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## **McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Receives Grant to Expand Expedition Days**

*Thunderbirds Charities grant to help expand STEM program for third- and fourth-grade curriculum*

SCOTTSDALE, AZ (March 16, 2022) – McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is pleased to announce the receipt of a grant from Thunderbirds Charities in support of its Online and On-the-road multimedia versions of Expedition Days, an interactive program aimed at inspiring elementary school students to become advocates for the Sonoran Desert.

The Online and On-the-road versions of Expedition Days, including Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), meet Arizona state curriculum standards for third- and fourth-grade students. The program has expanded its reach from 150 third-grade students in 2015 to more than 2,300 in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area in 2022. Support from Thunderbirds Charities will grow the program to include fourth-grade students, boosting overall participation to an estimated 5,000 in 2022.

“We are excited to support McDowell Sonoran Conservancy’s Expedition Days,” said Scott Jenkins, President of Thunderbirds Charities. “STEM education is important and this program engages students in a fun and captivating way.”

“We are extremely grateful for the support of Thunderbirds Charities and their commitment to engaging STEM curriculum designed to reach thousands of Arizona students,” said Justin Owen, CEO of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. “Their contribution will enable us to expand our online and on-the-road versions, which allows us to engage more young people, often from Title 1 schools, in immersive experiences that highlight the importance of protecting the environment.”

Now in its seventh year, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy’s Expedition Days takes third- and fourth-grade students on a journey of discovery as they explore their role in the conservation of the Sonoran Desert. The program features a multimedia curriculum including slides with video and audio components, which bring the sights and sounds of nature into the classroom. Topics include “The Urban Desert,” “Trash Through Time,” “Water in the Desert,” and “Documenting Wildlife.”

Expedition Days Online programming will be released in March 2022. For its On-the-road version, the Conservancy has packaged the learning stations to travel to schools beginning in late spring. Teachers interested in Expedition Days programs, which support the Arizona state curriculum teaching standards, should visit <https://www.mcdowellsonoran.org/expo>.

### **About the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy**

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that preserves and advances natural open space through science, education and stewardship. Through a unique partnership with The City of Scottsdale and the dedication of more than 650 volunteer stewards, the Conservancy protects more than 30,500 acres in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which is enjoyed by over 1.2 million visitors annually. To learn more about its mission and achievements visit [mcdowellsonoran.org](https://www.mcdowellsonoran.org).

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