



WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP & LEARNING
2015 ANNUAL REPORT



ADVENTURES IN LEARNING — LESSONS FOR LIFE



WILL'S MISSION



Wilderness Leadership & Learning's Mission is to provide diverse growth experiences and challenging learning opportunities to inspire and assist youth to make good decisions, become effective leaders, and achieve their goals.

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WILL is honored to be featured in the 2012-2013 *Catalogue for Philanthropy* as "One of the Best" community-based nonprofits in the Greater Washington region

"The WILL program means a lot to me – I learned something new every WILL program day. WILL has made me a better person and because of WILL I know that I am at the beginning of having a successful life." – Cheili



MESSAGE FROM WILL'S PRESIDENT

Dear Members of the WILL Family and Friends,

October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015 (FY15) marked the 11th year of Wilderness Leadership & Learning, Inc. (WILL) providing positive holistic youth development programming for DC youth.

We were pleased to have students from McKinley Tech and IDEA Public Charter School in WILL for the first time, and that there have been students from Bell in WILL all 11 years. For 8 years in a row, WILL's retention rate has been between 68% and 76%, far exceeding the 50% considered excellent for youth development programs (we have never been below 50%).

WILL youth were engaged in more than 335 hours of quality experiential learning, youth leadership, and life skills development activities that are designed to develop their inherent strengths, decision-making, and leadership skills.

Service learning is an important aspect of WILL. Each year we do at least two service projects giving back to the DC community - one is environmental in nature. In FY15, we replanted 400 native seedlings into larger containers for them to grow for the next year before being planted in the Anacostia River bottom, and planted 225 native wetland plants in the Anacostia River bottom during low tide, and, for the fourth year in a row, we packaged food at the Capital Area Food Bank for distribution to its clients.

Kristen Best and Tricia Duncan Co-Chaired a fantastic Third Annual WILL Power Party focused on leading WILL into its second decade of positively impacting DC youth from underserved neighborhoods, and we honored WILL Partner of the Year - The Steuart Foundation - a WILL champion since our inception.

We hired Kirsten Hagen as the WILL Program Associate, and attained a new revenue high - thank you to all who contributed to this milestone.

As we move forward into our 12th year, THANK YOU does not begin to express my gratitude to everyone who has been involved in the success of WILL's first 11 years - the schools with whom we partner, our program partners who assist us to provide amazing learning experiences, our volunteers, past and current Board members, the donors and funders who make the work we do possible, and the WILL youth and their families for believing in us and the positive impact WILL has on the youth with whom we work.

Warm regards,
Steve

There Are No Can'ts In WILL

WILL'S PILLARS

Wilderness Leadership & Learning is a holistic 12-month, experiential learning, youth leadership, and life-skills development program.

“My word to describe WILL is *educational* because I learned about things that I never knew about and was able to experience them.” – **Mifta**

OUR VALUE is found in our FOUR PILLARS:

Leadership & Self-Empowerment

Individual leadership, self-esteem, and confidence growth assist WILL youth increase their appreciation that each has the power and the ability to determine his/her life trajectory and to make decisions that lead to self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Critical Life Skills Development

WILL develops critical life skills, which are under-emphasized or not taught in school, such as financial literacy; accountability for behavior; communication skills; the importance of saying “please” and “thank you;” and how to make healthy nutrition decisions, set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound) goals, and create action plans to achieve them.

Environmental Awareness & Stewardship

Youth become more aware of the world around them and to be better stewards of the environment.

Cultural Awareness & Appreciation

WILL youth learn to be receptive to, to appreciate and to respect diversity and differences in others (e.g., race, gender, religion, country of origin, sexual orientation, and beliefs).

“In WILL, I learned to respect wildlife and that just like humans, animals and everything in nature has a purpose on the earth.” – **Jayla**

WILL'S PROGRAM

WILL believes that every youth has the potential to succeed and to create a full and meaningful life.

WILL'S CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- Ropes Course
- Rivers Day
- Holiday Party
- Nutrition & Cultural Awareness/Appreciation Days
- Biases, Diversity, & Inclusion day
- Day at the Newseum
- Bowling
- 3 Days at Karen Noonan Center (Chesapeake Bay Foundation Environmental Education Center)
- 3 SMART Goals Setting & Discussion Days
- 3 Financial Literacy Days
- College Admissions Forum/Expedition Orientation
- Environmental Service Project
- Scavenger Hunt on The Mall
- Day at Mount Vernon
- Canoeing on the Anacostia River
- Health & Service at Capital Area Food Bank
- 7-Day Expedition on Appalachian Trail
- Graduation

WILL'S ALUMNI SERVICES

- Letters of Recommendation
- Alumni Lunch
- Alumni Cookout

“One word that I would use to describe my WILL experience is *confidence* - WILL greatly increased my level of self-confidence. Steve says that we all have greatness in us and because of my WILL experience I believe him.” – **Clinard**

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

WILL's **youth development activities** are critical to the ongoing growth process by helping WILL youth (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, and have value, and (2) to build upon skills and competencies that allow them to be agents of change, and to be effective in their daily lives.



Service learning and giving back to one's community are important aspects of WILL. Environmental Service Project – native wetland planting in the Anacostia River bottom during low tide



Cultural Awareness
Learning about Ukrainian culture and folk dance.



Learning about art in the National Gallery of Art during the Scavenger Hunt on the Mall.

“The violin trick where the head of the violin in the painting seemed to follow me no matter where I walked in the room made me excited to learn more about art. It was an incredible sight, and I'm very glad to have seen it.” – **Louis**

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

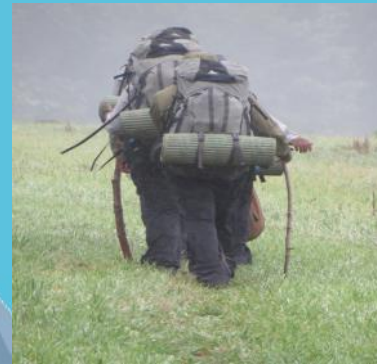
WILL's **experiential learning activities** enlarge the life experiences, enhance decision making and life skills, build character, and develop the leadership potential of WILL youth.



Environmental education on the Potomac & Anacostia Rivers.



Working on communication and team building skills at the Ropes Course



WILL Youth hiking through a field on the Appalachian Trail.



Seining in the Marsh at the KNC

“The Ropes Course was amazing. I never did anything like that in my life. We worked together, learning to communicate and trust each other to come up with a solution to solve a problem.” – **Ahammed**

LIFESKILLS DEVELOPMENT

WILL's life skills development programs develop youth abilities for adaptive and positive behavior, that enable youth to deal effectively with the life's challenges.



WILL Youth learn how to make a budget while learning an essential life skill - Financial Literacy

“WILL financial literacy days taught me many things, including, the importance of having a budget, how to make a budget, how to manage money correctly, and how to distinguish between needs and wants.” – Cheili

During small group discussions at WILL SMART Goals days, Youth provide constructive feedback on each other's goals and action plans

“The purpose of WILL doing SMART goals is to teach us how to set good goals and how to set action plans to achieve our goals” – Shayna

WILL'S 2015 GRADUATION

September 12, 2015, WILL youth who successfully completed the year gathered with their families, teachers, and WILL Board Members at the Thurgood Marshall Center to celebrate and honor their accomplishments and their year of new experiences and experiential learning. Jamel farmer received the Second Annual Jack Bauer Environmental Stewardship Award given in honor of Jack Bauer, a WILL Board Member and friend who passed away in December 2013.



“WILL is a great program. I have learned many things, including, being respectful to others and caring for the environment and all living things.” – Ahammed

WILL'S OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Since 2004, **100%** of youth who have graduated from WILL have graduated from high school or are on track to graduate.

For **8** years in a row, WILL's retention rate has been between **68%** and **76%**, far exceeding the **50%** considered excellent for youth development programs

2015 Graduates had **88%** attendance rate at WILL programs

89% of WILL youth reported that they loved or liked all WILL activities

91% of WILL youth reported learning something new at each WILL activity

2014-2015 Evaluation Survey Results

WILL youth showed: significant increases in knowledge and understanding of financial literacy, environmental awareness, nutrition, leadership, and self-empowerment, as well as positive knowledge acquisition in the areas of accountability, cultural awareness and appreciation, and communication. WILL youth also universally demonstrated increases in positive attitudes and perceptions about themselves.

“WILL is an amazing experience. If it wasn't for WILL, I would not have learned about nutrition and finances. WILL opened many doors for me.” – **Fatima**

WILL'S DONORS

We are pleased to recognize our growing community of supporters. Their generosity has allowed WILL to provide diverse growth experiences and challenging learning opportunities to more than 325 high potential underperforming youth in the Washington, D.C. area. We sincerely thank all those who contribute to WILL and invest in the futures of these incredible youth.

Foundations

The Aaron Straus & Lillie Straus Foundation
Amazon Smile Foundation
Anonymous
Awesome Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Trust/NOAA
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2015 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015 Audited Numbers



REVENUE AND SUPPORT

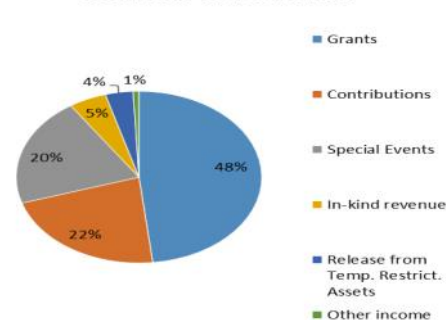
| | 2015 | 2014 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Grants | \$131,513 | \$115,600 |
| Contributions | 59,787 | 88,191 |
| Special Events | 55,998 | 32,677 |
| In-kind revenue | 13,495 | 13,323 |
| Other Income | 2,046 | 5,149 |
| Releases Temp. Restricted Net Assets | <u>10,000</u> | <u>10,000</u> |
| Total Revenue and Support | 272,839 | 264,940 |



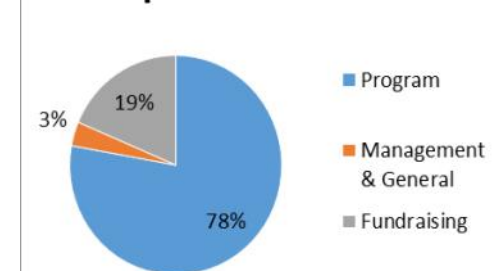
EXPENSES

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Program Services | 177,735 | 158,084 |
| Supporting Services: | | |
| Management and General | 8,104 | 6,911 |
| Fundraising | <u>42,481</u> | <u>39,898</u> |
| Total Support Services | <u>50,585</u> | <u>46,809</u> |
| Total Expenses | <u>228,320</u> | <u>204,893</u> |
| Change in Net Assets | 44,519 | 60,047 |
| Change Temp. Restricted Net Assets | - | - |
| Net Assets – Beginning of year | <u>198,647</u> | <u>138,600</u> |
| Net Assets – End of year | \$243,166 | \$198,647 |

Sources of Revenue



Expense Allocation





“The last letter in WILL is for learning and that is exactly what I have done. I have learned a lot from WILL and I think all youth should have the WILL experience. WILL is preparing me to be successful in life, to be a great and compassionate leader, and the importance of giving back to the community. Thank You.” – Clinard

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