

## Natural Connections Academy, Inc.

5827 W. Conkling Rd.  
Worley, ID 83876

Phone: 208-428-6224 (NCAI)  
Email: [info@naturalconnectionsacademy.net](mailto:info@naturalconnectionsacademy.net)  
Website: [naturalconnectionsacademy.net](http://naturalconnectionsacademy.net)

We are on the Web!  
[www.naturalconnectionsacademy.net](http://www.naturalconnectionsacademy.net)



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 call 208-428-6224

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

## Other ways to help:

We are searching for:

- large rounds of wood to create desks in our outdoor learning area. Rounds need to be 2' high with a diameter of 20".
- Bird bath, bird feeders
- Square patio stones (100)
- Fold up tables (2)
- Chairs
- Seat covers for our shuttle bus
- Looking for commercial building to use for a "base"



May 2022

Volume 1, Issue 2

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.
- Project WET
- IDAH<sub>2</sub>O

Current fundraising total:

\$25,060.24

Amount needed to provide the education to students as envisioned:

\$83,000

Natural Connections Academy, Inc.



## Idaho Gives

Idaho Gives – a program of the Idaho Nonprofit Center and powered by ICCU – is designed to bring the state together, raising money and awareness for Idaho nonprof-

its. Donations can be collected from May 2 - May 5.

Natural Connections Academy will be participating this year and is excited! We are

hoping to reach more like-minded individuals who are interested in helping us collect funds to help with our start-up costs.



## Updates and News:

Our first academic year is only three months away, and boy, are we excited! Especially now that we have found and purchased our shuttle bus! By no means is this a brand-new bus. While it needs some TLC and general maintenance, it will get the job done! Yes, that's right. Now that we have our transportation for the students, we can take them to all of the great places we'll visit! The students can visit Heyburn or McCroskey, we can take them to Stimson Mill and Birds of Prey in St. Maries... there are no boundaries! We do need assistance with one item, and that is with our seats. Because they are a bit worn out, we need someone to sew some seat covers. Know anyone who sews? Let us know so

that we can contact them. Thanks in advance.

We are working on our curriculum, combining all the various resources into a cohesive scope and sequence. A scope and sequence outlines when and what a student will learn. We need to plan when we will be teaching what topics, so that we can schedule speakers, arrange trips to different locations, and order supplies.

Now that the snow has melted (hopefully, I didn't jinx us) we

can start work on the trail that winds through the property of learning location 1 in Worley. We tend to have clay soil here. It becomes slick, slippery, mud sticks to boots, and when it is dry, the dust becomes very fine, making walking or driving over it very dusty and susceptible to erosion very quickly. We have been applying yard waste to the road to increase the amount of biological materials in the soil and to minimize the amount of mud and dust. There are also some parts of the trail that have

**Enrollment OPEN!**  
**Limited Spaces**

Continued on pg 2





## Educational Partner Spotlight : Kootenai-Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District

The Kootenai-Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District is one of 50 Conservation Districts in Idaho. Idaho Soil

**We promote voluntary, non-regulatory, locally led conservation and stewardship of the natural resources in our area**

and Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government but are not state agencies. Conservation Districts are charged with carrying out programs for conservation, use and development of soil, water, and other natural resources.

Conservation Districts are the primary entities to provide assistance to private landowners and land users in the wise

stewardship of Idaho's natural resources. They are catalysts for coordinating and implementing conservation programs, channeling expertise from all levels of government into action at the local level. Programs are non-regulatory; offer science-based technical assistance, provide incentive-based financial programs, and offer informational and educational programs at the local level.

will be built along with some outdoor bathrooms as well as a handwashing station.

A base location for the school is still being sought. This would be the location where we would begin and end our day. Parents would drop off and pick up at this location and travel to our learning locations would begin from here. Inquiries have been made at multiple locations, but we have not been able to secure a place yet. Any leads you can send our way would be appreciated.

With IdahoGives, we will kick off a new fundraising event May 2nd through May 5th. It's an online fundraising event that Idahoans (and everyone else) can take part in to support their favorite non-profit organizations. Please consider helping us achieve our vision of an outdoor school by looking us up and contributing.

### Updates and News continued...

a lot of roots, stems sticking out of them, so we are working to remove those.

The trail also goes through an area that will be used to collect historical data, as it runs through what we believe to be the old homestead. This area will provide us with an opportunity to study several things. For instance, we will do an archaeological dig to collect data and make theories and estimates, we can look at the chemical properties of items and how those substances interact with nature, and we can also talk about recycling. We are working to add amenities to the soil in that trail area as well.

Also, a gentleman from the local native plant society, Calypso Chapter, came to identify the native, introduced, and noxious plants that are found at both learning locations 1 and 2. Among the many interesting

plants we saw were miner's lettuce (which you can eat) and some beautiful wildflowers like the Long-flower Bluebells. We did find some noxious weeds, including Tall Hawkweed, Canadian Thistle, and Tansy. All of this will be an excellent opportunity for students to learn, collect data, and identify local plants to build a specimen collection. We can also take action to remove some of the unwanted plants that we find in our learning sites.

On learning location 1, construction of the pavilion has begun. Corner posts have been placed and cemented; structures to hold the floor have been erected and are awaiting weather conditions to be cemented. Volunteers will assist the learning location landowners with the project, which is expected to be finished by the end of May. Additionally, a warming house

### Six Ways Nature Helps Children Learn BY MING KUO JUNE 7, 2019

#### Nature restores children's attention

Attention is clearly important for learning, but many kids have trouble paying attention in the classroom, whether it be because of distractions, mental fatigue, or ADHD. Luckily, spending time in nature—talking a walk in a park and even having a view of nature out the window—helps restore kids' attention, allowing them to concentrate and perform better on cognitive tests.

#### Nature relieves children's stress

Just like adults, children are less stressed when they have green spaces to retreat to occasionally, helping them to be more resilient. Studies have found that holding a class outdoors one day a week can significantly improve the daily cortisol patterns of students—reflecting less stress—when compared to kids with indoor-only instruction. Also, in a study looking at children in rural environments, those with more nature nearby recovered better from stressful life events in terms of their self-worth and distress.

More next month

### From the Board of Directors...

We all know that we didn't learn to walk by following rules, we learned to walk by crawling, toddling, falling down, and trying again. The same can be said for outdoor education; Wikipedia defines experiential learning as "the process of learning through experience" and, more specifically, "learning through reflection by doing."

As a child, I was lucky to live in a rural area where I could explore, imagine, and experience nature on a daily basis. I have fond memories of playing outdoors; building fairy homes, making mud pies, and just enjoying the sounds and smells of the outside world. As a first-grade teacher in a traditional, brick and mortar school, I val-

ue quality education a great deal. I also believe that many students do not thrive in a traditional setting. Natural Connections Academy offers an outstanding alternative that will benefit these students.

Natural Connections Academy will allow students both self-initiative and self-assessment along with outdoor, hands-on activities which gives them the opportunity to learn in a more natural, cohesive way. Outdoor activities also tap into a child's natural creativity and curiosity, as they offer open-ended opportunities. This allows students to develop skills and generate questions they might have about something they are experiencing.

Students will have the opportunity to experience outdoor learning from a certified educator in the woods of beautiful northern Idaho. By building connections between nature and academics, this non-traditional school will allow students to learn responsibility, accountability, and ownership of their education.

Through these connections, the students will solidify their role in the environment to enable them to become strong, passionate leaders who are environmentally forward thinking. I chose to help in the development of Natural Connections Academy and will continue to fully support the organization as it grows – this school will provide a place for experi-

ential learning – learning that will educate and nurture the next generation in the great outdoors.

Sabrina Ferris



### Shout Out and Thank You!

We would like to thank those donors who have supported us .

- Nicole Barden
- Peter Bihuniak
- Mary Prete Dalbis
- David Handley
- Audrey Hoffmann
- Nancy Leong
- Edmund Leopold
- Michele Miller
- Eric Olson
- Jim and Gayle Prete
- Joe Prete
- Michael Prete
- She'om Rose
- John Saxon
- Debbie Wnukowski
- The Balanced Path

### 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 Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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