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## A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LONGWALK

### **Who We Are:**

LongWalk is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2009. We are committed to making a lasting impact, equipping young people to influence their culture by making a difference in their community. LongWalk is comprised of a working board, several staff guides, and countless community volunteers, both youth and adult.

### **What We Do:**

LongWalk equips, encourages, and empowers leaders; we use the wilderness as a teaching tool. Our program goes beyond the wilderness setting. We invite our participants to continue developing their leadership skills, by participating in youth-led public service and social outreach projects. We have designed our program with three levels, each level building upon the subsequent level.

### **Why We Do What We Do:**

LongWalk's Mission is to provide an opportunity for young adults to learn leadership through wilderness adventure and develop character by serving others in the community. LongWalk's program gives those students who make wise choices the opportunity to be the leader other students wish to follow. We do this with the knowledge that leadership comes from within a group and that healthy leadership produces healthy results. Our desire is that by the end of a trip, our participants will not only have a support network and an understanding of good decision making, but they will also have tangible experiences in leading their peers. They keep coming back because they have fun, and so do we.

### **How We Do What We Do:**

\*Please see "Sample Itinerary" for each of these levels for a more detailed description.

### **Level One:**

#### What We Do:

In the wilderness setting, a classroom that is extremely dynamic, we teach the foundations of servant leadership, good decision making, and the value of peer accountability. We believe in youth, we also believe in relational and experiential education.

#### How We Do It:

Facilitated by our guides, we take homogenous groups of up to 18 students and 2 adults on a 3-day backpacking trip. Each participant is assigned a day to lead on a Leadership Team (comprised of other students) and each day's Leaders are responsible for making daily decisions for the group. Equipped and empowered by the LongWalk Staff, students will lead their peers and are encouraged to work together as a team, to solve problems, to keep each other accountable, and also to keep it FUN!



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### **Level Two:**

#### What We Do:

We encourage young adults who are willing to explore more leadership opportunities to network with other young leaders from all over Oklahoma. We do this by inviting students to participate in our monthly public service projects known as The Secret Service. When they are comfortable with assuming a larger leadership role, they can assist in running these events.

#### How We Do It:

Our young leaders are in charge of our monthly public service outreach (service projects vary each month). Run by a Project Leadership team of 8-12 LongWalk participants and mentored by adults, the Project Team meets at least twice during the pre-project time with the chosen nonprofit, LongWalk staff, and corporate sponsors. The leadership team will attend a dinner after the project and will participate in an evaluation debrief while enjoying an excellent meal provided by LongWalk sponsors. These opportunities are open to all participants and involve student leaders from all over Oklahoma.

### **Level Three:**

#### What We Do:

We give students who have shown a willingness to lead others into better decision making the opportunity to test themselves in a high mountain wilderness. They face the new challenge of leading as an individual and being evaluated by their peers. Our participants will leave the trip having a more accurate self awareness, gained through experience and self-evaluation.

#### How We Do It:

Facilitated by our guides, we take up to 10 students from diverse backgrounds and 2 adults into the Weminuche Wilderness, outside of Durango, CO for a 6-day backpacking trip. Mentored by our staff, participants will lead sections of the course, including making daily decisions for the group, as an individual.

### **Our Impact:**

LongWalk has seen incredible results from our young program. The results are so encouraging the OU Social Work Department is conducting an outcome study.

We have facilitated many Level One Trips, taking out hundreds of youth, including sports teams, student leadership groups, youth groups and youth led ministries, home schooled students, and just groups of friends.

This year we will facilitate 15 Level One Trips, reaching over 500 youth. Our students will organize over 1,000 public service outreach hours, involving local nonprofits, corporations, and young leaders from all over Oklahoma. Fifty students will complete our Level Three training, and will be invited to return as our Leaders for next year.