unique value in every individual, therefore we make an effort to understand differing perspectives. If a disagreement arises, we show respect to the other person and move forward, working toward our common mission.

## COMMUNICATION

Maintaining a strong and healthy team is paramount to fulfilling our mission. At RMA there is absolutely no talking behind backs! If we have a problem with someone in our community, we have a conversation with them directly and with respect. If further support is needed, the leadership staff is happy to help.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All information shared by our guests and residents must remain confidential, with the exception of observed or suspected child abuse. Please review the volunteer policies for more information regarding Mandated Reporting.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

We encourage you to share photos of your time here as long as they do not violate the wishes of our guests. If you would like to share a photo that shows the face of one of our guests or residents, please check with staff to ensure that they have consented via our photo release.

## SUBSTANCE USE

On Property:

- No alcohol or drugs within property limits
- Vapes are permitted outside when no guests are present.
- Cigarettes are permitted only in designated outdoor smoking areas

Off Property:

- Providing alcohol or drugs to any intern, staff, volunteer, or guest under 21 years old will be cause for dismissal.
- Consumption or transportation of alcohol/drugs in camp vehicles is NOT permitted.

\*Breach of the Code of Conduct is cause for dismissal.\*



# WHO WE SERVE

## Teenagers in Group Homes

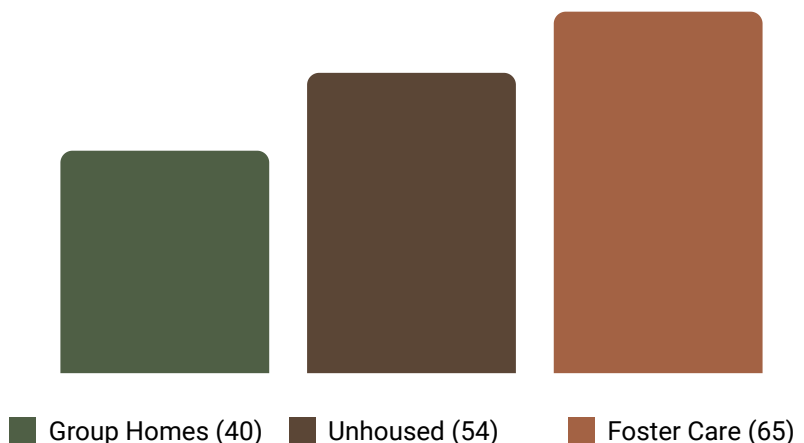
We are partnered with 2 nonprofit organizations that operate 7 group homes in Colorado. Group homes are usually for teenagers (age 14-18) who are unable to be placed with a foster family due to behavioral concerns or a criminal record. Teenagers from group homes are always accompanied by multiple group home staff while participating in our weekend retreats. Once teenagers complete the home's program they are either reunited with family, placed in a foster home, or age out of the system and transition to independent living.

## Children and Families in Foster Care

Foster children have been placed in state custody due to cases of neglect (63%), parental substance use (38%), or physical abuse (13%). The priority of foster care is always to reunite the child with their birth family. If this is not possible, the children are either adopted or remain in foster care until they age out of the system.

## Families Who are Unhoused

We are partnered with a nonprofit shelter in Colorado Springs for families experiencing homelessness. This is a temporary shelter for families who are in crisis that supports the families in locating affordable housing and employment.



**2025 Demographics**

# MEET THE TEAM



Tanner@rmascent.org  
(719) 661-2159

## Executive Director

Tanner Harrold

Son of the original founder, Tanner has been involved with the organization since its inception as Knights of Heroes. He received his BA in Psychology from Humboldt State University, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Nature-Based Counseling at Naropa University. His #1 passion is connecting members of his community to this land which has gifted him so much through the years. Tanner is also the on-site Wilderness EMT and Waterfront Lifeguard.



Liz@rmascent.org  
(513) 869-9249

## Operations Director

Liz Kelly

Liz volunteered with RMA in 2024, returned as staff in 2025, and can't wait for another amazing season! She holds a B.S. in Non-Profit Management from Miami University and has training in herbalism, yoga, and sound healing. Liz is passionate about creating spaces where people can grow and learn alongside the land. Her goal is to foster a safe, nurturing environment that encourages personal growth, connection, and renewal through nature.

## Program Assistant

Our Program Assistant position is reserved for previous RMA interns. It provides an opportunity for participants of our program to engage with our organization on a deeper level, gain experience in the field of outdoor programming, and continue developing the relationships created in previous years.

## Interns

As mentioned above, our internship program is for young adults transitioning out of the foster care system. We usually have 1-2 interns at any given moment over the summer and fall.

## Volunteers

Our volunteers bring life to our community. Coming from all around the world, we usually have 3-5 volunteers living and working on-site per month



# SCHEDULES

We schedule our volunteers in two groups; Saturday - Monday and Friday-Saturday, for a total of 23.5 scheduled hours per week.

Day	Activity	Group 1	Group 2
Mon	Cleanup	9:30AM - 4:00PM	OFF
Tue	OFF	OFF	OFF
Wed	OFF	OFF	OFF
Thur	OFF	OFF	OFF
Fri	Prep + Arrival	OFF	9:30AM - 4:00PM
Sat	Retreat	8AM - 8PM	8AM - 8PM
Sun	Retreat	8AM - 4PM	8AM - 4PM

Here is a sample of one of our adventure-focused retreat schedules:

Day	Time	Activity
Friday	7:00PM	Arrival
	8:00PM	Opening Fire
Saturday	8:00AM	Breakfast
	9:00AM	Low Ropes
	12:00PM	Lunch
	1:00PM	Kayaking
	3:00PM	Tomahawks
	4:00PM	Free Time
	6:00PM	Dinner
	7:00PM	Campfire
Sunday	8:00AM	Breakfast
	9:00AM	High Ropes
	12:00PM	Lunch
	1:00PM	Cleanup
	2:00PM	Closing Fire
	3:00PM	Departure

# TASKS

## Programming (40%)

- Belaying ropes course
- Leading activities
- Connecting with guests

## Meal Prep (20%)

- Grocery shopping
- Cooking meals
- Washing dishes

## Housekeeping (20%)

- Washing bedding
- Making beds
- Sweeping/mopping
- Wiping down bathrooms

## Groundskeeping (20%)

- Trail maintenance
- Cutting grass
- Picking weeds
- Gardening
- Chopping firewood
- Creative projects





# TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

## Overview

A majority of the children we work with have experienced significant trauma in their life so it's important we hold a compassionate awareness through all of our interactions. Trauma can cause children to react in unexpected ways like aggression, running, excessive attachment, detachment, and more. It is our responsibility to ALWAYS meet these behaviors with love, respect, and understanding regardless of our own personal triggers.

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## Connecting Principles

The majority of our time should be spent connecting with children, as opposed to correcting them. Here are some ways to connect:

- Calm, warm tone of voice and eye contact
  - Healthy touch (high fives, hand on shoulder, and hugs when appropriate)
  - Say yes only when you are certain you can follow through
  - Provide choices to affirm personal autonomy
  - Playful redirection (instead of harsh)
- 

## Empowering Principles

A child "acts out" when one of their needs is not being met. We should always make an effort to anticipate and accommodate needs. For example:

- Providing ample nutrition
  - Allow sensory engagement (especially for children with ADHD)
  - Provide warnings to ease stress in transition
  - Respect boundaries (not participating in certain activities, saying no to touch)
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## Correcting Principles

We should spend the least amount of time correcting behavior. Behavioral correction should be given in the following way:

- **Immediately** after behavior
- **Directly** to the child engaging in the behavior
- **Efficient** level of intervention that matches level of behavior
- **Action-Based** direction with opportunity to try again

# TRAVEL INSTRUCTIONS

## Flying

If you choose to fly to Colorado, we can pick you up from Colorado Springs. This means that you can either fly directly into the Colorado Springs Airport (we will pick you up at the airport), or fly into Denver International Airport and take a bus to Colorado Springs (we can pick you up from the bus stop).

## Driving

We are located about 1-1.5 hrs from Colorado Springs. There are about 2 miles of dirt road leading to our property, however 4-wheel drive is not necessary.

### MAP LINKS

Google Maps:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/MqUWZqVLQjbS8nsn7>

Apple Maps:

<https://maps.apple.com/?address=Victor,%20CO%20%2080860,%20United%20States&aid=10467323827075005868&ll=38.751144,-105.070586&lsp=7618&q=Dropped%20Pin>

### STREET ADDRESS

This address will take you close to our property, but it is not quite exact.

5987 Co Rd 8  
Cripple Creek, CO 80813

### WRITTEN DIRECTIONS

- From Divide, turn left (south) onto State Highway 67 toward Cripple Creek.
- When the highway begins to veer right, turn left onto CR-81 to continue south for 3 miles.
- Turn sharp left from CR-81 onto CR-8 (Gold Camp Rd) and follow for 2.2 miles.
- Turn left at a post covered in signs
- Follow the road straight until you reach the lodge!

\*We will connect you with other volunteers arriving on the same day, so if you would like to coordinate travel plans and/or carpooling you can do so\*



# PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

## Weather/Conditions

- Temperature: During the day, the temperature ranges from 60-80F, and at night from 35-55F.
- Rain: Typical of Colorado summers, it usually rains for about an hour or two every afternoon.
- Elevation: We are at 10,000 feet! It will take about 2 weeks to adjust to the altitude. This frequently causes mild headaches, dry nose/skin, and shortness of breath.

## Accommodations

Your cabin will include a bathroom with a shower. You will likely share your cabin with 1 or 2 other volunteers of the same gender during your month-long stay. We provide sheets, towels, blankets, and pillows. If you require special accommodations please let us know and we'll try our best to make sure you're taken care of :)

## Wildlife

There are all kinds of critters on our mountain!

Very Common:	Common:	Less Common:	Rare:
Chipmunks	Black bears	Moose	Mountain Lions
Mice	Elks	Coyotes	Bobcats
Mosquitos	Deer		

Don't worry, we have lots of people around so they keep their space. Also no snakes!

## Packing List

Clothing:	Gear
- Rain Jacket	- Flashlight
- Beanie	- Backpack
- Brimmed hat	- Sunscreen
- Hiking shoes	- Water bottle
- Sandals	- Earplugs
- Swimsuit	



# NEXT STEPS

1

## **Submit Paperwork**

Please review and sign our volunteer agreement. This does not yet confirm your volunteer slot, but it ensures you have all of the information you need before making your decision. This agreement includes Code of Conduct, Health History, and Liability Release. This form is located on our website [rmascent.org/volunteer](https://rmascent.org/volunteer).

2

## **Background Check**

Once you are ready to commit to your volunteer session, please submit a \$50 background check deposit to confirm your volunteer slot. This deposit will be refunded upon arrival at our property.

After we have received your deposit, we will send you an email through Checkr to complete your background check.

3

## **Zoom Training**

We will schedule a zoom training with you about two weeks prior to your arrival. This will include reviewing the principles of Trauma-Informed Care, getting set up on our communication platform, and confirming arrival dates.

4

## **COME ON UP THE MOUNTAIN!**