



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

NAME: Ignacio Fernandez Mata

LOCATION: Seattle, WA

OCCUPATION: Researcher

How long have you been volunteering for Outdoors for All? What year did you start volunteering? I have been volunteering for 3 years, since 2007, when I moved to Seattle.

How did you learn about Outdoors for All and what prompted you to get involved? When I moved to Seattle I was looking for some kind of volunteering to do on the weekends to get my mind off work. One of the first individuals I met here had volunteered before and she told me that if I liked the outdoors, Outdoors for All would be the perfect place to volunteer.

In what ways are you involved as a volunteer with Outdoors for All? I started in the winter program. Since I am not good at skiing or snowboarding, I decided to do whatever Outdoors for All needed me that first winter, and I ended driving the Van to Steven's pass, and also helped at the Nordic program. After getting totally hooked I decided to try every single other program they have during the spring and summer, and enjoyed biking, kayaking, rafting, water skiing, weekend camping trips.

What keep you coming back to volunteer each year? The mix of enjoying the outdoors and help others to enjoy the outdoors. Also the great people that work and volunteer make the effort much easier.

What do you enjoy most about your volunteer experience? Getting to know some of the participants at a personal level, becoming their friends. I think my best memory was getting a huge smile from one of our participants, who could not communicate very well, at a biking event.

What have you learned or how have you been personally affected from your experience with Outdoors for All? I have learned a lot in these 3 years. From sports like snowshoeing, wake boarding; how to pack a van efficiently, camping skills, etc. On a personal level I learn every day how to be patient, how to enjoy life, how to find ways to help others, how to understand and treat people with disabilities.

Do you have any advice for individuals considering volunteering with Outdoors for All? Just to find a program they like the best and try it out. One activity is all it took me to become completely addicted to Outdoors for All.



Photo: Ignacio (Nacho) heading out on a snowshoe hike with an Outdoors for All participant.

Do you have an inspirational story you can briefly tell about your volunteer experience? I have many but going back to my biking experience, I remember how much the participant enjoyed the feeling of the speed on the tandem bike. He would point his thumb up to let me know he wanted to go faster, with the hugest smile I have ever seen. We did maybe 12 laps around Greenlake in about 2 hours, and I remember being so tired afterwards, despite that I bike all the time. I think that afternoon we both went home completely exhausted but extremely happy.

Hobbies/spare time activities:

Not a lot of spare time in the science business, but I love to do any kind of sport. I play soccer twice a week, I love to ride my bike, wake boarding and snowboarding, hiking and snowshoeing, shop at REI (when money allows), travel around the world (I try to do this a couple times a year), spend time with friends (since family is very far away) and of course, volunteer with Outdoors for All every time I can.