

# Nearby Nature News

## 20th Birthday

### Special Report



Discover · Learn · Grow

## Celebrating Twenty Years of Programs, People, and Partners

From its humble beginnings in a backyard yurt to its present-day home in the heart of



Alton Baker Park, Nearby



Nature has journeyed a long way in the past 20 years. Its programs in local parks and schools now serve 7,000+ kids, parents, teachers, and community members directly every year. From school nature walks in the spring to daycamps in the summer, from the Haunted Hike in the fall to restoration projects in the winter, Nearby Nature is active in the community throughout the year.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Nearby Nature. Every year, they donate 6,000+ hours of time and talents to our work. Rain or shine, they lead nature walks for school children, pull invasive ivy, collect litter, plant trees, and tend our Learnscape Gardens. Dressed up like frogs, bats, and owls, they educate and entertain at special events, libraries, schools, and daycare centers. They also stuff envelopes, paint

murals, and build benches! Nearby Nature owes its amazing volunteers a huge round of applause for all their contributions in the past 20 years.

Finally, what would we do without our partners? Our work is immeasurably enhanced by the web of life we have woven with the Network Charter School, the City of Eugene, EWEB, the Science Factory, Walama Restoration, and members of the MUSE Coalition and the Youth in Nature Partnership, just to name a few of our many community friends. We



are grateful to all of our partners for their support during our first twenty years.

### Key Nearby Nature Programs

- School Nature Walks: 3,000+ kids/year
- Classroom Naturalists: 1,900+ kids/year
- Summer Daycamps: 400+ kids/year
- Network Charter School: 100+ kids/year
- Kinder Critter Programs: 600+ kids/year
- Haunted Hike: 500+ people/year
- Plus: No School Days, Nature Quests, Restoration Celebrations, Learnscape Gardening, and Community Festivals!

### Inside This Report

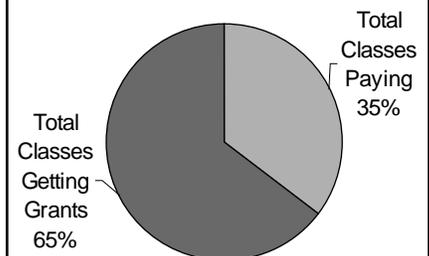
People, Programs, Partners .....	1
Scholarships Prioritized .....	1
Cheers for Volunteers.....	2
Community Partnerships .....	3
Milestones .....	4

### Donors Help Nearby Nature Prioritize Scholarships



Nearby Nature believes that opportunities to connect with nature nearby should be available to all members of our community, regardless of income. Therefore, throughout our existence, we have made a priority of offering financial aid for our programs. We are especially grateful to EWEB for the over \$200,000 in grant support it has provided through its Partners in Education Fund since the year 2000, most of it for scholarships for school nature walks, classroom visits, and daycamps. Other generous scholarship grant supporters have included the Staples Foundation for Learning, the Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund, the Lane County Cultural Coalition, the Oregon Community Foundation, and the Jill Heiman Vision Fund of the Oregon Country Fair. Nearby Nature also provides financial aid to schools and families through the generosity of those who donate to our Youth Scholarship and Outreach Fund.

**Alton Baker Park School  
Nature Walk Scholarships  
2000-2011**





# Cheers for Volunteers

## Nearby Nature Impacts Lives

As part of reflecting on the past 20 years, we recently reconnected with some of our former volunteers and staff. Below is a look at where these folks are now and how working with Nearby Nature impacted their lives. For news on even more of our friends (we couldn't fit all of your news here!), see [www.nearbynature.org/volunteers](http://www.nearbynature.org/volunteers). Note: If you have a story we haven't heard yet, please email us at [info@nearbynature.org](mailto:info@nearbynature.org). We would love to add your tale to our on-line journal.

**Jen Metz (Volunteer 1992-95):** NOAA Outreach and Education Specialist for Protected Species in Hawaii and former science educator everywhere from the San Juan Islands to Alaska's Mendenhall Glacier. "This chain of events (my work) was inspired a lot by my experience at Nearby Nature, where I learned how much I loved to teach people about the natural world. I can't imagine where I would be today if I didn't have that experience!" Jen spent a year trying to live trash-free. Check out her blog at [trashfreeyear.wordpress.com](http://trashfreeyear.wordpress.com).

**Patrick McIlrath (Volunteer 1996):** Willagillespie Elementary 5th grade teacher. "Leading Nearby Nature hikes was my first experience teaching groups of children. It was a great way to start my career as a teacher. I was in my element, talking with kids about nature and playing games with them. How could I not fall in love with teaching?"

**Timothy Whitley (Board, 1997-99):** 4J School District's energy and water education specialist and past teacher at Churchill High School's Rachel Carson Program. "I have definitely benefited professionally from my involvement with Nearby Nature. Working as a team member, understanding budgeting, and establishing community connections were all reinforced by my participation on the board."



**Lisa Seales (Volunteer 1998-2000, Staff 2002-05):** Graduate student in water management and teacher at two colleges in Bend. "I have used SO MUCH of what I learned at Nearby Nature in my personal and professional life. My Nearby Nature training prepared me for my career in environmental education. It also drove me to pursue graduate school."

**Corie Hinton (Volunteer and Board 1998-2007, Green Giving Partner 2012):** Artist in Residence with Lane Arts Council and recent Peace Corps volunteer in Madagascar. "Doing the Junior Naturalist and guide things really helped prepare me for the teaching I'm doing right now. It helped get me used to telling stories to and interacting with kids of all ages, and also with conflict resolution skills! I am 100% positive that my experience with Nearby Nature was what got me accepted into the Peace Corps."



**Kurt Engle (Board 2000-02):** Systems Analyst at PeaceHealth. "Nearby Nature taught me to give freely of my time to benefit others. The 'thank yous' and appreciation from those that benefit from others' volunteerism is very rewarding."

**Annie Nelson (Volunteer 2002):** Laurel Elementary Kindergarten teacher. "I use things I picked up while volunteering with Nearby Nature on a daily basis. I have also taken my own family and friends on walks through Alton Baker Park and shared the knowledge I gained from the Nearby Nature trainings."

**Sarah Laport (Intern Volunteer 2002-05):** Student at the Oregon Institute of Technology and former Wildland Firefighter and BLM Park Ranger/Naturalist. "I actually reflect on my experience with you often. You taught me to stand in front of people with confidence. I learned how to break things down and teach them to anyone! I was part of the community with Nearby Nature, instead of just being a student on UO campus. I still make an effort to find ways to be part of my community anywhere I am."



**Erin Machell (Intern Volunteer, Staff, Board 2002-03):** Bicycle and pedestrian urban designer and planner at Portland's Alta Planning + Design. "Nearby Nature left me with a perspective that seeks to understand how education and wonder about the world around us can be made into daily parts of our lives."

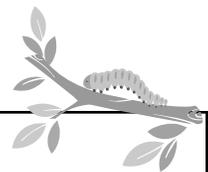


**Tami Dickinson-Chambers (Staff 2005-07):** Nurse at La Clinica Health Center in Ashland. "Nearby Nature taught me to appreciate nature moments wherever I am, especially where I would least expect them. I can't always get out in the wilderness but can always find a bit of the wild even on a busy street in town."

**Garrett McCullough (Intern Volunteer 2005-06):** Teacher in Japan.

**Sierra Predovich (Intern Volunteer 2009-12):** Naturalist Intern at San Mateo Outdoor Education in California.

**Souvanny Miller (Volunteer 2011-12):** NOAA Hollings Scholarship recipient.



### Founding Staff: Life After Nearby Nature

**Sharon (Teague) Blick** created the Living Earth organic farm in West Eugene. Before that, she worked in Alaska, was the Bug Lady of Eugene, and directed the School Garden Project. **Amy (Klauke) Minato** and **Joseph Minato** teach, write, and explore nature in Portland. Nearby Nature's greatest impact on their lives was probably the fact that they met at one of the group's first planning meetings!



# Community Partnerships

## Relationships Key to Program Successes

Nearby Nature has been privileged in the past 20 years to work in partnership with all sorts of community non-profits, businesses, and institutions. Significant on-going relationships have been developed with the Network Charter School, the City of Eugene, and EWEB.



### The Network Charter School

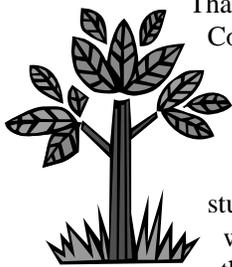
It's hard to believe that the first conversations about starting the Network Charter School happened more than ten years ago. Today, our partnership with the four organizations and businesses that currently make up this unique school is strong and vital. Working with NCS allows us to share our commitment to nature nearby with teenagers — members of the community we had only impacted in small ways in the past. Today, we connect with 100+ teenagers annually, sharing with them the wonders of nature nearby through experiential and project-based learning in science, math, health, and language arts. NCS's new home in south Eugene as of 2011 has great classrooms and plenty of space for gardens and a bike shop. We are excited about many more years of working with our NCS partners.

### At Home in Alton Baker Park

Throughout its existence, Nearby Nature's favorite outdoor classroom has always been Alton Baker Park. Our first official office, however, was in Armitage Park, where we began serving as Park Host in 1993. We loved our home in the woods, but when Armitage transitioned from State to County ownership in 1998, and the opportunity came along to become Alton Baker Park's Host, we said YES! We were thrilled to partner with the City of Eugene and to establish a new home base in a truly "nearby" natural area.

So what was it like moving to town? Exciting...but lots of work! In the beginning, our site was nothing more than a dilapidated old house in a neglected lawn. But after hours of cleaning, repairing, and repainting, the old house became a home. Our caretakers moved in and we were ready to roll! As our programs expanded in the 2000s, we continued to enhance the site, adding a bike shed, a yurt, and an accessible bathroom. We also did many hours of restoration work and litter patrol in the park.

In recent years, our site and the park have both changed dramatically.

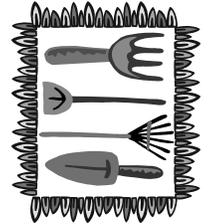


Thanks to a 2008 grant from the Gray Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, plus lots of additional support (see box to the left), we now have a Learnscape. This living, growing medley of outdoor classrooms, gardens, fruit trees, artwork, composters, native plants, and natural playspaces at our site is used throughout the year by students from our daycamps, school walks, and the Network Charter School. If you wander beyond our site into the Wildflower Hollow, you will be amazed. Thanks to thousands of hours of volunteer labor, this past haven for English ivy and blackberries is now a wildflower showplace in the spring.

### Water Wise Demonstration Garden

Completed in 2011, this demonstration site for water wise plants and landscaping was developed in partnership with the City of Eugene, EWEB,

LandCurrent Landscape Architecture, and the Schirmer Satre Group. The site showcases a variety of water wise plants and landscaping techniques. This lovely area will be visited for years to come by park visitors in search of information about how to conserve water as they enhance their home landscapes.



### Learnscape Contributors

The following individuals, businesses, foundations, schools, and organizations have helped bring the Learnscape to life since 2008.

#### Grant Support:

- Gray Family Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Staples Foundation for Learning
- Jill Heiman Vision Fund of the Oregon Country Fair

#### Volunteers, Artists, and Builders:

- Nearby Nature Staff, Interns, and Volunteers 2008-12; Network Charter School Students 2008-12; Rachel Carson High School Students 2008-12; Don Lown and the Emerald Empire Kiwanis Club; Ian Whitelaw (Contractor); Kelly Casad, Clare Gordon, Nicolette Getty-Beck, and Corie Hinton (Artists); Pip Allen and Students from the UO Architecture Department; Eagle Scouts Dominick Luna and Haden Miles; Sarah Whitney's LCC Water Conservation Class; United Way, and SOLVE

#### Donations:

- School Garden Project, Seed Ambassadors, Walama Restoration, Doak Creek Nursery, Second Growth Nursery, Science Factory, UO Urban Farm, UO Facilities Department, City of Eugene Stormwater Division, Weyerhaeuser, ELAW, Laurel Valley Educational Farm, Lane Forest Products, Mattress Mania



# Milestones

## Highlights on the Journey to 2012

**1991:** Nearby Nature's first organizational meeting.



**1992:** Non-profit incorporated. Classes in founder's backyard yurt and local schools. First newsletter!



School Nature Walks Program serves 945 kids. First summer daycamps. Ivy removal begins in Alton Baker Park. Founders help defeat efforts to build golf course in Alton Baker Park.

**1993:** Nearby Nature becomes Park Host in Armitage State Park.

**1994:** School Nature Walks Program serves 1,500 kids. Alton Baker Park nature center proposed. Current mission statement adopted. Green Scouts program serves teens.

**1995:** Daycamps serve 60 kids. *Spring Thing* in Armitage Park.

**1996:** First website created. Alton Baker Park *Action Project* work parties begin.

**1997:** First annual *Haunted Hike* in Armitage Park!



**1998:** Costumed *Kinder Critters*

debut in schools. Nearby Nature moves to Alton Baker Park!

**1999:** School Nature Walks Program serves 1,800 kids. First *Wild Cards*.

**2000:** First *Walk on the Wild Side*. Amazon Park Walks program. First EWEB scholarship grant. Use of Nature Hut begins. Volunteers donate 3,000 hours.

**2001:** *Restoration Celebration* Work Party program launched. Nature-scaping project at Spencer Butte Middle School. Teacher workshops begin. Daycamps serve 150 kids.

**2002:** 10th Anniversary! Work starts on Network Charter School (NCS).



Earthkeeping for Kids program begins. East Alton Baker Park becomes the Whilamut Natural Area and the Talking Stones are installed.



**2003:** First *Egg Walk*. First NCS classes. School Nature Walks Program serves 2,500 kids. Volunteers donate 3,700 hours.

**2004:** Yurt built in Alton Baker Park. NCS opens downtown site. *Nature Quest* weekend program launched.

**2005:** New After School Adventures and No School Days offered. Daycamps serve 270 kids.

**2006:** Bike storage shed built. *Classroom Naturalist Visits* program begins and serves 1,720 kids.



**2007:** 15th Anniversary! NCS celebrates 5th Anniversary! New bathroom constructed and yurt updated. School Nature Walks Program serves 2,900 kids.



**2008:** Work begins on *Learnscape*. Kiosk built. First *Play in the Rain Day*. Record attendance at Haunted Hike — 508 people!

**2009:** *Lessons in the Learnscape* workshops begin. Water Wise Garden planning begins. Partnership with Rachel Carson High School students begins. New website launched. *Learnscape Grand Opening* held.



**2010:** School Nature Walks Program serves record 3,194 kids! Park Host Residence gets new paint and windows. Covered bike shelter built. Volunteers donate 6,000 hours.

**2011:** NCS moves to south Eugene. Water Wise Garden opens. *Green Giving Program* launched. Nature Hut interior gets a facelift.

**2012:** 20th Anniversary! New logo! New *Wild Cards*! Restoration work begins in gateway area of Alton Baker Park. *Learnscape* thrives! Daycamps serve 400+ kids, more than ever before!



### Board of Directors

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*Weekend Coordinator:* Kate Self  
*Park Hosts:* Erin and Joy Lamb  
*NCS Teachers:* Wendy McKenzie, Billy Hughes, Denise Velasco, Breckon Neat, Tom Coppolino  
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