



Children
& Nature
Network



2024
ANNUAL
REPORT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR CHILDREN AND NATURE CHAMPIONS,

Throughout 2024, we made steady and significant progress toward our goal of increasing *equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play in 100 communities*.

We advanced nature-based policies and programs in the systems that impact children's lives, including schools, cities, early child care sites, family services and more. And we harnessed the transformative power of nature by collaborating with strategic partners and funders – and a global movement of children and nature leaders. Here are a few highlights from 2024:

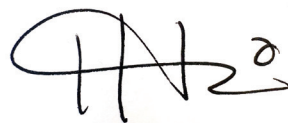
- We supported nature-based initiatives in **73 U.S. Nature Everywhere Communities** (representing a total population of more than **52 million people**). In addition to providing technical assistance and funding, we facilitated cross-sector collaborations that are delivering a “triple-bottom line” for communities: equitable access to nature; climate resilience; and improved education and health outcomes for children.
- **We granted and awarded a combined total of \$1.5 million** through catalytic grants, planning grants, Youth Outdoor Equity Leadership mini-grants and the annual Richard Louv Prize for Innovation in Nature Connection.
- 2024 marked **a decade of investing in communities** and for that time period, every dollar we've awarded in grants has leveraged, on average, an additional five dollars – and often more.

With your continued support, we can create a greener future where all children grow up thriving through deep, daily connections with the natural world.

With gratitude,



Sarah Milligan-Toffler
President & CEO,
Children & Nature Network



Hanaa Hamdi, PhD
Board Chair,
Children & Nature Network

HOW WE WORK

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

We work to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play by **fostering the belief** that nature is essential for healthy development; **growing an inclusive global movement** of nature connection advocates; and **changing the big systems** that impact children's daily lives.

FOSTER BELIEF

that a connection to nature is critical for children's healthy development.

GROW THE MOVEMENT

of diverse, cross-sector, multigenerational children and nature leaders.

CHANGE CORE SYSTEMS

that impact nature connection in children's daily lives.

OUTCOME:

Equitable access to nature so that children—and the natural world—can thrive.

CHANGING CORE SYSTEMS



PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

In 2024, collective efforts drove measurable change. These successes highlight what's possible when partners unite to promote equitable access to the outdoors.



NATURE-BASED PROGRAMMING IN MICHIGAN

With funding from the Kresge Foundation – and in partnership with over 100 organizations – we helped launch the Michigan Children & Nature Coalition with the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative to increase access to nature-based programming. This multi-year initiative will increase funding and supportive state-level policies in schools and communities across Michigan. It will also increase statewide collaboration on critical programs and infrastructure that support youth access to nature, such as green schoolyards, PreK-12 teaching and learning pathways, early childhood learning, nature-based play, outdoor recreation, and other formal and informal learning opportunities.

“The children of our state deserve well-supported, equitable and relevant pathways to benefit from engaging with nature throughout childhood.”

— CALEB CARLTON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GREAT LAKES
STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE



GREEN SCHOOLYARDS IN FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

Green Schoolyards Flagstaff is a coalition of local nonprofits, the City of Flagstaff and Flagstaff Unified School District. We provided three years of technical assistance and planning funds to the coalition, which transformed Flagstaff’s Killip Elementary Schoolyard into a stormwater detention basin that now manages millions of gallons of stormwater. Killip Elementary also established a Youth Therapeutic Horticulture Wellness Program, pollinator garden and a composting system for school food scraps. In May 2024, Flagstaff Mayor Becky Daggett presented this work at a [Congressional briefing hosted by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute](#), which highlighted nature-based solutions for small- and medium-sized cities.

NATURE-CONNECTION POLICY IN NEVADA

We provided casemaking and advocacy support to the Nevada Outdoor Education Advisory Working Group to help advance actionable recommendations for expanding outdoor education opportunities across the state. These statewide policy recommendations [were published in a report](#) to the Nevada State Legislature in late 2024 – and included in the [Youth Outdoor Policy Playbook](#), which highlights local, regional and state policy initiatives that can serve as models for the children and nature movement.





SUPPORTING LOCAL LEADERSHIP AT CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

We deepened our partnership with Casey Family Programs (CFP) by launching the CFP Leadership Cohort – a group of 20 leaders from CFP field offices across the U.S. who will help shape a new “Nature as Healer” initiative. These leaders will guide CFP field offices in implementing nature-based therapeutic practices in everyday interactions with children and families.

We also supported professional development for CFP staff with open forums, cohort calls and themed workshops – and facilitated engagement with inspiring partners such as [NatureQuant](#), [Brave Trails](#) and [OutGrown](#). These efforts support rich learning environments, offer actionable tools and expand opportunities for nature connection across Casey Family Programs.

CENTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD NATURE CONNECTION IN D.C.

In partnership with the National League of Cities and other key partners, we launched the **Outdoor and Nature-Based Early Care and Education Collaborative** by convening organizations and agencies working in early childhood for a policy roundtable in Washington, D.C. Attendees discussed how to advance nature-based care and education through public policy, funding and development of a national action agenda. [Read more.](#)



Photo courtesy of San Francisco Children & Nature.

NATURE EVERYWHERE COMMUNITIES LEAD LOCAL TRANSFORMATION

Our [Nature Everywhere Communities](#) initiative – a partnership between the Children & Nature Network, National League of Cities and KABOOM! – is designed to build local programs, policies and infrastructure that advance equitable, sustainable access to nature. In 2024, we witnessed the impact of long standing investments and the excitement of new beginnings.



Photo courtesy of San Francisco Children & Nature.

A TEN-YEAR JOURNEY IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

In 2014, San Francisco was selected as one of seven cities to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative, now called Nature Everywhere Communities. Over the course of three years, we provided leadership, technical support and seed funding to build a robust San Francisco Children & Nature team. A decade later, San Francisco Children & Nature supports a network of more than 40 organizations. They have raised millions in public and private funds to advance children and nature strategies – and have supported the creation of nature play areas in 21 child care centers and family child care homes in low-income neighborhoods, as well as in 12 public parks.

“This is among the most impactful programs in my 15-year tenure as General Manager of San Francisco Recreation and Parks. We could not have done this without the initial guidance and support of the Children & Nature Network, the ongoing access to their team of experts and the growing network of peers in other cities who are working to increase access to nature for kids.”

— PHIL GINSBURG

VISION LABS SPARK NEW MOMENTUM

We hosted two Nature Everywhere Communities Vision Labs to help community teams from across the U.S. advance their nature connection work. The first vision lab, held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was attended by six community teams who explored how to align climate resilience and nature-connection strategies – particularly through green schoolyards and early childhood education. The second vision lab was held in conjunction with the Nature Everywhere Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. Five Cities Connecting Children to Nature teams gathered to build on past successes with renewed commitment and updated tools.



INTEGRATING NATURE AND HEALTH IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

In Jacksonville, Florida, we supported [Project One Health JAX](#) efforts to improve children's well-being and the environment in the city's urban core. Funded by the Winston Family Foundation, the initiative will build on the work of local organizations

by fostering community engagement, facilitating neighborhood-driven action plans, and connecting residents to the city's Emerald Trail – a planned 30-mile network of greenways, parks and trails.



Libraries and parks: A nature-smart partnership

In cities across the U.S., strong partnerships between “Nature-Smart Libraries” and parks departments help kids connect to nature.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo courtesy of Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation.



Community Spotlight: Prescribe Outside

Learn more about Prescribe Outside, a Nature Everywhere Community working with physicians and families to improve the health of Philadelphia children.

[READ MORE](#)



A history of collaboration in Madison brings nature everywhere children live, learn and play

The collaborative Nature Everywhere Community team in Madison, Wisconsin, unites members from municipal government, local nonprofits and Olbrich Botanical Gardens.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo by Focal Flame Photography/courtesy of Destination Madison.



Telling the story of change: A look at Nature Everywhere Communities in 2024

These numbers and stories illustrate the efforts of Nature Everywhere Communities across the U.S. to make systemic changes in nature access.

[READ MORE](#)

CHANGING CORE SYSTEMS IN 2024, BY THE NUMBERS:

\$765,000

In seed grants provided to **20** Nature Everywhere Communities.

5:1

For every \$1 in grants received, Nature Everywhere Communities have leveraged, on average, an additional \$5 – and often more – over the past decade.

73

Total communities participated in the Nature Everywhere Communities initiative.

25

Nature Everywhere Community teams received direct technical assistance; all **73** communities had access to our Peer Learning Network, Resource Hub and research.

10

Proven nature connection strategies advanced in Nature Everywhere Communities, ranging from green schoolyards to early childhood nature connection to Nature Smart Libraries.

140%

Increase in local news coverage for Nature Everywhere Communities over 2023, raising awareness and making the case for systems level change.

FOSTERING BELIEF



MAKING THE CASE FOR NATURE

A growing body of research demonstrates that time in nature makes kids healthier, happier, smarter and better stewards of the environment. Around the world, leaders are using this knowledge to improve the well-being of future generations. In 2024, we were honored to share their stories, develop evidence-based resources and curate research to champion equitable access to nature.



ACTIVATING THE EVIDENCE

Our research team continued to promote the latest research about nature connection in our monthly [Research Digest](#) and free [Research Library](#) – which now holds more than 1,500 peer-reviewed studies. In late 2024, we also launched a [Benefits of Nature Toolkit](#), which has since been visited nearly 4,000 times. With curated talking points, infographics and evidence-based content, the toolkit helps organizations and individuals make the case for equitable access to nature.

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF GREEN SCHOOLYARDS

We commissioned an independent study assessing the economic impact of greening schoolyards, resulting in a report titled, "[How Green Schoolyards Create Economic Value](#)." The report, authored by former Federal Reserve economist Rob Grunewald, makes a compelling case, suggesting that **for every \$1 invested in green schoolyards, communities see more than \$3 in return**. These findings are being shared with cross-sector leaders to demonstrate how green schoolyards can provide improved outcomes in education, community health and climate resilience. [Read more.](#)

How Green Schoolyards Create Economic Value

Rob Grunewald, Economics and Public Policy Consultant



Research Digest: Nature mentors and role models

Learn how parents and teachers are important role models in connecting children with nature to promote their environmental stewardship and ease their eco-anxiety.

[READ MORE](#)



Research Digest: Nature and resilience

Read the latest research on nature as a promoter of resilience in vulnerable children and youth.

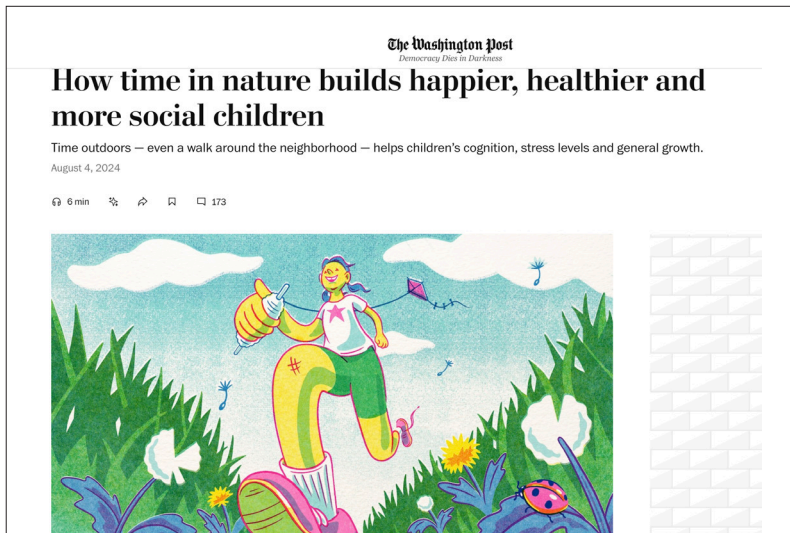
[READ MORE](#)



Research Digest: Play equity

This Digest explores the dimensions of play inequity and strategies to create greater equity.

[READ MORE](#)



REPORTING ON THE CHILDREN & NATURE MOVEMENT

Growing media visibility underscores our role as an expert source for information about the benefits of nature. In 2024, we were featured in prominent news outlets such as [The Washington Post](#) and [Grist](#), as well as a **White House Center for Environmental Quality** newsletter. Local news outlets also reported on their community's involvement with the Nature Everywhere initiative, Cities Connecting Children to Nature, or the Children & Nature Network – with a **140% increase** in local news coverage over 2023.

We published **36 issues** of our bi-weekly news publication, [Finding Nature News](#), featuring **in-depth articles and guest columns** highlighting leaders in the children and nature movement and demonstrating the transformative power of nature. These stories reached nearly 20,000 highly engaged subscribers – and many more through our combined social media audience of more than 250,000.





Placemaking: How to build kinship and inclusive park spaces for children with disabilities

Many traditional playgrounds don't adequately meet the needs of children with disabilities. But when universal design meets nature, it opens the door to more inclusive, enriching play for all.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo courtesy of Mark Davison.



Juneteenth, belonging and joy: A Q&A with Rue Mapp, Outdoor Afro's founder

Rue Mapp, founder and CEO of Outdoor Afro, shares her thoughts on representation, joy in the outdoors and the meaning of Juneteenth.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo courtesy of Outdoor Afro.



The big benefits of outdoor credit recovery programs

Wilderness Inquiry's Outdoor Credit Recovery Program is helping students stay on track to graduate, build social-emotional learning skills and connect with nature.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo courtesy of Nora West for Wilderness Inquiry.

FOSTERING BELIEF IN 2024, BY THE NUMBERS:

1.3 million

People reached cumulatively across our Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook pages.

117,459

Visits to our Research Library, which holds more than 1,500 studies.

186,639

Visits to our Resource Hub, which holds more than 1,000 tools and resources.

700,000

Unique users were reached through our Facebook page.

26%

Growth in LinkedIn followers as a result of a strategic effort to reach more children and nature practitioners.

4,000+

Visits to our new [Benefits of Nature Toolkit](#), launched in late 2024.

GROWING THE MOVEMENT



WE'RE STRONGEST WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER

That's why we bring children and nature advocates together through initiatives like our annual [international conference](#), engaging [webinars](#) and [The Trailhead](#) – our online community for the global children and nature movement.

“The Nature Everywhere Conference offered unique opportunities to engage with people like me and people I never would have met otherwise. I left knowing I had new insights on the work and issues that matter most to me.”

— GRANT GLINIECKI,
OUTDOOR POLICY COORDINATOR AT NATIONAL
CAUCUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATORS



NATURE EVERYWHERE COMMUNITIES ACTION CHALLENGE

In May 2024, we launched the Nature Everywhere Communities [Action Challenge](#) – a self-directed and self-paced option to participate in our Nature Everywhere Communities initiative. Participating communities receive access to our peer learning network, toolkits, case studies, nature access mapping and promotional materials for building awareness. We held three virtual convenings to support Action Challenge Communities in advancing their nature connection goals.

A COMMON MISSION AT THE NATURE EVERYWHERE CONFERENCE

In May, more than 630 leaders from nine countries attended our annual [Nature Everywhere Conference](#), held in Madison, Wisconsin. The conference's 50-plus sessions and four plenaries showcased the incredible work of leaders around the world in furthering a common mission – to ensure that every child has access to nature. We were honored to welcome speakers such as **National Geographic Explorer James Edward Mills**, who is working to create a more inclusive outdoors; Tribal law attorney **Samantha Skenadore** of the Ho-Chunk Nation, who [spoke passionately about the Rights of Nature](#); and **Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway**, who declared the Saturday following our conference “Nature Everywhere Day” in Madison. [Read more.](#)



“I attended the 2024 Children & Nature Network conference in Madison, and I can confidently say that my perspectives on conservation and youth engagement were enriched and forever changed by the incredible sessions offered during the conference...I am grateful for the learning experiences (and many epiphanies) I had.”

— DYLAN GRIFFIN,
EDUCATION COORDINATOR AT BROOKFIELD ZOO

INSPIRING FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

With support from Nature's Way, we hosted our fourth [Vitamin N Challenge](#) over the summer to provide ideas and inspiration to families hoping to spend more quality time together outdoors. The Challenge invites participants to set goals for getting more Vitamin N (for "nature"). Some families spend a few minutes outside every day, while others opt for weekly trips to the park or monthly outdoor adventures. The Challenge saw significant engagement as we tapped into the power of social media influencers to help us achieve more than 600,000 campaign impressions. Read about some of this year's Vitamin N Challenge participants [here](#).

This annual Vitamin N Challenge is part of our [Families Together in Nature initiative](#), which serves both longtime users of our online resources – and the more than 30,000 people who find us each month as they search the web for ways to get their families outdoors. In 2024, we hosted [three family-focused webinars](#) on nature connection strategies for more than 1,000 total registrants.



Vitamin N participants pose for a selfie while on a sunset hike. Photo courtesy of Katy-Robin Garton.



“The Vitamin N Challenge brought me back to what I knew as a child and often forget as an adult: that a neighborhood walk to find a leaf to trace, or a game of soccer in the field across from our house, holds the same value. These moments in nature are just as important and create meaningful connections for me and my family.”

— KATY-ROBIN GARTON,
A VITAMIN N PARTICIPANT ALSO KNOWN AS
[“ADVENTURE MOM OUTDOORS”](#)



SUPPORT THAT GROWS

We're honored that nearly 600 individuals and organizations support our work through [memberships](#), strengthening the global movement to connect children to nature. In 2024, total membership giving increased by over 9% and the average membership gift increased by 17.5% – a testament to the continued dedication of our community. Membership benefits included members-only newsletters and a special discount for our annual conference.

“Supporting the Children & Nature Network is the most impactful thing you can do to ensure that children across the country have access to the benefits of nature for generations to come.”

— DANIELE LYMAN-TORRES,
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE CHILD ADVOCACY
CENTER OF GREATER ROCHESTER AND C&NN MEMBER

GROWING THE MOVEMENT IN 2024, BY THE NUMBERS:

629

Attendees represented 9 countries, 4 Canadian provinces and 42 U.S. states at the 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference.

85%

Of attendees surveyed rated the 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference as “very good” or “excellent.”

1,400+

People registered for 10 webinars, including 3 Families Together in Nature events, all offered free of charge to grow the children and nature movement.

569

Individuals and organizations, representing 24 countries, invested in our work through Children & Nature Network memberships.

2,200+

Active users in The Trailhead, our online networking community for global children and nature leaders.

\$9,000+

In mini grants awarded to 20 youth leaders through our [Youth Outdoor Equity Leadership Fund](#) for projects and personal development opportunities.



2024 Nature Everywhere Conference highlights video

Check out insights and perspectives from 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference attendees.

[WATCH NOW](#)



The transformative power of nature — and collaboration — at the 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference

Our annual conference emphasized the relentless drive of leaders working to ensure every child has access to nature — and the power of collaboration.

[READ MORE](#)



2024 Richard Louv Prize winner Jason Stout helps children grieve, heal and learn in nature

Jason Stout helps children and families find their own path to healing by building a bridge between grief support and the transformative benefits of nature.

[READ MORE](#)



Powerful panels and inspiring keynotes take the stage at the 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference

Explore the incredible line-up of keynote speakers and panelists featured at the 2024 Nature Everywhere Conference.

[READ MORE](#)

Photo by Carly Harmon.

2024 FINANCIALS

2024 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

STATEMENT OF POSITION

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 6,662,717
Accounts Receivable	36,998
Grants Receivable	105,000
Prepaid Expenses	36,763
Property and Equipment – Net	

TOTAL ASSETS	6,841,478
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LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities

Accounts payable	73,623
Payroll Liabilities	61,138
Deferred Revenue	659,247

TOTAL LIABILITIES	794,008
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NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	4,697,487
Temporarily Restricted	1,349,983

TOTAL NET ASSETS	6,047,470
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TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	6,841,478
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Support and Revenue

Grants and Contributions	2,572,068
Government Grants	0
Program Income	925,568
Other Income	203,186
Special Events	

TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	3,700,822
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Expense

Program Services	3,571,668
Support Services	
Management and General	548,009
Fundraising	542,540
Total Support Services	1,090,549

TOTAL EXPENSE	4,662,217
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Change in Net Assets	(961,395)
Unrealized Gain (Loss)	102,869
Net Assets Beginning of Year	6,905,996

NET ASSETS END OF YEAR	6,047,470
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AUDIT STATEMENT

Our 2024 financial information has been derived from the Children & Nature Network's consolidated financial statements, audited by Carpenter, Evert & Associates. This information should be read in conjunction with our audited consolidated financial statements and related notes. To obtain copies or to request a copy of our 990, please contact us at admin@childrenandnature.org.

FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

The Children & Nature Network is grateful to ALL of our members, donors, funders and partners who make our work possible.

Special thanks to the following funders, partners and donors who made contributions of \$5,000 or more to support our work in 2024:

Betsy & Charles Townsend
Brandwein Institute
Casey Family Programs
The Dancing Goat Charitable Fund
Environmental Stewardship Fund,
a fund of Tides Foundation
Freedom Together Foundation
George B. Storer Foundation
The Hannah B. Quimby Gift Fund
Hayden Brooks
ICU Fund
Kathryn and Robert Riddell Fund
The Kim Larson & Gary Knell Impact Fund
The Kresge Foundation
L.L. Bean
Landscape Structures
Macy's Mission Every One
Morrison Family Foundation
Nature's Way
Olivia Farr
Outdoor Foundation
Pisces Foundation
PlayCore
REI Cooperative Action Fund
Riddell Fund of the San Francisco Foundation
Robert E. and Edith M. Grissinger Foundation
Swantz Family Foundation
Walker Family Foundation
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund
Wilderness River Foundation
Winnebago Industries Foundation
Winston Family Foundation

MEMBERS

We are grateful for the nearly 600 Children & Nature Network members that sustain and inspire us.

[Become a member today.](#)

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

We thank these strategic partners with whom we align resources to deepen our collective impact:

Alana Foundation
Casey Family Programs
International School Grounds Alliance
International Union for the
Conservation of Nature, Commission
on Education and Communication, and
#NatureForAll
Green Schoolyards America
KABOOM!
Learning through Landscapes
Learning Planet Institute
Let's Move in Libraries
North American Association for
Environmental Education
National Caucus of
Environmental Legislators
National Institute for Early Education
Research (NIEER)
National League of Cities
National League of Cities Institute on
Youth, Education and Families
National Wildlife Federation - Early
Childhood Health Outdoors
(NWF-ECHO)
Natural Start Alliance
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project
Outdoor Alliance for Kids
Percent for Place Coalition
[Re]Building America's School
Infrastructure
Coalition (BASIC)
Rob Grunewald Consulting LLC
Salzburg Global Seminar
The Big SandBox
Trust for Learning
Trust for Public Land
UNESCO
Urban Libraries Council

TEAM CHILDREN & NATURE

The Children & Nature Network is grateful for the leadership of our Board of Directors and Founders' Council, who guide our work to create equitable access to nature for children around the world.

[MEET OUR BOARD](#)

[MEET OUR FOUNDERS' COUNCIL](#)

This report reflects the work of the Children & Nature Network staff and consultants, working to ensure equitable access to the benefits of nature everywhere children live, learn and play.

[MEET OUR STAFF](#)



**JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO CONNECT
CHILDREN TO THE BENEFITS OF NATURE**

[DONATE TODAY](#)

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[OUR ONLINE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT](#)