

Nature has always been a constant familiar in my life. It has been the glue that holds my family together, formed lasting friendships with important people in my life, cleared my head when it needed to be cleared, and has brought me overwhelming love. I grew up knee deep in the creek behind my house, running barefoot through the woods, and exploring the mountains of Maine. Both my parents got the adventure bug and thankfully passed it onto my sister and me. My parents took us out in all conditions. I grew up going to a small cabin with no running water and electricity in the Maine woods and had the privilege to become acquainted with the woods. Needless to say, at a young age I became very comfortable in the outdoors, along with understanding how crucial it is to my life. My parents sent me to summer camp where I learned primitive skills and leadership skills where I fell even deeper in love with nature. I then had the opportunity to become a camp counselor at the same summer camp where I was able to discover a passion for teaching outdoors skills. I learned that one of the most rewarding things in life is helping others find their love for the outdoors.

After the death of my mother, I found myself seeking out hikes and nature even more than before. Through backpacking and spending solitude in the woods, I found her spirit with me. I found a healthy way to deal with the immense pain occurring in my everyday life. She was one of the most adventurous, strong, and passionate people I have known. Although she is no longer physically with me, her spirit is what inspires me to explore even more. She was and still is my biggest mentor. She taught me so much and left a positive impact on everyone she interacted with, and that is exactly what I strive for. With her always in the back of my mind I have made it a goal to hike all 46 high peaks in the Adirondacks. I have gotten into activities such as backpacking, hiking, rock climbing, and paddling. Her adventurous spirit lives in me and

inspires me to live each day with a sense of purpose, and when amazing opportunities arise, to always give them my best shot.

With nature being such a powerful and positive thing in my life, I have made it my goal to empower others and make them confident in nature. If you can depend on yourself in the wilderness, you can depend on yourself in any situation. I love taking my friend with little to no experience out backpacking for the first time and see that spark of joy in their eyes. Teach them that nature heals and to see that process of it healing. I realize that the outdoors is a privilege and it is scary for many to get into it. There can be gatekeeping and intimidation, large costs, and getting started takes a lot of courage. I want to do everything in my power to create a welcoming loving community for more people to get out there. It is my mission to get everyone involved and I have found a place where I can utilize this skill already. I have worked at Outdoor Gear Exchange in Burlington, VT, for the past year, helping many people find gear to get out and recreate. The community at Outdoor Gear Exchange strives to get people outside who may not be able to afford and it has been an honor to be a part of their mission.

I had been attending University of Vermont but took the spring 2021 off because of Covid. I used that time to work at Sugarbush as a lift operator and followed my love for skiing with the chance to try out new opportunities. After that, I landscaped to save up enough money to be able to work for Americorps at the VYCC farm in Richmond. The landscaping job was tough mentally, being one of two of the only females working. I learned how to stand up and show that women can do just the same as men. VYCC allowed me to help others and I learned so much about farming. I was on an all female farm crew which was an extremely valuable experience for me. While farming, my crew leader, Grace, would talk about her times traveling out to Montana by herself and all of the fulfilling experiences she had out there. She modeled

leadership skills which stuck with me, showing me how to stand my ground as a woman. I would consider her to be one of my mentors today. I went back to UVM in the fall, but felt as though I was going down a path of being trapped in a career path I did not wish to not be a part of. With this in mind, I decided my time at school was done and I needed to take hold of my life. I picked up more hours at Outdoor Gear Exchange and found an incredible guiding opportunity across the country for the summer, in hopes of starting my dream life.

This summer I am traveling to Montana to guide for the company Alpengirl. There I will be taking middle school and high school girls on trips to teach them outdoor skills and leadership skills. This has been a dream of mine, to get women out and empower them, and I will use the leadership skills I learned from Grace in my role as a leader. I plan to drive out to Montana from Vermont, which will be costly with the rise of gas prices. After the trip I plan to adventure down the West Coast to gain more experience and knowledge and hopefully find new opportunities to help others get outside and empower themselves. With these traveling experiences I will be following my dreams and follow in my mother's adventurous footsteps..

With the rise of gas I have been worried about how I am going to be able to afford everything without bleeding my savings dry. My good friend, Helen Salvatore, and a coworker, Evertt, told me about Flyin Ryan and how I could be able to get a fund. Doing the math out I believe it would cost me close to \$700 in gas and around \$300 in food. I would hope to get an extra \$200 incase opportunities, like white water rafting or renting out canoes on rivers come up. In total I am asking for \$1200 to help fund my dreams, and would be grateful for any help as I get started on my life's dream