

# HOMER NEWS <sup>(1)</sup>

## Point of View: TRAILS program for inclusive recreation

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I've had experiences throughout my life where I had little — little money, little time, little energy. We all have been there. It's the ebb in the ebb and flow of life. So we dig deep, we prioritize, and we do what we can with what we have.

This is the situation that many not-for-profits are finding themselves in right now. There is less funding and more need for services. The Independent Living Center's (ILC) TRAILS program is one of these nonprofits finding ways to continue offering quality services with reduced budgets. TRAILS offers inclusive recreation and advocates for accessible recreational opportunities in our area. Wait, I know, some of you are thinking: Recreation? How does that make it on to the important list when survival services are needed? That is a fair question; here is the value I see:

When we have less, what we do have becomes more valuable, the useful becomes essential, and the sweet parts of life—they become sweeter and keep us going through the tough times.

Recreation offers opportunities to connect to some of the sweet stuff in life; informal and low-stress social interactions with a variety of people, fun and non-routine physical activity, exploring and savoring Nature in new ways and locations. Everyone — of all abilities and income — needs and deserves opportunities like these. Homer is a stronger, more interesting and caring community when we all get chances to enjoy and appreciate these experiences. As federal and state funding have decreased, TRAILS has turned to our community for increased support. We are so grateful for the organizations and businesses that have kept the TRAILS program going this last year.

First off, we would like to offer a special Thank You to The Homer Foundation, which awarded us a grant for participant scholarships. This grant makes up 60 percent of our scholarship budget. Many folks who turn to TRAILS for once-in-a-while (and sometimes once-in-a-lifetime) experiences depend on scholarships to make participating possible—without scholarships, they simply couldn't afford to go on our big, special adventures—what TRAILS calls its "One Hit Wonders" (OHWs). Others from the business community who have made scholarships possible are Rotary of Homer Downtown, Maritime Helicopters, All Seasons Honda, Mary Ann and Don Fell, Ulmer's, K-Bay Café and The Tom Beatty Memorial Scholarship Fund. To all of you, we give our heartfelt thanks.



In FY 2017/18, 100 percent of our OHW participants used the TRAILS scholarship program. A scholarship made it possible for a woman who uses a wheelchair to ride the Alaska Railroad across the state's dramatic heartland, fulfilling a dream she's nurtured for 20 years. A scholarship gave a young man a chance to spend time at his favorite place in the world—a horse ranch in Cooper Landing that, he says, "feels like I'm home." Scholarships made it possible for folks to get out on the water and harvest fish or pick berries across the bay; being on the ocean and rocking on the waves are treasured special pleasures when boat trips are so rare. Scholarships also showed us how beauty and art can encompass disability and elevate community; they helped ten TRAILS consumers attend the Homer Council on the Arts Moving Metaphors dance performance and see the beauty of a dance built around women in wheelchairs. These are significant, even life-changing experiences for our community members, and they're made possible by scholarship support. Thank you to those who make scholarships possible. You do good in ways you can hardly imagine.

Beyond scholarships, the TRAILS program enjoys other kinds of support from the community: recreation vendors, partner nonprofits, and local businesses support our programs by giving us discounted prices on goods, services, or use of their facilities. We would like especially to thank BGS Media, Red Mountain Marine, Center for Alaska Coastal Studies, the Alaska Railroad, Islands and Oceans Visitor Center, Alaska Horseman's Adventures, Challenge Alaska, Alaska Coastal Marine, Homer United Methodist Church, Homer Bowl, Starvin' Marvin's Pizza, Save-U-More and Safeway. You help us keep down the costs of our activities while enabling us to keep quality top notch.

This year we have also partnered with local nonprofits to share information, ideas, and come together to support our diverse community by promoting inclusive recreation. Thank you to our partners: Journeys, SPARC, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust, Kachemak Bay Water Trail, Alaska State Parks, City of Homer Parks and Recreation, Homer Chamber of Commerce, Homer Senior Center, Seldovia Village Tribe and South Peninsula Hospital.

Our funders, donors and partners exemplify why Homer is such a special place. They elevate, connect, and enrich our community, and we are humbled by their support. To see the wondrous kinds of things they make possible, check out a brand new video about the TRAILS program on our video page: <http://www.peninsulailc.org/TRAILS-Videos> (<http://www.peninsulailc.org/TRAILS-Videos>).

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