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From the President



WENDY WHEELER, President,
Innovation Center for Community
and Youth Development

Outdoor Frontiers for Leadership

The [Innovation Center](#) has taken its work to a new frontier! With our new partner, [Reach Out to Asia](#) (ROTA), IC trainers traveled to Doha, Qatar - and desert sand dunes and inland sea of Khor al-Adaid - to embolden local students to take on leadership and service-learning roles in their communities.

IC trainers facilitated ROTA's Youth Service Club Leadership Training from January 13-16. The participants, approximately 65 youth between the ages of 14-24, living in Doha but from all areas of the Middle East, attended the conference with the goal of starting ROTA service clubs at their own schools. The first day of the training familiarized participants with personal leadership competencies; the second day put that leadership into action - in the desert.

The outdoors can be a challenging yet fun environment for real-life leadership and learning - and the desert proved to be just that. Trainers and participants traveled to the training site via "dune bashing," a favorite Qatari sport and a form of off-roading that uses special 4WD vehicles to explore sand dunes. Once at the training site, participants worked in teams to survive the day. They created "leadership communities," rustic desert camps representative of team members' values, by building tents and cooking their own meals.

"Many of these young people had been to the desert before," Innovation Center President Wendy Wheeler said, "but they'd never had to fend for themselves. It was a really great learning opportunity - and the desert was a great laboratory to put their leadership skills into action."

Check out photos from the training in this [online gallery](#)!

Activity of the Month: Community Gridding Exercise

Sometimes, one of the greatest barriers to using the outdoors as a space for learning is simply knowing what natural resources your community offers. When framed in the context of natural or environmental resources, community gridding engages participants in visualizing their community's space with a fresh perspective. [Read more...](#)

Partner of the Month: Redwood City, California

San Mateo County, located on the San Francisco Bay Peninsula, is a nature lover's paradise. With ocean, mountains, forest, and national parks all within a day's drive - and northern California's storied weather to boot - it seems that county residents would be spending more time outdoors than in. Nevertheless, obstacles - some expected, others unexpected - often keep these Californians, especially youth, indoors. A group of young people from Redwood City, California are working to find out why, exploring their own community's natural resources and sharing them with their friends and family in the process. [Read more...](#)

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Coming Soon: IC Senior Director in Online Conference

On Tuesday, March 2 at 1:30 p.m. EST IC Senior Director Dr. Carla Roach will host an online discussion about how collective leadership can lead to inclusive civic engagement. The discussion is part of Public Decision's online conference, *Including the Excluded* from March 2-4. [Learn more](#) about the conference and receive a \$50 discount on entry rates; listen to Dr. Roach in a [podcast](#) about her session. Be sure to tune in!

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