



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF ADVENTURE

Bryson City, N.C. (Feb. 21, 2022)— Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC), the Leaders in Outdoor Adventure since 1972, is kicking off its 50th anniversary this spring 2022. The founders — Horace Holden Sr., Payson and Aurelia Kennedy — created the organization with the idea that friends working together to pursue their outdoor passions could change lives. Originally getting its start as just a small motel and gas station along the Nantahala River in Bryson City, NOC has grown to multiple locations across four Southeastern states and guided millions of guests down the river.

NOC's initial niche of whitewater rafting trips has expanded to over 120 land and river-based activities, including kayaking, ziplining, mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, tubing and international trips. The 500-acre main campus in Bryson City hosts the renowned Paddling School, SOLO Wilderness Medicine courses, restaurants and lodging, also serving as a respite for thru hikers along the Appalachian Trail. A home for professional adventurers as well as novices, the campus is one of the nation's premier training sites for elite whitewater athletes, including 23 Olympians and two gold medalists.

Horace Holden Sr., who purchased the property on the Nantahala, brought Aurelia and Payson Kennedy on board 50 years ago to help him mold NOC into what it is today. Now the last remaining founder, Payson Kennedy is proud to celebrate five decades since guiding the first commercial whitewater trips in the region. His incredible legacy includes pioneering rafting and kayaking on the most iconic rivers in the Southeast, filming as a stunt double on the Chattooga River in the film *Deliverance*, hosting Olympic athletes and races, and so much more. Payson's daughter Cathy Kennedy has been a part of the NOC family since she was 16 years old, and she still guides rafting trips down the Nantahala River and works in various departments across the company. The family's legacy exemplifies NOC's commitment to tradition and fostering relationships that continue to grow and strengthen throughout the years.

"Fifty years ago, Horace, Relia and I envisioned a community where a group of friends who loved sharing outdoor adventures together could enjoy those activities more frequently while providing support and instruction to others to make it safe and easy for them to do the same," said NOC co-founder Payson Kennedy. "We were surprised and pleased at the number of highly capable people who chose to join us in this endeavor, and by the enthusiasm of the guests who participated. This venture, now widely known as 'the NOC,' grew beyond our wildest expectations. My hope is that over the next fifty years even more people will learn to enjoy outdoor adventures with our help."

In celebration of this important milestone, NOC will be hosting events, giveaways, storytelling, interviews and more throughout the year. To keep tabs on events, access a timeline of NOC's history and learn more about the 50th anniversary, visit www.noc.com/50-years-press-kit/.

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About Nantahala Outdoor Center

Nantahala Outdoor Center is the nation's largest outdoor recreation company with operations spanning Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Over a million guests visit NOC annually to embark on a diverse collection of more than 120 different river and land-based itineraries, learn to kayak at NOC's world-renowned Paddling School, travel abroad with NOC's Adventure Travel program, test the latest outdoor gear and shop at its LEED-certified flagship retail stores or enjoy NOC's resort amenities such as its three restaurants and multi-tiered

lodging. NOC has been recognized by The New York Times as the "Nation's Premiere Paddling School," "The Best Place to Learn" by Outside, and as "One of the Best Outfitters on Earth" by National Geographic Adventure.

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