

# The next generation

Young industry leaders unite to discuss the industry's — and their own — future

→**FREELANCERS**, sales managers, marketers and a few entrepreneurs, all under the age of 35, gathered at Squatters Loft last night for the Futurist Project. The normal comforts were there — beer, food and lots of excited young voices — but unlike the usual OR after-party or press release, the conversations were centered around a lofty goal: moving the industry in the right direction.

Started by Stasia Raines and Deanna Lloyd, the Futurist Project as Lloyd described it is “a space for discussing what the industry should be.” Stasia added: “There wasn't space to talk about what inspires us in the industry and where we, as the future of the industry, wanted it to go. We wanted to create that space for you guys.” Mission accomplished at the second event for the Futurist Project Wednesday evening. It's come a long way since being held at a condo with a spaghetti dinner.



Deanna Lloyd and Stasia Raines

Outdoor Nation, which partnered with the event, announced the Futurist Grant Program to help fund ideas from the young leaders in attendance. The event was held in a café conversation style, discussing topics ranging from what was inspiring in the industry to what could be the agent of change for engaging more people in the outdoors. With each new topic three out of four members of table groups moved so that each question had a fresh perspective.

Everything from political clout to marketing and mentorship came up in conversation. Tom Flynn of the Outdoor Alliance has lofty goals for the industry in five years. “If climbers identified with mountain bikers identified with paddlers and hikers, it would make a big difference in D.C. This industry could have a lot of influence if we all started talking,” he said. Another table group took another perspective, trying not to look to companies but to the employees

within those companies to make the social changes, as individual influencers within their group of contacts.

The changes that groups wanted to see were diverse. Demystifying the outdoors and getting rid of some of the rad factor came out right off the bat. Another table came up with an innovative idea for lowering the barrier to entry by setting up infrastructure so consumers could donate old gear to those in need when they buy new. Another way that a table group thought could lure in more faces was having more broad-spectrum events similar to the Tough Mudder.

Laura Shaffer of Mountain Hardwear had only positive comments on the event. “I believe this group can really affect change. Just the number of people that showed up shows the great promise.”

The next challenge for the group — turning the youth-oriented think tank into successful action.

--LORIN PALEY