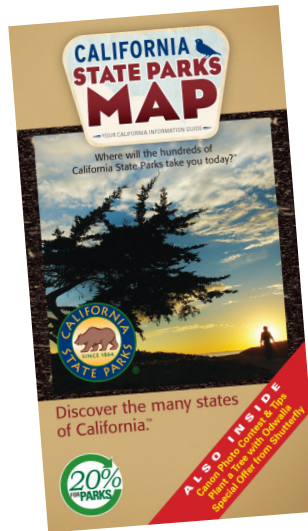


TAKE A HIKE

...And Grab A Map While You're At It

As the unflappable, cigar-chomping leader of 80s TV classic "The A-Team," 'Hannibal' famously loved it when a plan came together. His band of blacklisted special operatives always came up with creative solutions to do some good, much like the deeds of Government Solutions Group (www.govsolgroup.com) and CEO Shari Boyer, who are all about doing some creative good for one of California's most cherished natural resources: state parks.

At a time when state governments desperately need a bailout and eco-awareness is at the forefront of American consciousness, Boyer's own Pasadena-based A-Team has stepped in to help save the day. Together, they've created the perfect marriage of public and private entities, bringing corporate marketing and sponsorship into the fold – literally – to benefit hampered government agencies and state parks across the US. Impressively, they've gotten such heavy hitters as American Express, Travelocity, and Canon to chip in on the creation of state Park Visitor Welcome Kits®, special green programs, and generous donations through their "20% for Parks" campaign.



Shari and her husband Chris, avid outdoors people and lifelong corporate marketers, one day asked themselves, "How can we do something positive for the environment, and also do successful marketing?" The answer: an overhauled California State Parks map, which the trailblazers expanded into a full-blown, information-packed visitors welcome kit, completely paid for by corporate partners that also include Odwalla and Shutterfly.

"Californians are passionate about their parks," explains Boyer. "We found that younger generations are open to sponsorship, but feel strongly that corporations need to give back to the environment." Enter the welcome kits, which are printed on 100% recycled paper and distributed free to visitors (formerly \$4.95). In addition to a big foldout map, they also include basic park information, highlights, outdoor tips, and gear recommendations, with the sponsors taking on the entire cost of production, printing, and shipping. Handy for the visitor, the kits also satisfy the corporate need to reach a target consumer audience, and communicate their company "green-friendliness."

Government Solutions Group makes sponsorship partners earn that merit badge through its highly successful "20% for Parks" Program (www.20forparks.com), in which special offers and promotions yield a return donated directly to the parks themselves.

In 2008, for example, American Express donated the money for a \$20,000 solar installation in Anza-Borrego Desert state park outside of San Diego, raising the sum in a mere three weeks through a promotion encouraging online driver's license or registration renewal instead of a trip to the DMV. The technology will power the park's entire visitor center with sunlight.

The success stories don't end there, however, as Odwalla's recent national Plant-A-Tree program cultivated a \$21,000 reforestation project, and Juicy Juice showed its green thumb and commitment to healthy youngsters by building playgrounds at seven state parks in New York.

In all, GSG has needed only four years to raise over \$3 million for state parks in California, New York, Colorado, and several others. Boyer explains that "the previous model was based on donations; by marrying our love of the outdoors with a marketing opportunity, we've created a public-private partnership for the good of the citizen."

"What we do is create win-win situations," Boyer summarizes. "In this case the parks win, the corporate marketer wins, and therefore the park visitor wins." Somewhere, perhaps from a lofty mountain trail, a stogie-filled grin is shining down on them, saluting a job well-done. - Chad Collins