

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Ian Anderson (970) 477-4023, ian@visitvailvalley.com

Emily Jacob (970) 845-5292, ejacob@vailresorts.com

FIRST DESCENTS KICKS OFF 3RD ANNUAL KAYAK CAMPS FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH CANCER FROM JULY 20 THROUGH AUG. 2

Vail, Colo., July 21, 2003 — Twenty-two teenage cancer survivors from around the nation will spend one week in the scenic Vail Valley in one of two kayak camps, organized by First Descents, starting July 20.

Each young camp participant has been invited by First Descents to come to the Colorado High Country and spend one week filled with outdoor adventures, including kayaking, horseback riding, mini-golf and scaling a rope-course.

In the language of kayakers, a first descent refers to the successful challenge of the many obstacles along a particular and previously uncharted stretch of whitewater. At First Descents kayak camp, the term has become synonymous with the exhilarating feeling camp participants experience when they face and overcome a particular fear and the many obstacles that come with facing uncharted physical and emotional territory.

It is First Descents' mission to help young camp participants gain the courage and open mind to try to excel at previously unknown activities and come to accept their own limitations. The camp is also designed to offer campers a temporary respite from hospitals and medical treatments and help each camper appreciate and celebrate personal victories of any kind.

“It is a powerful week-long camp for young adults with cancer designed to not only give them the time of their lives, but also help them learn the skills to achieve anything they want,” says Brad Ludden, the 22-year-old founder of First Descents.

Ludden, a professional kayaker and Vail resident, who continues to push his own limitations along waterways around the globe, says kayaking has allowed him to travel and meet people from many walks of life at an early age. Along the way young cancer survivors made a lasting impression on him. As a volunteer at a camp for cancer survivors in his native Montana, Ludden became aware of the unique set of obstacles cancer puts in the way of young people.

“After learning more about cancer in young adults, I found that it was one

of the largest, fastest growing areas of cancer and probably one of the most under-recognized,” says Ludden, who at the age of 20 set out to create a kayak camp for that particular age group of cancer patients. “I want to do my part to make sure that people realize what a threat cancer is to young people,” he says. “Besides, your teen years are hard enough...imagine losing a leg, your hair your physical strength, try going to the prom then, and you thought a zit was bad.”

Since its formation in 2001, First Descents, a non-profit organization, has helped young cancer survivors create memories of a lifetime — even if that lifetime is sometimes tragically cut short.

“We had this camper our first year,” remembers Ludden. “He showed up the first day of camp with no color in his face, no smile, nothing. He had recently lost a leg to cancer and the cancer had spread to various parts of his body. Throughout the week we watch a fun, playful spirit grow from his heart and by the end of the week he was dancing, without his crutches. He was the person he wanted to be, he was alive.”

The camper, who died less than a year after attending had told his family to mention the camp as one of his favorite memories in his obituary. While campers are encouraged to tackle new challenges on a daily basis, a full complement of medical professionals as well as counselors are on hand to supervise campers health and ensure their well-being.

A daily theme, from teamwork to living life fully, is complimented by a series of nightly speakers — individuals who have attempted and overcome their own personal challenges. Among the speakers are Sarah Will, a champion disabled skier and Ellen Miller, who has successfully climbed Mount Everest twice.

As part of Ludden’s stated goal to invite as many as 1,000 campers per year to camps around the nation, First Descents is proud to announce the first expansion of its program this summer with two consecutive camps in Colorado.

Also new this year, First Descents will call the 7W Ranch near Sweetwater, Colo., its temporary home. The private guest ranch has been generously made available by Amware Logistics based in Avon, Colo.

Partners and volunteers without which First Descents would not be possible, include: Nike ACG, Dagger Kayaks, the Vail Valley Chamber & Tourism Bureau, the Vail Valley Foundation, Vail Resorts, Town of Vail, Alpine Kayak, Satcom Resources, Stohlquist Waterware, Seven2 Paddles, Safeway and Untraditional Marketing.

Because of the generous support of these companies and organizations as well as countless private individuals, First Descents is able to offer each camper a \$2,500 camp experience, complete with room, board and activities, free of charge.

For more information about First Descents or to learn how to help create a unique opportunity for young adults with cancer, visit www.firstdescents.com or call. 970-476-9400.

####