

# Red River Gorge Climbers' Coalition

2020 Annual Report



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jereme Ransick

*President*

Nicholas Hart

*Vice President*

Briana Blanchard

*Secretary*

Matthew Fonek

*Treasurer*

Curtis Gale-Dyer

*Land Manager*

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Jake Ellis

Adam Gregory

Colin Howell

Sam North

Billy Simek

*Executive Director*

Bill Strachan

*Executive Director Emeritus*



***We are dedicated to securing and protecting open, public access to rock climbing in Red River Gorge, Kentucky and promoting conservation of the environment on the lands where we climb.***

## ***A Letter from the President:***

The Coalition, like the rest of the country, faced some difficult challenges in 2020. Temporarily closing our properties in March was one of the more difficult decisions the Coalition has had to make in my time on the Board. The mantra of "If we own it, they can't close it" weighed heavily on our minds when we were in the unenviable position of closing our land for the health of the local community.

With a long-term the lockdown and social distancing becoming more and more real, it was clear that we could not hold our annual Johnny & Alex Trail day and ultimately that Rocktoberfest could not happen on its normal terms. Nonetheless our financial obligations to maintain our properties, pay our mortgage and meet our other financial commitments were still very real.

Fortunately, with the support of the community, volunteers, donors and sponsors I am happy to report that the Coalition remains financially sound and focused on our mission.

We started off the year in search of a new executive director, as Ashlee Milanich had moved onto a role with the American Alpine Club. After interviewing several strong candidates, the Board voted to offer Billy Semik the executive director position in May.

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented he jumped right in and made an immediate impact.

We held a virtual Rocktoberfest with solid support from sponsors and athletes that enabled the RRGCC to raise enough funds to make not only our mortgage payment (\$30,000), but also close out our conservation easement commitment to the Access Fund (\$10,000).

We have some great things planned in 2021 including:

- the announcement of two new crags,
- a pit toilet in the Motherlode lot,
- various trail & infrastructure improvements,
- a membership program,
- an update to the Economic Impact Study continued outreach through our Gym-to-Crag program & partnership it Ale-8,
- an in person Rocktoberfest (fingers crossed),
- and continued progress on access initiatives.

Jereme Ransick  
*President*

# Membership Program

The RRGCC is starting an official membership program!

## Membership Tiers & Incentives (Pricing TBD)

- **Tier 1:**
  - Member sticker
  - Applicable member discounts
- **Tier 2:**
  - Member t-shirt
  - Includes all Tier 1 incentives
- **Tier 3:**
  - Engraved member quickdraw
  - Includes all Tier 2 incentives



## Sponsors & Discounts

- Miguel's Rock Climbing Shop
- Daniel Boone Coffee Shop
- Lago Linda Hideaway
- BedRock RRG
- Muir Valley
- Hoosier Heights Gyms
- Rockquest



To find more details and sign up to become a member, follow the link below --  
**RRGCC Membership Page: <https://rrgcc.org/membership>**

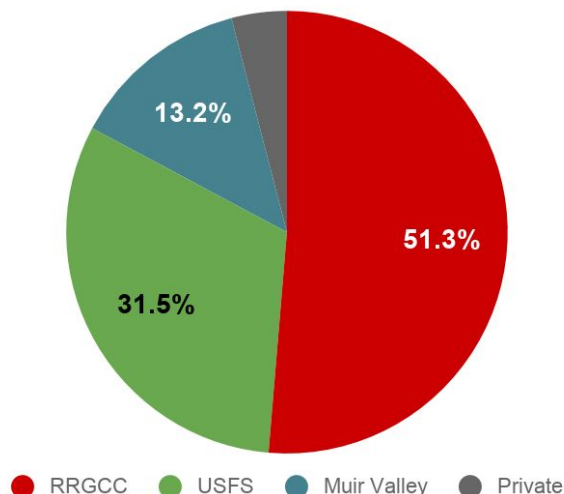
# Access & Acquisitions

## Climbing in the Red

### Growth of Climbing

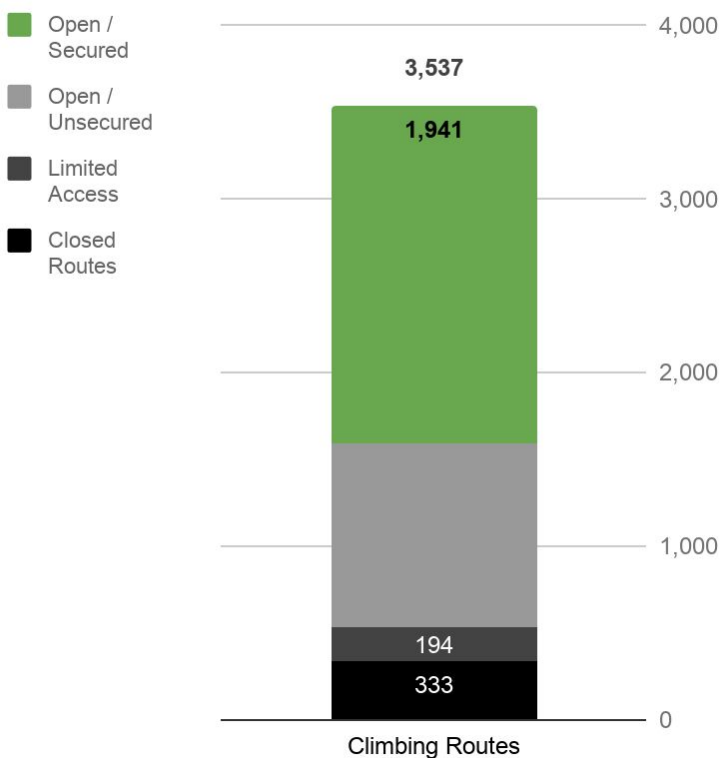
Routes in 1998 Bronaugh Guidebook: ≈ 1,000  
 Routes in 2005 Ellington Guidebook: ≈ 1,300  
 Routes on redriverclimbing.com: ≈ 3,270

### Open Routes by Owner



Source: www.redriverclimbing.com, RRGCC, 2021

### Routes By Access



## Access & Acquisition Review

Our strategy is to first secure the highest quality climbing opportunities, whether on public or private land, then make climbing sustainable for climbers and the environment, and finally to provide exemplary stewardship of the natural environment on the lands where we climb.

### Recent Developments

- *MOU with Forest Service (2019)*
- *Foxtown Boulders Lease (2019)*

### Current Opportunities:

- *Lease (1)*
- *Purchase (4)*
- *Negotiated Access (1)*
- *Donated Land (1)*

### Developer Forum / Meetings

- *Focus on development guidelines*

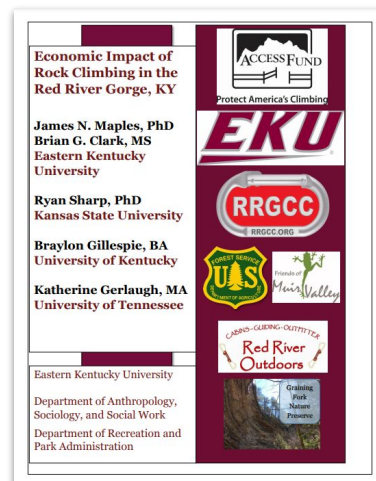
## Economic Impact Study Update

In 2019 Dr. Maples, of Eastern Kentucky University, contacted the Coalition about updating his seminal economic impact study of climbers in Red River Gorge.

The original 2015 study found climbers spend an estimated \$3.6 million dollars in the regional economy each year.

With the help of a grant from the Access Fund and funding by Eastern Kentucky University a new study was conducted in 2020.

**The study results and the corresponding report will be available by June of 2021.**



# Conservation & Stewardship

1.6  
Miles of  
Road

1,161  
Acres

247  
Hours  
of Work

18 Miles  
of  
Trails



## Update from the Land Manager

Given the challenges posed COVID-19 we were limited in what we could safely accomplish in 2020. Sadly we had to cancel our annual Johnny & Alex Trail Day, which is normally our largest volunteer trail & infrastructure event of the year.

We were able to host a few trail days in early winter and the Board came together for a socially distanced trail day in July. With 2020 more focused on maintenance, we are excited to get some improvement projects completed in 2021 and announce a few new crags.



## 2020 Highlights

- Updating of all of our Emergency Tubes
- Four Official Trail Days
- Extensive work on several new trails to be opened in mid to late 2021
- Erosion control project at Left Field
- Miller Fork Road Repairs & Grading
  - *Thanks Jonathan Drake!*
- Miller Fork Pit Toilet servicing
- Bald Rock Pit Toilet Planning

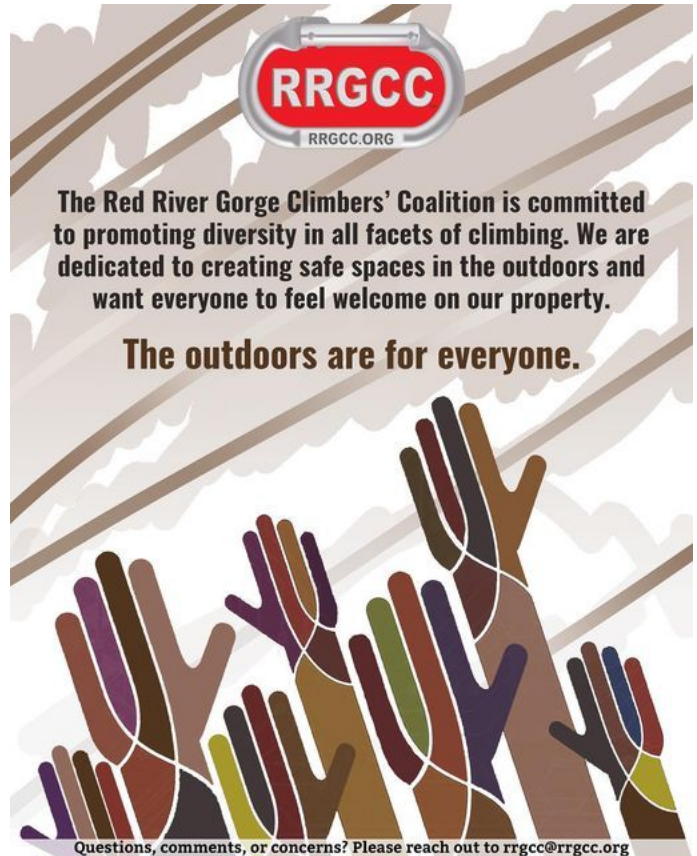
# Education, DEI & Outreach

## Our Values

We value the world class rock climbing opportunities found in and around the Red River Gorge as a national treasure deserving of our best efforts to preserve for **all climbers** to enjoy, experience, and appreciate.

### The RRGCC reaffirmed its commitment to diversity and passed two new bylaws:

1. The RRGCC shall be committed to diversity and inclusion within the Board by refusing to discriminate against persons of a certain race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, or class
2. The RRGCC shall be committed to diversity and inclusion in the composition of its members by refusing to discriminate against persons of a certain race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, or class.



## Our Strategy

It is also our strategy to educate climbers about access issues, encourage them to take “ownership” (responsibility) for their behavior and its impact on access, and then to become “Citizen Trustees of Climbing” through direct participation.

## Gym-to-Crag Program

In depth discussions about what to expect for your first time climbing outside and how to be a good steward of the land.

- Four in-person events
- Three virtual events
- Targeting one every other month in 2021

## Climb Late with Ale-8

Events for first time climbers, individuals from marginalized communities, and those who do not have the means to afford admission & rentals to come together with fellow climbers.

- \$1,000 funding from Ale-8-One
- Partner gyms include ClimbTime, Rockquest, and ClimbCincy
- Meetup planned each month of 2021

**FROM GYM TO CRAG**  
7PM(EST)  
January 13th  
Zoom call

Climbing etiquette and sustainable land use in the Red River Gorge

2 lucky attendees will win a pair of Evolv shoes at the Q&A Raffle

**VIRTUAL**

Thanks to our partners:

**Climb Late with Ale-8**  
hosted by the RRGCC

Please join us for a complimentary night of rock climbing: Climb Time Oakley  
March 24th from 6-8 4460 Orkney Ave  
Cincinnati, OH 45209

Guests need to register by emailing [briana@rrgcc.org](mailto:briana@rrgcc.org) before March 21st \*15 person capacity\*

The Red River Gorge Climber's Coalition is committed to promoting diversity in all facets of climbing. That's why we want to facilitate a safe and free space for individuals from marginalized communities, first time climbers, and those who do not have the means to afford admissions and rentals to come together and hang out with fellow climbers. If you just want to come climb, please provide a donation of \$10.00 to help cover expenses.

For new or first time climbers, RRGCC board members will be on hand to answer any questions and offer a belay if you're interested.

If you are over 18, please join us the third Wednesday of each month!  
\*please wear a mask

Logos: Ale-8, ClimbTime, RRGCC, 18+

# Fundraising & Events

## 24<sup>th</sup> Annual “Virtual” Rocktoberfest

Special thanks to our outgoing Director of Corporate Relations Andrew Dangler for making our first “virtual Rocktoberfest” a success!

We would like to thank all of those that showed support and attended the event. To no surprise the majority of attendees were from the tristate area although we had attendees from 24 states.

- **Over \$30,000 Raised! Let’s pay off that mortgage!**
- **Clinics:**
  - *Backcountry Cooking with Brittany Griffith (Patagonia)*
  - *Gym-to-Crag (RRGCC)*
  - *Intro to Trad Climbing (Southeast Mountain Guides)*
  - *Multi-Pitch Anchors with Tyler Allen (RAB)*
  - *Multi-Pitch Trad with Heath Rowland (RAB)*
  - *Redefining Our Relationship to Risk with Laur Sauborin (The Warrior’s Way)*
  - *Sport Climbing Basics with Becky Switzer (Mystery Ranch)*
  - *Sport Climbing: The Beta with Dru Mack (Evolv)*
  - *What I’ve Learned with Matty Hong (Scarpa)*
- **Films:**
  - *“Gone Tomorrow” (Wilkinson Visual)*
  - *“The Artist” (Black Diamond)*



**Billy Simek**  
**Briana Blanchard**



**Kris Hampton**



**Dru Mack**



**Ashima Shiraishi**

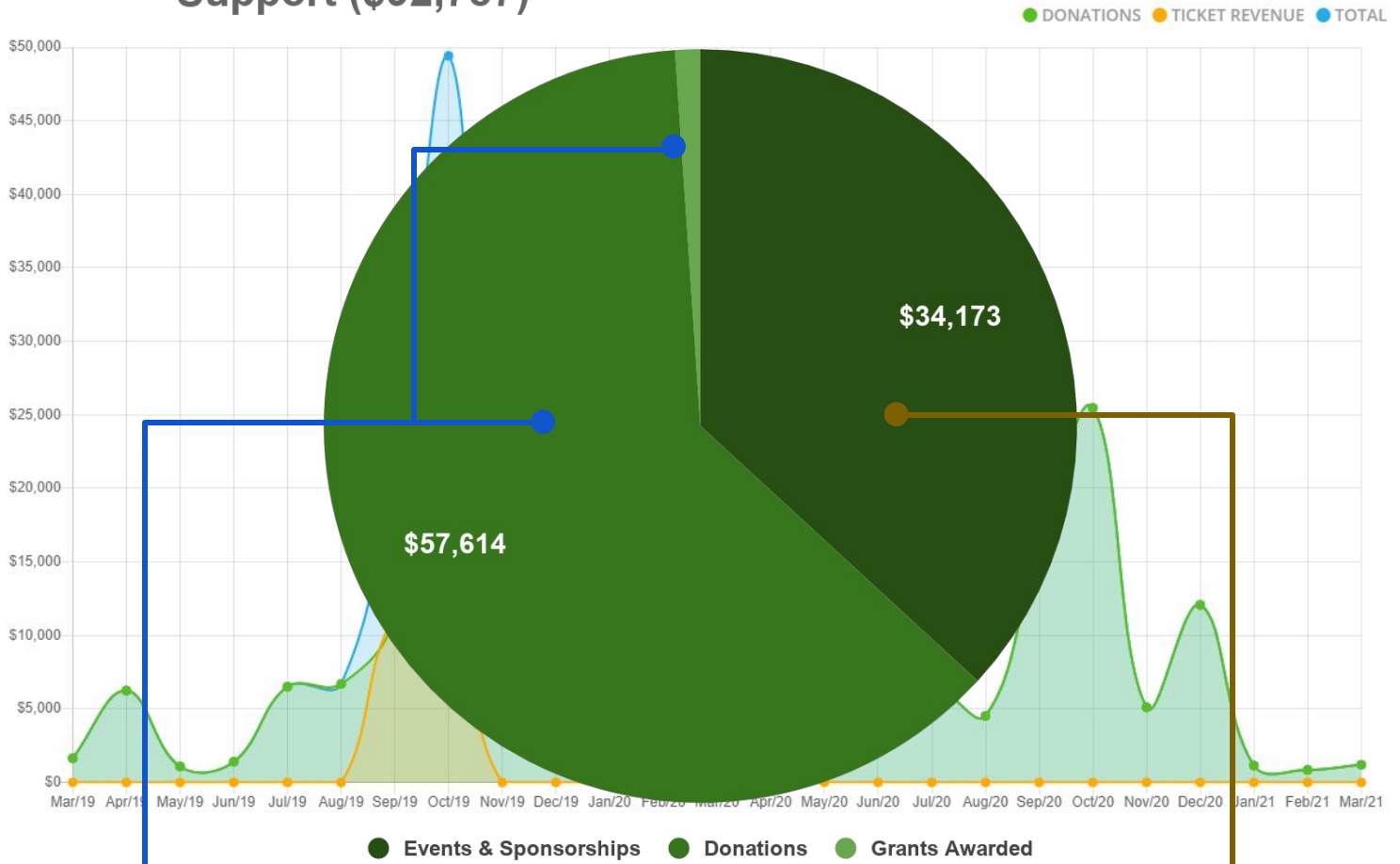
## Johnny & Alex Trail Day

Not wanting the our annual workday tribute event to the late John Bronaugh and his son Alex, the Board held a “socially distanced” trail day to work on trails to a new crag set to open in 2021.

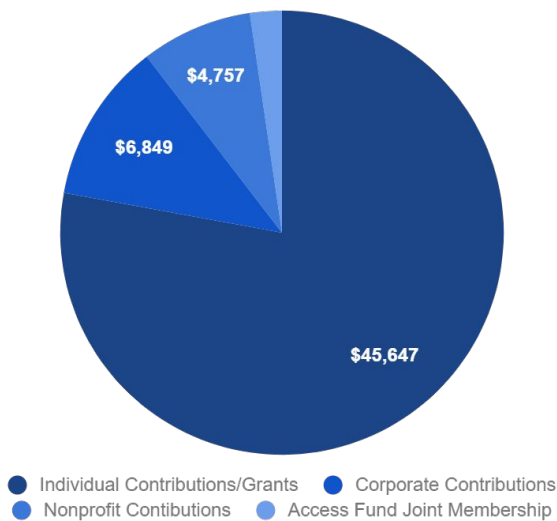
- **BOD Socially Distanced Trail Day**
- **Online Raffle**
- **Over \$3,000 Raised**

# Finances: Support

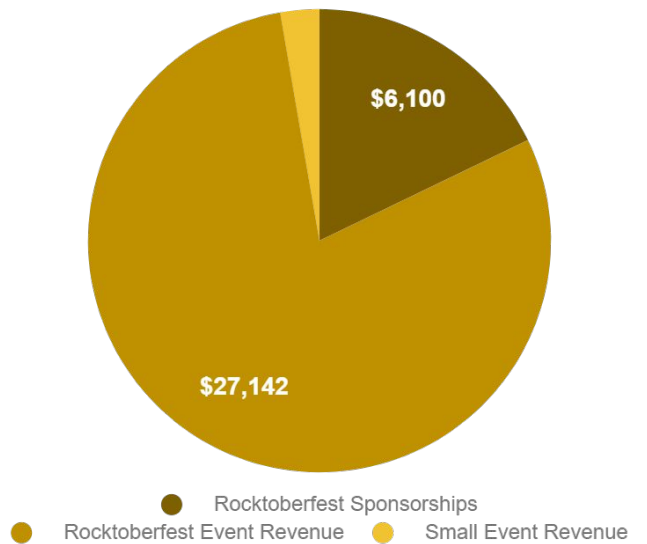
## Support (\$92,787)



### Donations by Type (\$58,614)

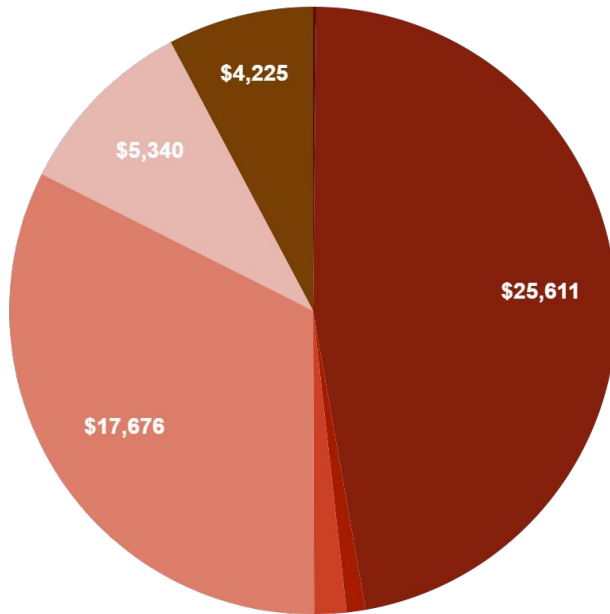


### Events (\$34,173)



# Finances: Expenses

Expenses (\$54,424)



- Conservation & Stewardship
- Land Acquisition & Management
- Education, DEI, & Outreach
- Advocacy & Research
- Management & General
- Special Events
- Fundraising

## Treasurer's Notes:

### **Bald Rock Fork Payoff**

In 2017 the RRGCC established the Bald Rock Fork Recreational Preserve (BRRP) with the purchase of the land surrounding the Motherlode, Chocolate Factory, & Bear's Den. This was funded in part with a \$225,000 loan from the Access Fund.

We have made great progress towards paying off this loan with almost \$175,000 repaid over four years. We have \$21,000 to go which we plan payoff in 2021.

This will mark the third successful climber-funded land acquisition in the Red River Gorge. This purchase was made possible by our donors, corporate sponsors, a Conservation Alliance grant and the Access Fund's Climbing Conservation Loan Program.

### **Grants & Reserved Funds**

When the RRGCC receives a grant there may be stipulations as to how those funds may be used. In those cases, we hold and track those funds separately to ensure they are used solely for their designated purpose.

Currently, we have reserved funds from the Arches Foundation for use in building and maintaining pit toilets. We have installed one toilet in Miller Fork and a second in being built in Bald Rock Fork.

## 2020 Capital Expenditures

- **Principal Payments**
  - Bald Rock Fork: \$30,000



### **Conservation Easement**

The RRGCC and Access Fund recorded two permanent easements to strengthen conservation and recreation protections at all three climbing areas owned by the Coalition.

The Access Fund now holds permanent conservation and recreation easements on the properties, providing backup and support for RRGCC's long-term commitment.

The RRGCC pledged \$20,000 to the Access Fund to support the upfront legal costs and on ongoing maintenance expenses for holding the easements. The second half of this pledge was paid 2020 making up the bulk of our Land Management & Acquisition expenses..

### **Grants & Capital in 2020**

With traditional grant projects delayed due to COVID-19 the Coalition, facing the risk of lower than normal donations & possibly cancelling Rocktoberfest, applied for and was awarded both a grant and low-interest loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration. These were applied to our mortgage payment, conservation easement payment, and payroll & operating expenses.

- **\$1,000 U.S. SBA EIDL Grant**
- **\$41,400 U.S. SBA EIDL Loan (2.75% for 30 Years)**
- **Ale-8-One: Climb Late with Ale-8 (Outreach)**



# Donors & Sponsors

The following list recognizes cash contributions during the calendar year 2019. Sponsors, volunteers, and donors who made in-kind contributions or gifts of their time, for which we are also grateful, are not included on this list.

**\$5,000+**

Beck Kloss

**\$2,000+**

Ale-8-One Bottling Company, Inc.  
American Online Giving Foundation, Inc  
Facebook, Inc.  
Anonymous  
Petzl America, Inc

**\$1,000+**

Access Fund  
Dave & Maryanne Foster  
Edward Agarwala  
Mardi Roberts  
MadTree Brewing  
The Progressive Insurance Foundation  
U.S. Small Business Administration

**\$500+**

AmazonSmile Foundation  
April Reefer  
Bill Strachan  
Breanna Anderson  
Carl Virost  
Climb Time of Blue Ash Inc  
Dave Phillips  
David Miller  
Faye Camahalan  
Jacob Shidler  
Jerry Kripal  
Joern Putschke  
Jonathan Bruns  
Kelly Survant  
Kevin Gardner

**\$250+**

Andrew Andrada  
Beth Lappin  
Dan Chandler  
Jerrod Long  
Joel Handley  
Jordan Wesolek  
Matt Fay  
Michael Kuppert

## Our Donors

- **470 Annual donors**
- **308 New Donors**
- **162 Repeat donors**
- **127 Access Fund Joint Members**
- **44 Monthly Recurring Donors**
- **29 Corporate Donors / Sponsors**

Kroger Community Rewards  
Maxwell McDonald  
Melissa Bellew  
Michael Bond  
Michael Hargis  
Michael Murray  
Mystery Ranch  
Nathan Fletcher  
RAB USA LLC  
SCARPA North America, Inc.  
Scott Corl  
Shaun Gamble  
Sky Bridge Station  
The GE Foundation  
Wolverine Publishing

Nicholas Hart  
Nicholas Wood  
Patti Winford  
Tim Gruber  
Tyler Yarbrough  
Van Wombwell  
West Sixth Brewing