

BALANCED ROCK

Volume 6, Issue 2

10

April 2011

A BIT-OF-HISTORY AND CURRENT EVENTS

By Pam Meierding

Balanced Rock is a Yosemite-based non-profit whose mission is to inspire people to live more meaningful, healthy and sustainable lives through deep connection to nature, community and themselves. Our organization began after Joie Armstrong, a local Yosemite Institute outdoor instructor, was tragically murdered in 1999.

Balanced Rock (at the time called Wild Women Workshops) was created by Yosemite Institute instructors to help the local community heal.

Recognizing that more people could benefit from life-changing empowerment opportunities in the outdoors, the workshops were expanded to a larger audience. The majority of our programs are mind-body-spirit backpack programs and retreats that allow people to unplug from their busy lives in the outdoors. Because we believe that people from all walks of life can benefit from wellness journeys, we regularly offer scholarships to those that cannot otherwise afford the trip, and we have led the country's first and only Women of Color (WOC) backpacking retreat since 2004.

In this particular YGP issue, we want to highlight two key programs that relate specifically to the gateways. First, we want to bring attention to our locals policy: We offer great last-minute deals on our trips (up to 75% off!) to locals, social workers and schoolteachers.



Balanced Rock

Yosemite journeys for mind, body and spirit

For our last minute deals email us at info@balancedrock.org.

The second highlight is our Yosemite Youth Expedition for Mariposa youth. In 2010, with funding from the Pacific Watershed Stewardship Council, the Yosemite Rotary Club, and individual donors, Balanced Rock led the Yosemite Youth Expedition (YYE) for Mariposa County high-school-aged, underserved youth. Thirty youth participated in four empowering "rite of passage" group experiences over a 12-week period with three day hikes leading up to a week-long backpacking trip. Although participants live in close proximity to Yosemite, most had never experienced the spectacular national park in their own backyard.

Partners in producing YYE included Balanced Rock, Ethos Youth Center, Mountain Crisis Services, Mariposa Safe Families, and the Mariposa County Unified School District with support from NPS, Wildlink, Yosemite Institute, and the Mariposa County Sheriff's Department. A short video was created to highlight YYE

(go to youtube and search "balanced rock" and "youth"). We are now in the planning stages of the 2011 YYE. This partnership program provides a model for bringing our local youth into Yosemite and we're happy to share our lessons learned with other gateways.

For information call 209.379.9453 or see <http://www.balanced.rock.org>

