

# CHALLENGE ASPEN CELEBRATES THIRTY YEARS

THREE DECADES OF IMPACT, COUNTLESS MEMORIES, AND A FUTURE STILL WAITING TO BE WRITTEN



## YEAR-ROUND LIMITLESS ADVENTURE

Students discover joy and possibility through Challenge Aspen's partnerships with local schools. *PG. 2*

## OPENING DOORS TO POSSIBILITY

Courage takes new form as veterans find healing and purpose through Challenge Aspen's year-round adventures. *PG. 6*

## GROWING UP WITH CHALLENGE ASPEN

For those who took the first runs with Challenge Aspen, adventure became a path to courage, confidence, and belonging. *PG. 7*

## THE NEXT HEADLINE IS YOURS TO WRITE

This year, we are celebrating 30 years of Challenge Aspen. But how do you capture all of the wonderful things that have happened in that time? Since 1995, we have opened doors to adventure for **over 18,000 people** and awarded over **\$4.5 million in scholarships**. In the end we realized that the best way to celebrate this milestone was by sharing the stories of people who have found hope, healing and opportunity through our programs – and those who continue to do so today.

**For three decades, donors like you have made every milestone possible. As you look back through the years with us, I invite you to help write the next headline by giving to Challenge Aspen today.**

**LINDSAY CAGLEY**, Chief Executive Officer



**CHALLENGE ASPEN**





▲ With Challenge Aspen's Grit Chair and a little teamwork, Christian hits the trail for his first hike with his Ready for the World classmates.



▲ Alex on the Elk Camp Gondola between powder laps during Basalt High School's ski day with Challenge Aspen



▲ Alex and instructor Tommy Spiers bi-ski in 8" of powder

# Year-Round Limitless Adventure

## A STORY OF PARTNERSHIP, POSSIBILITY, AND LIFELONG IMPACT

When Basalt High School Principal Megan Hartmann watched her students strap on snowboards for the first time, she saw courage, connection, and community partnership in action.

“Today was the first day that some of our students have ever snowboarded, even though they’ve lived in the valley their whole lives,” Hartmann said. “What Challenge Aspen has done in creating an inclusive community and providing support for every single student in this valley to participate in skiing and snowboarding is incredible.”

Across the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys, moments like these are multiplying through Challenge Aspen’s School Partner Programs, developed with local special education and transition classes to provide outdoor recreation for youth with disabilities. Programs include adaptive ski lessons for Significant Support Needs (SSN) classes and year-round activities such as hiking, Nordic skiing, paddleboarding, and archery—each building confidence, friendship, and a love of the outdoors.

“Challenge  
Aspen has  
truly been a  
lifeline for my  
students”

— Chelsea Robson

At Bridges High School, Ready for the World teacher Chelsea Robson has seen those changes firsthand. The program helps young adults with disabilities build independence and life skills after graduation. “Challenge Aspen has truly been a lifeline for my students,” Robson said. “Their confidence and health have

grown through every challenge, and the friendships they’ve built through Challenge Aspen have far outlasted the school system itself, creating a lasting sense of community and belonging.”

“I’ve learned so  
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I got out of my  
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— Kendra Fernandez

One of those students, Kendra Fernandez, shared, “I’ve learned so much to become independent. I got out of my comfort zone to try skiing, archery, and paddleboarding.” Each new activity, she said, helped her believe she could do more.

Throughout the Roaring Fork Valley, students in local special-education and transition programs are discovering their strength, their voice, and their place in nature. All programs are offered at no cost to schools or families, thanks to donations and grant funding, so every student has the chance to experience what’s possible.

Challenge Aspen today, and into the future, is a year-round, valley-wide partner shaping inclusive communities and writing new stories of courage and connection every day. Your generosity makes every one of those stories possible.

## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION FOR 30 YEARS

**\$4.5M+**  
in scholarships  
awarded since 1995

over  
**18,000**  
**PEOPLE SERVED**  
since 1995

**74%**  
receive  
financial aid

**70% OF DAYS**  
include financial  
assistance

**100+**  
disability  
types served

**100%**  
of veterans receive complete  
or partial financial aid



▲ Adam, Challenge Aspen staff, and volunteers ride CMC's Spring Valley trails above Carbondale



▲ Adam and his service-dog, Miso with longtime friends Gus and Antonella at Challenge Aspen's 2024 annual gala.

# On a Ride Toward Access for All

Adam Lavender always loved the rush of mountain biking. In the early nineties, he helped establish many of the valley's now beloved trail networks and raced downhill at a semi-professional level. Until in 2012 a crash at a Freeride World Tour event shattered his C4 vertebrae, leaving him paralyzed from the neck down.

The crash ended one chapter of Adam's life and began another defined by resilience and certainly not without struggle. It took him two years just to be able to lift his arm. He recognizes that healing is a never-ending journey, and the key, he shared, is to “celebrate the wins, and never stop working towards your goals.”

For the first time since his accident, Adam celebrated one of the biggest wins of his life with Challenge Aspen when he rode an adaptive mountain bike on a local trail this summer. The world of adaptive mountain biking is exciting new territory, and Adam is thrilled to be back in the saddle and at the forefront of it. Your generosity is making Adam's story possible. Every gift helps someone discover that healing, joy, and adventure are still within reach.



▲ Adam using Challenge Aspen's Tetraski, cutting edge equipment that allows the user to ski independently through the use of breath control and joystick mechanisms.



“We had one sit-ski and a couple of crutch skis for stand-up amputees. I still remember the day Amanda was buried in toilet paper being fitted for a sit-ski. The Snowmass mountain manager said, ‘We need to do something about this.’”

— Houston Cowan, Co-Founder, Aspen Times, 2025



“From my first turns in a bright vest to skiing black diamonds, Challenge Aspen taught me that possibility has no limits.”

— Laura Forbes, Participant Testimonial

“Challenge Aspen has allowed Max to not just participate alongside his peers in school, but to excel, especially on ski days. It gave him purpose, allowing him to participate in outdoor activities like any other child in the valley. I can’t imagine where we’d be without them.”

— Katie Grange, Mother of Max, Aspen Times, 2025



“I hope they (the students) gain what I gained, and that was a level of confidence that is unimaginable.”

— Joseph Gray, Teacher at Tennessee School for the Blind & Paralympian Track & Field, Aspen Times, 2022

“CAMO has guided me on an incredible journey— from cruising groomed runs to confidently riding the Superpipe at Buttermilk. It enriched my skills and fostered deep connections with fellow veterans who share a passion for adventure. The camaraderie and support have turned challenges into cherished memories and lasting friendships.”

— Chad Prichard, Veteran, Participant Testimonial



OUR  
LEGACY  
IS IN THE  
STORIES  
YOU  
HELPED  
MAKE  
POSSIBLE



“Challenge Aspen is an amazing organization that opens up the world of skiing and outdoor adventure to populations that otherwise would never get the opportunity. As a teacher of individuals with disabilities, I know how few opportunities exist for them to engage. We are extremely grateful for the love and generosity that make it all possible.”

— Christopher Ducharme, Teacher at Tennessee School for the Blind during their annual senior trip with Challenge Aspen

“Once I found out about adaptive skiing, it wasn’t feeling like life was over anymore. There was hope. It gave me something to hold on to and something to look forward to. It gave me something to live for.”

— Mary Porter, Army Veteran with ALS, Aspen Times, 2023

“I had a stroke fourteen months ago... Before my time on skis with Coby I had four goals— driving a car, riding a bike, skiing, and fly-fishing. I’ve now knocked one off the list. Even if I never ski again, I know it will be my decision and not a result of the stroke, which means a lot to me.”

— Dave Hardin, Participant Testimonial



# Opening Doors to Possibility

Challenge Aspen Military Opportunities (CAMO) was formed in 2005 in response to large numbers of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans returning home with service-related injuries.

CAMO began by inviting wounded service members to the slopes of Snowmass for winter retreats that encompassed everything from adaptive ski and snowboard lessons, to yoga, breathwork and music therapy to promote camaraderie, movement, laughter, and healing. The goal of CAMO retreats has and continues to be giving disabled veterans the opportunity to connect with each other, support to try new things, and the chance to develop a fresh, positive outlook on life that they can take home with them.

What started as a handful of winter retreats has since grown to become one of the country's leading military adaptive recreation programs, uniting veterans their families through shared experiences in Colorado's great outdoors.



▲ CAMO's advanced snowsports retreat summits Highland Bowl.

Today, CAMO hosts year-round adventures — from cycling up Independence Pass and rafting down the Roaring Fork River. Veterans describe the program as a lifeline, offering camaraderie and belonging that lasts long after each trip ends.

**“As a veteran with PTSD, TBI, and physical injuries, I’m so grateful for these therapeutic opportunities. The friendship, fellowship, and shared adventures are hugely impactful in the healing process.”**

— CAMO Participant Survey

As The Aspen Times recently reported in “Challenge Aspen's Ski Retreats Help Military Vets Cope with the Past,” Vietnam veteran Lt. Col. Frank Anderson witnessed that healing firsthand: “The transformation that goes on saves lives.”



▲ Ski-biking at a CAMO winter sports retreat



▲ An early CAMO river expedition



▲ CAMO's second annual Ride the Pass Western Slope Social



▲ CAMO partners with Velofloprojekt to host an adaptive mountain bike retreat for disabled veterans.

# Growing Up With Challenge Aspen

## A STORY OF UNSTOPPABLE ENCOURAGEMENT

For 30 years, Challenge Aspen has grown alongside the people we serve, and few friendships capture that journey better than Danielle and Max's. They met as young children on the mountain and have grown up together, cheering each other on through every new adventure, from their first wobbly turns on skis to racing slalom in the Special Olympics.

Born with cerebral palsy, Danielle Coulter was one of the first children to take part in Challenge Aspen's programming. She was just four years old when her mom signed her up for ski lessons and play camp. Max Grange, who also began participating with Challenge Aspen at a young age, is fueled by the adrenaline

of skiing — they don't call him “Big Air Max” for nothing. Together, he and Danielle have tackled the slopes, tried paddleboarding and archery, starred in Music & Dance Camp performances, and competed side by side in the Special Olympics. With Max at her side, Danielle has gone on to become a pioneer in adaptive snowboarding, opening doors for other athletes to follow.

They celebrate each other's victories, encourage each other to try what once seemed impossible, and remind everyone around them that friendship and possibility have no limits. That same spirit continues today in every program, every season, and every story of courage.



▲ Danielle (left) and Max (right) sport multiple Special Olympics Medals

## What is Your Challenge Aspen Story?

**We asked our community to share their experiences. Laura Forbes was among the first to respond with her story.**

Dear Challenge Aspen,

I would like to offer some history about two amazing ski instructors, Annabelle Baldwin and Tom Spiers. Tom took me skiing to Ajax, now known as Aspen Mountain, when I first arrived in 2006. I was a blind skier wearing the big vest. By 2020, before the pandemic, I was skiing black runs on Snowmass, blind or seeing. Tom was determined to put me on diamonds, and now I ski diamonds thanks to him.

After surgery in 2022, I met a little girl named Belle. She received her first medal, and we made history by sharing Challenge Aspen on Instagram through the We Finish Together Foundation. We handed out medals to celebrate what Challenge Aspen stands for: kindness, compassion, and making adventures accessible to all, making the mountains accessible to all.

Even though I was just learning to use my eyes again, Belle decided on the third day of skiing, in the first of so many wonderful adventures together, that we would have a fresh powder day in the best blizzard of our lives. She has taught me to enjoy the mountain and enjoy my talent, yet she challenges me to try harder, to ski faster, and to keep improving. She even got me to race NASTAR, where I skied a 54-second run—imagine if I had known the course.

She has also taken me across 90 percent of Snowmass Mountain on blacks and blues. I cannot thank Challenge Aspen enough for giving me two amazing teachers who have taught me not just to enjoy skiing, but to become the best skier I can be.

Thank you, Challenge Aspen. Enjoy this history.

Sincerely, Laura Forbes



▲ Laura (left) and Annabelle (right) with their “We Finish Together” medals.



▲ Laura skis a black diamond run at Snowmass Mountain



# GIVE TODAY

## HELP US WRITE THE NEXT HEADLINE



### DONATE

Use the envelope provided, scan the QR code to make your donation online.  
[challengeaspen.org/donate](https://challengeaspen.org/donate)



### BECOME A MONTHLY SUPPORTER

Support Challenge Aspen through a monthly donation of any amount. Visit [challengeaspen.org/donate](https://challengeaspen.org/donate)

### JOIN NATIONAL COUNCIL

Become a champion for Challenge Aspen. National Council members gain access to special events and benefits throughout the year. To learn more visit:  
[challengeaspen.org/nationalcouncil](https://challengeaspen.org/nationalcouncil)

### OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

In-kind donations, gifts of stock, corporate sponsorship, planned giving, submit your donation for a corporate match, or host a fundraiser. Contact Director of Development, Brenna Sandstorm, to learn more.



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