



2023 Annual Report



TURNING PASSION INTO PURPOSE



We believe everyone has the power to give back to the land they adventure on and the communities that inspire them.



Together, we empower individuals to use running as a mechanism to raise awareness for causes close to their hearts.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

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VISION

We harness the power of community to change the world.

MISSION

Through events, we empower individuals and organizations to raise funds for charitable causes that matter to them.

VALUES

- **Inspire:** We excite and encourage our community to turn their passions into purpose.
- **Engage:** We connect with individuals and organizations to leverage the community for the greater good.
- **Support:** We provide what our community needs to succeed.

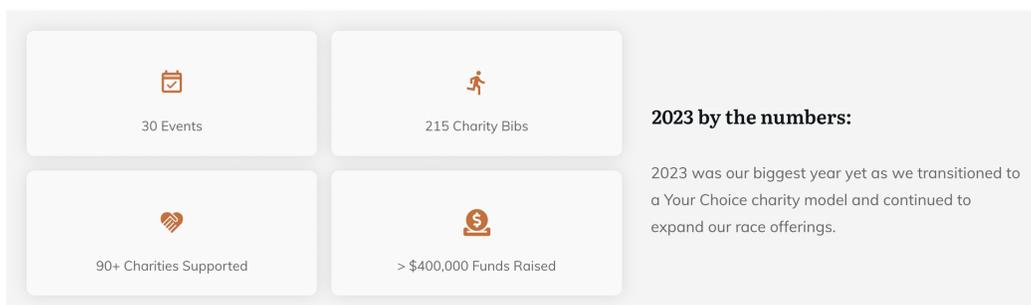


A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Wander Project supporters,

As we reflect on 2023, we want to acknowledge the strides we took towards furthering our mission of “through events, empowering individuals and organizations to raise funds for charitable causes that matter to them.” This year we raised a record number of funds for a record number of organizations thanks to your continued support. We are incredibly grateful for the collective action of everyone involved in our programs to give back to the communities we run and play in.

Our Impact



This past year has been a time of transition and growth as our focus continues to evolve to new program priorities. We continued to build ties with an amazing set of events throughout the country that share our commitment to giving back to the communities they run in. By engaging with events ranging from 5K to 250 miles, we aim to inspire a wide range of individuals to use outdoor adventure as a way to support and draw attention to causes they care about. We continued to grow our relationships with nonprofit partners that empower their supporters to bring about change through running. For the first time, we also provided participants the option to select the charity and cause of their choice. The individuals participating as charity bibs are the focal point of our program, and in 2023 we had a record number lace up to run for a purpose!

At the close of an eventful year, we express our deepest gratitude to Amy Ben-Horin, who has decided to step down after years of visionary leadership as our Executive Director. Amy's profound impact at Wander Project, especially in developing our charity bib program, leaves a lasting legacy of empowerment and community engagement. We welcome Zander Chase, a previous charity bib athlete and board member with a startup background and a passion for environmental health, as our new Executive Director. Zander's experience and commitment to our mission promises to guide us into an exciting future of growth and continued positive impact on the running community and beyond.

We are incredibly grateful for the continued support of our charity bib athletes, donors, partners, and all who have helped us make significant progress towards our mission. We are committed to giving back as much as we can to the communities we run in and hope to continue evolving as needed to fulfill this goal. Thank you again for your support, and we look forward to continuing to work together to make a difference in the world.



Lindsey Powers
Board President
Wander Project



Zander Chase
Executive Director
Wander Project

A catalyst for good work

CHARITY BIB PROGRAM

“Turning passion into purpose,” can be achieved in many ways. Wander Project grew from a running company so it is only natural that a charity bib program is our framework to help others create change.

Historically, charity bibs were known as an option to get into big, well-known runs for serious athletes. Folks could apply to run for a pre-designated charity as a way to get in. While those charity bibs still exist, Wander Project’s charity bib program is for **everyone**.

Regardless of distance, pace, location, or notoriety, the 2023 Charity Bib program allowed participants to turn their walk, hike, or run into a fundraiser for a charity of their choice. They chose everything, starting with over 30 events from 5ks to multi-day events spread out across the country. Then they selected the cause they wanted to raise for, it could have been one of our amazing charity partners or **for the first time**, a charity of their choice. At registration fees were waived in exchange for a commitment to hit the required fundraising minimum determined by the selected distance.

Once registered, we supported them until race day with resources, meet ups, and timelines to get them to the fundraising finish line.



215
charity bibs

Participants
from
39
states



30
events

93
charities
supported

Over
4,850
miles run

\$400,650
raised



A YEAR OF CHOICE

While charity bibs have had a say in which charity partners they wanted to support in years prior, 2023 brought Wander Project the “Your Choice” option.

This option means rather than a menu of focus areas to consider, a charity bib participant can select **any 501c3 charity based in the U.S.** This provided the freedom for participants to choose the causes they were truly, deeply passionate about. It also made it easier for folks to fundraise since they could choose local organizations directly benefiting their community **and** increasing the reach of communities and causes supported by Wander Project.

Dozens of charity bibs selected the “Your Choice” option, bringing awareness and funds to nonprofit organizations big and small around the country. The response was so overwhelmingly positive that staff worked diligently in 2023 to lay the ground work to expand to international charities for 2024.

Bryan and Gabe, father and son, pictured below, ran for This Time Tomorrow an organization that provides support to families currently fighting cancer. As a family who had used that support the year prior, it was a full circle moment for Bryan and Gabe to run together and directly provide funds for multiple families battling cancer.



NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Charity organizations are key to our goal of giving back to the communities we run in. We partner with organizations that align with our values to encourage more supporters to use running as a medium for raising awareness and funds.



Our national partners were featured on all of our events and brought together support from across the nation. Our national partners had a combined total of over 60 athletes raising awareness for their causes!

Our regional partners were featured on up to five races and brought together supporters for targeted events throughout the year.



Our local partners give back to the immediate community around events. Many are stewards of the environment and trails that we recreate on and enable these magical places to continue to exist.

NONPROFIT PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



2023 was a record breaking year for our nonprofit partners. In their first year of partnering with us Bigger Than The Trail had 28 charity bibs run, **raising over \$27,000** to shine light on mental health.

These funds went towards providing support to individuals struggling with mental health.

The support from charity bib athletes provided **hundreds** of months of counseling to people in need.

Meet Ann

Ann's son has major depression, anxiety and ADHD. He has been dealing with these diagnoses since 3rd grade. Imagine being a parent of a 3rd grader who comes home and asks you, 'Mom when are you going to get me someone to talk to? I do not feel like I belong on this planet.'

This was a scary time in her life and she honestly never thought he would make it to adulthood. There were days she cried in her car because the school had called again and she did not know how to help him.



Now at 23 he is still dealing with his major depression and anxieties daily. He will tell you he is just used to being sad even when you think he is happy. Until you yourself experience something like this it's impossible to understand.

Ann's story is not an isolated case. She has friends who have lost loved ones because of mental illness and are still dealing with the pain everyday from it. Because of this and many other reasons she chose to raise money for Bigger Than The Trail as she set out on this journey. Ann ended up raising over \$5,000 for BTTT and ran 250 miles at the Cocodona 250 raising awareness and funds that will benefit numerous individuals who are struggling with mental health.

STORIES OF INSPIRATION

Overall Top Fundraiser

MEET JENNY

\$42,325 Raised for Bridging Bionics

When Jenny registered for a charity bib for the 2023 Zion Ultra she hopped on a call with our team and said, “I’d like to set my goal for \$10,000.” We knew then that this would be a participant to keep an eye on for the overall 2023 top fundraiser.

Jenny selected to run as a “Your Choice” bib, meaning she could select any 501c3 charity based in the United States. For her, the choice was obvious, Bridging Bionics.

Bridging Bionics is a nonprofit with a neuro-rehabilitation program created to help individuals who have neurological mobility impairments regain mobility and walk again.

This organization is close to Jenny’s heart as her daughter has benefited from the program. With that motivation inspiring her, she easily crushed her \$10,000 goal, increasing to 15,000 then 20,000. By race day she had individually raised \$42,325.00 and her team collectively raised over \$48,000!

Jenny turned her run at Zion Ultras into meaningful change that will provide life-changing support for numerous families served by the Bridging Bionics Foundation.



*Antelope Canyon Ultras Fundraiser***MEET ANDREW***\$5,026 Raised for Bigger Than The Trails*

Andrew Gillis didn't set out to change his whole world when he registered for the Antelope Canyon Ultras 100 mile race. The allure of a waived entry fee drew him into a charity bib, and after researching charity partners, selected Bigger Than The Trail, a personally close cause. He found repeated motivated by the ways his community showed up to support him and his cause. Andrew ended up being the top overall fundraiser at Antelope Canyon Ultras, but his story didn't end there.



“My charity bib experience was very rewarding. Fundraising was invigorating and inspired me in ways I wouldn't have been able to imagine otherwise. The fulfillment of giving back to the greater human community while doing something rewarding for myself was like having cake and eating it at the same time.”

The fundraising took on a life of its own, gave me a second and third wind, and brought such fulfillment that I am now working towards creating my own nonprofit. ” -Andrew

Andrew was so inspired by his experience that he decided to start his own nonprofit. He's currently fundraising to support initial operations for his new organization, Upward Spiral which will focus on leveraging fitness, art, community service, and adventure to aid in healing, maintaining, and progressing mental health for every and any one. This support will be provided through mobile workshops with an emphasis options that have no cost barriers to entry.

When asked what advice he would give to someone considering a charity bib Andrew shared, “If you are thinking of running with a charity bib, DO IT!! You will find that many people, far more than you think, are ready and willing to help; they just need to be asked. When they see and feel your passion, they will give even more!”

How one charity bib's run turned into a 350 kids running

THE IMPACT OF ONE CHARITY BIB

Dear Wander Project,

We were the recipient of just over \$1,500 in funds from your organization thanks to efforts by our running friend, Dylan Jones.

Our goal with these funds was to cover the cost of race entry fees for students running in our races. We used the funds for three races specifically and wanted to send you pictures!

Pie Run was held on November 9 and we welcomed over 50 students - this was approximately one third of our overall attendance. We were so excited to see our friends from another town! Because of the grant funds, we paid for the race entries and the coaches were able to pay for a school bus to bring 25 kids from a town 40 minutes away!

Jingle Bell Run was on Dec 9 and we saw almost 200 kids! We have developed a great relationship with local coaches, such as Coach Dylan Jones, who work to recruit students to join us. Being able to offer a drastically discounted rate because of your grant funds meant more participation from lower-income schools in the area.

Last, we held Resolution Run on January 1. We covered the cost of over 100 students because of these grant funds!

We are attaching pictures from the races - we are so very grateful that over 350 students were able to participate in our races because of your generosity!

Thank you for the grant funds!

Jennifer Crosby
For the Love of Go



2023 TOP FUNDRAISERS

- **Saguaro Half Marathon**, \$1,635.00 Bailey McLagan
- **Zion Half Marathon**, \$7,750.00 Jared Davis
- **Antelope Canyon Ultras**, \$5,026.00 Andrew V Gillis
- **Zion Ultras**, \$42,325.00 Jenny Soho
- **Bryce Canyon Ultras**, \$2,598.00 Chris Morrison
- **Yosemite Half Marathon**, \$2,702.09 Nancy Mogy
- **Grand Teton & Yellowstone Half Marathons & 5K**, \$11,595.00 Bryan Komars
- **Glacier Half Marathon**, \$1,650.00 Doug Mitchell
- **Mt. Rainier Half Marathon**, \$1,525.00 Molly Parrish
- **Rocky Mountain Half Marathon**, \$1,065.00 Marissa Leandro
- **Smoky Mountains Half Marathon**, \$3,958.00 Carly Stafford
- **Grand Circle Trailfest**, \$5,300.00 Kimberly Psaltis
- **Lake Powell Half Marathon**, \$5,594.00 Clayton Frank
- **Joshua Tree Half Marathon**, \$2,060.00 Sophia Krasny



EVENT PARTNERS

In 2023 we had an amazing set of event partners with events ranging from 5Ks to half marathons to multi-day events to a 250 mile race! All of these events share our vision of empowering individuals to use outdoor adventure as a way to draw attention to causes they care about.



New Partnership Spotlight



In their first year of partnering with Wander Project, Seattle based Orca Running had 10 charity bibs raise \$10,000 through two of their events in 2023!

ORCA RUNNING

Increasing Ultra Distance Events

We continued to expand our race offerings into trail and ultra distance events with some of our largest fundraisers covering hundreds of miles while raising thousands of dollars. Cocodona 250 and Transrockies Run each had 5 fundraisers raise over \$5,000 for charities, giving back in big ways as they covered big distances.




Vacation Races

Vacation Races was our most supportive event partner in 2023 with 17 events with charity bibs throughout the year. Including our first sold out event, the Yosemite Half Marathon



Navajo Parks Race Series

Navajo Parks Race Series continued to offer charity bibs for three of their events in addition to serving as an official charity partner.

Additional Event Partners

Charity bibs were also offered for Suffer Better & the Running Up for Air Series, AKtive Soles' Hatcher Pass 50 Miler and Marathon, and Evergreen Trail Runs.



STORIES OF SUPPORT



VOLUNTEERING IN PAGE, AZ

One of our most unique days of support this year coincided with Vacation Races' Antelope Canyon Ultras. Wander Project arranged with a local Navajo family to help rebuild and move two hogans in the area.

The Antelope Canyon Ultras is a special event because it works with local families in the area who provide access to the land the events are held on. This volunteer day allowed charity bibs, regular bibs, and attending family and friends to give some of their time back to the community hosting them. For 2023 this was our only volunteer project. Through sun, rain, and a bit of hail we were able to help set the foundation for one of the new hogans while learning the significance and history. It was a special day for everyone involved.

BEST FRIENDS DAY TRIP

After lots of feedback at Grand Circle Trailfest in 2022 about Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, a charity in the Kanab area, we held a field trip in 2023.

At the 2023 Grand Circle Trailfest, Wander Project Staff took two dozen guests, charity bibs and regular bibs, plus guests of the runners, on a guided tour of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. It's not just that it was close by, but one of our charity bibs selected Best Friends as their charity. This connection allowed us to share Wander Project's mission and how one fundraiser can make an impact on a charity in real time. Inspiration was found in every story and around every corner. One of the families on the tour even went back and adopted a kitten the next day they were so moved to create the change they want to see in the world.

The chance to share stories, learn about causes close to everyone's heart, share a meal, and experience some good work being done was a highlight for everyone.



outdoor element

As far as support goes, in 2023 Wander Project added its first corporate partner. Outdoor Element, manufacturer of high quality adventure and survival tools, joined as a Trailhead partner, pledging to support Wander Project through the 2023 season.

STAFF



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Zander Chase



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Courtney Bierschbach



FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amy Ben-Horin

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LINDSEY POWERS - 2023 Incoming President

JOSH LUKASAK - Treasurer

JOCELYN BOSS - Secretary

SALEM STANLEY - 2023 Outgoing President

KRISTINE HOLFERTY

JAMES DYKSTRA

LAWRENCE COOPER

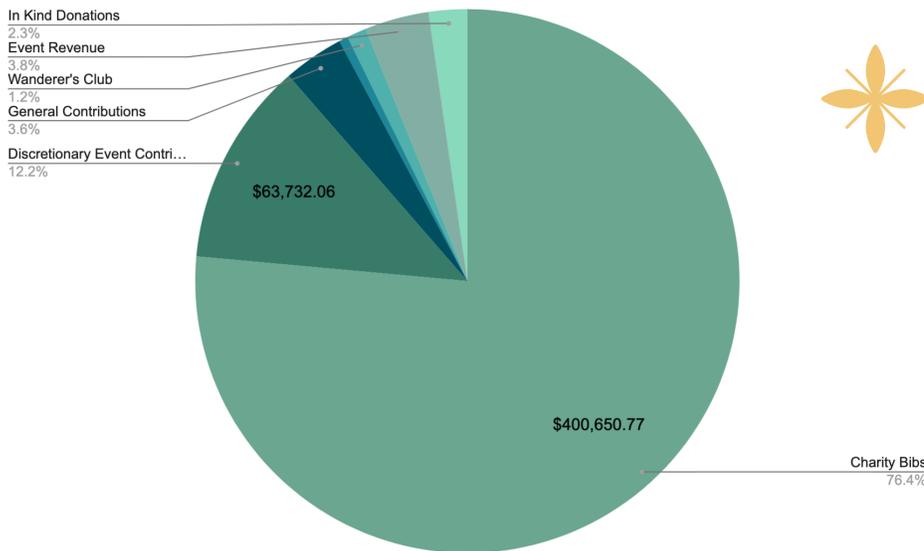
ALICIA ROBB

A Year in Review

FINANCIALS

Wander Project is a U.S. tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are committed to engaging with participants and running events to support local communities by inspiring fundraising and service. All donations are tax deductible to the furthest extent of the law. Tax ID 83-1778644

The following documents are available to the public upon a written request to our Executive Director at zander@wanderproject.org: 1023, 990, governing documents, conflict of interest policy and financial statements.



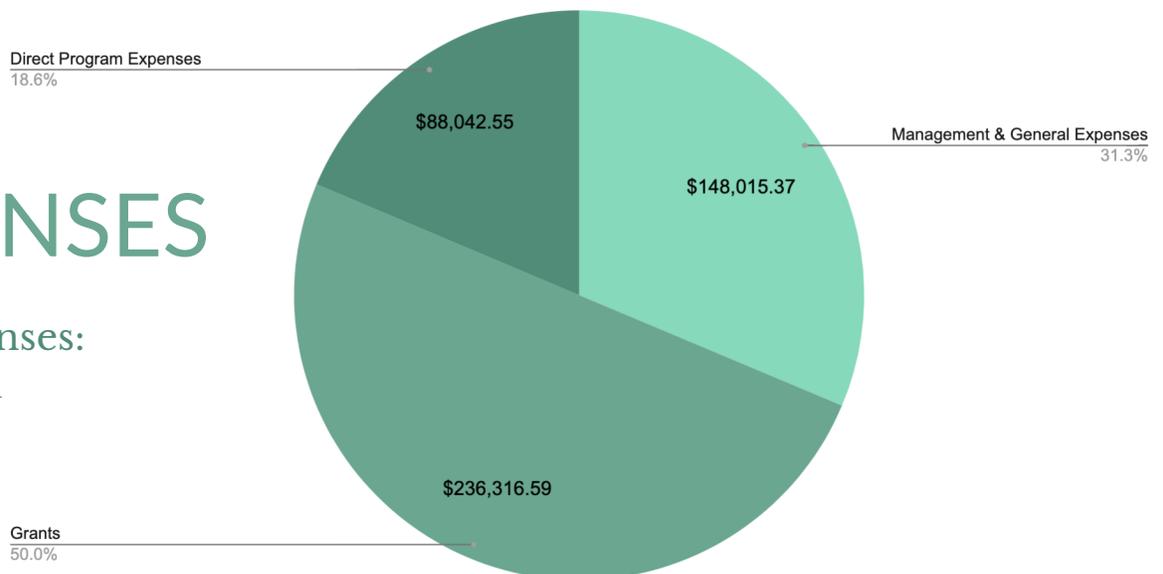
REVENUE

Total Revenue:
\$ 512,089.73



EXPENSES

Total Expenses:
\$ 472,374.51



To all the runners, walkers, hikers, pacers, partners, donors, volunteers, cheerleaders, event guides... to all the wanderers out there, we thank you for making 2023 our best year yet!



215

Charity bibs
running for
purpose.

93

Charities
supported
across the US.

30

Amazing
events to
choose from.

\$400,650

Raised for
charitable
causes.

We are thrilled to continue to expand our reach in 2024 and partner with more events and nonprofits around the country to engage individuals looking to run for purpose. We hope to see you out on the trails running for a cause next year!

Join The Movement 



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