Dear Friends,

Children are one third of our population and all of our future. Your support means smarter, healthier happier children thanks to nature connection and mentoring. Thanks to you, 2018 was the best year ever for Wilderness Youth Project: we got 1,000+ kids outside. We made great strides towards our goal of reflecting the demographics of the community we serve. Our staff, board and volunteers learn and grow along with the children, expanding our capacity and competence and deepening connection.

One of our summer camp scholarship recipients, Lydia, shared this reflection with us:

“My brother likes to stay inside on the computer. He doesn’t like to get dirty, but I love to play outside. It’s because I’ve been in WYP since I was little. When I grow up, I want to be a WYP counselor.”

Even though he lives in Santa Barbara, with abundant natural beauty and a community devoted to our children’s future, Lydia’s brother’s indoor childhood puts him at risk. Kids who don’t get nature time are more prone to anxiety, depression and attention-deficit problems. They’re at a higher risk for obesity and Type 2 diabetes. Thanks to you, we’re making more stories like Lydia’s.

All children need nature.
Not just the ones whose parents appreciate nature.
Not only those of a certain economic class or culture or gender or sexual identity or set of abilities.
Every child.
Santa Barbara is a nature-rich city, from coastal zones to canyons, rivers and mountains. And yet every day out on program we hear a child say “this is the first time I’ve ever done this!” These firsts: first time playing outside barefoot, first time climbing a tree, first time to the beach... can be the spark of curiosity that lights the fire of lifelong learning. Thanks to you, we can reach those children who’ve never enjoyed nearby nature and make these firsts happen.

As Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder” writes:

*If a child never sees the stars, never has meaningful encounters with other species, never experiences the richness of nature, what happens to that child? Research suggests that exposure to the natural world – including nearby nature in cities – helps improve human health, well-being, and intellectual capacity in ways that science is only beginning to understand. People need nature for healthy development.*

2019 is Wilderness Youth Project’s 20th year: twenty years of smarter, healthier and happier kids in our community for kids from all backgrounds and abilities. We invite you to celebrate with us!

In gratitude,

DAN FONTAINE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WYP strives for equity, working to include students from diverse backgrounds of ethnicity, ability, gender identity and socioeconomic status. Our goal is to mirror the demographics of Santa Barbara and Goleta. We use affirmative action considerations in our outreach and staffing.

MISSION
The mission of Wilderness Youth Project is to foster confidence, health, and a lifelong love of learning for young people and families through active outdoor experiences and mentoring.

VISION
Wilderness Youth Project envisions teaching the next generation of children to be peaceful, respectful and confident stewards of our world.

Who We are...

100 Volunteers
16 Full-time Staff
37 Part-time Staff
10 Vans

WYP strives for equity, working to include students from diverse backgrounds of ethnicity, ability, gender identity and socioeconomic status.
310 Students served during the school day in 2017-18 at 7 Elementary Schools in Santa Barbara Unified School District

539 Summer Campers

1,059 Youth Served

35 School-Year programs

$465,915 Total amount of scholarship given

64% Receive Scholarships

677 Total number of participants who receive scholarships

40% Latinx

10 school & agency partnerships:
- Police Activities League
- Storyteller Children's Center
- Goleta & Santa Barbara Schools

539 Summer Campers

65 Average hours a participant spends with WYP in one year

40% Latinx

7% Children with disabilities
In schools:
Elementary students at Adelante Charter School, Adams, Franklin, McKinley, Monroe, Notre Dame and St. Raphael's all get to take part in the Bridge to Nature school day program. That means 416 students built an “experience bank” that supports English language arts, science, executive function, social-emotional, and other learning.

And after school:
With 18 different programs meeting from western Goleta to Montecito, 216 children from Kindergarten through high school explored the wondrous places of wild character nearby.

And during summer:
539 young people ages 4-18 adventured to Gaviota, the Santa Ynez River, Carpinteria’s bluffs and points in between and beyond, rediscovering the essence of childhood: freedom, curiosity, learning, and play outdoors.

And in early childhood:
60 preschool-age children became Woolly Bears and Chickadees, cultivating a heightened awareness of nature. They directed their own learning and cultivated a sense of place. These opportunities for growth provide a foundation for physical, emotional, and social intelligence that lasts a lifetime.

And with partner agencies:
Storyteller Children’s Center serves 42 of our community’s most vulnerable young children, 90% of whom live in poverty. Wilderness Youth Project works there twice a week, building a bridge to nature for some of the youngest children most in need of nature. In the spring, we join forces with Storyteller staff to provide a weekend family campout at the beautiful Arroyo Hondo preserve, with support from the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County.

Partnering with the Police Activities League (PAL) extends our reach to underprivileged teens in the school year, as well as the many summer campers who receive transportation services. San Marcos High School’s AAPLE Academy benefits from a year-long personalized outdoor leadership program run by Wilderness Youth Project. Sharing Wilderness Youth Project mentoring techniques with UCSB’s environmental education class has a double benefit: college students experience nature connection themselves and bring it to the children they teach, and many choose to join our volunteer force.

The Bridge to Nature School Day program provides a 3.5-hour nature-based mentoring program for students in 4th grade at Santa Barbara schools where over half the kids receive free school lunch. One day each month, every student heads out during class time for hands-on, student-centered learning, relevant real world problem-solving, inquiry, and interaction with the natural world.
Kids who come to Wilderness Youth Project...

- Feel Connected To Nature
- Are Physically And Mentally Healthier
- Have Higher Self-Esteem
- Are More Cooperative With Others
- Are Good Problem-Solvers
- Feel More Capable And Confident
- Are More Creative
- Do Better In School
- Have Good Self-Discipline
- Are Tomorrow’s Conservation Leaders
“Hugo is my son and he looks forward to the monthly trips. It is through your program that he has developed a passion for caring for the environment. Your program has also helped him become aware of all the beautiful places our community has. Thank you for providing him and many other kids with memorable experiences!”

-XOCHILT, DAD OF HUGO

“Max loves WYP. He is incredibly introverted but thrives socially and emotionally in his WYP afterschool program. My family is SO very grateful for how the counselors are able to draw Max out of his shell - your instructors are patient, thoughtful, understanding, kind, and make my son feel safe to explore how he relates to others and nature.”

-COURTNEY, MOM OF MAX
“The kids absolutely adore the program. They look forward to each and every trip. Some of the kids wrote their personal narratives on their experiences at Ellwood Beach. They also loved reading teacher Andrew’s personal narrative. When I announced that tomorrow is a WYP day, they burst out in cheer. I discuss the vocabulary words that you send me and when they describe their experiences, I make them use the correct word. It has helped them use adjectives and their senses to describe these awesome experiences that they would probably never experience.”

- LAUREN THAL, TEACHER AT FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“I look out and see the ocean, the town, the world. This is one place where I can just be who I am: I can run, jump, sit, hide and explore. I am amazed by this place and wonder what extraordinary animals live here.”

- 4TH GRADER AT FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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“As a child of suburbia, I had almost no wilderness experiences, and none that were positive, until I was in my late 20s. And, my deep connection to wilderness did not really take root until my 30s. I have tried to make up for lost time since then, but I strongly believe in giving as many children as possible an early and positive introduction to the outdoors. It is a great source of renewal, introspection and delight in our fast moving modern world.”

- NICHOLAS J. SCHNEIDER, J.D. (PARENT AND SUPPORTER)
How Our Community Supports Wilderness Youth Project

**Through foundations:**
Grants from family foundations, community foundations and regional groups committed to nature connection made up one third of our fundraised dollars.

**And individual donors:**
Nature connection heroes like you made 617 donations to make sure nature connection and mentoring reaches low-income children, those with disabilities and other groups less likely to access this kind of program through our scholarship program.

**And skilled staff and volunteers:**
Our 4:1 youth-to-counselor ratio affords our participants a high quality of mentoring typically unavailable in youth services. This low ratio, along with the flexible nature of our programs, also allows for individualized attention by our highly trained staff. As volunteer Laura Barley wrote:

> “I spent about a year volunteering with Wilderness Youth Project, and it was enough to inform my future career path and to inspire me for a lifetime. The opportunity to bring youth into the wilderness, and to see the look on their faces as they encountered natural wonders, made me realize the extensive impact of environmental education.”

**And our board of directors:**
Who volunteer their time to make sure that the strategic vision of Wilderness Youth Project has the support it needs.

**And through our Endowment Fund:**
Which provides resilience and sustainability, ensuring that nature connection is in Santa Barbara to stay. Planned giving, bequests, and gifts to the endowment will plant seeds for a healthy future.

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<th>Endowment Value</th>
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<td>2015</td>
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Total Operating Revenue: $1,464,197

Program Fees: 40%
Fundraising: 60%

Total Operating Expenses: $1,296,000

Program Expenses: 77%
Fundraising: 12%
Management: 11%