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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grand Canyon Youth Continues Partnership with Alpine Leadership Academy

Students participate in 12 spring expeditions, including 9 Grand Canyon Youth river programs

Flagstaff, Ariz. April 26, 2017- Walking down the concrete boat launch at Lees Ferry, the 6th grade class let their toes feel the cold of the Colorado River for the first time. As they rode up-river surrounded by Navajo Sandstone, one student remarked "It's so beautiful! Why would anyone want to look at their phones all day when they could be looking at these cool rocks instead?"

Last week, 77 6th grade students from the Alpine Leadership Academy in Flagstaff participated in four river programs with Grand Canyon Youth (GCY). Aline 6th grade teacher, Scott Godwin, was thrilled with how programs went, saying "This is the perfect partnership to grant youth the opportunity to discover their nature!" Split into daily groups, students started by engaging in a service project in the orchard at historic Lonely Dell Ranch before heading to the river. Participants visited and learned about petroglyphs, conducted citizen science projects, camped at Horseshoe Bend for the night, and voyaged downriver in paddleboats with GCY guides.

GCY and Alpine were also able to bring in partners from Willow Bend Environmental Education Center and the Flagstaff Area National Monuments, who have been working with the 6th graders on watershed and invasive species curriculum all school year. "It was inspirational to see students make connections between what they'd previously learned in class and what they were experiencing outdoors, first-hand" said Cassandra Roberts, Willow Bend's Education Director.

Alpine's 6th graders won't be having all the fun! Over the next two weeks, GCY will launch five more river programs with the magnet middle school. Three groups of 7th grade students will discover the San Juan River, while 8th grade students run the Diamond Creek to Pearce Ferry section of the Colorado River in two separate programs. GCY is also supporting logistics and programming on Alpine excursions to Sedona, Zion, and Lockett Meadow. GCY Executive Director, Emma Wharton, commented "I love how students have the opportunity to build their outdoor skills and knowledge throughout middle school". 2017 marks the 5th year of collaboration between GCY and Alpine, and close to 200 Alpine students will go on river programs with GCY this spring.

These programs were made possible in part by a grant from the Arizona Community Foundation of Flagstaff. This funding made it possible for GCY to award over \$14,000 to 63 different students in the Alpine programs. River trips are, by nature, expensive endeavors, and GCY is thrilled to honor their desire to ensure that price is not a barrier for youth to participate in the outdoors. Both partners are excited about how much these programs have grown over the last 5 years, and cannot wait to see where this dual commitment to outdoor education progresses in the future.

About Grand Canyon Youth

Grand Canyon Youth (GCY) is a nonprofit organization in Flagstaff, AZ serving diverse youth on educational river programs in the Southwest. GCY was founded in 1998 and now serves about 800 youth annually. To find out more information visit www.gcyouth.org.

About Alpine Leadership Academy

The Alpine Leadership Academy offers a three-year experiential learning program at Mount Elden Middle School. Alpine students are engaged in experiential education, connecting classrooms to natural spaces and communities through learning expeditions. For more information visit <http://www.fusd1.org/domain/1501>

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