



## Strategic Plan

# Of Mountains & Men

As of April, 2023

[www.ofmountainsandmen.org](http://www.ofmountainsandmen.org)

# “Guiding Teens Into Christian Manhood”

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### “Of Mountains & Men: Guiding Teens Into Christian Manhood”

[www.ofmountainsandmen.org](http://www.ofmountainsandmen.org)

As of April, 2023

“This we must understand: Masculinity is bestowed. A boy learns who he is and what he's made of from a man or a company of men. This can't be learned in any other place. It can't be learned from other boys and it can't be learned from the world of women.” -John Eldredge, *The Way of the Wild Heart*

**WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO:** Of Mountains & Men (OMM) is a 501c3 dedicated to helping young men develop into strong Christian men through outdoor adventure and biblically-based talks about masculinity.

#### **NEED**

Many young men in America are blessed with strong fathers who provide guidance, teach vital skills, and impart a strong sense of masculinity. Many others, however, totally lack a father figure. Others may have a father, but the father needs help in teaching outdoor skills or guiding their teen into manhood.

The impact of being without a father figure on a young man is tremendous:

- More than one out of every three teenage boys is without their biological father in their home (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Twice as likely to drop out of high school (National Center For Fathering)
- Twice as likely to end up in jail (National Center For Fathering)
- Twice as likely to commit suicide (National Center For Fathering)
- More likely to be convicted of spouse/child abuse when grown (National Center For Fathering)

Bluntly put, many of America's youth desperately need help in becoming men—powerful Christian men of character and capability.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

OMM's mission is to implement a Christian-based wilderness program through which young men advance on their journey in becoming capable, Christ-centered men. Through the experiences of wilderness canoeing, big game hunting, and winter adventures, along with biblical discussions about masculinity, the young men will obtain outdoor skills, confidence, and an understanding of what a Christian man is.

## **MINISTRY NAME/MOTTO**

The ministry's formal name is "Of Mountains & Men." Its motto is "Guiding Teens Into Christian Manhood." It captures the heart of the ministry in that it speaks of rugged outdoor settings and masculinity, guiding teenage boys on a journey to a place within themselves where they begin to embrace their God-ordained masculinity. The formal name is abbreviated as "OMM" throughout this strategic plan.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

A boy can become a man of strong Christian character through a blend of the following two elements:

Becoming confident in his capabilities: confidence is a critical component of being a man. Confidence comes from feeling capable, and being capable comes from skills. OMM teaches valuable outdoor skills, which improves the youth's confidence.

Mentorship: We believe young men require thoughtful and intentional discussions on Christian manhood to become strong men of God. OMM facilitates discussions on their wilderness adventures through nightly Campfire Talks. Based on the book *Wild At Heart* by John Eldredge, the talks help the boy begin to answer four key questions:

- What does it mean to be a man?
- How do I become one?
- What does a woman need in a Godly man?
- How do I become truly alive?

While the staff of OMM recognizes these questions take far longer than several days to answer, they plant the seeds for the youth to discover their own answers.

The nightly Campfire Talks are discussions where everyone participates: youth, mentors, guides, cooks, etc. Here's a description of the book *Wild At Heart*:

[https://www.amazon.com/Wild-Heart-Expanded-Ed-Discovering/dp/1400225264/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=2PS4X6HGURZ1Z&keywords=book+wild+at+heart&qid=1679165955&srefix=book+wild+at+hea%2Caps%2C945&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Wild-Heart-Expanded-Ed-Discovering/dp/1400225264/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2PS4X6HGURZ1Z&keywords=book+wild+at+heart&qid=1679165955&srefix=book+wild+at+hea%2Caps%2C945&sr=8-1)

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

Our trips are for young men aged 13-17 who fall into one of two categories:

Primary Target Audience: young men without an active father in their lives

Secondary Target Audience: young men who do have a father figure active in their life, but the father needs help teaching outdoor skills or mentoring the teen on Christian masculinity.

## **SELECTION METHOD**

People interested in a young man participating in an adventure fill out an application on OMM's website where they describe the young man's family situation, outdoor experience, and, most importantly, how the experience would benefit the young man. Teens without a father take priority over those who do and we prioritize young men with little outdoor experience over others who do. The adventure trips are open to young men around the country.

## **FINDING THE RIGHT YOUNG MEN**

OMM conducts a variety of outreach methods to find the young men whom they can most benefit, including:

- Professional website: [www.ofmountainsandmen.org](http://www.ofmountainsandmen.org)
- Presentations/Outreach to various Christian ministries and church youth groups
- Twice-weekly blog posts sent to subscribers to update/inspire them about OMM activities
- Social Media platforms:
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OfMountainsandMenWildernessMinistry>
  - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ofmountainsandmenministry/>
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/OMM\\_ministry/status/1626351043075272706](https://twitter.com/OMM_ministry/status/1626351043075272706)
  - Radio interviews: <https://www.670kltt.com/2023/02/10/steve-osterholzer-of-mountains-and-men/>

## **ACQUIRED/IMPROVED LIFE SKILLS**

Through outdoor adventures and the Campfire Talks, teens will develop valuable life skills they can use all their lives, regardless of profession or calling:

- Self-Confidence
- Self-Discipline
- Determination/Grit/Toughness
- Focus
- Propensity to try new things
- A solid blueprint of how to answer the four questions posed in the Campfire Talks

## **CORE OBJECTIVES**

- Provide young men without fathers a mentor who can help guide them on their journey to Christian manhood
- Assist fathers in teaching their sons outdoor skills and mentorship on Christian masculinity
- Improve the young man's self-confidence through him learning outdoor skills
- Promote thoughtful discussion and reflection on Christian masculinity through the Campfire Talks
- Inspire teens to develop an appreciation for nature and see beauty in God's creation

## **MENTORS**

Each youth has a mentor on the trip. The role of the mentor is to be a man of strong Christian faith with whom the young man feels comfortable in discussing Christian masculinity. Teens may either bring their mentor (i.e., father, relative, family friend), or if needed, OMM provides a background-checked mentor.

## **COSTS FOR YOUTHS/MENTORS**

The only costs youths/mentors are responsible for are any transportation costs to/from Base Camp and fishing/hunting licenses. Participants in the Fall Hunting Trips are also responsible for all meat transportation/processing costs. OMM assumes all other expenses including providing all meals and equipment.

## **ADVENTURE TRIPS**

There are three types of trips:

- Fall Big Game Hunting in Colorado (operational)
- Summer Wilderness Canoeing in Minnesota (operational)
- Winter Adventure in Minnesota (future)

### Trip Overviews

#### ***Fall Big Game Hunting***

Youths and mentors experience a four-day hunting trip for elk, deer, and antelope in Colorado. Highlights include:

- A robust base camp consisting of wall tents, cots, heaters, lights, and hearty meals
- Marksmanship practice (rifle/muzzleloader)
- Hunting class: Youth/mentors are taught basic hunting skills. While they may not be expert hunters following the four-day hunt, they will have learned enough to hunt independently.
- Presentation by Colorado Parks & Wildlife Officer
- Nightly Campfire Talks
- Several days of hunting big game
- Each youth/mentor team has their own assigned guide
- Hunts are conducted both on 80,000 acres of private land (Colorado Springs, CO area) and a Colorado State Wildlife Areas (Craig, CO area)
- All hunting equipment is provided (guns, ammo, field dressing items, etc.)

#### ***Summer Wilderness Canoeing***

Youths and mentors experience a six-day adventure in the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe area along the Minnesota/Canadian border. Boundary Waters is a 1.2 million-acre wilderness area with over 1,000 lakes. Roads, buildings, and motors are prohibited, making it a canoeing paradise. Highlights include:

- *Base Camp/Skills Phase (two days)*: at a location outside Boundary Waters, youths/mentors learn the skills while canoeing within Boundary Waters.
- Skills Learned At Base Camp:
  - Fire starting
  - Canoe paddling techniques
  - Navigation
  - Fishing
  - Fish Cleaning
  - Camp Life: water purification, tent setup, sanitation, food prep, etc.
- *Lakes Phase (four days)*: each youth/mentor team will paddle their two-person canoe. Guides will lead them throughout the paddling/camping experience. Campfire Talks will occur on a daily basis.

### ***Winter Adventure***

Youths and mentors will experience a four-day adventure in Northern Minnesota during winter. Highlights include:

- All participants will be housed indoors
- Classes Taught/Skills Learned:
  - Fire starting
  - Dressing for cold weather
  - Cold weather injury prevention/treatment
  - Snowmobiling
  - Ice fishing
  - Dog sledding
  - Cross country skiing
  - Snow cave construction
- Campfire Talks will occur on a nightly basis

### **HISTORICAL GROWTH**

OMM was founded in 2019 and has grown more than 1,100% in four years.

2019 (Fall Hunting Trip): two youths/six people in camp

2020 (Fall Hunting): five youth/ten people in camp

2021 (Fall Hunting): six youth/sixteen people in camp

2022 (Fall Hunting): twelve youth/fifty one people in camp

2023 (Summer Wilderness Canoeing): four youth/nine people in camp

2023 (Fall Hunting): 20 youth/sixty people in camp

### **FUTURE GROWTH**

OMM's long-term plan is to establish OMM Centers at several locations nationwide. Permanent facilities with full-time paid staff will allow us to provide life-shaping experiences for hundreds of young men annually.

There are three Phases of OMM's Strategic Growth:

Phase One (Current): Trips Execution

Phase Two (Time TBD): Mobile Training Teams (MTTs)

Phase Three (Time TBD): OMM Permanent Sites

### **Phase One (Current): Trips Execution**

Timeline: This phase began with OMM's first trip in 2019 and ends when all three trips are operational. Two of the three trips are currently operating (Fall Hunting/Summer Canoeing). Phase One ends when the third trip of Winter Adventure is operational.

Desired Trip Frequency/Youths served per year:

- Big Game Hunting: Three individual hunts (one each for elk/deer/antelope) with twenty youths total
- Wilderness Canoeing: Two trips with sixteen youths total
- Winter Adventure: Two trips with sixteen youths total

Major Objectives:

- Improve financial support from private donors
- Expand Social Media/website presence to improve awareness/resource more youth
- Increase involvement of new people within OMM (guides, mentors, sponsorship outreach, media, etc.)
- Obtain Corporate Sponsorship

### **Phase Two: OMM MTT (Mobile Training Team)**

Purpose: This phase serves as a bridge between Phases One and Three

Timeline: This phase begins with the establishment of an MTT based out of the Director's residence which routinely travels throughout the country to conduct all three trips. This phase ends when all three trip types are conducted annually with a minimum of two iterations per trip type.

Concept: The MTT model is based on the Director's military experience with Army MTTs. In this model, trained cadre with equipment travel to various Army posts to conduct schools/educational classes as an exportable training package. For example, the Army's Air Assault School (which teaches helicopter rappelling and sling load operations) is based out of Ft. Campbell, KY. Soldiers around the world need to be trained in these skills, and while they do travel to Ft. Campbell from various posts, the vast majority of them are trained when cadre/equipment travel from Ft. Campbell to their post to conduct the training.

Implementation: OMM-trained staff will travel with the required equipment to locations nationwide to conduct the Fall, Summer, and Winter Adventures.

Advantages:

- *Cost Reduction:* It will be far less expensive for an MTT to travel around the country in conducting the trips than purchasing/operating permanent centers around the country. Additionally, it's far cheaper to take one set of equipment to various locations than to resource multiple sets for numerous sites.
- *Cadre Expertise:* The guides/mentors/support personnel currently based out of the Director's residence in Colorado are highly-experienced in successfully conducting the trips.
- *Trip Standardization:* Having a core of OMM cadre conduct the trips ensures they will be conducted similarly with similar outcomes.
- *Continuity of Leadership:* With the majority of OMM's Board of Directors centrally located and will provide the majority of personnel for the MTT, this concept allows the leadership team to travel to different locations to determine the best ways to operate in the new environment.
- *Locations:* While the particular states the MTT will travel to is TBD, they will likely be locations suitable for all three trips (such as Maine, Wyoming, Oregon, etc.)
- *Resourcing Support Facilities, personnel, and youth/mentors:* OMM leadership at the headquarters (currently in Colorado Springs) will find and work with support personnel, facilities, and places to conduct the trips. For example, a Wilderness Canoe Trip could be executed in its current form in Maine because it has winter weather, big game hunting, and numerous canoeing opportunities.
- *Example:* Before a trip to Maine, OMM personnel will reach out to churches to identify participants, find a base camp (such as a campground), and lakes suitable for the trip. OMM cadre would then travel to Maine with all required equipment and conduct the trip for the boys of the church.

**Phase Three: OMM Permanent Sites**

*Purpose:* To facilitate hundreds of youth to have these life-shaping experiences per year.

*Timeline:* This phase begins with purchasing OMM permanent facilities in states other than Colorado or Minnesota.

*Vision:* OMM's vision is to have permanent OMM sites nationwide with full-time, paid staff. Each site will have its own equipment to conduct the trips (i.e., wall tents, cots, canoes, etc.)

*Restricting Factor:* Money will restrict how soon and extensive this phase is conducted.

**SAFETY**

- Background checks on all OMM personnel having direct contact with youth are conducted before the trip (ProtectMyMinistry.com)
- OMM mentors do not sleep in the same tent/room as their assigned youth
- In areas where cell service is unreliable, OMM Cadre utilizes Garmin InReach GPS units. This allows the user to text anyone anywhere without cell service (they use satellites).
- First aid kits are utilized on all trips. OMM personnel have extensive first-aid training



**FUNDING**

OMM is currently funded 100% through donations by private individuals. Future plans include corporate sponsors and grants.

**QUESTIONS?**

For questions regarding this Strategic Plan, please call the Director (Steve Osterholzer) at 303-253-5724 or email him at [omm.ministry.com](mailto:omm.ministry.com).



**OF MOUNTAINS  
& MEN™**

