



Austin Kraal had a deep passion for the Sawtooth Mountains and often spoke of the peace and tranquility he experienced when he was enjoying the area. He found his love for the mountains and the natural world at an early age and, as with all things, was passionate to the point of obsession about his sawtooth mountains. He spent all his summers in the mountains working for the Forest Service and has walked every trail and cleared and rebuilt many of them. He was brilliant intellectually and as proud of his skills at falling trees or fighting fire as he was with his ability to understand the scientific complexities of nature.



After Austin's death, his parents Kevin and Debi Kraal of Twin Falls, Idaho asked that donations be given in his memory to the Sawtooth Society, a nonprofit organization formed to protect and enhance the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Friends and family were very generous with their donations, and established a legacy of annual Sawtooth Society volunteer program support.

"The Sawtooth Society asked us what we wanted to do with the resulting fund. Kevin and I came up with the idea that we wanted to see youth experience the Stanley Basin, possibly kids who might not have had the chance to see or experience the magic of this area," she said.

"The wilderness is a big part of who Austin was," Kevin said. "Our thought was that if we could get the kids up there, they would be exposed to this incredible environment and they would get the kind of positive feedback you get when you work hard and accomplish something." Now, after several years of volunteer projects which were funded through ongoing donations, the Kraal's appreciate both the on-the-ground outcomes and the education of volunteers. Debi reflected "We can see all the work that's been done. And through that work has come education, too. Did you know, for instance, that antelope can't jump fences? They crawl under them. That's why it was so important to tear down unnecessary fence and build any new fence at least 18" off the ground. I learned that on a volunteer project with the Society."



In his enduring honor, the Sawtooth Society is proud to sponsor this volunteer program that allows youth access to education and the opportunity to participate in preserving, protecting, and enhancing the Sawtooth NRA. This partnership with the U.S. Forest Service has been made possible by donations from his family, friends and others who support not only Austin's legacy, but also feel compelled to fund important work being completed on-the-ground.

