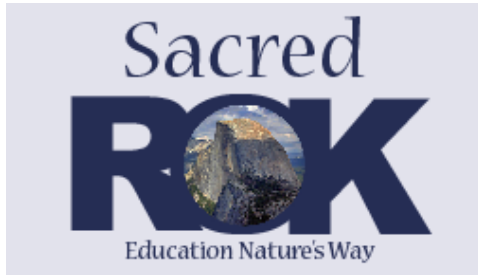


Sacred Rok

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

October 2012





October 2012

We are writing on behalf of the Sacred Rok Board of Directors to share our 2012 Annual Report. This Annual Report covers Sacred Rok's third fiscal year of operation. We are thankful to our supporters and donors for helping us to make this possible. We are especially grateful to the young people who have allowed us to share Yosemite with them.

Spearheaded by the vision of Executive Director Ron Kauk, the Sacred Rok mission is help young people learn to respect nature and through that, to respect themselves. Ron wants to connect young people to nature and help them learn to value the natural world. Our motto is "Education Nature's Way." Our approach is to slow down and focus on the basics - water, air, breathing, learning to walk again.

Ron's philosophy is simple. "Sitting by a river, hiking, camping, learning to climb a rock. Experience with nature serves as a source of energy for youth to discover their potential, to explore themselves, to develop relationships with caring adults, and to learn to mentor other youth. Every time a Sacred Rok youth steps into a river, touches a rock, appreciates a sunset, and honors the earth, we are learning from their actions and marveling at the power of that ceremony. The instructions are written in nature, and we are becoming more literate at deciphering what is written with every passing experience." Ron lives and models this philosophy with the young people whose lives he touches, and they are changed by it.

We accomplish our mission through day trips and camping trips with youth, as well as educational presentations, our newsletter, and our web site www.SacredRok.org. Our Annual Report provides an opportunity to share our accomplishments and plans for the future.

Sacred Rok Board of Directors:

Ron Kauk, Executive Director

Nancy Goodban, Board Chair

Kenji Hakuta, Secretary/Treasurer

Brian Cooley

Lamar Henderson

Steve Shackelton

Lucy Snyder

Sacred Rok Annual Report

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The Year in Review

We finished our third fiscal year in June 2012. This year Executive Director Ron Kauk has brought foster youth, incarcerated youth, Native American youth, and community youth from the Boys and Girls Club and local middle schools to experience the beauty of Yosemite National Park – young people who had never experienced the healing power of nature, exposing them to the beauty of the natural world and the value of our stewardship of nature.

It is Ron's personal commitment and involvement as trip leader that helps these young people feel safe, cared for, and nurtured. They resonate to his accepting and non-judgmental approach.

"I love when we walk in silence. You see everything in a whole other way. You pay attention to the things you could not hear before. This Saturday I missed out on three parties, but I had forgotten all about them because of this wonderful place... I love the spring water Ron showed us... it's so fresh, I can feel it going down my throat."

Ron Kauk is a legendary rock climber who has lived and climbed at Yosemite National Park for more than 35 years. Ron moved to Yosemite at age 17. He found his education in the high granite peaks and thundering waterfalls and rivers of Yosemite. He felt that the mountains saved his life – he was able to follow his dreams, and became one of the most renowned rock climbers in the world. He is credited with first ascents of many of the classic technical climbs in Yosemite that continue to serve as an inspiration for climbers around the world. Ron also developed a film, *Return to Balance: A Climber's Journey*, which he shows at the Yosemite Visitor Center on the weekends during the summer and which shows his evolution as a climber to fully embrace the balance of nature.

As he turned 50 in 2009 and reflected on his life, Ron realized his concern about the fact that many young people do not have the opportunity that he had, to experience the healing and learning of nature, in particular young people like he himself had been – not fitting well into the social and formal education expectations. He felt that too many young people, especially those in low-income neighborhoods, do not have access to the therapeutic experience of the wilderness. So in 2009, Ron founded the nonprofit Sacred Rok with the mission "to help youth learn to respect nature, and through that to respect themselves."

2012 Goals

The Board of Directors continued its three FY 2011 goals in FY 2012; building organizational capacity, telling the story of Sacred Rok, and programming and activities. We also added a fourth long term goal of finding land to provide a place where our Sacred Rok youth can return at any time for a safe haven, a refuge for these young adults. We are working with youth who are at or near maturity, and want to provide a safe haven for them. Our vision is a small facility in or near Yosemite, where young people can come at any time once they have graduated from foster care or Probation.

Activities and Accomplishments

In Fiscal Year 2012 through the date of completion of this report, Ron has led fifteen trips to Yosemite National Park -- twelve day trips and three camping trips. These trips introduce young people to the natural beauty of Yosemite and provide a safe and supportive outdoor experience. In small group settings, the youth build a relationship with Ron, which we are committed to maintaining for the long term. The relationship with an adult mentor and role model allows them the space and opportunity to feel safe in a natural setting. The goal of Sacred Rok is to expose these teens to nature through camping trips and hikes, helping them to learn to respect and value nature and to understand their own role, to empower them to make positive choices in their lives and to help protect and preserve the natural world they are experiencing and learning to value.

We continued our newsletter and compiled these contributions into a book, *Letters from Sacred Rok*, to be published this December. Ron gave a number of educational presentations, starting off the year with a Clif Bar event in honor of his photo on the new Builder Bar. This year we also made photo cards, using photos Ron has taken, with a story on the back of each card, to supplement our business cards. Besides the "Midnight Lightning" Sacred Rok t-shirts, which we send to anyone who makes a \$50 donation, Ron also offers a signed photo he has taken. We reached out to the outdoor industry and foundations, and were grateful to receive cash or equipment donations from the Clif Bar Family Foundation, The California Endowment, and REI. We were approved for continued funding by the North Face Explore Fund and by the United Way of Merced County to take youth on day trips to Yosemite National Park for FY 2012.



Camping and Day Trips

Our primary activity with young people is for Ron to lead them on trips to explore Yosemite National Park. This provides healing time away from the stress of daily life, which may include gangs, drugs, or family violence. "I enjoyed all the peace and quietness... Just listening to nature talk, getting your mind off of every problem at home or at school. We picked up trash on our way, something good for nature."

In fiscal year 2012 through the completion of the annual report, our fifteen trips included:

- **Camping trip with foster youth from Merced County Human Services Agency Independent Living Program (ILP).**

In August 2011, Ron led a five-day, four night camping trip for Merced County foster youth enrolled in ILP. ILP is designed for teenagers in foster care to help prepare them to "age out" of the foster care system at age 18. These foster youth participate in classes and field trips during the school year, as well as work experience in the summer. Prior to returning to school in August, their summer was capped off with a Sacred Rok camping trip at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park.

These young people help cook healthy organic food; they learn how to keep themselves safe, how to be part of a team, how to pitch a tent and clean up after themselves. They report that the experience is life changing. One foster youth commented that she had never thought there was much to live for, but lying in the meadow at night looking up at the stars gave her a sense of peace and belonging that she had never before felt.

- **Four day trips with teens from Merced Boys & Girls Club.**

With funding from United Way of Merced County, Ron led four day trips for young people from the Boys & Girls Club in Merced. Club staff loved seeing these teens jump in a freezing cold river or scramble over boulders with absolutely no hesitation, free from the fear of getting jumped by gang members or by the noise of police sirens nearby. As one Club member put it, "no stress, no shooting, no people yelling at each other." Another said, "I will always remember climbing in rocks and using my whole body in harmony to reach new heights."

- **Six day trips with Merced County Probation youth who are incarcerated in Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice facility.**

These young men are in long term incarceration programs and are selected by the Probation Department on the basis of good behavior, and are accompanied on trips by a Probation Officer. On day trips, they spend the day hiking in Yosemite Valley, enjoying a nutritious picnic lunch prepared by our camp manager, and challenging themselves through

the physical activity and camaraderie. They also spent a day volunteering to rebuild climbing trails as part of a partnership with the National Park Service, funded by the Yosemite Conservancy.

Ron wrote about one such trip: “We stopped to have lunch at El Capitan Meadow, at the base of the towering cliff. This was a relaxing place to sit, eat, and visit. The light and air felt special, early spring. Juan talked about Juvenile Hall, waking up in the small cinderblock walls with no windows. I said these 3,000-foot granite cliffs are my walls that I live in. We kind of laughed about it, subdued because we acknowledged the reality. Looking up at El Cap, George made a comment that everyone absorbed: ‘No matter who you are, rich or poor, good or bad, you still got this.’ We all resonated to his humble tone.”



• **Two day trips and a camping trip with middle school students from Mariposa.**

Another first this year was a series of trips with students from Mariposa Middle School. Ron led a day trip in May, followed by a camping trip in July and another day trip in September. These trips were funded by Clif Bar Family Foundation and the North Face Explore Fund. As one middle-schooler said, “I’ve learned a lot about nature. I heard the wind blowing, the birds chirping. This is one of the greatest places I’ve ever been ... and going without technology for a while is not that bad...”

Their social worker/school counselor says, *“A year has gone by, and these young people have come to know each other and their Yosemite backyard in new and exciting ways.*

“During the day we ate lunch at the most exquisite granite table, imagining ancient groups like ours sharing food preparation, stories, splashing in the crystal clear water, (even in September in a drought year), eating together, balancing on log crossings, making driftwood

art, and discovering slumbering bears in the rocky crevices of the far shore. Ron Kauk has opened up an opportunity for us to immerse ourselves in the present and delight in it. How can we be totally alive to our senses when we are hurried and worried to death and dullness? In these little oases of outdoor living, we have been present with each other and our setting.

“The four day stay in Tuolumne was a true highlight of the summer for all of us. The meals were simple, healthy, and the organic produce and oh so fresh. As a veteran backpacker and camper for 30 plus years, I am not accustomed to fresh produce at the campsite. The students were able to help prepare the meals and in one case, the understanding of how to prepare and include vegetables in cooking was life-changing for her. She said, “You know how we had the chicken meal on our last night and we used Grandma’s recipe plus the veggies; now we add veggies whenever we make it.” Our meal planner and Chef Katie added a key ingredient for healthy, balanced life together.



“As a social worker/school counselor, I am increasingly aware of growing numbers of students that experience anxiety and depression. With the pressure in school to achieve standards, and the financial pressure on the families, it becomes all the more important to maintain a balance of self-care and family play. Five fourteen year-olds found themselves playing, creating, interacting, and challenging themselves physically beyond their expectations of themselves. One of the girls stretched herself physically when bouldering and learned, “Even if you doubt that you can do something, try it anyway. If you tell yourself you can’t do something, make it your mission to prove yourself wrong.” One of the guys challenged his negative self-perception, “Never doubt yourself and enjoy the moment, even if you think you are insignificant, keep an open mind and you will learn that you are more.” Thanks to the unique opportunity that these students have had with Sacred Rok, they have more vitality and motivation to explore beyond their borders. Isn’t that what education is all about?”

- **Camping trip with Native American youth.**

This year for the first time we took local Native American youth camping. In July, an elder brought five Yosemite native young people between 11 and 16 years old to camp for three days at Tuolumne Meadows. Having an elder to keep things in perspective was a good and powerful experience. He would say to the youth to go to the river and make your offering to the water, the earth, your family. Then when breakfast was ready, he would have one of the guys say something about the food, to appreciate it. The same for dinner. Always taking a little time to honor life and what gives us life.



Sacred Rok Outcomes

We seek positive outcomes - defined as changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior - for youth participants.

- Some outcomes are apparent immediately. These short term outcomes include an increased self-confidence in nature and caring for the environment. Participants learn to sit at peace under a tree or by a river without needing an iPod or cell phone. They are calmer and better able to manage anger, and more able to control their impulses. We surveyed Boys & Girls Club members after each trip. When asked whether they could more easily sit by a river without their iPod or cell phone, 80% of participants said yes; 20% said maybe, and none of them said no. Sixty percent felt more comfortable being in nature after the trip; the other 40% said maybe they were more comfortable about nature. Based on the survey responses as measured by whether they feel more self-confident in the outdoors, 80% of participants said yes; 20% said maybe, and none of them said no.
- In the medium term, additional outcomes are expected to be exhibited in the following year. Medium term, youth participants may serve as mentors on return trips or speak about the experience to other youth. Participants will exhibit better impulse control, and decreased stress, anxiety, and depression. Based on another survey question of Boys & Girls Club whether remembering how they felt at Yosemite would help them stay calm instead of getting angry when something goes wrong at home or school, 40% said maybe but 60% said no.
- Longer term, over a three year period, outcomes include respect for nature and themselves, the feeling of being respected and valued by adults, more positive peer and adult relationships, and hopes and goals for the future that lead to more engagement in school or work. On the survey we also asked if the experience had opened their eyes to goals or dreams they could have for the future. Based on the survey responses, 20% said yes; 80% said maybe, and none of them said no.

Future Plans

We are very excited about our book coming out! It has been a major effort to compile our newsletters into a book, *Letters from Sacred Rok*, which is being published in December 2012. This is a wonderful growth opportunity for us, as we can truly share our story.

We have a number of youth activities planned. For example, we have a camping trip planned with incarcerated Merced County Probation youth, and have been approached by other youth Probation departments as well. We continue to work with Mariposa Middle School youth and Native American youth, the Merced County Boys and Girls Club, and are reaching out to the Dos Palos community in Merced County as well.

We continue to work with the National Park Service to lead youth volunteers to help develop and maintain trails for rock-climbing. We will use our renewal United Way grant to support four day trips to Yosemite for Merced youth from the Boys and Girls Club. A North Face Explore Fund grant will continue to support activities among youth who have participated in previous trips.

We are continuing to explore how best to build capacity in our small nonprofit. The Sacred Rok Board maintains its vision for an identified site for camping and other activities, a small facility on one or more acres in or near Yosemite, where young people can come at any time once they have graduated from foster care or Probation or other programs we serve. Over the years, we want to continue to build ongoing relationships with and among the young people we serve. We would also like to have a van to facilitate transportation, particularly for groups who do not have access to transportation.



Supporters

We owe special thanks to our supporters, without whom our efforts would not be possible.

Individual Donors

Monir Ahmed	Denise Gleb	Beth Ogilvie & Susan Straghalis
Christophe Aurine	Vernon Godwyn	Debbie & Victor Peng
Jeff Baptista	Nancy Goodban & Kenji Hakuta	Donna Piedrafita
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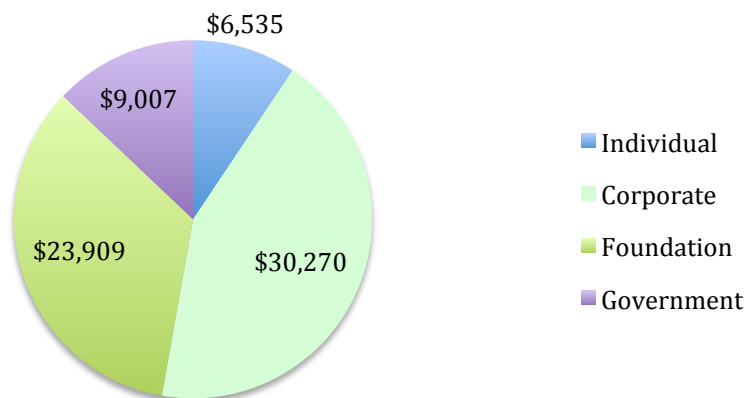
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Five Ten	The California Endowment
Hamill Family Foundation	United Way/Merced
Klean Kanteen	Yosemite Conservancy/National Park Service

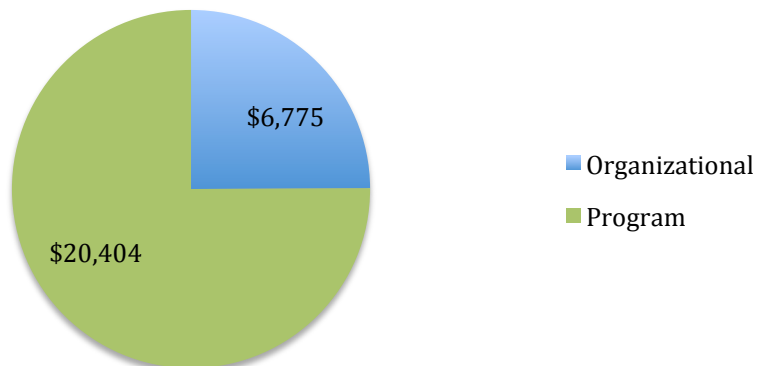
Financials

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2012, Sacred Rok received \$69,721.47 in revenue and had \$27,178.41 in expenses, for a net income of \$42,543.06. We ended the year with a solid cash reserve, with \$62,038.02 in the bank. This year, our primary funding was from one-time corporate donations, followed by foundation funding (we received both restricted and unrestricted foundation funds). Our primary cost is the camping and day trips. We have very small fixed costs including web site hosting and insurance. We also pay for administrative support staffing for grant writing and upkeep of the web site and newsletter. This year we also printed selected photos of Ron Kauk's onto photo cards to supplement the business cards. The pie charts below show our revenue sources and our costs. The Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet are shown on the next two pages.

Fiscal Year 2012 Revenue



Fiscal Year 2012 Expenses



Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Profit and Loss Statement FY 2012

	<u>Amount</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Restricted	
Government Grants and Contracts	\$9,007.47
Foundation Grants	<u>\$18,409.00</u>
Total Restricted	\$27,416.47
Unrestricted	
Individual Donations	6,535.00
Foundation Donations	5,500.00
Corporate	<u>30,270.00</u>
Total Unrestricted	\$42,305.00
Total Income	\$69,721.47
Expense	
Organizational Costs	
Administrative Support Staff	\$1,900.00
Printing & Reproduction	\$1,625.86
Postage and Mailing	\$223.54
Telephone and Telecommunications	\$509.98
Insurance	\$1,590.00
Miscellaneous Administrative Costs	\$751.79
Bank and PayPal Fees	<u>\$173.48</u>
Total Organizational Costs	\$6,774.65
Camping and Day Trip/Program Costs	
Program Staff	\$16,830.00
Supplies	<u>\$3,573.76</u>
Total Camping and Day Trip/Program Costs	\$20,403.76
Total Expense	\$27,178.41
Net Ordinary Income	<u>\$42,543.06</u>
Net Income	<u>\$42,543.06</u>

Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Balance Sheet FY 2012

July 1, 2012

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings \$62,038.02

Accounts Receivable \$0.00

Supplies \$729.73

Total Current Assets **\$62,767.75**

Other Assets **\$0.00**

TOTAL ASSETS **\$62,767.75**

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable \$0.00

Fees Payable \$0.00

Insurance \$0.00

Unearned Revenue \$0.00

Total Current Liabilities **\$0.00**

Long Term Liabilities **\$0.00**

Total Liabilities **\$0.00**

TOTAL LIABILITIES **\$0.00**