

## ...BENEFIT FROM A.E.E. (1)

### MEMBERSHIP

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) is a non-profit, member-driven organization dedicated to Experiential Education (EE). As an **individual** member, benefits include:

- access to publications, books, manuals, member directory, the newsletter, and the Journal of EE;
- networking opportunities around job postings, professional development and special events; and
- discounts from key AEE partners and for registration at regional or international conferences.

As an **organizational** member, benefits contain individual membership sub-profiles for many staff, with all of the above benefits. A higher level of organizational membership is possible: the **Accredited Organization Membership**.

### ACCREDITATION

After a rapid increase in the number of EE programs in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the need for **standards** of program quality, professional behavior, and appropriate risk management became imperative.

In 1994, AEE responded to that need by developing the most comprehensive standards for common practices in the industry, becoming **North America's first recognized accreditation process** focusing on adventure programming.

Since then, the AEE Accreditation Programs standards-based evaluation process, **conducted by objective and independent reviewers**, has become widely accepted by the industry as a level of professional evaluation for experiential and adventure programs.

Attaining accredited status through the AEE Accreditation Program is solid evidence of an organization's commitment to: quality, safety, belief in professional standards, and allocation of resources toward continued excellence and improvement. Programs that achieve AEE Accredited status can be confident that they **meet or exceed recognized industry standards**.

In 2013, the **Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) Council** invited AEE to jointly embark upon the expansion of existing standards to better reflect the field of **wilderness therapy** and their current practices, with the goal of having AEE become an independent accreditor for these therapeutic adventure programs.

This resulted in the creation of a detailed set of ethical, risk management, and treatment standards created by longstanding OBH leaders, adventure therapists, and wilderness programs.

### SERVICE TO OTHERS

The **public** benefits from readily identifying and choosing quality programs, from objective and independent information on which to base a purchase choice, and from a clear indication of the program's operational standards.

The **profession** benefits from a safeguarding of reputation, elevated practices, self-governance, and avenues for professional development.

The **accredited EE program** benefits from providing professional leadership, from utilizing accepted industry standards, from improving program quality, from better attracting new funding and competent staff, by distinguishing themselves from their competitors, and making a commitment to continuous improvement.

*Steve Pace & Simon Priest*