WILDERNESS YOUTH PROJECT

# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

**Spending time in nature makes children smarter, healthier, and happier.**

# SEASONS OF GROWTH

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Dear Friends,

**IT IS WITH GRATITUDE** for our participants and their families, our supporters and our community that we celebrate 2013. A year of continued growth, 2013 offered new avenues for WYP to nurture smarter, healthier, happier children through nature connection. This report provides you a view of the benefits of our work and the operational strategies that make those benefits possible. When it comes to measuring our service to the community, **nature connection is our bottom line**.

Our success is measured in moments of inspiration, newfound curiosity, and the sense of deep joy and freedom children experience in the wild. It is measured by the themes we hear repeated by participants and parents:

"Wilderness Youth Project is the highlight of our child's week."

"I want to do this everyday for the rest of my life."

"We are amazed at the things she has learned."

"He has connected with his natural environment in such a joyous way."

Our focus for 2014, our fifteenth year, is on increasing the nature connection bottom line in more resourceful ways, beyond just adding vans, kids and weeks of summer camp. We look forward to collaborating more closely with educators and other partners in youth services. Meanwhile, our program capacity continues to grow to meet the expanding interest in our community.

As John Burroughs once said, "Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow." Thank you for joining us in making sure that love comes first.

Gratefully,

**DAN FONTAINE**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Photos courtesy of **EMI Photography** and WYP staff.

## MISSION

The mission of Wilderness Youth Project (WYP) is to foster confidence, health, and a life-long love of learning for young people and families through active outdoor experiences and mentoring.

## VISION

WYP envisions teaching the next generation of children to be peaceful, respectful and confident stewards of our world.

## RESEARCH

Research has shown that time in nature has many benefits, among them improving children's cognitive flexibility, emotional stability, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, use of imagination, self-esteem, and self-discipline.

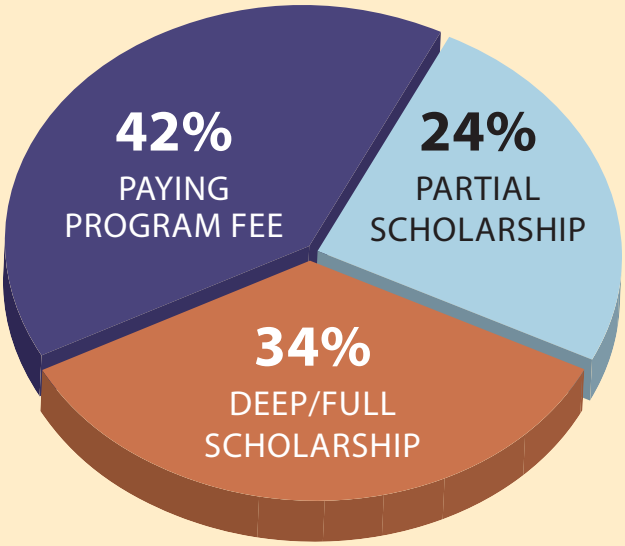
### WYP Participants Grow In These Areas:

- **Individual**– Self-confidence
- **Interpersonal**– Respect for others and conflict resolution abilities
- **Physical**– Competence and agility
- **Environmental**– Respect for the natural world

### Our Programs Create Nature Connection With:

- Safe, well-facilitated, age-appropriate time in nature
- Individualized mentoring
- Exploration and curiosity

## Total Unduplicated Youth: 678

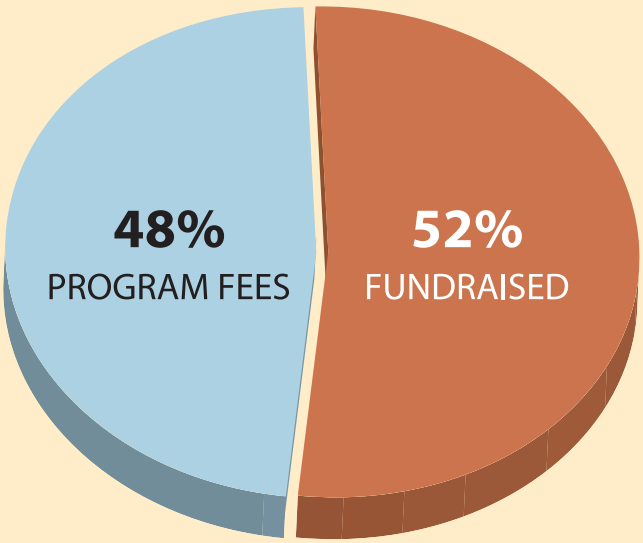



## Key Statistics and Accomplishments for 2013:

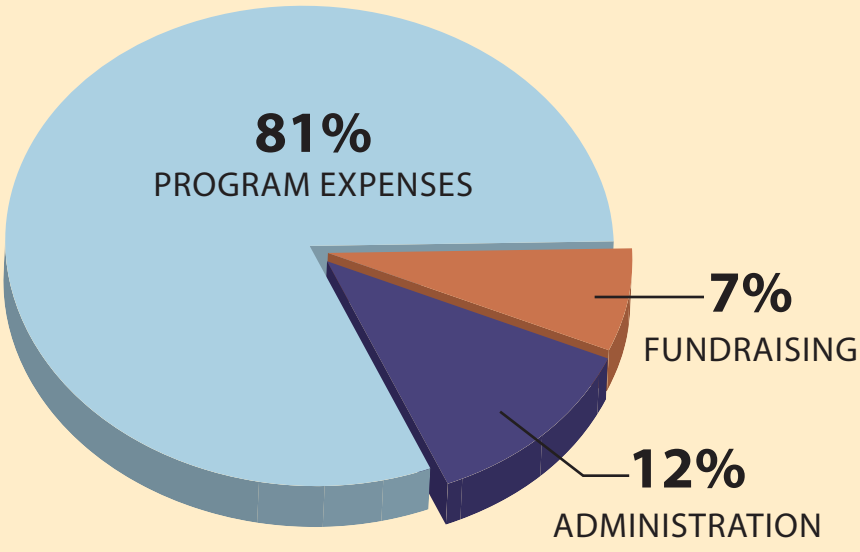
- 50 weeks of summer camp
- 28 weekday programs (school year)
- 60% of participants receiving scholarships
- 7 vans
- 46 employees/interns (9 full-time, 37 part-time/seasonal)
- 73 volunteers
- 4:1 ratio participants to counselors
- 16% capacity growth, 12% expense increase
- 15% of participants have disabilities

**We strive to reflect the demographics of our community and welcome youth with a range of abilities and backgrounds.**

## Total Income: $829,000




## Total Expenses: $753,350



## NATURE CONNECTION MAKES CHILDREN...

### Smarter

Nature play stimulates creativity and improves problem solving. Children who participated in outdoor education programs raised their science test scores by 27%, improved their conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, and experienced better self-esteem and motivation to learn.

### Healthier

Americans are suffering from an acute case of "nature deficit disorder," and the effects are showing. American children spend 90% of their time indoors, resulting in increasing severity of health challenges including ADHD, obesity, depression and stress.

### Happier

Nature play increases self-esteem and reduces stress. Children learn self-discipline and are more cooperative with others. Children feel more capable, confident and connected to nature.

# TESTIMONIALS

"My 10 year old has been in WYP since age 6. To her, there is nothing better than a "WYP day". Not only will she explore the wonders of nature and all its richness, she will also be enriched by the mentorship provided by the leaders. Mentors skillfully teach and nurture each child as they explore new habitats, taking great care to help them through any difficulties or fears they may encounter."

**SONJA,** *Mother of Chloe, Age 10*

"It was as if the children had dropped into their wild selves and become creatures of the woods, comfortable and at home in their minds, bodies, and native habitats. It had been just about a mile up and back, but so much had happened. There was never any talk about global warming or endangered species, but there was ample opportunity to become one with the natural world. And all the children were eager to come back and do it again. This is the kind of environmental education that I believe leads to environmental values and behaviors in adulthood—education that originates in children's innate play tendencies in the natural world."

**DAVID SOBEL,** *Director of Certificate Programs, Antioch University, New England*

"I am a pediatrician who specializes in caring for children with ADHD and similar behavioral problems. I have several patients who participate in your programs, and I cannot adequately express my sincere gratitude for the amazing differences you have made in these children's lives. I so strongly believe and share in your mission, and would like to do anything in my power to ensure that your awesome programs continue to grow."

**STEPHANIE D'AUGUSTINE,** *Pediatrician*

WILDERNESS YOUTH PROJECT

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**CELEBRATING 15 YEARS!**

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