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College Outside helps rebuild after Thomas Fire

December's Thomas Fire devastated Ojai Valley School, decimating its equipment shed. College Outside helped the school acquire all new gear, offering a much-needed return to normalcy for students.

"College Outside was pivotal in getting our outdoor program back online in the wake of the Thomas Fire," says Zach Byars, Outdoor Education Coordinator at Ojai Valley School. "We lost our entire inventory of outdoor education gear, and were able to get what we needed in the short term to successfully run our first trip of the year to Joshua Tree, as well as replace the majority of the gear we lost in preparation for trips to come."

Outdoor programs are central to Ojai Valley School's mission to foster balanced, well-rounded students, and students participate in trips across the region as early as kindergarten.

College Outside was also affected by the Thomas Fire, but the staff consider themselves lucky that an evacuation was the worst of it.

"It's our responsibility to help rebuild," says College Outside Founder and CEO Sarah Lockwood. "We understand that outdoor programming is an integral part of student life, and that for a lot of people, being outside is an important mode of processing trauma. Helping these schools rebuild their equipment sheds is about more than a return to normalcy; it's about healing after students' whole lives have been turned upside down."

About College Outside:

College Outside, headquartered in Carpinteria, is the collegiate sales channel for the outdoor industry. We partner with 250 university outdoor programs nationwide that engage more than 150,000 students of nearly equal gender representation. We provide groups with discounted gear, expert advice and access to intercollegiate events, effectively reducing barriers to entry for the next generation of outdoorspeople.