

Sent on Behalf of the 2016 Outward Bound Kurt Hahn Award Committee:



We are pleased to announce **Thomas James** as this year's **Kurt Hahn Award** recipient. This award, named in honor of the founder of Outward Bound, is presented annually to a person who exemplifies outstanding service to our mission. It is awarded to an individual who has made a contribution through his or her life's work on behalf of others, while demonstrating the values and ideals of Kurt Hahn.

Tom is a living embodiment of the values of Kurt Hahn. He is described as the first eminent scholar in America to take Outward Bound seriously as a form of education. Tom's involvement with Outward Bound spans more than four decades. During this time, he has been characterized as Outward Bound's leading and most eloquent chronicler of its teaching and learning approach, and how that approach is rooted in the work and ideals of Kurt Hahn.

Tom first became involved with Outward Bound in the 1970's. He was working for the Education Commission of the States in Denver, CO when he had the opportunity to observe and participate in a number of courses run by the Colorado Outward Bound School. This led to the 1980 publication of a book entitled "Education at the Edge," which powerfully describes the educational approach fundamental to COBS' wilderness courses. Tom also published several papers and articles about Outward Bound during the period he was involved with COBS, including "Can the Mountains Speak for Themselves?", "Service—What is it, and Why?", "The Paradox of Safety and Risk", and "Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound Today." He went on to get a Ph.D. at Stanford University and then to his career as a historian of education and academic leader.

After reading "Education at the Edge," the North Carolina Outward Bound School invited him to visit. This visit resulted in Tom's writing a couple of essays for NCOBS: "Beyond Time and Place" in 1987 and "Where Heart Meets Mind" in 1992, as part of NCOBS' 20th and then 25th anniversary celebrations. In both essays, Tom lyrically invoked the power of Outward Bound as an educational vehicle and grounded his commentary in the moral force of Kurt Hahn's ideas about education. He joined the NCOBS Board of Directors in 2002 where he continues to serve today.

In 1987, Tom was commissioned by Outward Bound USA to write a study that explored the feasibility of starting an Outward Bound Center in New York City. His study became a vision paper that made a strong case as to why an Outward Bound presence in NYC was a compelling idea, while also suggesting a number of possibilities for what Outward Bound programming in New York could look like. The study was an important element in OBUSA's deciding to charter New York City Outward Bound.

In the early 1990's, Tom joined the team that wrote the proposal to New American Schools that resulted in the creation of Expeditionary Learning. Of note, Tom authored the opening sentence in that proposal: "To start a school is to proclaim what it means to be a human being." With simple eloquence, Tom captured the Hahnian idea that education is more than the teaching of reading, writing and other academic subjects; it is fundamentally a moral enterprise, whose purpose is to teach core values like self-discovery, compassion, and service.

In addition to his involvement with COBS, NCOBS, NYC, and EL, Tom has written extensively over the years about Kurt Hahn, as well as Outward Bound's approach to teaching and learning. Probably his most widely known piece is "The Only Mountain Worth Climbing," which sets forth Kurt Hahn's educational

philosophy, his experiences at the Salem School in Germany and Gordonstoun in the UK, and how those experiences later shaped Outward Bound and other Hahn-inspired educational endeavors. "The Only Mountain Worth Climbing" continues to be one of the best short histories of Outward Bound and its Hahnian underpinnings, and it has been read by countless instructors and staff in Outward Bound schools across the country and around the world.

Tom illuminates the philosophies of Kurt Hahn not only through his writings and teachings. He also leverages his current role as Provost and Dean of Columbia University's Teachers College (the nation's oldest and largest graduate school of education) to raise greater awareness for experiential education, including that of Outward Bound. Through Tom's counsel and encouragement, countless educators and other individuals have grown to understand the transformational outcomes of Outward Bound. Over recent years, Tom has been working on a new book about Kurt Hahn, embracing the German as well as the English-speaking aspects of Hahn's career. There is more to come from this scholar who has done so much to deepen our insights into the great educator for whom this award is named.

Tom tells the story of Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound in an unparalleled manner. He gives special meaning and power to the work of Outward Bound by connecting it to its roots and to its animating values. And not incidentally, through his own example, and the way he lives his life, he embodies those values. He is a person of great dignity and decency, who in his own quiet way consistently exhibits, "... an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, sensible self-denial and, above all, compassion."

Tom has served Outward Bound in many capacities from a student and trainer to innovator and board member. From his early days in the 1970's as a writer and historian of Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound, to his creative role in helping to conceive multiple Outward Bound programs in the US (NYCOBS, Expeditionary Learning Schools, NCOBS Educator Initiative), Tom has remained grounded in his convictions that Outward Bound is "... more than a set of methods and activities. It represents a core of values, a philosophy of education. In this broader sense, as well as in its applications as a specific method of learning, Outward Bound has a deep historical affinity with conventional schooling."

We thank Tom for a life's dedication to the ideals of Kurt Hahn. Through Tom's writings, research and teaching, he lifts high the belief of Kurt Hahn that our society can be better than we are, that each of us has more in us than we know, and that experiential education can ignite a passion for learning. Outward Bound has been enriched immeasurably by the service of this educator who exemplifies the values held to be integral by our founder.

Please join me in congratulating Tom on this service recognition and thanking him for his commitment to Outward Bound.

Members of the 2016 Kurt Hahn Award Committee

Laura Kohler, Outward Bound USA Board Chair

Frances Ashley, Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding Board Member

Mitsu Iwasaki, Northwest Outward Bound School Executive Director

George McCown, Former Outward Bound USA Board Chair & Member

Ginger Mihalik, Baltimore Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School Executive Director

Peter Steinhauer, Outward Bound USA Executive Director

Shelley Thompson, Outward Bound USA Board of Advisors

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Lee Skold, Outward Bound USA Board Member

**Thank you to those who submitted this nomination for Tom James and for helping to provide language/content for this announcement.*