

Winter Kids



ANNIVERSARY

25 Years of Outdoor Learning & Play

A SEASON IN REVIEW: WINTER 2025/26



Introduction

Hi Friends,

As we close out an extraordinary year for WinterKids, I find myself reflecting on both where we've been and where we're headed.

This season marked our 25th anniversary, a meaningful milestone and an opportunity to step back and reconnect with our purpose. Together, as a team and community, we took time to clarify our vision and values, grounding ourselves in what matters most: helping children across Maine develop healthy, lifelong habits through education and fun, outdoor winter activity.

This clarity has guided our work in powerful ways.

This year, more than 24,000 children participated in WinterKids programs—reaching approximately 13% of Maine's school-aged population. Across all 16 counties, we partnered with educators, families, and communities to create opportunities for kids to move their bodies, build confidence, and experience the joy and connection that comes from being active outdoors.

Through programs like the Winter Games, Learn Outside Guide, Passport, and Welcome to Winter, we're seeing what's possible when access, education, and community come together. Teachers are fostering stronger classroom connections. Families are building new traditions outdoors. Kids are discovering not just winter, but their own sense of confidence and belonging within it.

None of this happens alone.

It is made possible by a community of supporters who believe deeply in this work. Your generosity, partnership, and advocacy make it possible for us to continue expanding access and ensuring that more children across Maine can experience the benefits of outdoor activity—not just for a season, but for a lifetime.

As we look ahead, we carry both momentum and responsibility. We know there is more to do to reach every child who could benefit from these opportunities, and we are energized by what's possible when we continue to work together.

Thank you for being part of this community and for helping make this work possible.

With gratitude,



Courtney Holub
Executive Director



By the Numbers

- 24,000+ children
- 51,000+ participants
- 1,293 educators
- 16 counties
- 6,128 Passport users
- 17 Family Days
- 130+ photo contest entries
- 83 volunteer
- 16 board members
- 5 staff members



MISSION

To help children develop healthy lifelong habits through education and fun outdoor winter activity.



VISION

A Maine where regardless of background, every child grows up with access to outdoor winter play and education, fostering lifelong learning, health, resilience, and a deep connection to nature, outdoor recreation, and the state.



PURPOSE

To facilitate meaningful opportunities for Maine children, regardless of background, to develop healthy lifestyles through inclusive and high-quality outdoor winter education and recreation. By focusing on depth of engagement with each child and family, our programs integrate movement and learning to build confidence, support well-being, and lay strong educational foundations. We prioritize accessibility by addressing physical, financial, and geographic barriers, ensuring that all children have the chance to thrive.



When children embrace winter, they thrive.

Winter in Maine offers incredible opportunities for learning, movement, and connection. Yet for many children, the season can also bring barriers to physical activity, outdoor exploration, and overall well-being.

Today's youth are facing growing challenges. Rates of anxiety and depression continue to rise, many children are not meeting recommended levels of daily physical activity, and increasing screen time often competes with opportunities for active play and meaningful time outdoors. At the same time, educators are seeking new ways to engage students, support mental health, and create positive learning environments.

Research consistently shows that time spent outdoors can improve physical health, reduce stress, increase focus, strengthen social connections, and support academic success. Outdoor learning and active play help children build confidence, resilience, creativity, and a lifelong connection to their communities and natural environment.

Winter presents a unique opportunity to harness these benefits. Rather than viewing the season as something to endure, WinterKids helps children, families, and educators embrace winter as a time for movement, discovery, and fun. Through outdoor learning, family engagement, and access to winter recreation, we work to ensure that every child can experience the joy and benefits of being active outside.

By helping children move more, learn outdoors, and explore Maine's winter landscape, we are building healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Together with our educators, families, partners, and supporters, we are creating pathways for children to thrive during winter and beyond.

Governor's Award for Business Excellence

This year marked a historic moment for WinterKids as the organization received the Governor's Award for Business Excellence, becoming the first nonprofit in Maine to earn this distinction.

The award recognized not only WinterKids' organizational growth and innovation, but the broader impact of our work across education, public health, outdoor recreation, and community wellbeing. For 25 years, WinterKids has demonstrated that investing in children's health, confidence, and connection to the outdoors creates lasting benefits for families and communities across Maine.



Receiving this recognition during our 25th anniversary season was especially meaningful. It reflected the dedication of our staff, board, educators, volunteers, partners, and supporters who have helped shape WinterKids into a trusted statewide organization reaching thousands of Maine children each year. It reinforced something we have always believed: creating opportunities for kids to move, learn, and thrive outdoors is essential work for Maine's future.

Movement Doesn't End When Winter Does

Healthy habits aren't built in a single season. Through the **25 Days of Movement Challenge**, WinterKids encourages families to keep exploring, playing, and moving together long after the snow has melted. By making outdoor activity simple, fun, and accessible, families are building routines that support physical health, mental well-being, and lasting connections.

This year, **1,214 participants representing 320 families from all 16 Maine counties** took part in the challenge. Most importantly, 100% of surveyed families said they plan to continue spending time outdoors together after the challenge, proving that small moments of movement can inspire lifelong healthy habits.

Keep the momentum going!

Download the **25 Days of Movement Guide** and see how many days you can check off in a row. Every day outside is a step toward a healthier, happier family.

<https://winterkids.org/25-days-of-movement/>

FOR THE JOY OF WINTER

25 YEARS OF WINTERKIDS

A DOCUMENTARY BY AGAIN CREATIVE

Snow Day Dreams: Celebrating a Legacy on Film



WinterKids partnered with the Maine Outdoor Film Festival to present Snow Day Dreams, an evening celebrating outdoor adventure, community, and storytelling. The event also featured the premiere of ***For the Joy of Winter: 25 Years of WinterKids***, honoring the organization's quarter-century commitment to helping children build healthy lifelong habits through outdoor winter activity.

More than a film screening, the event served as an inspiring kickoff to winter, reminding attendees of the joy, connection, and sense of belonging that outdoor experiences create.

The evening left guests energized for the months ahead. Thanks to support from Mt. Abram, attendees were offered free lift tickets to continue creating their own winter memories.

For the Joy of Winter:
25 Years of WinterKids
streaming now on
PBS.org as part of the
Maine Public Film Series.

ADVENTURE FUND

Every child deserves the chance to experience the joy and confidence that come from being active outdoors. The WinterKids Adventure Fund helps remove financial barriers by supporting access to recurring winter recreation opportunities across Maine.

This year, the Adventure Fund helped **1,278** children participate in habit-building outdoor experiences through partnerships with **Maine West Project Play, Ski 4 Life, Quoggy Jo, and the Sugarloaf Ski Club**. From first-time skiers to returning adventurers, these partnerships ensure more children can discover the lifelong benefits of winter activity regardless of their family's ability to pay.



LOAN PROGRAM



Access to outdoor adventure shouldn't depend on having the right equipment. WinterKids' Snowshoe & StoryWalk® Loan Program helps schools, libraries, and community organizations bring outdoor learning to life by providing free snowshoe kits and interactive StoryWalk® materials.

This year, **2,026** participants explored winter trails, discovered new stories, and experienced the joy of learning and moving outdoors together—making it easier for more Maine children and families to connect with nature, regardless of experience or resources.



Learn more about the Snowshoe & StoryWalk Loan Program at <https://winterkids.org/snowshoe-and-storywalk-loan-request/>



First Tracks to Lifelong Adventure: 25 Years of the WinterKids Passport

For 25 years, the WinterKids Passport has helped remove one of the biggest barriers to winter recreation: cost. What began as a way to introduce children to skiing, skating, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing has grown into a pathway for lifelong outdoor participation.

This year, a record **6,133 family members** participated in the Passport, with children accounting for 84% of all activity. Families didn't just try something new—they came back. Nearly one in five youth participants redeemed multiple Passport offers, building healthy winter routines, while **31% of high-use participants tracked since 2019 have gone on to purchase season passes.**

The Passport continues to prove that when families are given the opportunity to experience winter together, first tracks often become lifelong traditions.



6,133

**FAMILY
MEMBERS**

2,962

**OFFERS
REDEEMED**

75

**PARTNER
LOCATIONS
ACROSS MAINE**



"We were able to try many new mountains to downhill ski this year. Without the deals from WinterKids it would have been unaffordable for my family...What a great experience...Hopefully we can try out some of the other activities next year! "

— Sarah King, Passport Parent



WELCOME TO WINTER

A MAGICAL NIGHT OF OUTDOOR PLAY AT LOST VALLEY, DECEMBER 20, 2025

Our Welcome to Winter celebration at Lost Valley brought families, friends, and community partners together for an evening of laughter, lights, and outdoor fun.



This was such an amazing event!
It was so well organized and so
many activities for the kids!
It was my boys' first time skiing.
They loved it and asked to go
back today.

-Michelle Fuller

From skiing and snowshoeing to cozy cocoa & s'mores breaks, every moment reflected what WinterKids is all about: helping Maine kids and families discover the joy of winter through movement, learning, and play.



Mark Your Calendar!

Welcome to Winter will be back at Lost Valley
on **December 21, 2026!**



Learn more about Welcome to Winter at
<https://winterkids.org/welcome-to-winter/>

WINTER GAMES



The theme for 2026 was **HEART** – caring for it, and each other, both physically and emotionally.

HEART health and following your **HEART** guided the students as they worked their way through the four weekly topics of PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION, FAMILY, and WINTER CARNIVAL.

10,687

STUDENTS

1,293

TEACHERS

78

SCHOOLS

16

COUNTIES

Gold Medal

Winning School

\$5,000

Cash Award

**Hall-Dale
Elementary**

Silver Medal

Winning School

\$3,000

Cash Award

**Community Regional
Charter School**

Bronze Medal

Winning School

\$1,500

Cash Award

**SeDoMoCha
Schools**

“It was wonderful to see students making real-life connections about how exercise, rest, and mindfulness affect their bodies... They tracked their heart rates while stretching, during movement breaks, and even during a calm listening activity... making real-life connections.”

— **Woodland Consolidated School**

Changing Winter, Together

Winter has long been associated with shorter days, less movement, and declining physical and mental well-being. For 10,218 students across the state, WinterKids helps rewrite that story.

For four weeks, schools across Maine embraced a simple but powerful idea: when movement, outdoor learning, nutrition, and family engagement become part of the school culture, everyone benefits. Classrooms traded sedentary routines for active learning, hallways buzzed with excitement, and entire school communities rallied around healthy habits that extended well beyond the school day.

This year's Winter Games showed that wellness isn't another item on a teacher's to-do list—it's something that can unite students, educators, families, and communities around a shared purpose. ***Teachers reported stronger engagement, improved school spirit, and students encouraging one another to get outside, stay active, and lead by example.***

The excitement extended far beyond school walls. Communities across Maine followed the Games through local media, with features in the Sun Journal and radio segments on WJBQ and Newsradio WGAN highlighting the creativity, enthusiasm, and impact unfolding in classrooms statewide.



“

"One moment that really stood out to me was a student who typically struggles with PE and often opts out or sits during running activities. This week, he was leading the charge outside: moving, smiling, and fully participating. Seeing that shift was incredibly powerful."

— **SeDoMoCha Schools, Week 1 Submission**



Learn more about
the WinterKids Winter Games at
<https://winterkids.org/winter-games>



LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Building a Community Around Childhood Wellness



This spring, WinterKids welcomed educators, healthcare professionals, business leaders, nonprofit partners, and community champions to our inaugural Leadership Summit. The morning served as an opportunity to share the growing body of research connecting outdoor activity, movement, and positive childhood experiences to improved physical health, mental well-being, and academic success.

Panel discussions featured leaders from healthcare, business, media, and adaptive recreation, each offering a unique perspective on why investing in children's wellness benefits our entire community. Together, the conversation reinforced a shared belief: supporting healthy, active childhoods isn't simply an education issue or a public health issue, it's a community responsibility.

The response was positive, with attendees leaving inspired by both the evidence and the stories shared throughout the morning. More importantly, the event sparked new conversations, strengthened partnerships, and created momentum for future collaboration.



2025/2026 Community Partners

Avalanche Partners \$30,000+

Portland Media Group

WMTW

WEX

Powder Partners \$15,000-\$29,999

Agren Appliance
Central Maine Power
L.L. Bean

Trailblazer Partners \$10,000-\$14,999

Evergreen Credit Union
Hannaford Snack Pals
MyMaine Media

Summit Partners \$5,000-\$9,999

AAA Northern New England
Acadia Insurance
Aroma Joe's
Backyard Farms
East Coast Yatch Sales
Eighty Eight Donuts

Franklin Printing
Goodwin Well and Water
Harvard Pilgrim
HM Payson
Insurcomm Restoration
Kittery Trading Post

MaineHealth
Mt Abram
RLC Engineering
United Earle W. Noyes & Sons
United Insurance
Verrill Dana

Flurry Partners \$2,500-\$4,999

All States Material Group
Family Chiropractic Associates
Franklin Savings Bank
i am frank
Lajoie Brothers
Maine Community Bank
MMG Insurance
Mountainside Real Estate
Patriot Auto Group
Piscataqua Landscaping
Sugarloaf Inn
Valley Beverage
West Mountain/Winterstick

Event Partners Under \$2,500

Benchmark Construction
Chalmers Insurance
Kevin Browne Architecture
Machias Savings Bank
Maine Drone Imaging
Martin's Point Health Care
Patagonia
Saco and Biddeford Savings Bank
Snowbound USA
Woods + Waters Gear Exchange

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Sugarloaf: A Partnership That Keeps Maine Kids Moving

For more than 25 years, Sugarloaf has been a true partner in WinterKids' mission to help children discover the joy of winter.

From hosting Downhill 24 to opening their mountain to WinterKids Passport families, Sugarloaf has consistently invested in making outdoor recreation more accessible for Maine youth. Their support has helped remove barriers, inspire first-time skiers and riders, and create experiences that often become lifelong traditions.

Beyond financial support, Sugarloaf's team shares our belief that every child deserves the opportunity to experience the confidence, connection, and adventure that winter offers. Together, we've introduced thousands of children and families to the outdoors while strengthening Maine's vibrant winter recreation community.

We're proud of everything we've accomplished together and grateful for a partnership that continues to create brighter, healthier futures for Maine kids.



VOLUNTEERS

At WinterKids, our volunteers are the heart of everything we do. Their time, energy, and love for the outdoors help create joyful, active winter experiences for children and families across Maine.

At a Glance:

71

Volunteers

5

Programs Supported

318

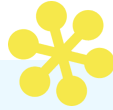
Total Hours Worked

That's the equivalent of
8 WEEKS of
full time
employment!



Learn more about
volunteer opportunities at
<https://winterkids.org/volunteer>

Thank you for your support!



Because of you, WinterKids programs reached over **13% of all Maine Kids aged 5-17** during the 2025/26 season!

Participants Reached:

24K

Kids

1.3K

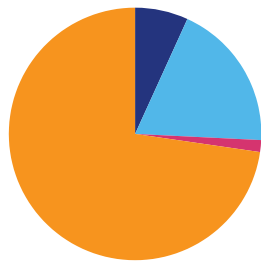
Teachers

84

Schools

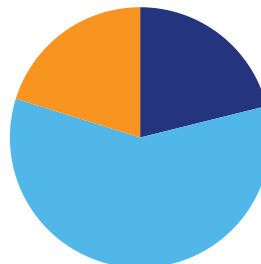
Statement of Activities:

INCOME



- 73% - Individual Giving
- 19% - Corporate Support
- 7% - Program Income
- 1% - Grants

EXPENSES



- 59% - Programs
- 20% - Resource Development
- 21% - Administration

Board of Directors

OFFICERS

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Head, Sales Excellence, WEX, Inc.

JILLIAN RICH, VICE PRESIDENT
Marketing Director, Portside Real Estate Group

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Performance Director, CRH Americas Material, Inc

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DIRK GOWENS, EX OFFICIO
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