

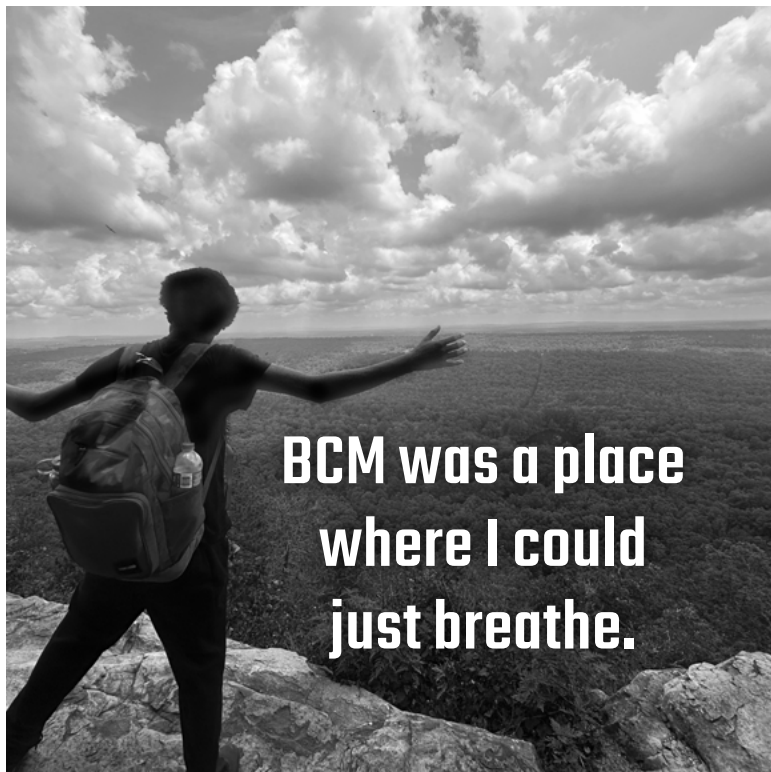


# 2025 IMPACT REPORT

## WELCOME: EXPERIENCES THAT CONNECT

In 2025, Big City Mountaineers focused on a single, powerful lens: **Connection**. In a world that often feels fragmented, BCM provides a sanctuary where youth can disconnect from digital noise and reconnect with what matters. Our mission remains rooted in the belief that the outdoors is a catalyst for personal transformation. This year, we prioritized building confidence, technical skills, and lifelong friendships, all while nurturing the emotional well-being of every participant.

Through our **Youth Agency Partners (YAPs)**, we ensured that the outdoors wasn't just a destination, but a bridge to local support systems that extend long after the sleeping bags are packed away.



**BCM was a place  
where I could  
just breathe.**



**Big City  
Mountaineers**  
provides transformative  
experiences through  
connections to nature  
that strengthen life skills  
and build community for  
youth from disinvested  
communities.



# WHO WE SERVE & WHY IT MATTERS



Participation sets the stage for **higher self-esteem, self-efficacy, belonging, and reduced loneliness.**

We serve youth from urban environments who are often underrepresented in outdoor spaces. For many, a BCM trip is their first time seeing a horizon uninterrupted by skyscrapers.

## The Power of Partnership

Our YAPs are the backbone of our recruitment. By providing familiar faces and pre-trip preparation, they ensure youth arrive at the trailhead feeling safe, seen, and ready to engage.

## Representation as an Anchor

We saw a marked increase in engagement when BIPOC youth worked with instructor teams that reflected their own identities. This cultural safety is not a “bonus”—it is a requirement for growth.

## The Outcome

When a student feels they belong in the woods, they begin to believe they belong in any space they choose to occupy. This builds a foundation of **self-efficacy** and **reduced loneliness.**



**0% of participants had prior backcountry or wilderness exposure before BCM.**

**Only 2% had ever been camping before the program.**

BCM uses a methodology for measuring our program's impact, focusing on key index social-emotional dimensions in youth participants: Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, and Sense of Social Belonging. These are the results:

Youth who competed expeditions versus peers who have not participated in BCM's programming had:

**28%**  
HIGHER  
SELF-ESTEEM  
SCORES

**36%**  
HIGHER  
SELF-EFFICACY

**36%**  
HIGHER  
SENSE OF  
BELONGING

Every hour spent navigating a trail or paddling a lake is an investment in a student's self-esteem and leadership capacity.

# 2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**329 unique youth  
reached across five  
metro areas**



**4,672 program hours  
and 207 program  
days delivered.**



**programs include-  
paddle clinics, day hikes,  
overnights, multi-day  
expeditions.**

## THE BCM PROGRAM EXPERIENCE: FOUR CONNECTIONS IN ACTION

**Connection to Self:** youth reflection, stepping into leadership, emotional growth.

**Connection to Community:** teamwork, gratitude circles, shared challenges.

**Connection to Nature:** immersive, awe-inspiring experiences outdoors.

**Connection to Joy:** play, discovery, laughter, unstructured moments.

**“I felt proud of myself.”**

These experiences foster **self-esteem, self-efficacy, belonging, and reduced loneliness.**



**“Being in nature made me feel calm.”**



Seattle, WA



Minneapolis, MN



San Francisco Bay Area, CA



Denver, CO  
BCM Headquarters



Birmingham, AL

**“It made me feel like I belonged.”**

**Seattle**

Emphasized the volunteer-to-instructor pipeline, showing youth that their journey with BCM can evolve into a career.

**San Francisco Bay Area**

Our bilingual “Trail Sampler” pilot allowed youth to explore diverse ecosystems while feeling culturally supported.

**Denver**

Leveraged the Rockies for high-altitude expeditions that emphasized teamwork and “leave no trace” ethics.

**Minneapolis–St. Paul**

Returning instructors created a “legacy effect,” where youth felt an immediate sense of belonging with familiar mentors.


**Birmingham**

Riverside treks sparked immediate self-confidence as youth navigated new terrain and mastered the art of scouting the water’s edge.

**FIVE  
CITIES  
SHARED  
SUCCESS**

## BELONGING, REPRESENTATION & TRUST

Trust is earned in the transitions. By using a co-guiding model and prioritizing staff representation, we create a “social safety net.” When a student sees an instructor who looks like them navigating a map or leading a climb, the “outdoor glass ceiling” shatters. Community-building activities like gratitude circles ensure that every voice, no matter how quiet, is honored.



**“We supported each other when it got hard.”**

**“I learned  
I can do  
more than  
I thought.”**



## SAFETY, CARE & PREPAREDNESS

Growth requires a foundation of safety. In 2025, we bolstered our “behind the scenes” systems:

### Medical Oversight

A new Medical Advisor and updated standing orders ensured we were prepared for any contingency.

### Efficiency

Streamlined health screenings and rapid-response EpiPen protocols meant less time on paperwork and more time on the trail.

### The Result

When youth feel safe, they take the positive risks necessary for growth.



# LEARNING, IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION



BCM is a learning organization. We are consistently exploring opportunities to expand our impact and add value to our programs through:

## **New Curriculums**

More inclusive, reflective prompts for trail journals.

## **Meal Systems**

Refined recipes that are more culturally diverse and easier for youth to help prepare.



## **Data Loops**

Improved feedback systems from YAPs allowed us to adjust programming in real-time to meet specific community needs.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we look toward the future, BCM is committed to deepening our impact rather than just widening it. We will continue to expand our regional footprints, refine our “Trail to Leadership” curriculum, and ensure that every youth who walks with us leaves with a stronger sense of self-efficacy, belonging, and joy.

**“I didn’t think I could do it,  
but I did.”**



## GRATITUDE

Our work is only possible because of a vast ecosystem of support.

### To our Youth

Thank you for your bravery and for showing us the world through fresh eyes.

### To our Staff & Volunteers

Your mentorship is the heartbeat of this organization.

### To our YAPs

Thank you for being the bridge that connects us to the vibrant communities we serve.

Together, we are ensuring that nature is a place where every young person can belong.

