



Annual Report 2023-2024



Mission Statement

Grand Mesa Nordic Council is a community-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting fun and safe cross country skiing experiences on Grand Mesa for skiers of all ages and abilities. GMNC relies entirely on voluntary contributions and grants to fund trail grooming and maintenance operations.



Non-Discrimination Policy

Grand Mesa Nordic Council does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for our staff, members/clients, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors. Minors may be excluded from membership or participation at the discretion of Grand Mesa Nordic Council leadership.

Letter from the Executive Director

This was my 20th year as a GMNC member skiing on the Grand Mesa, and I love this place more with each passing year. I love my job – caring for this place and community that mean so much to me. What distinguishes GMNC from full-service ski resorts is that our mission is not to make a profit, but to serve our community. We are a place to belong, where the most invested members are those who give back in whatever way they can.

This year we welcomed a new operations crew, led by Tigran Bailey, and they quickly put their extensive experience to work grooming our trails. We've been professionalizing the GMNC to ensure that we can provide world-class skiing, but we're committed to remaining the same welcoming, community-based organization we've always been. Our membership fees are some of the lowest in the country, and we're dedicated to keeping skiing affordable and accessible to everyone. That's also why, we once again offered free learn-to-ski clinics so our community can try skiing in a safe and welcoming environment.

We're thrilled to be moving forward with the Skyway Station building project. (You can read more about this project elsewhere in this document.) Over the summer, we're finalizing contracts with our local building contractor and are aiming to break ground next spring and complete the project during the 2025-26 season. If you have the means, please consider making a donation to help us cross the finish line. This project will increase the life and the health of our grooming equipment and give our community a warm, safe place to gather.

We remain committed to creating new ski and snowshoe trails on the Skyway/County Line systems. We've been working with



the Forest Service on this project, and they cosponsored a grant we submitted to Colorado Parks and Wildlife to pay for the environmental assessments required for approval of the new trails. The CPW grants are extremely competitive, and unfortunately our proposal wasn't funded this round, but we intend to try again and are seeking other sources of funding.

Thanks for your support!

-Christie Aschwanden, Executive Director

A photograph of three people standing in a snowy, mountainous area. On the left is a woman wearing a wide-brimmed tan hat, sunglasses, and a teal jacket. In the middle is a woman wearing a brown beanie, sunglasses, and a dark blue jacket. On the right is a man wearing a green baseball cap, sunglasses, and an orange jacket. They are all smiling. In the background, there are snow-covered rocks and a dense forest of evergreen trees. A sign on a structure behind them reads 'SKYWAY SYSTEM'. A banner with a logo and the text 'GMNC.ORG' is partially visible.

Hannah, Tigran and Jared

Operations Report

Thanks for a great season! Our grooming crew was me (Catmadness), Hannah Grossman (Pitter-Patter) and Jared Sears (Seazo). Rich McCreanor helped us with summer maintenance and getting the season started. It was our pleasure to groom the GMNC trails.

We had a fantastic year. During our six month season, our team groomed more than 6,600 km over the course of 136 grooming shifts at Skyway, County Line and Ward.

Wishing you all a safe summer. We'll see you again in a few short months!

-Tigran Bailey, Operations Manager/ Lead Groomer



Community Outreach Director's Report

This was my second season with GMNC, and although I didn't think my job could get any better, it did!

On-snow events held this year were designed to offer support and the opportunity to engage with others while avoiding crowding on the trails or at the trailheads. We created more informal meet-up groups, increased opportunities for off-mesa gatherings (Apres Ski Party, wax clinics, etc.), and hosted over a dozen trailhead outreach tables that enabled users to connect with GMNC staff and volunteers, ask questions, join GMNC, purchase swag, and enjoy cookies and hot cocoa.

We trained 24 new Trail Ambassadors this season, and our 32 active Ambassadors donated 500 hours of service. These individuals assist fellow trail users while out skiing, and are our "eyes" on the trails when staff members cannot be. I also recruited and managed volunteers for our many events.

I developed two new marquee fundraising events this season — a silent auction that coincided with our season kick-off parties and the Friluftsliv Challenge Skiathon (a celebration of the "free air life" on Grand Mesa). Together, these events raised about \$14,000. I also worked with Christie to recruit new business memberships.

Thank you for the privilege and honor of working with and for you, the GMNC community.

-Melissa Newell, Community Outreach Director



Ski School Report

The GMNC ski school had another great season. We kicked it off with an instructor training course with PSIA-certified trainer Deb Willits from Telluride. Deb helped us create a comprehensive teaching protocol for our 13 instructors.

The GMNC ski school is self-supporting (no operation funds are used to pay for it), and it operated in the black again this season. Offerings included a weekend Grand Mesa Nordic Festival in December, followed by a weekly Masters program with rotating instructors. We also offered a progressive skate clinic series for skiers looking to meet more specific training goals.

Our free learn-to-ski clinics were once again popular, as all three clinics sold out in a very short period of time. We were able to once again offer these clinics at no cost to attendees thanks to a grant from the Surface Creek Community Fund and a generous donation from Bill and Laurae Fortner-Welch. We also partnered with Silent County Cycle & Ski and Summit Canyon to offer complimentary ski rentals to clinic attendees. These clinics were a big hit with first time classic skiers and they translated into many new members and ski enthusiasts.

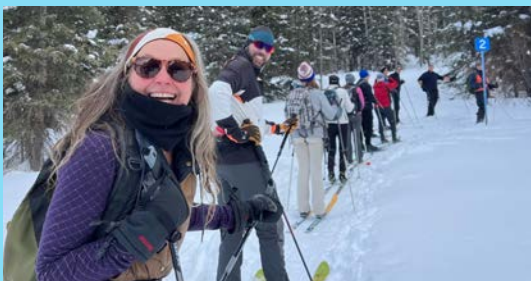


Our Wednesday Women's clinics were also well-attended. By popular request, we added an additional skate clinic (later in the season) to the existing classic clinics. We will continue to offer women's clinics for both styles of skiing next season. Looking forward to more great clinics and programs next season!

-Deb Cheesman, Ski School Director



2023-2024 By the Numbers



12 Ski Meetups



136 Grooming Shifts



3 Free Learn-to-Ski Clinics



5 Ski Races



32 Trail Ambassadors

1,400 Volunteer Hrs



4 Kids/Family events

Leadership

GMNC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors from our local communities.



Dan Tille President

Originally from the the Midwest, Dan spent 13 years traveling around the US and Europe for his wife's career in the US Air Force. He runs a coaching business and spends time with his wife and two daughters, training his dogs, skiing on the GMNC trails, and riding his bicycle as often as he can.



John Traylor Vice President

Born and raised in the Grand Valley, John has skied on Grand Mesa his whole life. Now retired after a career in public finance, he is happy to support GMNC and all it does to enhance winter sports and community building for Coloradans.



Christine Noel Treasurer

Dr. Christine Noel, CPA, is a tenured Associate Professor of Accounting at Colorado Mesa University with 20+ years of teaching experience. She has cross-country skied all around her beautiful home state, and is delighted that the best skiing Colorado has to offer is right here at the Grand Mesa Nordic Council.



Marguerite Tuthill Secretary

Marguerite Tuthill grew up in Avon and has lived in Grand Junction since 2015. She learned to love Nordic skiing in college. She heads operations for a value-based healthcare company. Her friendly, Newfoundland dog has designated herself an unofficial greeter on the County Line dog loop.

Board of Directors

Members At Large



Susie Attaway

Born and raised a beach bum near Mustang/North Padre Islands, Susie spent several decades traveling our vast mountains as a medical sales rep in healthcare. An avid back-country telemark skier, Susie started her winter Nordic addiction on the Grand Mesa after attending a skating clinic in Crested Butte.



Tom Ela

Tom was born and raised in Grand Junction and learned to downhill ski at the old Mesa Creek Ski Area. After 15 years of college and seeing the world, he returned to Colorado. He helped found the GMNC in 1990 and has been a Board Member almost continuously since. He has been integral in putting on the GMNC races since the beginning.



Larry Gruel

Larry joined the GMNC board after relocating to the Grand Valley in June of 2020. He's been in the management accounting and banking business for over 25 years. In addition to cross country skiing, Larry is an avid (but admittedly slow) cyclist and took up winter Biathlon racing in last winter (even slower).



Ben Graves

Ben is the Director of Development and Partnerships for the Nature Connection, and has worked as a high school science teacher in the Delta County School District. He enjoys working with kids and families, inspiring a love for our local environment and being outside. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Paonia.

Key Staff



**Christie
Aschwanden**
Executive Director



Melissa Newell
Community
Outreach Director



Tigran Bailey
Operations/Lead
Groomer



Chantell Hansen
Bookkeeper



Treasurer's Report, Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2024

The GMNC had a good year financially. We materially broke even with total revenues of \$295,547 and total expenses of \$297,413; a net loss of \$(1,866). This is better news than it sounds — due to the unusually high off-season snowcat maintenance we needed last summer (the beginning of our fiscal year) we had budgeted for a shortfall of (\$15,506). Instead, we finished near even for the year — a tremendous showing.

Total revenues were up 6% over last year. The largest drivers were trail boxes and daily use donations with a 15% increase, business contributions with a 60% increase, and special fundraising events with a 630% increase(!) over last year. The adult and race programs earned a tidy gross profit of 45%. Membership dollars were flat. Grant revenue decreased by 15%, and CERF donations dropped by 60%. The latter was likely due to a website error. (The CERF donation form was unintentionally dropped as a line item from the membership renewal page.)

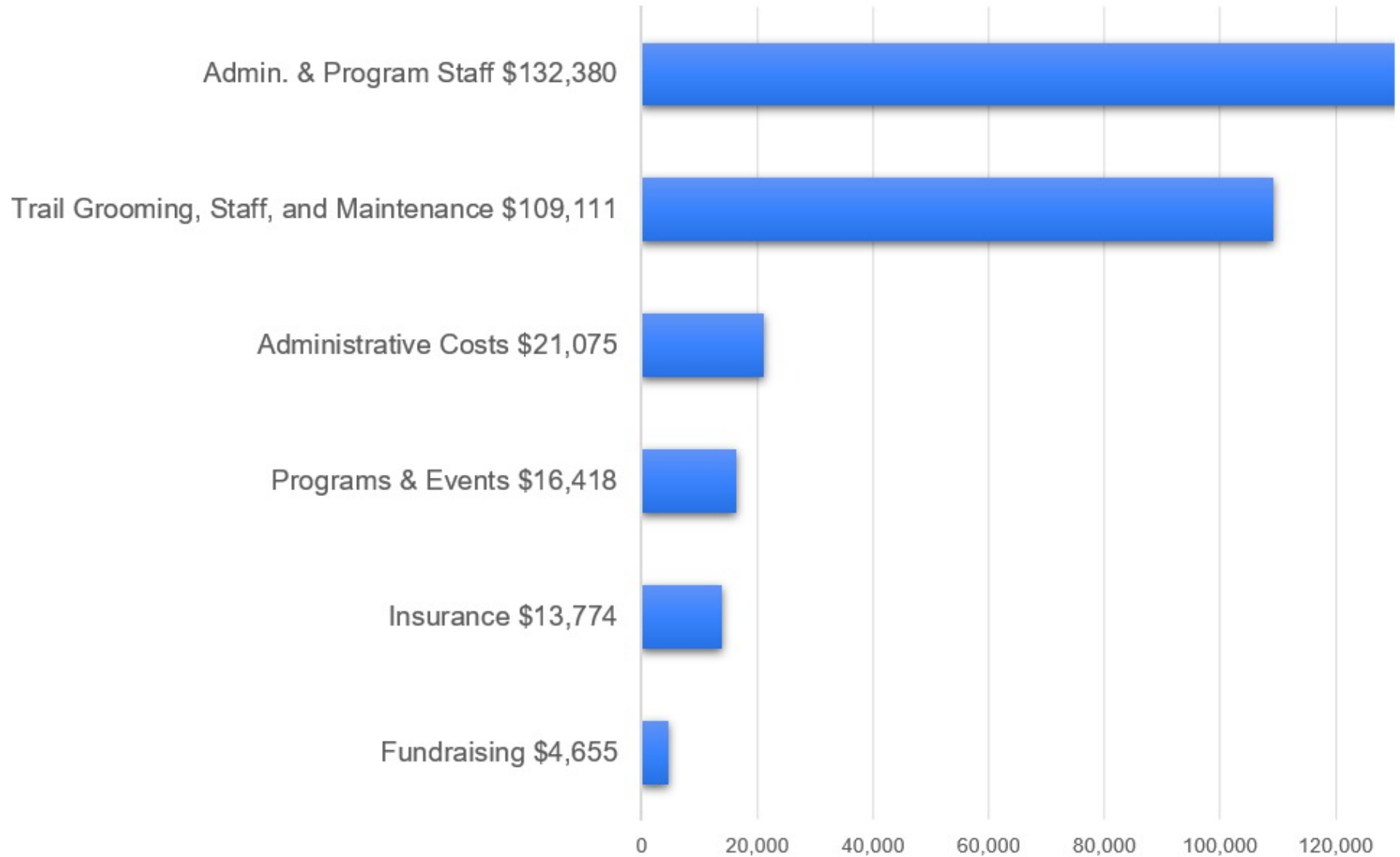
There are two new revenue line items included in this year's chart. The first is operating interest income of \$7,142 (exceeding last year's operating interest earnings by 145%). This is interest we earn from investing our operating funds. The GMNC Finance Committee is actively engaged in ensuring that funds are invested in low-risk accounts (such as in US Treasury Bills) and earning good rates of interest. The second is a capital fund reimbursement of \$7,236. The Skyway Station funds are kept entirely separate from our operating funds. This capital transfer comes from interest earned on the Skyway Station account to cover staff hours worked on the capital campaign project.

Total expenses increased 2.5% over last year. The largest contributors were Snow Cat maintenance and expense costs coming in higher than expected, exceeding \$30,000; credit card fees, increasing by 45%; and insurance, also increasing by 45%. Other costs were up (fundraising costs increased by 30%) and down (website/software costs decreased by 50%), largely offsetting. GMNC staff did an excellent job keeping overall expenses in line.

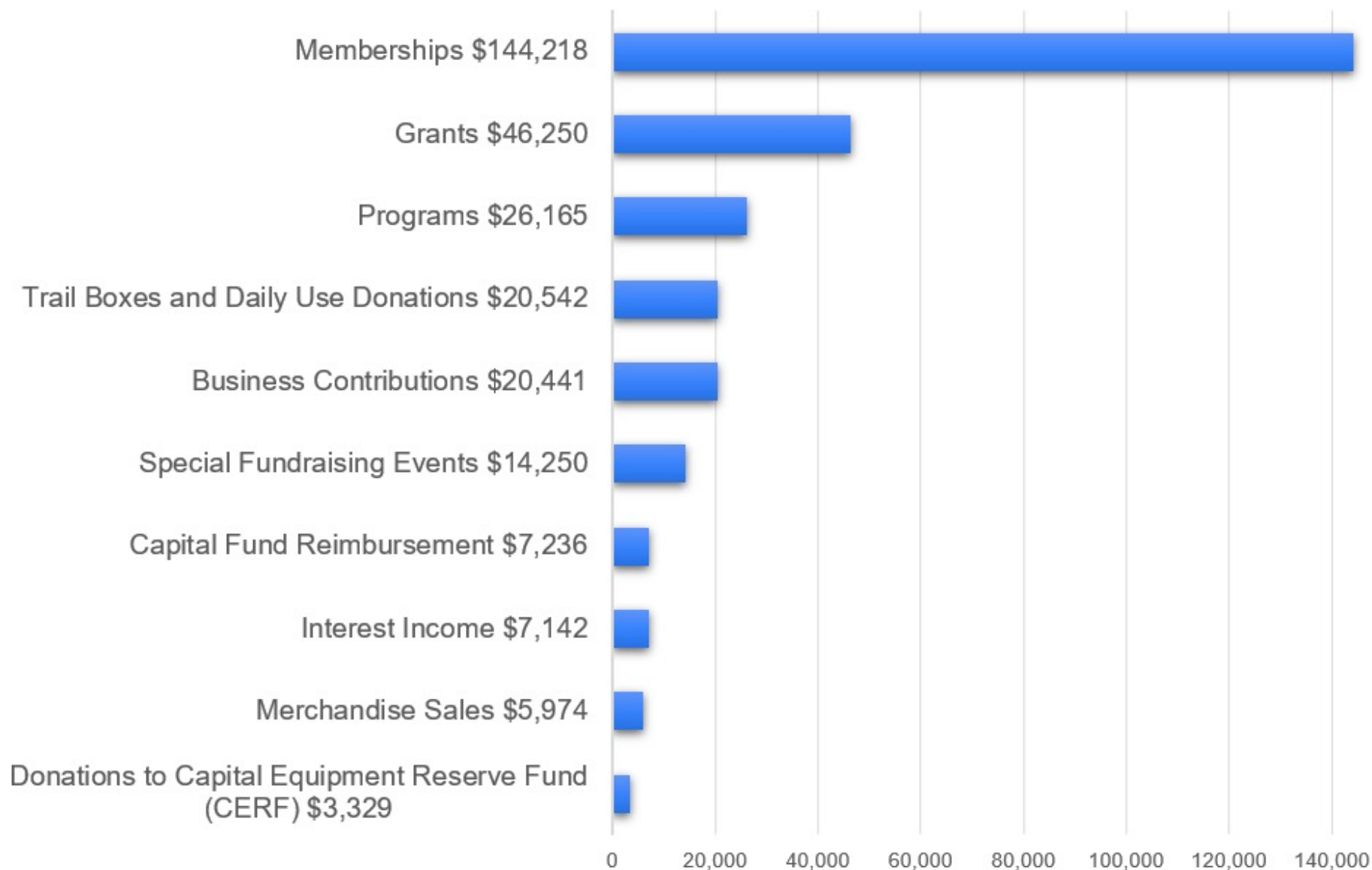
We continue to set aside contingency funds and thoughtfully invest excess cash. **Carrying zero debt, the organization has \$450,000 in net operating assets** to close out the fiscal year.

-Christine Noel, GMNC Treasurer

Expenses 2023-2024 \$297,413



Revenues 2023-2024 \$295,547





The Grand Mesa Nordic Council is excited to introduce Skyway Station, our trail system's first permanent building. Nestled in the trees just north of the parking lot at the Skyway trailhead on Grand Mesa, this rustic, charming shelter will protect and store our grooming equipment and give our community a space to gather and belong.

Skyway Station is part of the GMNC's long-term vision to preserve and sustain what we love about skiing on the Grand Mesa. We've already raised more than 70 percent of the money needed to complete the project and are now launching a capital campaign to get us over the finish line. With your help, we aim to begin construction in summer of 2025.

Find more information or make a pledge here: <https://gmnc.org/join/future/>

Donors to this campaign include:

Alpine Bank

ANB Bank

Dave and Mary Wood Fund

El Pomar Foundation

Gates Family Foundation

Goodwin Foundation

Western Colorado Community Foundation

Mission Focused

The Skyway Station fits into GMNC's values and long-term goals.

The Skyway Station

Grooming

- Protected storage space for grooming equipment
- Sheltered area for maintenance work
- Solar electric to power equipment
- Plug-in capability for the snowcat

Community

- A place to gather, get warm, eat, socialize and make friends
- Safe space for educational programming
- Staging area for races, lessons, events
- Shelter from the elements, changing room, storage space

Environment

- Passive solar design to reduce fuel usage
- Solar power to harness local energy
- Forest Service design standards to blend with the ecosystem
- Right sizing to reduce impact

GMNC Values

Preserve

We know that many of you come to our trails seeking solitude, quiet, nature and wilderness, and we are working to preserve access to these experiences.

How: Expanding our trail network to decrease the density of users on the trails and creating dedicated snowshoe trails to avoid conflicts between users. Planning events so that they leave plenty of space for users seeking solitude.

Sustain

Grooming and maintaining our trail system is our core mission, and ensuring that we can continue our operations in a financially sustainable way is paramount to our success.

How: Skyway Station secures and protects our equipment to extend the lifespan of our machines. In concert with the Skyway Station campaign, we are increasing our fundraising efforts to ensure the long-term financial stability of GMNC.

Belong

The Grand Mesa Nordic Council is a community — a place to feel at home and nurture a sense of belonging.

How: Skyway Station gives people refuge from the weather, a place to gather and socialize and somewhere to stage events that build community.



Community Partners

- Alpine Bank
- ANB Bank
- Delta County
- El Pomar Foundation
- Friends of Youth and Nature
- Gates Family Foundation
- Goodwin Foundation
- Grand Valley Nordic Ski Club
- Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission
- Jean Thomas Lambert Foundation
- Kampe Foundation
- The Rotary Club of Delta Colorado
- Mesa County
- The Nature Connection
- Riverside Educational Center
- Surface Creek Community Fund
- U.S. Forest Service
- Western Colorado Community Foundation

Business Members

Bronze Supporters (\$500+)

- The Board & Buckle
- Cedaredge Land Co.
- The Cedaredge Lodge
- Chill Switch Wines
- Chow Down Pet Supplies
- Cristee-Meade Building Co.
- CMU Outdoor Program
- Community Hospital
- Delta County Tourism
- Dufford, Waldeck, Milburn & Krohn
- The Gear Junction
- Grand Mesa Lodge
- Loki Gear & Outdoor Shop
- Lost Mesa Grill
- Monument Health
- Mariko Wilcox
- Odin Recreation
- Rotary Club of Delta Colorado
- SIPS on Main
- Starr's Guitars
- Summit Canyon Mountaineering
- Thunder Mountain Lodge
- The Yarrow Taproom



Race Series Sponsor (\$1,500) Empowered Energy Systems



Silver Supporter (\$1000+) Fortunate Fruit

Basic Business Supporters (\$250+)

- Aaron Birch Family Dental
- Blue Bear Cabin
- The Great Outdoors Company
- Lovemore Real Estate & Retreats
- Maison de Terre Bed & Breakfast
- Mesa Bloom Market
- Montrose Chiropractic, Dr. John Unger
- Paonia Storage
- Sauvage Spectrum-Estate Winery & Vineyard
- Silent Custom Ski & Cyclery
- Third Sector Innovations

Ways Our Supporters Give

Memberships

Snow Angels Club (\$500+)

Sustaining memberships (Monthly giving)

Employer Match

Donor-Advised Funds

Qualified Charitable Distributions

Legacy Giving

Donate a Vehicle



Our Volunteers Get It Done!

Volunteers formed the backbone of our event offerings. Our volunteers gave more than 1,400 hours of their time in service to our community this season.

We had seven volunteer trail days in the late summer and early fall of 2023. Led by volunteers Rich McCreanor and Eric Jansen, we completed extensive repair work on signage and trail markers on the backcountry trails at Ward as well as replacing and repairing trail markers and signs on our other trail systems.

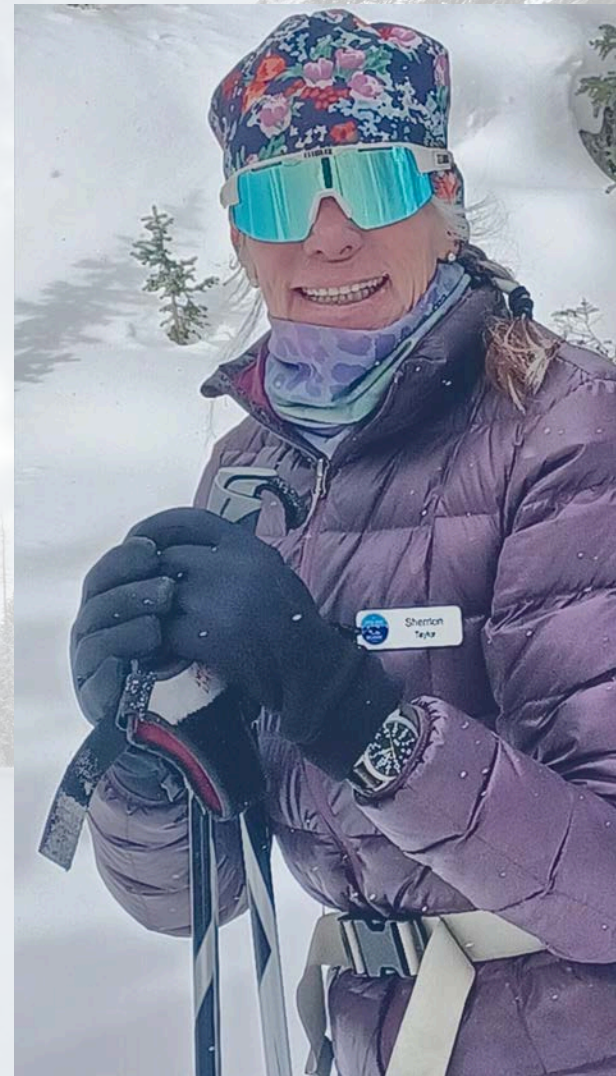
Trail Ambassadors are the friendly face of GMNC, providing information and etiquette tips to trail users. Ambassadors also collect user feedback and provide GMNC staff with detailed reports of happenings and usage. Our 32 Trail Ambassadors donated nearly 500 hours of service this season.

Throughout the season, volunteers supported races, tables, kids days, providing helping hands at lessons, serving hot cocoa, cookies, and soup, directing racers on course, and selling swag and memberships at trailhead events that totaled over **\$11,000 in revenue** for GMNC. Our robust and enthusiastic volunteer crew is at the heart of what makes this organization tick.

Volunteer Spotlight: Sherrion Taylor

My experience as a GMNC Ambassador has enriched my life and hopefully the lives of folks I have encountered on the magnificent trails on the Grand Mesa.

I support the GMNC organization because it offers all people the opportunity to delve into nature at its finest. I'm thankful to the leadership, the groomers and all the GMNC contributors who make this outdoor experience possible.



Sherrion volunteered 66 hours this season, much of them as a Trail Ambassador.



We Get Kids Skiing

We want every child in our community to have the chance to get outside in nature during the winter to experience the joy of moving their bodies in the outdoors.

We support these opportunities by working with community partners such as Friends of Youth and Nature, The Nature Connection, the Grand Valley Nordic Ski Club and Riverside Educational Center.

Friends of Youth and Nature arrange winter outings for kids on the Grand Mesa. The Riverside Educational Center introduces kids from the Grand Valley to our trails. They provide the equipment, we provide grooming and some instruction.

Students from Delta County and Olathe schools learned to cross country ski on our trails this winter, thanks to our partnership with The Nature Connection. The Nature Connection also provides low cost family ski lending and Pop-Up ski lending at some of our events, including Family Fun Days.

The Grand Valley Nordic Ski Club offers coaching and instruction to kids who want to try racing. They also participate in our Family Fun Days.

We also received support from Friends of Youth and Nature, the Kampe Foundation and the Rotary Club of Delta for our kids programs.



Business Member Spotlight: Empowered Energy Systems

Empowered Energy Systems, LCA (EES) is a local, employee-owned business and Public Benefit Corporation specializing in solar electric systems. We're celebrating 20 years of serving Western Slope communities and we're proud to sponsor the Grand Mesa Nordic Council's Race Series.

We give to GMNC to support their efforts to provide excellent trails and events for cross-country skiing enthusiasts on the Grand Mesa. By backing the GMNC, EES continues the tradition started by John Burritt, the father of EES founder Brad Burritt, promoting cross-country skiing for all ages on the Grand Mesa.



Solar solutions as sure as the sun

Sustaining Member Spotlight

Irene & Jim Compton



Irene & Jim are sustaining members and belong to the Snow Angels Club

When we moved here, we had never skied before, but we'd always wanted to try it. So we bought cross-country skis for Christmas and signed up for a lesson. We love GMNC's instructors — they've all been wonderful. Last season we took a lesson with Lori and she was so helpful. The grooming is always top-notch and we love the big open spaces. Of course we want to support GMNC, it's a dream come true!

We became sustaining members because we know that the work GMNC does costs money, and there's work that goes on year-round, so you need a steady source of income to support all your activities. We have benefitted so much from the GMNC and we're happy to support your work.

Volunteer Spotlight: Karen Cornell and Dave Roedel (and Madi)

When we started skiing on the Mesa everyone was so warm, helpful and caring, we decided membership fees alone were not enough.

Volunteering is our way of giving back and being part of something extraordinary.



Dave and Karen are Super Volunteers, logging 66 and 69.5 volunteer hours this season, respectively.

Sustaining Member Spotlight



Jimmy "Rabbit" Whiting

I support GMNC one, because it's a wonderful place to ski. And two, because the grooming and activities the GMNC does are as good as it gets. It's just a lovely place, and a world-class ski venue. You're forward-thinking and doing all the right stuff.

I feel good about being a sustaining member because I just signed up once, and now I don't have to think about it.

2023-2024 in Photos



2023-2024 in Photos

