As a kid, I was obsessed with animals. I always loved interacting with and seeing them, and soon developed a passion to protect them in any way that I could. I knew that when I grew up, I wanted to work with them. The problem was, I didn’t know what that was called. See, I knew I wanted to work with wildlife and spend my time in the outdoors, I just never knew how to get there. To be honest, I didn’t even know if it was possible. Fast forward a couple of years and I’m a sophomore in high school interning at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge where I meet Justin Twist, an Education Coordinator for Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK). After conversing with him about my interests, he told me to join ELK’s Urban Ranger crew. Urban Rangers is an employment program that is a partnership between ELK, the National Park Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Denver Parks and Recreation. College and high school students are educated about science and the environment, furthering their understanding of the outdoors, their communities, college, and careers. After my first year as an Urban Ranger, I was amazed at how much I got to do. I taught kids how to fish, some for the first time. I went on camping trips and bonded with families and their kids who to this day, still remember those moments and talk to me about them whenever they see me. I learned survival skills, my favorite being learning how to start a campfire. I learned the importance of conservation and how everyone plays a part. Most importantly, I got to see just how many careers there were in Natural Resources. A spark grew in me and I thought to myself, “This is what I’m looking for”. Today, I am the Youth Workforce and Inclusion Intern for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. In the beginning, I had no idea if working outdoors was possible. I didn’t even know if such careers existed. But because of what I learned with ELK and what I am currently learning through my internship, I see that there is so much out there, so many paths to take that it really makes it hard to choose from. Now I’m currently studying at Front Range Community College, and will hopefully transfer to Colorado State University, specifically the Warner College of Natural Resources to major in Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology. What that degree, whether it be as a District Wildlife Manager, a wildlife biologist, or anything really, I now know that Colorado Parks and Wildlife is the agency I want to work for. And I wouldn’t have ever come to that conclusion without ELK.

“I now know that Colorado Parks and Wildlife is the agency I want to work for. And I wouldn’t have ever come to that conclusion without ELK.”

– Citlalli Rojas, ELK Alumna
Looking forward to the 10th Anniversary of our largest fundraiser of the year, *ELK ‘n Eggs*. As ongoingly hosted by the generous Denver Museum of Nature and Science, this event celebrates our 2019 accomplishments and highlighted our many great adventures to come – with our ever-growing group of friends and family. As our MVP of the morning, Ronika Kone perfectly painted a picture of why organizations like ELK are important. “Picture a room full of students remembering you and what you did. Who might have not experienced outdoor programs until hitting college. That is amazing. I never even knew what a macroinvertebrate is. I was scared to even touch a fish. Now I have been teaching students how to fish for three years. Now that I am ELK’s new Student Coordinator, I can’t wait to see where our future adventures will take me.” A very special thanks goes out to all of our wonderful sponsors, including Climax Molybdenum for their extremely generous $5,000 Bald Eagle sponsorship.

**Upcoming Programs**

**Saturday, November 23rd**

*ELK Fall Potluck*

- **Ages:** ELK Families
- **Time:** Starts at 1pm
- **Location:** Montbello Recreation Center
- **Sign-Up:** RSVP with Amy Wright at awright@elkkids.org

**Saturday, December 7th**

*Family Walk Along the Highline Canal*

- **Ages:** ELK Families
- **Time:** 10am-2pm
- **Location:** Green Valley Ranch (exact location TBD)
- **Sign-Up:** RSVP with Amy Wright at awright@elkkids.org

**Saturday, December 8th**

*CU Boulder College Visit D.I.V.E.*

- **Ages:** High school students
- **Time:** 7am-3pm
- **Location:** Meet at DCIS Montbello
- **Sign-Up:** RSVP with Taylor Ruffin at truffin@elkkids.org

---

*On October 4th, 2019, we were delighted to host the 10th Anniversary of our largest fundraiser of the year - ELK ‘n Eggs!* As ongoingly hosted by the generous Denver Museum of Nature and Science, this event celebrated our 2019 accomplishments and highlighted our many great adventures to come – with our ever-growing group of friends and family. As our MVP of the morning, Ronika Kone perfectly painted a picture of why organizations like ELK are important. “Picture a room full of students remembering you and what you did. Who might have not experienced outdoor programs until hitting college. That is amazing. I never even knew what a macroinvertebrate is. I was scared to even touch a fish. Now I have been teaching students how to fish for three years. Now that I am ELK’s new Student Coordinator, I can’t wait to see where our future adventures will take me.” A very special thanks goes out to all of our wonderful sponsors, including Climax Molybdenum for their extremely generous $5,000 Bald Eagle sponsorship.

---

We are pleased to share exciting news in regards to the campaign to build the Education and Community Center in Montbello. The city of Denver recently pledged a $1.5M match to help us reach our $3M goal for the building! We are less than $200,000 away from achieving the full match and completing fundraising for the education center. ELK, The Trust for Public Land, and Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) have been working together to transform once neglected property into a natural open space and learning laboratory. The project restores 4.5 acres of empty lot to mimic the native short-grass prairie ecosystem.

The Open Space includes, trails, bridges, an outdoor classroom, geo-discovery area, wood nature play areas, a climbing wall, ropes course, and native plants. ELK has activated the space as weather and final construction activities allow.

The ELK Education and Community Center will be the place-making anchor for the neighborhood and will activate the Open Space Park, house ELK programs and operations, and provide a safe place for youth and families. The building consists of two classrooms, office and storage space and gathering areas. The building design connects with the textures and colors of the surrounding restored prairie and will create an open inviting place for the community.

We are grateful to all our partners, students and families as ELK reaches its fullest potential. We are closing in on the fundraising gap and will soon have a place we can call home.

For Our Youth,

*— Loretta Pineda, Executive Director*
This Colorado Gives Day, your gift will be matched TWICE!! Thanks to PB and K Family Foundation and an anonymous donor. Your dollars will have 3x the impact on youth exploring the natural world in 2020. Colorado’s largest day of giving, Colorado Gives Day, takes place on Tuesday, December 10th. On this day, thousands of people join together to support Colorado nonprofits like Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK).

Together we can help cultivate the next generation of leaders. When you donate to ELK on Colorado Gives Day, you’re helping youth get outside and excited about science, outdoor adventure, career development, and mentor relationships. You can schedule your Colorado Gives Day donations to ELK early at www.coloradogives.org. With your help, we can remove barriers and impact a diverse community of young leaders and inspire them to reach for the stars.