

Natural Connections Academy, Inc.

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We are on the Web!

www.naturalconnectionsacademy.net

Connecting Children's Learning to the Environment



Natural Connections Academy, Inc. (NCA) is a private, non-profit outdoor school. We provide a nature-based educational experience for students in 3rd through 5th grades in Kootenai, Benewah, and Spokane Counties.

In order to learn about their world, students are immersed in the natural environment through their own inquiries and wonder. Students solve real-world problems through hands-on learning opportunities. The goal is to reconnect students with nature so that they can be good stewards of their local environment.

Natural Connections Academy, Inc. (NCA) mission is to connect children's learning to the environment. Building connections between nature and academics, we want students to learn responsibility, accountability, and ownership of their education. Through these connections, they will solidify their role in their local communities and become environmentally focused leaders.

Volunteer Opportunities

As our school grows, we will be looking for volunteers to assist us in various areas.

If you are interested in helping, please contact us.

- Trail Preparation
- Sign Creation
- Grant Writing
- Curriculum Creation
- Office Manager (July)
- Camp Aid (July)
- Social Media Manager



April 2022

Volume 1, Issue 1

Our Educational Partners:

- Birds of Prey Northwest
- Stimson Lumber
- Idaho Forest Products Commission
- Project Learning Tree Idaho
- Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission
- Kootenai Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District
- Coeur D'Alene Tribe Department of Education.

Current fundraising total:



Amount needed to provide the education to students as

envisioned:



Natural Connections Academy, Inc.



The OWL Connection

Enrollment OPEN!
Limited Spaces

Updates and News:

As we continue to move towards our first academic year, which starts in August, we have been busy with lots of projects. Our Executive Director and Board members have been applying for grants from a variety of sources, such as Kootenai Electric, Idaho Forest Products Commission, Idaho Forest Products Commission, Idaho Native Plant Society, Avista Foundation, Coeur D'Alene Tribe, Innovia Foundation, Forever Idaho, Idaho Future Fund, Reiman Foundation, Sony Corporation, Sidney Stern Foundation, and more. Three grants have been received so far, three of which have come in the form of in-kind donations from 4Imprint, Snake River Seed Cooperative, and American Farm Bureau. Our school has received 20 embroidered vests for students, seeds for our vegetable garden, and a book titled How to Grow a Monster, as well as copies of the Ag Mag. In addition, Idaho Botanical Gardens provided a Lunaria Grant of \$550 to help build the student garden.

Establishing educational partnerships and networking have also been high priorities. Our educational partners will serve as a resource to locate subjects' experts, provide instructional specialists, and support the

verification of high-quality teaching and curriculum. At this time, we have been in contact with and collaborating with the following organizations: Birds of Prey Northwest, Idaho Forest Products Commission, Project Learning Tree Idaho, Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission, Kootenai Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District, Stimson Lumber Co., Coeur D'Alene Tribe Department of Education, Calypso Chapter of Idaho Native Plants Society, USGS Idaho Water Science Center scientists, Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation managers, and more.

Since our establishment in July, we have been working to complete our IRS 501(3)c exemption application. We have now submitted that application and hopefully will hear soon of its acceptance. Until that time, we will continue working with our fiscal sponsor, Institute for Education, Research, and Scholarship, located in California. With this affiliation, we can continue to receive donations and donors will receive receipts from IFERS for tax deduction. Our hope is to receive our own exemption by the end of April, which will allow us to participate in Idaho Gives. We continue to distrib-

ute brochures, business cards, and stickers to our contacts in hopes of raising donations and interest in Natural Connections Academy.

A curriculum scope and sequence for the first academic year is also being developed with our outdoor educator. We are focusing on environmental topics and utilizing our local area as a real-life hands-on laboratory. One of our units focuses on the forest. This unit involves students determining why a parcel of land has downed and dying trees on it. In order to explore why this tree died, students will research tree processes, insects, and diseases, learn about forestry, and visit a logging operation and local mill. Every unit will include a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and/or service learning (citizen science) project in our community. Planting new trees in a location may fall under the Forest unit's remit, as well as working on removing an abundance of fuel from a park, collecting firewood for a community member, and helping collect insects, such as UF/IFAS' Backyard Bark Beetle project. Additionally, the curriculum incorporates resources and lessons from Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, Aquatic Wild, Project Wet, and various National Science Teachers Association units.



Educational Partner Spotlight :

Birds of Prey Northwest

Birds of Prey Northwest's mission is to educate the public about birds of prey, through on-site and virtual live raptor presentations and other expanding outreach, and provide medical treatment to injured, sick, and orphaned wild raptors with the goal of returning them to the wild. In 2022, Birds of Prey Northwest will celebrate its 29th year as a nonprofit founded by raptor biologist and executive director Janie Veltkamp in St. Maries, Idaho.

Janie's early work helping reintroduce endangered Peregrine Falcons to urban sites led her to realize the unique position birds of prey hold as both powerful educators and bioindicators of ecological systems.

With dedicated board members, core staff, volunteers of all ages, and longtime and new partners, she is guiding Birds of Prey Northwest into the future, including state, regional and national education out-

reach, and state-of-the-art rehabilitation facilities and techniques. Her pioneering leadership of the team that engineered a 3D-printed prosthetic beak for Beauty the Bald Eagle, and her co-authorship of the award-winning children's book *Beauty and the Beak: How Science, Technology, and a 3D-Printed Beak Rescued a Bald Eagle*, have brought Birds of Prey Northwest's work to worldwide attention.

Excerpt from *Growing Outside* by Richard Louv

Connection to nature can be a doorway into a wider, deeper and even healing world—if we pay attention.

Increasingly, psychologists, health professionals, urban planners and others are, in fact, paying attention and incorporating the power of nature into their practices. Washington, D.C.-based pediatrician Robert Zarr, for example, founded Park Rx America, now a network of some 820 healthcare professionals from around the world who literally write prescriptions for nature. They'll tell patients to "plant a garden," "take a hike" or unplug from electronics and just "notice what's in motion" outside. They've even created a

database of parks or trails for outdoor opportunities in patients' own neighborhoods.

Similarly, pediatrician Stephen Pont in Austin, Texas, prescribes nature as a "stealth health" intervention. In nature, children "can engage in health-improving activities without even realizing it," he says. "Give kids a healthy snack and time outdoors in nature and many medical problems can be prevented or improved." These problems range from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder to Vitamin D deficiency to cardiovascular and mood disorders. And though nature isn't a panacea for everything that ails us, it's one of the few prescriptions that act as *both* prevention and therapy.

As founding chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Obesity, Pont is now encouraging AAP to establish a Na-

ture and Child Health group for pediatricians interested in "increasing the amount of time that our patients spend in nature." He bases this advice on common sense and hard science. "A growing evidence base is now documenting ... what we've always known—that we feel better after spending time in nature," he says.

Not long ago, it wasn't easy to support the argument that the natural world can enhance physical, mental and social health and improve cognitive skills. In the early 2000s, when I was researching and writing *Last Child in the Woods*—a book about the benefits of nature and the problems with what I called nature-deficit disorder—I found only about 60 studies rigorous enough to cite. Then, in 2006, I co-founded the nonprofit Children & Nature Network, which now offers a free online research library with abstracts of more than 1,000 studies.

Our Path

- Founded July, 2021
- Board of Directors first meeting
- Received our first In-Kind Grant
- First fundraising drive for Giving Tuesday (raised
- Acquired permission to utilize Stimson Lumber parcel
- Applied for 501(c)3 status February 2022
- Summer Camps slated for July, 2022
- 2022-2023 School Year to begin Aug. 15th!

To read more of Richard Louv's article visit <https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2020/Oct-Nov/Conservation/Kids-and-Nature>

"Ultimately, I'd argue the most useful dose is this: Some is better than none, and more is better than some."

From the Board of Directors...

This is an unprecedented time in history in so many ways. There have never been so many people that spend so little time in nature. This serious disconnect between people and the life-giving natural world has created a disregard for nature and the natural rhythms that nourish all life.

The tapestry of life has been torn and we as humans are at least partly responsible for the damage.

The NCA provides an opportunity for the next generation of world leaders to develop a nature based foundation which can help guide their decisions in how best to repair the dam-

ages to our life giving mother earth.

When I was growing up the kids in our neighborhood were always out playing in the empty lots and foothills within biking range. Parents weren't worried about our safety and trusted us and the natural environment. The worst part of growing up for me was being stuck in a classroom being forced to learn things that were in my young opinion irrelevant to the life I wanted to live.

As soon as I graduated High school I moved into the "woods" and my wife and I raised our daughters on a homestead farm in the remote mountains of far Northern California.

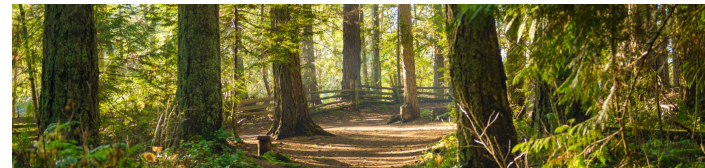
In an effort to be closer to our grandchildren and to reach out and teach what we hope will heal the serious epidemic of "Nature Deficit Disorder" we now have a homestead farm closer to town where we grow 90 percent of our food. Sharing our knowledge and skills in our community.

I also teach Ancestral Skills and Nature Connection to kids between the ages of 5 and 16 in an afterschool and homeschool program.

I wish there was a "Natural Connections Academy" in our community. I support the NCA and offer my help in creating their Nature Connection Program.

The NCA provides a unique school experience blending the academic subjects and natural connections that occur when kids spend time in nature. Creating a bridge between the natural world and the knowledge that is needed to repair the tapestry of life in this unique and challenging time.

She'om Rose



Shout Out and Thank You!

We would like to thank those organizations and businesses that have supported us with either in-kind or monetary grants..

Imprint

- American Farm Bureau
- Foundation for Agriculture
- Snake River Seed Cooperative
- Idaho Botanical Society



Interested in Donating?

Choose what of our learning topics or projects you would like to support with your donation.

- Gardening
 - Math Outdoor Lab
 - Weather Monitoring and Data Collection Materials
 - Bird and Pond Native Plant Garden
 - Environmental Study and Testing Materials
 - Silviculture Study Materials
 - Reading Books (supplemental and for independent reading)
 - General Use Donation
- Total: _____

Method of Payment

Check

Bill Me

Visa

MasterCard

American Express

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Credit Card # _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____

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