

## ADVENTURE THERAPY

*“The mountains make the rivers;  
the rivers make the people.”*  
- Author unknown

**F**irst Descents is the brainchild of Brad Ludden, professional kayaker and Nike athlete; and Allan Goldberg has taken it to the next level. Fueled by Allan’s passion for survivorship issues, First Descents facilitates whitewater kayaking and outdoor adventure – free of charge – to young adults coping with cancer.

The majority of participants are paddling Class 3 whitewater rapids by the end of each week-long camp. Seeing the transformation from “I’m fragile,” to “I’m strong and my cancer doesn’t define me,” is incredibly rewarding to Allan who knows what it’s like to deal with cancer.

### **3 percent survival rate**

Allan was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma in the soft palate at age 12, a disease that carried a dismal 3 percent survival rate at the time. “They gave you everything they could and hoped for the best,” recalls Allan.

There was no infusion room in the Children’s Hospital at National Medical Center in Washington, DC, when Allan was being treated. Instead, he sat in a lawn chair in a deserted room of the hospital for his chemo drips.

Allan underwent two years of chemo with high dosages of radiation during the first 30 days. Throughout his teen years, Allan said he was pretty much in denial. “It wasn’t until I was finishing up college when I had a bout with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that I realized I had unresolved issues to deal with.”

After graduating from Syracuse University with a degree in International Relations, Allan moved to San Francisco and started a career in advertising and sales. In his spare time he volunteered at the local hospitals, getting his name out as a survivor.

One day Allan got an interesting call from one of the pediatric nurses at UCSF Medical Center. They had a fairly strong children’s cancer support program going, but couldn’t get the adolescent group off the ground. The nurse asked if Allan would like to give it a shot.