



# expEDITION

Winter, 2021

## \$1 Million Dollars Awarded For Worthy Programs

In 2003, the first grant fulfillments totaled \$11,000. Now, fast forward 18 years if you will. The Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation has awarded a total of \$1,083,437 in grant funds to numerous outstanding schools, camps, and environmental centers. This number is incomprehensible, especially considering we have had NO corporate sponsors. All of the money raised to support these incredible endeavors comes directly from personal contributions made by YOU – our remarkable supporters who have displayed ongoing faith in our mission.

This year, the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation received 79 applications for grants totaling \$565,000. The Grant committee met and selected 44 organizations to receive \$155,000. However, the requests were received prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, once the pandemic hit, many schools were forced to close early and the grantees were asked to describe what they would be doing to adjust their programs. The Grant committee knew that if the projects were to go totally virtual, it would have to take a second look at the applications.

In the end and after careful consideration, 19 organizations, mostly local to the Philadelphia area, were awarded \$42,500. You can read the stories of these extraordinary groups in the newsletter.

During these incredibly difficult times, the KSMF will continue to find avenues to be involved in activities and programs that align with Kate's vision, her hopes, and her dreams. It's what our dear Kate would have wanted us to do. The primary focus continues to be underwriting educational pursuits related to outdoor and/or wilderness study, preservation, improvement, expansion, and enhancement.

It is YOU who have kept us strong since the founding of the Foundation in 2002. With you, we have been able to make a difference in the lives of thousands, if not tens of thousands of children. The Svitek Family, Bob Clair, and the Founders of the Foundation thank you from the bottom of their hearts.



# Message

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone is staying safe during this pandemic. I pray we all do our part and work hard to turn this virus around so we can get back to “normal” life.

This year most students had to learn virtually. When the schools had to shut down, most of our camps and outdoor programs went virtual as well. We were very disappointed because bringing the great outdoors to kids is our mission.

COVID-19 caused us to curtail much of our fundraising. We started our year with our Sip and Shop 4 at Evelyn and Arthur that raised \$10,075; our Annual Appeal raised \$37,421; we sold \$725 worth in cards; we raised \$4,668 in contributions; and got a refund of \$175.90 from Amazon Smiles. We raised \$53,065.90 this year. Additionally we received a grant from the Joseph Alexander Foundation for \$2,500. I know I’ve said this in many columns but I just know Kate would be so proud of us for raising so much money and awarding grants to so many wonderful causes that allow kids to experience the great outdoors. Together with your support we get to help make her dreams become a reality.

*Ellen Frank Michael Bob*

Ellen for Frank, Michael and Bob Clair (Kate's Pop-pop)



**CHICAGO VOYAGERS**  
*GUIDING YOUTH ON THEIR JOURNEY*

Support from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation funded our Journey Program. The program engages the same group of youth for a period of 6-9 months. Youth are in groups of nine or less with a 2:1 adult-to-youth ratio. Each Journey Program uses outdoor programming that includes carefully crafted physical and emotional challenges designed to enhance self-esteem and build self-sufficiency. Outdoor activities include things like hiking, mountain biking, and rock climbing. The program culminates in a multi-day long outdoor wilderness trip.

This year, the Journey Program and access to the outdoors was especially vital to the health and well-being of those we serve. COVID-19 is a collective trauma, one that our youth are experiencing deeply. Our programs serve primarily low-income, minority students who have been disproportionately impacted by corona virus. In Cook County, African Americans account for 58% of COVID-19 deaths even though they make up only 23% of the population. Additionally, undocumented families, many of whom are Latinx,



are ineligible for the government-backed financial relief programs available. One of our partners reported that this spring, 57% of those who were tested in their service area,

which is predominantly Black, tested positive for COVID. For our youth who are 87% low-income, 54% Latinx, and 30% African American, COVID-19 stands to be a devastating crisis. They need our support more than ever.

On one of our trips from this summer, youth shared the following reflections:

- One of our youth described leaving their house as playing GTA (the Grand Theft Auto video game), because he has to “watch [his] back constantly.”



- Another youth said that it feels like the only way to stay

safe is to “go to school, work, and take care of your family with a gun on your waist.”

Access to the outdoors; access to a space where they are safe and can let their guard down; and time outside of their homes, which are often cramped and unsafe are critical to the health and wellbeing of those we serve.

Support from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation was absolutely critical this year. This new grant funding allowed us to adapt our programs to meet the current moment of a global pandemic seamlessly. We are grateful for your support of our organization and the many ways in which you’re providing hope and healing to the youth we serve.



No one at NBW could have predicted the global health crisis that we are all currently facing. Central to all the work that we do is the ability to gather and to work side by side. NBW uses staff and volunteer teaching mechanics to help youth make their own bike repairs. This model means that dozens of individuals are touching many tools and working closely with one another in a confined space. It wasn't possible to continue this model while 6+ feet apart.

Much of our youth programming was derailed this spring and summer due to COVID-19. However, our youth programming department adapted quickly and started offering online programming for our youth within the first month of the epidemic.



Our remote programming included a weekly Social Distance Scavenger Hunt incorporating watershed sites and historic sites from our Watershed Trailblazers Curriculums, a weekly mechanics Q&A Session for youth to troubleshoot mechanic issues from home, a biweekly hip-hop Line Dancing class, and an online version of our Leadership and Advanced Mechanics Class.

In June 2020, we were able to adapt some of our existing classes to offer an outdoor version of our programming. This summer we offered 2 sections of a class that is a combination of Ride Club and Earn-A-Bike programming with 17 students graduating. By reducing class sizes, incorporating more rides utilizing watershed trails and sites, and taking our repair stands to a nearby park, we were able to offer this program while still adhering to city safety guidelines.

In FY20, we engaged 165 youth in ride and repair classes and 63 youth learned how to maintain bikes through our Earn-A-Bike program (with another 114 youth that would have graduated from the canceled classes). Youth rode 2,872 miles even with Spring Ride Club being canceled and 18 youth received paid job opportunities.

Additionally, we launched the Bikes for Neighbors program which pairs essential workers and guardians of our youth

graduates with free bikes. We gained a lot of press attention and started to recognize the vast need for bikes that exists. We were gaining new donors and had another potential future paid job opportunity for our youth. Amid a crisis, we struck gold.

Bikes for Neighbors serves our mission of equitable access to bikes and will be folded into our youth programming in a synergistic way that benefits our community, promotes further job readiness opportunities for our youth, and provides bikes to those who want and need them. We have already distributed 82 bikes through the Bikes for Neighbors program and have had 545 requests for bikes so far.

Even though we faced some significant challenges during the grant period, the staff and board of NBW responded agilely and pivoted to adjust for each new challenge ending FY20 without a deficit in the operating budget while not having to cut salaries and still managing to serve our mission and values. This flexibility and adaptability will be the key to weathering the rest of the pandemic and we believe we are poised to do so.

Thank you for your continued support. Together we are keeping kids riding even amid a global crisis!



Our wonderful Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation supporter and dear friend, Mel Ruskin celebrated his 80th birthday in February. In lieu of gifts he asked friends to donate to the Foundation and \$2,571.50 was raised in his honor.



Mel and Lea Ruskin

## Thank You! Thank You!

Once again, the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation received a check in the amount of \$2500 from the Joseph Alexander Foundation. Mr. Alexander's niece, Randi Windheim serves on the board of the Joseph Alexander Foundation and knew Kate when she was growing up.



On June 8, 2020 Adventure Works transitioned back to our outdoor “offices” by offering in-person sessions and group programs outside (versus telehealth only). We had some concerns about young kids being able to keep their masks on and

follow safety protocols but found ourselves more concerned with the impact of social isolation our youth have been experiencing since the spring. Fortunately, we quickly learned that most kids were very cooperative with safety protocols and really enjoyed the freedom of being outdoors. Thanks to your grant support, we provided approximately 30 hours of summer group therapy sessions to children regardless of their ability to pay.

As an outdoor behavioral healthcare organization, Adventure Works focuses on dimensions of mental health as a primary component of every program. By engaging youth on many levels (emotionally, kinestically, physically, behaviorally, cognitively, socially, etc.) the benefits of participation can extend to many aspects of their lives. Our summer programs focused on building pro-social skills (cooperation, communication, sharing, conflict resolution) through adventure therapy, including bushcraft and outdoor games. Each activity is planned with intentionality while

allowing space for spontaneity and openness to whatever the kids might bring to the group that day! For example, one of our local parks has an amphitheatre and the group suggested a talent show to end one of the sessions. A few of the kids weren’t comfortable with being on stage so the group problem-solved and created roles (stage manager, emcee, set design, etc.) that suited the personalities and comfort level of each member. The most wonderful part of this outcome was that it all happened organically due to the cohesiveness of the group and the freedom for them to do their own decision making versus it being led by the staff.



A “survival bracelet” made from paracord.



A “survival bracelet” made from paracord.

Another child showed up with friendship bracelets for the group (the unofficial motto is “friendship always”). Other activities included; shelter building, stream crossings, orienteering, fire building, and building mindfulness through nature. While these experiences are all therapeutic, they also help to fill gaps for children growing up in the world today--environmental stewardship, a passion for the outdoors, and the grit to overcome challenges-- which we believe mirror the values Kate conveyed in her writings. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of these kids and honoring Kate’s memory in such a meaningful way!

Note: Because our children are also in counseling, we do not show faces or identifying information in any photos. We hope you can get a sense of our summer from the pictures below!



A mindfulness activity is looking for faces in nature. What face do you see in the tree?



A participant problem solving about how to cross the stream. She then had to lead others across without getting wet.

## Annual Appeal 2020

When your eye doctor tells you your vision is 20/20 they are telling you your vision is perfect! Unfortunately, the year 2020 has been anything but perfect. Our Annual Appeal 2019 raised \$52,683.25. This year, we raised \$37,421.15. When the pandemic hit, the Foundation decided not to send out a second ask letter. We also cancelled our Non-Event Event. We realized because we are a grass roots organization, many of our supporters were hit hard financially and were unable to support us as they had in the past. We used all of the funds raised to fund this year’s grants. We hope to be able to return to our aggressive style of fundraising next year.



# The College Settlement of Philadelphia

600 WITMER ROAD • HOESHAM, PENNSYLVANIA 19044

*To prepare young people to make a positive impact on the world.*

**A**s I'm sure you are aware, we were unable to hold summer camp this year and all of our Outdoor School field trips were cancelled due to following the safety protocols of observing the quarantine. In spite of the challenges, we were able to adapt our program model and offer families in need essential resources and opportunities to connect with the outdoors here at our 235 acre camp.

Our success this year is based on our history. This is not the first time that College Settlement has played an important role during a pandemic. During the 1918 Spanish Flu, College Settlement went out to the families and provided child care, meals, laundry and cleaning services to help people get back on their feet. Now in 2020, College Settlement has re-focused on its original mission and has launched several initiatives in order to stay relevant and serve the community.



Since we were unable to host summer camp, we launched our Campfire Channel which was a free on-line program that allowed campers and families to watch videos that included camp songs, guest appearances from international staff, various environmental lessons as well as arts and crafts. We also offered an interactive program that allowed campers to connect virtually.

As the school year approached and we learned that many families would be keeping their young students at home to learn online we decided to open, for the first time in our history, an Academic Engagement Camp to assist children of essential

employees with their virtual learning. We are offering a safe, monitored place for children to do their schoolwork allowing parents to go to their jobs secure that their children are taken care of. Students have their own workspace in our open air Day Camp Building which has 8 garage doors, 12 windows and ceiling fans to allow fresh air to flow throughout the building. Our kid-friendly staff provides brain breaks, recess and lunch outdoors, and provide the much needed social and emotional support which children have missed due to COVID-19. We adhere to CDC Guidelines for all staff and participants and hold daily health check-ins. The program is for students in grades 2- 5 and, as always, financial assistance is available for those that need it.



Finally, over the course of the Summer and now into the Fall, we have carefully opened the camp and are serving the surrounding community by offering opportunities to small family groups to participate in on-site camp programs. Options include 2-hour and 4-hour family experiences as well as 2-day/1-night and 3-day/2-night experiences. It is our hope that we will meet new families from our community that would like to experience College Settlement for the first time by taking advantage of these on-site opportunities. We also hope that, in the spirit of our mission, underserved families from the greater Philadelphia region will sign up for these experiences, too.

Once again, thank you for the ongoing support you have provided College Settlement over the years. Your generosity is appreciated and our programs wouldn't be successful without you!

## Chipping Hill Micro Farms

Helping children learn healthy eating habits

**T**his year, because of the pandemic, Chipping Hill Micro Farms founder, Howard Brosius, was not able to work with the children hands on at the Day Care Centers in his program. In the past, he has built raised bed vegetable gardens at the schools. This year a 5 foot by 11 foot flat bed trailer and 30 supermarket baskets were filled with potting soil and 15 different vegetables were planted at the Johnson Child Care Center in Germantown.



He worked virtually with the lead teacher and 65 African American children aged four to ten teaching them how to water, weed and harvest the vegetables that were planted. The vegetables were either cooked or served raw to the kids for their lunches. The children spent one hour a day working on their gardens.





Thank you to the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation for their generous support giving the opportunity for 48 children to attend summers camps in the summer of 2020. What a year! Due to Covid 19 Lacawac Sanctuary had to make many changes in order to safely conduct its summer camps 2020. After much consideration and planning Lacawac revamped our day camp

The summer of 2020 was like no other! We were fortunate enough to be able to get all safety protocols in place in time to run our Nature Day Camp.

Starting one week later, we still hosted 120 local children in grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades, (we did not hold half day camp for 4 and 5 year olds). Camp was limited to 35 children per week, when we are used to seeing 45 to 55 children weekly. The three groups of up to twelve campers and two counselors did not mix with other groups each week; and camp counselors issued pool noodles to help children keep their distance from one another. Following the July 2nd Governor’s order, we required our campers to start wearing masks. We lost some enrollments, but not many, as it was explained that we had many activities planned in which the children did not have to wear their masks.

Those children who attended camp this summer were just happy to be here- outdoors, in a natural space, playing with other kids!

Unfortunately, we had many guest presenters who opted out of presenting at Nature Camp this year, whether due to health concerns, or our multi-program rule – individual group presentations would be conducted for 30 minutes each, in place of one program for all campers in one meeting area .

However, we sought out the guests who were comfortable being here, and could conduct multiple programs, and invited a few for more than one week. And the generosity of Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation enabled us to do this!



Bill Wood, Storyteller visited three times this summer. Twice, with his puppet friends and instruments, Bill shared stories about wildlife and Native American lore with our younger campers. For the 6th and 7th grade campers, he told historical stories and held a teambuilding session.



Critter Connections was new to our camp this year. Mr. Buleza visited with numerous exotic reptiles, and highlighted their native habitats and adaptations for survival. Green Valleys

programs to be able to accommodate as many children as safely as possible. Lacawac changed its onsite day camp program from 8 weeks to 4 weeks and from 16 campers per week to 12 campers per week. During the planning stages for summer camps the pandemic was in full swing and Pennsylvania was under lock down. Lacawac was uncertain if it would even be able to fill registration should summer camps be permitted. As time went on and as the world began to understand the virus better people were looking for safe ways to interact get outside and be active. As a result of this need, Lacawac’s day camps became a popular choice for parents wanting to have their children participate in organized outdoor activities. The campers for this year’s camps ranged from ages 8 to 11 for 4 weeks of modified day camp.



Overall the camps were a great success! Parents were grateful for the opportunity to send their children to a safe and structured outdoor program. The camp included nature based arts and crafts, hikes through Lacawac’s 550-acre property, water and macroinvertebrate sampling, outdoor survival skills, nature journaling, games and many more activities.



So what were some of the favorite activities of the campers? Almost all stated that they loved all the activities each day! Some loved the hikes to the lake and others catching frogs at the pond. Some loved the crafts like making a rain tube! One parent stated, “Our camper loved learning about identifying skulls and can regularly identify whatever we come across in the woods.”

The feedback on our 2020 programming was overwhelming positive. In camp evaluations parents wrote “Our children came home saying they loved camp every day and couldn’t wait to return the following day! Thank you!” Another parent wrote, “Thank you this was a wonderful experience during challenging times.” And another, “Thank you for having camp this year in light of the crazy circumstances. It was truly a bright spot in our summer.”

Because of Lacawac’s summer programming that target and engage today’s youth in diverse outdoor experiences we see an increase in interest in conservation and preservation of open spaces and public lands. The Foundation’s support has provided an opportunity to children to become good Earth stewards and helps Lacawac to shape the next generation of conservation leaders!



Facing a summer unlike any of us had experienced before, we were very grateful to receive the

generous gift from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation. We had initially made the sad and difficult decision to cancel all of our summer programs, including our internships. However, just as we began to see a way to safely welcome small groups to our preserve once more, the kind letter and donation arrived from you!

Your gift allowed us to offer an internship to Sara Robinson, who had been volunteering at Riverbend for the past three years and has demonstrated a keen passion for nature and the work we do. We depend on volunteers to help care for our thirty acre preserve, and it was devastating to lose the tradition spring season of school and corporate groups. However, working with Sara, we were able to make progress.



Of importance, we ran an expanded teen volunteer program for five weeks during the summer. Instead of the typical one morning per week, we welcomed groups of up to five teens, for three mornings a week. These young people worked alongside the Kate Svitek Intern to carry out much needed work on the preserve. As well as working really hard to care for the preserve, it was a chance to connect with people (socially distanced!) and nature after a time of isolation.

Over the spring, especially during the first phase of lock-

down, Riverbend had become a place for all members of our community to come and find respite in nature. Although school programs were canceled, children still came every day to explore and learn with their families. With the opportunity to hire an intern, we were able to work on the trails, continue to care for all the trees we have planted over the years, and ensure that Riverbend remained a healthy, vibrant place to welcome visitors.

We appreciate the work of the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation and thank you for your incredible support of the years, which has had an amazing impact on the lives of so many young people seeking to make a difference in the world.

Sara Robinson: *Since I began volunteering at Riverbend in 2017, I knew I wanted to be a habitat management intern. This opportunity truly could not have come at a better time. After graduating from college at home during the pandemic, I felt understandably stressed. However, through helping maintain trails, remove invasive species, and otherwise make progress on projects that had been halted during the lockdown, I was able to relieve this stress in a productive and rewarding way. Lorna is extremely knowledgeable about the local environment, encourages initiative and developing leadership skills, and is extremely kind and positive. As someone who has been coming to Riverbend since I was a child, it was interesting to see the non-profit operations of Riverbend while continuing to expand my knowledge of the environment. Working as a habitat management intern has not only helped me engage my interests in nature and science but also has helped me grow and get my feet under myself in my post-college life. It has been an amazing experience, and I am genuinely so grateful for this opportunity.*



## Sip and Shop

On February 23, 2020, the 4th Annual Sip and Shop Event took place at Evelyn and Arthur's ladies boutique in Palm Beach Gardens. This year, Shoe Spa, a ladies luxury, comfort shoe store also participated.

Our ladies were dressed from head to toe! Our amazing supporters never let us down and the event raised \$10,075. Evelyn and Arthur presented us with a check for \$8500, Shoe Spa an additional \$900 and donations added an additional \$675. Those who attended had a fun time!



**W**ISE is grateful to the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation for your support of the 2020 Copper River Stewardship Program. We were especially pleased that you were able to offer support even though we had to make big changes to the program because of the Covid19 situation.

The program partners (WISE, Copper River Watershed Project, Prince William Sound Science Center, US Bureau of Land Management, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park) met in April to discuss our options, and quickly decided that the full program, including gathering a cohort of 10 youth and travelling between communities, would not be possible. Instead, we decided to work with two small groups in their local communities for field days, then meet via video conference to compare notes and do full group activities. Some of the applicants decided to participate, while others chose to defer until next summer.

Our research project this season involved studying two species of trout near the northern extent of their habitats, Rainbow Trout in Moose Creek, and Cutthroat Trout on the Copper River Delta.

WISE worked with 4 students from the Copper Basin area for two days of field activities including sampling a stream for juvenile fish, taking habitat observations, and learning about how culverts affect stream dynamics. They also participated in leadership and creative writing activities to gain an understanding of their role as stewards of the watershed. At the other end of the watershed, a team of two Cordova based students were also part of the program.

The students put together slide shows with photos from their adventures, and polished up poetry and art projects. Then we all met via video conference. Teenage shyness quickly disappeared as the students told stories and shared projects. Although the bonding was very different from sharing an extended wilderness adventure, the youth still got the opportunity to see different parts of the watershed, and compare notes with their peers on how they interact with the natural world.

We are thrilled to have figured out a way to hold Copper River Stewardship Program amid all the uncertainty, and continue to invest in the long-term sustainability of this unique experience.



Outfitted in chest waders and masks, Copper River Stewardship Program students and staff spent two days studying Moose Creek, a Copper River Tributary.

**Don't forget to smile!**

We splash through the water,  
 Always looking around.  
 There the streams connect,  
 Eternally moving forward.  
 Rounding a bend,  
 Salmon swim with a purpose.  
 Helping life and nature,  
 Even when it's hard,  
 Don't forget to smile!

-Mia R.

**A Watershed**

Way down south from the  
 Alaskan Range  
 Meandering Tributaries continually change  
 A biome thriving from delta to bay  
 With Rivers and streams leading the way  
 Salmon and trout Swim determined upstream  
 With enemies, Human and not, making a  
 formidable team  
 With words like ecosystem, Estuary, and  
 adventuring, dear  
 There's really no need for hydrophobia here!



A macroinvertebrate study of the stream sediment helped determine the health of the aquatic ecosystem, and elicited some "Wow" moments when we got up-close looks at various tiny critters.



Although this culvert seems huge, we were able to see adverse effects on the hydrology of the creek which in time could hinder passage of fish.



# Grassy Waters Conservancy

Supporting the Everglades in West Palm Beach

Although COVID-19 restrictions in Palm Beach County limited in-person visits with the children attending West Palm Beach school and community camps, a modified summer program was created at Grassy Waters Preserve. The support provided by the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation enabled Grassy Waters Conservancy to fund a college intern, Christina Eure, who helped create both in-person and virtual experiences for the campers. Although interactions with the campers differed from previous years, the goals were the same:

to enable the staff of Grassy Waters Preserve to engage the campers so that they could experience and appreciate the natural environment of the Everglades and recognize that the natural

environment is all around them and needs to be protected. Forty-three children, grades K- 8, from four school and community camps participated. While only one camp allowed in-person pre and post visits, much of the interaction with the campers in the other 3 camps involved live streaming virtual visits. Working with staff at Grassy Waters Preserve, Christina developed and delivered virtual interactive videos for the campers. As in the past, this year's program involved:

- A pre-visit that brought the Everglades and scientific concepts to the campers by guiding them through an Everglades animal video and a Project Wild, Adaptation Artistry,

- Through a real-time live streaming zoom session using a tablet at the preserve, campers were taken through a virtual field trip involving a discussion of the Everglades marshes, swamps and their corresponding animals and plants. At the conclusion of this ‘trip’ one student shouted, “that was awesome” .

- And a post-visit where Christina led a live streaming zoom session for K-5 campers involving an arts and crafts activity about Everglades animals and what they needed to survive and for middle school age campers a modified version of Project Learning Tree's Life on the Edge focusing on Everglades Endangered Species & how they could help. Following the lesson, the campers created posters about the animals and how people can help them



survive. For her legacy project, Christina developed ~virtual resources that have been shared with the county and can be used by teachers, camp counselors, and home-schooled children to enhance their understanding of the scientific concepts taught during field trips to the Preserve.

For her Testimonial Christina Eure wrote: *“Before this internship, I was undecided about my course of study and future career, but this summer has solidified my interest in environmental studies and introduced an interest in education. My favorite part was teaching the campers all the new Everglades facts I learned while at the Preserve. Getting to wade into the marsh to actually touch the Everglades animals, plants and soil and share this experience with the campers through a virtual field trips was really special.”*





**H**ow do we get campers excited about nature when we are holding camp virtually? This was the question that I spent a significant amount of time pondering this spring. What I have come to realize over the last month is that if you give kids the tools

to explore nature, they will take those tools, run with them and get really creative in finding the nature in their own backyards. The continued support provided by the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation has allowed us to open the eyes of our campers to the beauty of the natural world and help them develop lifelong connections to it.

Our activities this summer looked a little different than usual, but all focused on the theme of nature at home. Often times children think that you have to go out for a hike, go to the forest or a mountain to be in nature. This summer I wanted to show campers they could experience nature even when at home.

Our first activity was an Attaway favorite: seed planting. It was wonderful to hear how campers watched the pre-recorded instructional video and then went to plant their seeds. In the follow up live session, campers shared about their favorite fruits and veggies and we talked about where food comes from. Through this activity, campers were able to see that they could grow their own food right at home. Campers were also charged with watering their plants each day (a task usually done by our counselors in training). Campers felt a level of responsibility for their plants and truly wanted the plants to grow and thrive. A camper commented that he “loves growing plants because he gets an excited and loving feeling” when he sees them grow.



During the second week, campers took part in a nature bingo scavenger hunt. This was an opportunity to really show campers that nature is all around them. From finding items outside that were their favorite colors to observing the clouds or watching a bird, campers immersed themselves in the nature of their own backyards.



The theme of our last week of camp is coping. For this nature activity, the campers learned about camouflage. We talked about how camouflage is a way that organisms cope and how sometimes we wished we could camouflage ourselves.

This summer was definitely different than any we have had in the past. The fact that keeping the nature program as part of our virtual camp was a priority speaks to the positive impact the nature program has had on the campers over the years. The financial support provided by the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation has truly allowed this program to flourish and the campers are reaping the benefits. By showing campers how to feel comfortable in nature and by nurturing their curiosity in it, we are helping them become stewards of the Earth. Thank you so much!



**T**he Schuylkill Center was awarded a grant of \$1,000 from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation for the purpose of purchasing equipment to aid in inspiring new connections to nature through outdoor activities not typically available to Philadelphia residents.

With these funds, the Schuylkill Center purchased three Kelty Discovery 4 3-season camping tents and four Nikon Prostaff 3S 8 x 42 Binoculars.

Over the last several months, we’ve collectively begun to come to terms with the relative safety of socially-distanced outdoor activity. Sales of outdoor gear have skyrocketed. Nature is free, but outdoor gear can be expensive, even in the best of times. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, many formerly social activities have been reduced to individual or family pursuits, leaving would-be participants without access to the people and communities that could otherwise welcome them. Yet, more than ever, families need connection to nature learning and play.

We understand that everyone is facing uncertainty during the coronavirus pandemic. Yet, the mission to connect people with nature matters more than ever. Thanks to the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation, the Schuylkill Center was able to purchase equipment to supplement existing gear and expand our efforts to inspire new connections to nature with our community. This equipment will increase the number of safe and positive outdoor experiences available at the Schuylkill Center during all four seasons.



## FRIENDLY REMINDER

Over the past fifteen years the Foundation has earned \$28,000 in card sales. From 2005 thru 2015 we averaged \$2,163 per year! The past five years we have averaged only \$645 in sales.

So, I am asking you, our valued supporters to think of the Foundation when you want to honor or memorialize someone. Just go to the website for a form or email Ellen at [esvitek@comcast.net](mailto:esvitek@comcast.net) and let her know who the card goes to and for what reason. Cards are only \$10 each and the foundation makes \$9.45 per card! Let’s support the Foundation instead of your favorite card shop!



**T**FKDM successfully ran its Learn to Earn (LtE) program for 2020 thanks to the support of the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation and other funders. TFKDM worked with partners such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), Groundwork Denver,

and others to bring our rigorous STEM curriculum to students that these groups work with long-term. We served 60 youth in 2020. Each class enjoyed twelve hours of instruction broken into six sessions.

Over the course of the program, youth received training and hands-on practice in basic bike maintenance skills and safe bike riding skills. Our highly-trained instructors used our curriculum framework to help participants link the basics of bicycles to key STEM ideas like Systems, Simple Machines, Energy, Force, and Friction. The bikes helped our instructors bring these abstract concepts to life for the youth in a practical and fun way.



The participants walked away from the program with more than just a deeper understanding of bike safety and maintenance, or even a new interest in STEM concepts. They each earned a refurbished, geared bicycle of their own, a bike helmet, a bike lock, replacement tube, bike chain lubricant and two tire levers. In the low-income communities with which we work, owning a bike can be a rarity. The youth value having something that belongs to them alone. Furthermore, a bike represents the freedom to move around the city independently. These youth are now able to get where they want to go in a way that improves their mental and physical health.



COVID-19 global pandemic obviously threw a wrench into our programming. While we ceased programming for several months in order to keep students and staff safe, we have since established several safety policies and procedures to maintain social distancing and best cleaning practices. Fortunately our programming involves quite a bit of outdoor environmental learning. The smaller classes enable us to spend more time with each student and manage any disruptive behavioral issues before they escalate.

Additionally, we have hired Trung Nguyen as our Program Manager who oversees the Learn to Earn program. Trung has 20 years of outdoor education experience working with youth.



**T**he year of the COVID-19 pandemic inspired Camp Rainbow to experiment programmatically. We held our life skills development and outdoor recreation program for financially, emotionally, and socially disadvantaged youth ages 6-14 online this summer through YouTube videos and Zoom sessions. Initially, over 60 kids indicated they were interested in participating, but when we actually began providing videos and the opportunity to interact no more than half a dozen children participated in each age group.

The weekly videos encouraged live participation and back and forth discussion. Kids developed their imaginations, communication, socialization, and teamwork and leadership skills. All ages shared their thoughts and listened to others as they discussed bullying, peer pressure, how to excel at school, reading for fun, good communication, making friends, and how to be safe, live with the Corona virus, and have fun too.



Camp Rainbow had once-a-week themed sessions for the 7-9 year olds, 10-12 year olds and 13-14 year olds.

**July 28-31 Virtual Field Trip:** The campers explored outer space - what it would feel like to be there, how to survive, and environmental sustainability here on earth.

**August 3-7 Dance Party:** Campers took part in a dance party. Counselors demonstrated dance moves and campers practiced the dance then innovated their own dance moves.

**August 10-14 Vacation Day:** Counselors dressed like they were on vacation. Campers had fun laughing at their goofy outfits. The campers were asked to use their imaginations to decide and describe where they would want to go, why and with whom.



**August 17-21 Talent Show:** Campers danced, sang, drew pictures and played instruments for one another. They found talents they never knew they had. This activity allowed participants to develop perspective and empathy. Kids were challenged to understand nervousness, fear and shyness, to show respect and support for each other.





Peak 7 Adventures is a faith-based 501 (c)3 non-profit providing life-changing outdoor adventures to under-resourced young people across the

Pacific Northwest. We believe every young person should have experiences in the outdoors that help them realize a greater potential, and to grow spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally regardless of socio-economic standing.

Studies have shown that youth benefit deeply from spending time in creation and often experience their first moment of spirituality in nature. However, for many youth – especially those in low-income and minority populations – the cost of high adventure trips and lack of experience is prohibitive to their involvement. Peak 7 seeks to serve those youth who would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience adventure.



We accomplish this goal through rafting, kayaking, hiking, mountaineering, and camping. Every year through our adventure trips, we introduce thousands of young people not only to the outdoors, but to the hope of a brighter future. When daunting physical challenges are undertaken in a supportive, trustworthy environment, young people begin questioning their perceived limits. By the time fears of rapids, lack of trust in ropes, or tired legs have set in, emotional and spiritual barriers have been broken down and their hearts are open to hearing a greater message of truth and love.

**Reese Smith, Backpacking Trip Participant:** “I was homeless for about five months in Seattle, and the entire time I kept telling myself it was a mountain I was climbing and that I may not be able to see the top, but I’ll get there. There would be times where I thought I was getting a home and I didn’t and it reminded me of summiting El Dorado. You’re on a slope of snow and you think you’re almost at the top, but you’d get over it and see two more slopes. I kept reminding myself to keep going and keep pushing, and that even though it hurts, the views are beautiful and you grow stronger with every step. My favorite memory was while backpacking on the beach. The sun was setting and I was running free in the ocean without a care in the world. At that moment, I told myself I loved myself for the first time in a very long time. It was a turning point in accepting myself. What I really hope Peak 7 does for other youth is to point them in a better direction, because that’s what it did for me. It doesn’t take much to change someone’s life—bringing someone on a trip and into nature helps them learn how to love strangers and themselves.”



**Haley Suskin, Summer Guide:** (quotes from a rafting trip with Daybreak Youth Services) “During the facilitation game at the beginning of the trip, I asked the girls what they wanted to gain from this rafting trip. One girl responded with: ‘I want to

gain experience, knowledge, and relationships from this trip.’ I asked her at the end if she had achieved those and she said “yes!” Now she has an experience to tell others about!” “I asked the girls what their favorite and least favorite things about the outdoors were. Most of the girls said bugs were by far their least favorite thing, and one girl said what she loves about the outdoors is that it ‘brings people together.’” “Another quote that I offhandedly heard from a girl was the following : ‘Everyone views rehab as such a bad thing ... but we get to go whitewater rafting!’” “A girl said that she never lets herself have fun ... but today she let herself have fun.”

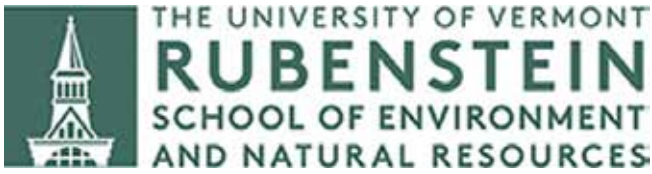


Lisa Fantini, director of Robbins Park said, “I can’t thank you enough for the continuous support of the students at Robbins Park Environmental Education Center! I typically see over 2,700 students from the Upper Dublin and Wissahickon school

districts twice a year to get their hands dirty with outdoor environmental education. We gather data, enjoy nature and problem solve environmental problems.”

In October 2019, Robbins Park received trout eggs from the PA Fish and Game Commission in partnership with Trout Unlimited. The goal was to promote cold water fish populations and stocking waterways, while connecting to environmental science curriculum such as food chains, pollution, pests and water quality. Two hundred fish were released into the Loch Alsh Reservoir. Students were able to watch the fish grow and develop via YouTube once school was closed due to Covid 19. Funds for the project came from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation and the Stoney Creek Anglers Club.





To The Svitek Family:

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the financial support you gave me this summer which allowed me to pursue an internship with the Youthbuild program at ReSOURCE. Between taking on this unpaid internship as my senior capstone and the difficulty of making plans in the midst of a pandemic, I was in a bit of a

financial bind coming into the summer. Your generosity gave me some much-needed stability, so for that I thank you.

That stability provided great rewards. While my internship with Youthbuild was not conventional by any means, I still got the chance to work remotely (and in-person a bit this fall) with a progressive, exciting non-profit. The program is designed to help young people graduate high school on a more individual, alternative track, while also training them in basic construction, helping them write resumes, and getting them ready to enter the world with a diverse set of professional and life skills.

I assisted instructors in several classes, tutored, and worked alongside the Youthbuild crew this fall on jobsites. I feel this was the first time I've ever properly taught, and I'm grateful to have gained some basic teaching skills. But above all, getting to know a group of teenagers and staff from many different backgrounds and with many different skills and struggles was a reward in itself, especially amidst the social isolation we all experienced earlier this year.

Once again, I thank you for your tremendous generosity, and hope that my experience helps to preserve the legacy left by your daughter, Kate.

*Erik Faber*

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**Thank you for your continued support!**

The summer of 2020 was full of firsts for the Sauvie Island Center's summer camp program. Camp was held at our new location on Topaz Farm. Our summer staff included six college students who received both credit and a stipend. And of course, everyone wore masks and practiced social distancing. But in many ways, camp was the same. Each day campers arrived on the farm, eager to take in the beautiful, wide open space of the farm and learn about healthy soil and pollinators.

In 2020 we offered two weeks (five days/week) camp sessions. Thanks to funding from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation, we were able to offer half of our 40 summer camp spots as scholarships (free) to children from families whose income falls below the national threshold for poverty. With the March of 2020 closure of Oregon schools, families were desperate to find opportunities for children to get out of the house, expend some energy and learn a little while they were at it. Lower income families were hit hardest. Some parents struggled with finding childcare while they continued their work in service industry jobs. Others lost jobs and could not afford camp registration fees.

Many of campers who received scholarships also attend the Title I schools that we serve at no charge during the school year. Twins Erykah and Christopher both received full camp scholarships and participated in no-fee field trips to the Sauvie Island Center in the fall of 2019.



Their mother Tracee came along on the field trip as a parent chaperone. Tracee said that the opportunity for her children to spend time learning on the farm multiple times throughout the year really ignited their interest in both the natural world and fresh vegetables.

Each day at camp was a new adventure as children explored the five different parts of the Sauvie Island Center's five-part curriculum. On Monday campers spent time on the farm exploring the connection between Wildlife and the Food Web. Activities included a scavenger hunt for signs of wildlife such as nests, bones, animal scat or partially consumed plants. Tuesday was dedicated to the study of Plant Parts. Campers visited farm rows to identify different parts of plants and their associated functions. Wednesdays we studied the cyclical nature of farming, following the process of growing food from Seed to Harvest. Much of this day is spent in the Grow Lunch Garden planting, harvesting and tending to the campers' own farm row. This year campers planted several kinds of herbs, and root vegetables like radishes and parsnips that would continue to produce into fall. Thursday was the day to learn about Healthy Soil. In the Worm Bin Scavenger Hunt campers use magnifying glasses to examine decomposers found in composts. Friday was dedicated to our hard-working friends of the farm, pollinators.

**Internship Program:** Our new space at Topaz Farm provides learning opportunities for students of all ages. In lieu of hiring camp counselors in 2020 we created an internship program. We offered six positions, with stipends, to college students interested in environmental and/or general education, and farming.

**Impact of COVID-19:** With the COVID-19 pandemic came very strict guidelines from the Oregon Health Authority for all camp providers. We were limited to 20 campers per week, and campers were organized in to 2 "stable co-horts of 10 children". We had quite a bit of work to do in reworking curriculum to remove food production, eliminate close contact activities and provide each camper with their own set of camp materials to avoid contact transfer of the virus.



## Getting To Know Kate

*Those who had the fortune to meet Kate all knew what a vivacious and unique person she was. Not only did her sparkling personality shine through, but her intelligence and understanding of her world were immediately evident. This section of the newsletter is being included to give those who did and didn't get to meet her a better understanding of what she stood for and the mark she had made on her world in the short time she lived.*

Kate and I were in the same grade at GA, but ran in different circles, so it wasn't until the summer between our freshman and sophomore years in college that we got to know each other, as we were co-counselors of the "K-troop" (10 year old girls) at the GA summer camp. Kate and I, having spent so much time passing each other in the halls, were both surprised, I think, at how much we had in common and what a great time we had working with each other and the kids. We both were at college in Vermont, both frequented the same spots in Burlington, both focused on environmental majors. We played off each other well with the kids and made quite a team, making them friendship necklaces that were all the style that year (I still have the one Kate made for me) in our down time.

We had one camper who didn't quite fit in with the rest of the kids in our troop. She was smaller, not very good at sports, one of the very few African-American campers, and (most distressing to her) the only kid in our troop who couldn't swim. She was terrified to even put her head under the water. Kate decided she was going to help her get past that fear, and began bringing her bathing suit and jumping in with the kids at pool time - probably the only counselor to do so (pool time was our one chance to be away from the kids). She was consistent, going in every day and working with the camper.

The final day of camp, we invited this girl's grandfather to come to the pool (he worked at the school). With everyone standing by and cheering (especially Kate), our camper not only swam, but jumped off the diving board. I've never seen a smile on a little girl's face since that was quite as bright. It was like a scene out of a movie that is too precious to be true, and I've never forgotten it. I'm sure that little girl never did either. Kate's dedication to her was simply inspiring.

*Katie Bender Commons  
January 18, 2008*



# Wissahickon

## CHARTER SCHOOL

Wissahickon Charter School is extremely grateful for the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation's generous gift of \$11,500 to support Environmental Education at our school. The Foundation's friendship and support over the years have been so appreciated and have helped provide years of environmental education and exploration to our Wissahickon students. Thank you for helping us continue to provide a robust and holistic model of education for our students during a time of increased need due to the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Our Population & Educational Model

Founded in 2002, Wissahickon Charter School

is a K-8 public charter school with two campuses in Northwest Philadelphia. WCS is committed to an equitable, holistic model and a rich educational experience for ALL students. Among our nearly 1,000 students: 98% represent minority populations, 25% have special needs, and 100% are eligible for free lunch. We have students from 34 Philadelphia zip codes. We seek to serve the "whole child," making WCS a place where students feel seen and supported emotionally as well as academically. Our work is guided by three essential elements:

**1) Environmental focus:** At Wissahickon, we provide a Sustainable Environmental Curriculum, and environmental themes are woven into all areas of school life. Students explore the natural world through hands-on experiences in weekly Discovery Classes, and participate in yearly service learning projects and myriad field trips through our Outdoor Program. Our student-written motto is, "We take care of the Earth that takes care of us."

**2) Social-emotional curriculum:** In addition to caring for the Earth, we also want to care for the people on it: Our students receive support from a full-time guidance counselor, a dean of culture, and a behavioral support team at each campus; Students start each day - whether in-person or remote - with a Morning Meeting, a "soft landing" to the day where students commune to share, play games, and reflect. Wissahickon students also engage in a robust social justice curriculum, emphasizing identity, inequity, and the actions we can all take to create fair and just communities.

**3) Family involvement:** At every level of our organization, we emphasize parents as true partners in the learning experiences of their children. Centering and valuing our students' lived experiences are critical to how we approach our work.



We have worked extremely hard to ensure that students receive the same quality of education they would receive during a typical school year. This means that ALL Wissahickon classes and supports will still take place despite our virtual status. All of the programming at the heart of our mission – art, literacy supports, extracurriculars, and Environmental Education especially – are still happening. Here are some of the ways we will practice environmental education at Wissahickon this year:



- Discovery Class, one of the cornerstones of our school's Sustainable Environmental Curriculum, is still taking place over Zoom. Discovery is a weekly class focused on nature and the environment led by an Environmental Educator. While the topic and theme of Discovery Class are always tied to the environment, students find themselves doing math, reading, writing, social science, and science in this special class.
- At both of our campuses, WCS is partnering with Outward Bound to provide virtual team-building and character development workshops for middle-grade students. These skills and experiences are typically introduced as part of outdoor day-long and overnight camping trips that were cancelled this fall due to the pandemic. Outward Bound has adapted their in-person curriculum into highly interactive virtual experiences for students, ensuring that WCS students don't miss out on these experiences this year.
- Teachers are utilizing technology to ensure Discovery class remains interactive, engaging, and fun- just as it was in the classroom. For example, at our Femhill Campus, Eighth Graders have used Nearpod, an interactive online learning platform, to power their lessons. In a lesson on Environmental Racism students could use Nearpod's collaboration board to define terms like "environmental problems" and "racism" with their classmates. Later, using a Nearpod quiz, they were asked to identify which scenarios are examples of racism and which are examples of environmental problems.
- At our Femhill Campus, physical education teacher Coach B has organized family hikes in Wissahickon Park so that students can get out, move their bodies, breathe some fresh air, and spend time with their classmates.
- Our Awbury Campus is offering regular "Specials in the Park" at Awbury Arboretum. During these outdoor, in-person days, students participate in Discovery class as well as Art, PE, and other activities live and in-person with their school friends. Students who are unable to attend these "specials" in person are still offered virtual versions of these classes and experiences.

THANK YOU! Wissahickon Charter School is continually grateful to the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation for providing necessary funds to continue the school's unique educational model. We look forward to strengthening our work next school year and beyond as we continue to prioritize environmental education in our curriculum.



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