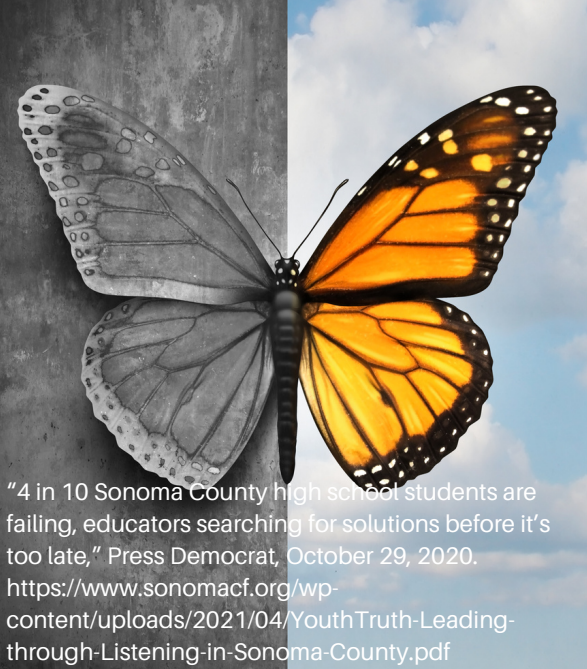




“ Nature indisputably helps reduce stress and protects the psychological functioning of children. ”



Roberts, N & A. Suren (2010) Through the Eyes of Youth: A Qualitative Evaluation of Outdoor Leadership Programs. Journal of Park and Recreation Administration. Vol. 25, No. 4.



"4 in 10 Sonoma County high school students are failing, educators searching for solutions before it's too late," Press Democrat, October 29, 2020. <https://www.sonomacf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/YouthTruth-Leading-through-Listening-in-Sonoma-County.pdf>



The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes. Environmental Research 166 (2018) 628-637xt



STATEMENT OF NEED

The COVID-19 crisis affected Sonoma County in profound ways. In a 2020 local survey, young people reported their mental health has suffered as a result of the pandemic. More than 7 in 10 Sonoma County high school students said they "feel deep anxiety about the future." In 2021, a YouthTruth survey revealed Sonoma County teens faced academic, emotional and mental health challenges - 43 percent of teens reported experiencing prolonged sadness.

BEING OUTDOORS BENEFITS HEALTH

International research reveals that time outdoors can demonstrably improve mental and physical health. Outdoor youth programming not only leads to knowledge gains related to the environment, it also can enhance social-emotional well-being and reduce stress. Japanese shin-rin yoku "forest bathing" studies find walking or spending time in the forest reduces hostility and depression.

HOW WE CAN HELP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

As we transition to a post-pandemic "normal," Sonoma County Regional Parks has resumed its role as the largest provider of outdoor education programs in Sonoma County, reaching close to 20,000 students each year. In addition to educational programs, Regional Parks offers a range of experiences for youth from pre-school age to young adults, with a particular emphasis on supporting participation by people of color, Spanish-speaking individuals, and families with limited resources.

PHILANTHROPY THAT BENEFITS CHILDREN OF SONOMA COUNTY

CAMINITOS AL PARQUE In these "little walks," preschool-aged children and parents from low income and Spanish-speaking households spend the morning developing connections to each other and their parks. Families take a bus to a nearby Regional Park, where they hike, read nature-based picture books, create crafts, and enjoy a healthy snack. Caregivers learn about how to stay connected with their parks as a venue for family wellness and learning.

STUDENT FIELD TRIPS AND STIPENDS FOR BUS TRANSPORTATION

Students head outdoors to learn about the natural world around them at various locations throughout the county. These hands-on, inquiry-based programs reinforce critical Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. Students learn about:

- Wildlife diversity and the importance habitat plays in a healthy community
- Local watersheds through science exploration at the Environmental Discovery Center and a hike through the beautiful Spring Lake ecosystem
- Wildflowers and pollinators that live in the Sonoma Valley oak woodland ecosystem
- Edible plants and soils growing in the community garden at Andy's Unity Park, and many other fascinating topics.

SUMMER CAMPS Regional Parks offers a range of camps for ages 5-14, such as nature study, outdoor challenges, coastal exploration, Latinx culture, kayak skills, and junior lifeguards. The Parks Foundation offers "camperships" covering at least half the camp fees for families with significant financial need.



PHILANTHROPY THAT BENEFITS LOCAL YOUTH

REGIONAL PARKS YOUTH PROGRAMS are developed through the lens of social emotional learning, trauma informed care, youth activism through social media, and developing youth leadership around the environment.

YOUTH EXPLORING THE SONOMA COAST A year-long immersive experience for teens furthest from opportunities, YES! Coast offers career exploration, stewardship, recreational, cultural and historical activities on the Sonoma Coast.

YOUTH EXPLORING SONOMA RIVERS This outdoor program brings youth who are far from parks to discover the Russian River over eight weeks during the summer. Teens learn about the river's impact on our community, enjoy swimming and camping, and lead stewardship activities.

YOUTH CAREER PATHWAYS Young people age 17-24 who have overcome adversity gain work readiness and employment skills while being paid a salary to work outdoors. They explore career opportunities and develop an appreciation for our Regional Parks. As a measure of success, three Youth Crew graduates have advanced to full-time Regional Parks employment.

TRIBAL YOUTH BEAR PROJECT Youth from local Native American tribes engage with a wildlife tracker and researcher in a series of presentations and field experiences about wildlife conservation. Focusing on Sonoma County's growing black bear population, the youth:

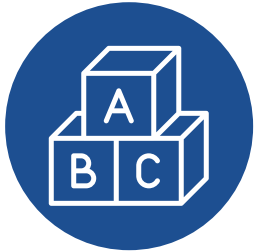
- Set up wildlife cameras
- Learn mapping techniques and field journaling
- Interview wildlife practitioners
- Analyze scat

Participants also interview elders to understand cultural traditions and stories related to bears.



A REQUEST FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Here is an outline of expected expenses for the programs described in this report. Additional information on programs and financial details are available upon request.



CAMINITOS AL PARQUE

\$30,000 per year
for 280 families



SCHOOL FIELD TRIP STIPENDS

\$20,000



BUS TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

\$10,000 per year



SUMMER CAMPS

\$10,000
for "camperships" for
low-income families



YOUTH EXPLORING SONOMA COAST

\$80,000
for year long program

*Partially funded by the
California Coastal
Conservancy*



YOUTH EXPLORING SONOMA RIVERS

\$25,000
for fiscal year
2022-2023



YOUTH CAREER PATHWAYS

\$27,700 per month
for 8-member youth crew
Youth earn \$16.44 per
hour



TRIBAL YOUTH BEAR RESEARCH

\$2,000 per program



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Melissa Kelley, Executive Director
Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation
melissa.kelley@sonoma-county.org
707.292.2380 Direct
707.565.1830 Office

SonomaCountyParksFoundation.org