

## Charting a Course for Inclusion

In this special newsletter, we're focusing on a newer element of SAIL's accessible recreation program that's made possible through the generosity of donors. The SAIL Challenge Course is celebrating its second season in operation under the leadership of SAIL's ORCA program. The "ropes course" - originally designed and operated by SAGA at the Eagle Valley Center - had fallen into disuse when SAIL agreed to take on the property several years ago. Today our staff and volunteers operate a safe, accessible curriculum that emphasizes teamwork, communication, and inclusion in all aspects of the course.

So far this season SAIL has served 365 people, including 300+ youth at the SAIL Challenge Course. Groups have ranged from young adults from the Youth Employment in the Parks (YEP) summer work program who learned teamwork and communication skills, to nonprofits hosting their employees in an afternoon of fun and learning, to young campers spending a week of their summer playing and growing together.

**Our goal this school year is to facilitate the SAIL Challenge Course for every 6th grade student in Juneau - more than 300 of them!** We're excited to share the power of inclusive outdoor education, and hope to see the program grow with time and support from the community. Thank you for being a part of our journey as we chart a course for inclusion and accessibility in our communities.

## Playing—and Growing—Together

SAIL hosted Camp Independence for a second summer that emphasized accessibility for all. Two dozen elementary-aged youth of all abilities spent a week with the SAIL Challenge Course team to focus on a different skill each day—and have fun! Thanks to a grant from The Alaska Community Foundation, campers were able to participate for free, dismantling financial barriers for many.

Campers completed several low elements hand selected by the Challenge Course team to highlight a core value each day— Integrity, Collaboration, Inclusion, Empowerment, and Accessibility. Ending each day on a high element—which involved climbing, balancing and trusting each other—campers were pushed to work together and step outside of their comfort zones.

---

*"I can't begin to say how influential and important this camp has been !"*

---

Campers surprised themselves by accomplishing challenges they couldn't do alone, and relying on each other. Friendships were formed with inclusion at the core.

One parent reflected on her daughter's experience and said, "I can't begin to say how influential and important this camp has been for her self esteem and courage. She has been able to do brave things, feel proud of herself, have fun, and make new friends. Thank you so much!!"

SAIL is grateful to have shared in the joy of playing and growing with new friends. Camp Independence would not have been possible without the support of generous donors like you. Thank you!



# Investment is Building Accessible Discovery for All

In the past two years, **SAIL has made many upgrades to the SAIL Challenge Course in collaboration with our partners.** Trail Mix, a local nonprofit specializing in trail maintenance, built an accessible public trail that circles the course. Not only does this allow participants to enjoy the meadows when the trail is not in use, it also allows folks who use wheelchairs to access all of our elements.

We improved existing elements to make them more inclusive and accessible. For example, we installed a 4-to-1 pulley on our Catwalk to ensure it was accessible to everyone. We watched as a high school student who uses a wheelchair said through laughing spells, “I am flying!” SAIL also installed two new high elements: the Giant Swing and the Giant’s Ladder. **The Giant Swing quickly became our most used element (and perhaps the most beloved)!**

In addition to these improvements, the Challenge Course team also achieved ACCT (Association for Challenge Course Technology) Level 1 certification through rigorous training that goes in-depth on facilitation techniques, rescues, and challenge course philosophy. The SAIL Challenge Course was and continues to be inspected at the start of every season. This ultimately ensures our elements and course meet industry standards.

---

*“The activities are challenging, yet all students leave feeling successful - What a great way to start the school year!”*

---



Photo courtesy of Stacy Unzicker

**Thanks to these and other upgrades, SAIL now hosts school groups—and witnesses the impacts the Challenge Course has on students and classrooms.** The Challenge Course creates a community of open-minded and inclusive youth who look at their classmates as teammates.

But our work isn’t done yet! **The Challenge Course has a pricey list of upgrades and maintenance needs we need to serve as many youth as possible.**

Rehabbing the Challenge Course will ultimately allow all youth in Juneau to partake in empowerment, integrity, accessibility, collaboration, and inclusion—regardless of ability. **The impact this will have on building an inclusive community cannot be overstated.**

**Our goal this season is to serve all 300+ 6th graders in Juneau as well as high school classrooms with youth who experience disabilities.**

We are well on our way to achieving this goal, and your generosity will help get us there! Your special give to SAIL today will support healthy, inclusive activity for young people of all abilities.



**Want to book the Challenge Course for your organization, business or event? Go to [www.sailinc.org](http://www.sailinc.org)!**