Dear Friends,

I heard a story from a staff member at WYP who has a three year old in our program for preschoolers. She reports that her son has developed a habit of asking “what are you feeling thankful for?” As we reflect on 2021, we are thankful for the everpresent, wild and nearby nature where we live. We are thankful for the families and partner organizations who entrust WYP with the honor of introducing children to the joy inspired by that nearby nature. We give thanks for our team: the volunteers who make it possible for keep our 1:4 ratio of adults to kids; our board members who devote their time and treasure to this mission; our staff who bring their best selves everyday; and you, our extended family and community. You are truly the reason that Wilderness Youth Project has the opportunity to bring the gifts of nature connection to the Santa Barbara community.

There’s a lot of research out there, confirming the thing we’ve known since WYP began in 1999: connecting with nature brings healing, joy, play inspiration, curiosity, and so many of the experiences that support children in growing into adults who tend the wellbeing of the people and places around them. One researcher, Louise Chawla, describes the outcome of childhood nature connection as “constructive hope.” In this report, we'll share some of 2021's headline news about nature connection, along with some stories and numbers from WYP’s work over the year.

Together, with your support, we are constructing hope. At a recent Goleta city meeting, I heard Goleta School Board member Luz Reyes-Martin say “I’m blown away by how incredible this program is. They have such a strong commitment to equity. They pay detailed attention to balancing race, gender and income. I haven’t seen another organization like this in Santa Barbara that has such detailed attention to equity in the admissions of the program.” You’re part of the WYP community because you know that all children need nature, but they’re all at risk of too much time indoors. Thank you for the part you play in building a bridge to nature for the children and families of our community.

In gratitude,

Dan Fontaine
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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About Wilderness Youth Project

MISSION
The mission of Wilderness Youth Project (WYP) 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. WYP aims to promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. We do this through building affirmative action practices, cultural competence, diverse multilingual staff, outreach, communications and scholarships based on financial need.

Our goal is for our board, staff, volunteers and participants to mirror the demographics of our service area: Goleta to Carpinteria.

WYP staff bring many years of naturalist experience, wilderness safety, social justice, teaching and mentoring.

United by the belief that all children need nature, our team works together to bring our passion for the natural world and our knowledge of the benefits of mentoring to the community.

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
Your WYP Community: More than just numbers

This community has built Wilderness Youth Project to connect kids from all backgrounds to Santa Barbara’s natural beauty. To make sure kids get to be kids, find curiosity and health, and learn about their place in the world around them. Our programs provide the space and opportunity to gain a deeper connection to nature and sense of belonging for all participants.

Total amount of scholarship given to participants:

**$500,559**
65% of participants

WYP creates long-term mentoring relationships, so many participants come year-round and for multiple years.

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**$500,559**
65% of participants

SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMS
During the school year, we serve youth ages 3-18. We offer weekly fee-based programs as well as our Bridge to Nature community-supported programs.

BRIDGE TO NATURE PROGRAMS
Thanks to community support, these school day and afterschool programs are offered at no cost to families in these areas.

**16** Programs serving **238 Students**

Adelante Charter School
Cleveland Elementary
Harding Elementary
Franklin Elementary
Peabody Charter School
Notre Dame School
St. Raphael School
McKinley Elementary

**$500,559**
65% of participants

WEEKLY FEE-BASED PROGRAMS

30% of WYP’s budget comes from program fees paid by local families.

**21** Programs serving **351 Students**

After-school & morning programs meet at:

- Tucker’s Grove
- Mission Rose Garden
- Carpinteria Bluffs
- Rocky Nook
- Ellwood
- Ennisbrook Open Space
- Skofield Park
- Kiwanis Meadow

SUMMER PROGRAMS
Youth ages 3-18 have the opportunity to participate in 1 and 2 week camps, including overnight trips and backpacking.

**705** Summer Camper Spots

Children with disabilities **8%**

“We are so appreciative of your program. So often our son, who has autism and ADHD, doesn’t fit anywhere in our society easily. It has been amazing for him to feel like he belongs somewhere, and is okay just as he is. It is the highlight of his week. He just told me we could never move because he never wants to stop coming to WYP.” -WYP Parent

Latinx participants **37%**

“I love that I can send my Spanish-dominant mom to comfortably do pick ups and drop offs. Both of my boys love WYP. Thank you for making sure that the outdoors are for everyone.” -WYP Parent

32% Bilingual WYP Staff
Nature Connection Made Headlines in 2021

When WYP started in 1999, “nature connection” was not a household term. In 2004 Richard Louv’s Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder became a bestseller. He told the world that in just two generations childhood had moved from outdoors to indoors, and he raised alarms at the detrimental effects that move has on kids. And in 2013 Oxford’s Stephen Kellert was on NPR saying “the natural world is the substrate on which we must build our existence.” But perhaps 2021 was the peak (so far) headline year for the importance of time outdoors.

A few key takeaways from 2021 include:

Stress Busters
The California’s Surgeon General added “access to nature” to its list of seven Stress Busters as published in the Roadmap for Resilience which highlights how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress impact long term community health. Wilderness Youth Project is proud to be actively working toward three of the seven stress busters – access to nature, physical activity and building supportive relationships.

Nature Rx: Creating a Referral Network
Because of this ACEs work, Cottage Health, on behalf of Pediatric Resiliency Collaborative and Resilient Santa Barbara County, received a grant from the state’s ACEs Aware initiative to support the Santa Barbara County Network of Care. The ACEs Aware initiative is a first-in-the-nation effort led by the California Department of Health Care Services and the Office of the California Surgeon General. ACEs Aware seeks to screen patients for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in an effort to prevent and address the impact of ACEs and toxic stress.

ACEs refers to traumatic events, such as abuse, neglect or household challenges, that are experienced before the age of 18. We are proud to be selected to provide evidence-based interventions that prevent, treat, and heal the harmful consequences of toxic stress by offering nature experiences for children and youth in small group settings to deepen relationships with self, others, and mentors as well as facilitate child-centered nature exploration, skill-building games, and storytelling.

Outdoor Equity
The Nature Gap reports that people of color, families with children, and low-income communities are most likely to be deprived of the benefits that nature provides. In addition, Black, Latino, and indigenous people often encounter hostility or threats when trying to enjoy time outdoors.

California State Parks Launched the new Outdoor Equity Grants Program in 2021 with $57 million available for competitive grants statewide. The creation of a new outdoor equity grant program advances the Governor and First Partner’s commitment to expanding outdoor access for all. The funding will go toward transportation, program operations, staffing and other costs that traditionally present barriers for historically underserved urban and rural communities throughout California.

The conservation movement, also known as nature conservation, is a political, environmental, and social movement that seeks to manage and protect natural resources for future generations. The next wave of the conservation movement is outdoor equity.

In Fall 2021, we presented a vision for increasing outdoor equity in the lower Westside and lower Eastside neighborhoods in Santa Barbara. Wilderness Youth Project submitted a grant application to the Outdoor Equity Program in October 2021 and will coordinate with 7 partner organizations to ensure youth and families in Santa Barbara have equitable access to the natural resources and public lands in our region.
“Wilderness Youth Project is the backbone for any outdoor immersion activities involving kids in Santa Barbara. With deep dedication to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, WYP is influencing the hearts and minds of underserved community members that never saw themselves fitting into or passionate about the natural world.

WYP also works closely with other nonprofits, government agencies, and private businesses to enhance our community and not work in isolation. The result is a more abundant, collaborative effort to create resiliency against worsening mental and physical health conditions that so many youth are experiencing in our county. They are responsible for a lot of smiling faces, both young and old.

I’m sincerely honored to participate on their board and partner as an organization as the founder of The Sea League. The process has been nothing short of life fulfilling – so much gratitude, love, and respect for Wilderness Youth Project!”

- Chris Ragland, WYP Board Member

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Individual donors:
You know that nature connection makes children happier, healthier, and smarter and you joined 970 more people to make donations in 2021 and support scholarships that make sure local children can experience nature without the burden of financial cost.

And foundations:
Grants from family foundations, community foundations and regional groups committed to nature connection make up half of our funding and sustained us in 2021.

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.

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

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

“I took a call from a parent today with a child in our after-school program. When I affirmed that there was a scholarship available for her daughter to come to summer camp, the mom started crying out of gratitude. To paraphrase what she said: You have given her more than I ever could as a parent. Every month she comes home after WYP brimming with joy for the way she gets to be herself when she’s out there. I could never have enough words to thank you and the donor who made this possible.”

-WYP Staff

Your Support Matters

2021 Total Expenses $2,568,573

2021 Total Assets $3,803,163
2021 GIFTS

Nothing compares to a child’s first time jumping into salty ocean waves, climbing the rough bark of a coast live oak or witnessing a red tailed hawk dive down while hunting. Your donations make these (and many more) nature rich experiences possible for youth in our community.

$250 and above
Kathy Abney
Peter & Rebecca Adams
Ann Adams
Adams Legacy Foundation
Melika & Tom Adams
Karina & Terry Aggeler
Alice Tweed Tuohy
Terri Allison
Pamela Altman & Larry Renacker
Amazon Smile
Kathy Ambrette
Courtney & Jim Andelman
Kathy Andelman
Amazon Smile
Armand Hammer Foundation
Audacious Foundation
Dean Axelrod & Constance Frey
Anne von Boeselager
B & B Foundation
B.P. Moser Trust
Ways to Get Involved
This work is made possible by a community of partners and supporters. Volunteers, donors, and community ambassadors are essential for us to connect children with nature.

To find out more, visit wyp.org or email info@wyp.org.
ALL CHILDREN NEED NATURE.

Not just the ones whose families have privilege and easy access to nature. Not only those of a certain economic class or culture or gender or sexual identity or language or set of abilities.

Every child and every family.