

The logo for Children & Nature Network, featuring a stylized leaf icon to the left of the text.

Children  
& Nature  
Network

The title '2023 ANNUAL REPORT' in large, white, serif font, overlaid on a background of a tree trunk and green foliage.

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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## DEAR CHILDREN AND NATURE CHAMPIONS,

In 2023, we launched a new strategic vision, [Nature Everywhere](#), to increase equitable access to *nature everywhere children live, learn and play*. With our partners at the National League of Cities and KABOOM!, we are working to advance Nature Everywhere in 100 communities by 2025. We've made great progress toward that goal and aligned all of our initiatives to advance nature-based experiences and learning. Here are a few highlights:

- **69 U.S. communities** are advancing Nature Everywhere, including **19 new communities** selected for our inaugural Nature Everywhere Communities cohort.
- We leveraged **\$3.1 million** to support green schoolyards across the U.S.
- **548** children and nature leaders from **13** countries attended our annual international conference.
- We granted and awarded a combined total of **\$119,000** through Youth Outdoor Equity Leadership mini-grants, the Richard Louv Prize, and green schoolyards and international initiatives.
- We expanded resources for family service providers, parents and caregivers, including quarterly webinars with an average attendance of **450**.

We are grateful for your partnership in this work. Together, we can create a world in which all children grow up with nature in their daily lives.

With gratitude,



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

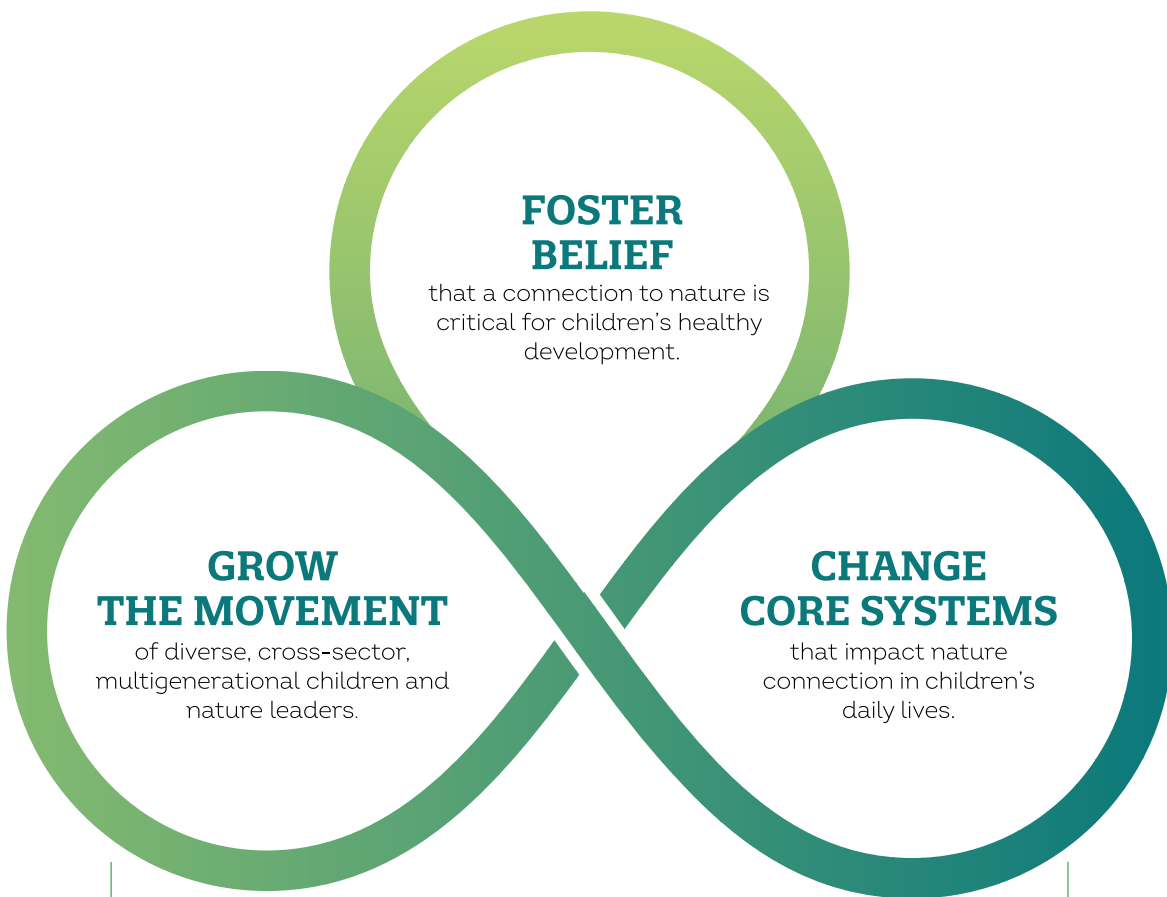


Jesús Aguirre  
Board Chair,  
Children & Nature Network

# 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.

# FOSTERING BELIEF



Mounting evidence underscores the positive impact of nature on children's lives. Throughout 2023, we were honored to highlight nature connection leaders and strategies – and to create

evidence-based tools and resources to make the case for equitable nature connection.

*The Children & Nature Network Research Library has been a game-changer for us and an invaluable tool for educating parents about the benefits of nature play.*

— PATRICIA LEON, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR  
OF MIAMI NATURE PLAYSCHOOL

## BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

Our research team continued to curate the latest research on the benefits of nature for our free, online research library, which now holds 1,400 peer-reviewed studies. In 2023, an intentional emphasis was placed on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in our [Research Digest series](#) and we launched an evidence-based [All Abilities Toolkit](#), developed by our research curator Ruth Wilson and Louise Chawla, professor

emerita with the University of Colorado Boulder and member of the Children & Nature Network's [Scientific Advisory Council](#). The toolkit includes research, resources and recommended reading on the benefits and design of outdoor play and gardening environments that meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families.



### *Research Digest: Social Justice in Research*

This Digest illustrates inclusive approaches to research, such as increased diversity and pluralism, the use of culturally sensitive data-collection tools, and the right of children to have their voices heard.

[READ MORE](#)



### *Research Digest: Children with Special Needs*

Studies in this Digest focus on children with special needs and inclusion as a social justice issue.

[READ MORE](#)



### *Research Digest: Community and Environmental Benefits of Green Schoolyards*

This Digest explores both the environmental benefits and potential of green schoolyards to address socioeconomic disparities.

[READ MORE](#)

## 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

# 181

new studies highlighted in 12 Research Digests

# 400,000

visits to our Research Digest archive in the past 6 years

# 65,000

visits to our Research Library, which holds 1,400 studies

# 700+

resources in our online Resource Hub

# 28,770

visits to our Resource Hub

# 39

articles published in 25 issues of Finding Nature News

# FINDING NATURE NEWS

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

In 2023, we published dozens of articles and guest columns in our bi-weekly publication, [Finding Nature News](#). Our editorial team shared stories that highlighted leaders in the children and nature movement, promoted an inclusive vision for nature connection and demonstrated the transformative power of equitable access to nature for communities.

*Reading Finding Nature News often reminds us of the ‘proof’ of why children need to be outside. It helps provide further affirmation that early experiences in nature are vital.*

— JENNIFER RIGBY,  
DIRECTOR OF THE ACORN GROUP



***Nature helped Nicole Jackson see possibilities over trauma; today she helps others do the same***

Being outdoors helped Nicole Jackson survive foster care. Today, she is an environmental educator and founder of a coaching business that helps Black women connect with nature as a conduit for joy and healing.

[READ MORE](#)



***“Naturally Inclusive” outdoor experiences for children of all abilities***

Staying active is not just a nice-to-have for Leela — her congenital heart defects mean that regular physical exercise is essential for her current and long-term heart health. “Hiking can be her medicine,” Leela’s mother says.

[READ MORE](#)



***Park pilgrimages: Unearthing new ways of being in nature***

Read this guest column to hear the story of how one park employee in San Francisco, California, facilitated a welcoming environment for local Muslim families and children to connect with nature in the Golden Gate Parks.

[READ MORE](#)

# GROWING THE MOVEMENT



We help children and nature advocates access tools and resources and connect with each other through initiatives like our annual [international conference](#), [webinars](#) and digital

platforms like [The Trailhead](#), our online community for the global children and nature movement.

*Overall, this conference was amazing! As a first-time attendee and presenter, I left with a wealth of new knowledge, ideas and connections with people worldwide.*

— EILEEN GARCIA SANCHEZ, SAN ANTONIO ZOO



## TURNING THE “INSIDE OUT” AT OUR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

We held the 2023 Inside-Out International Conference at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. The scenic location provided an incredible backdrop for general sessions that focused on dismantling conventional systems and (re)creating space for new ways of thinking. With help from a [Colorado Advisory Council](#) and [Youth Advisory Council](#), the conference centered Indigenous knowledge and

the voices of young environmental justice leaders, as well as a wide range of perspectives from around the world. We were thrilled to welcome more than 500 attendees from 42 states and 13 countries – and increase youth participation and representation by offering scholarships to youth identifying as Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color.

*The speakers can't stop raving about it, and it actually set a precedent on how we want to present our youth speakers in the future. [This was] unlike any other conference any of us have been to.*

— TYLER MASSIAS, KEYNOTE PANELIST FROM THE YOUTH-LED CLIMATE JUSTICE ORGANIZATION, EARTH GUARDIANS

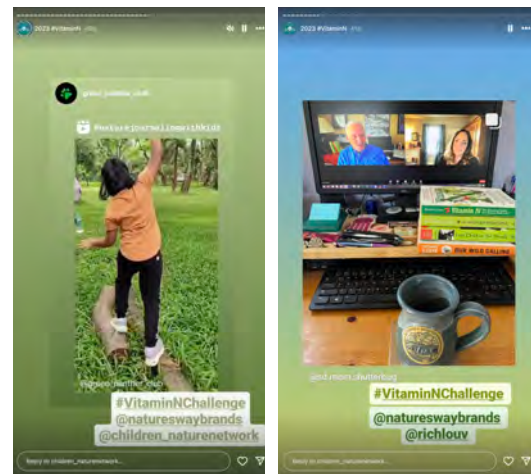


## SUPPORTING STRONGER FAMILY CONNECTIONS IN NATURE

Each month, more than 30,000 people discover the Children & Nature Network while searching the internet for tips that will help them spend more family time outdoors. In 2023, we launched a [Families Together in Nature resource page](#) and newsletter designed to engage parents, caregivers and family service providers. Resources include a nature-based activities [Group Planning Guide](#) available in English and Spanish, along with a [Self-Care in Nature](#) tip sheet, which has been downloaded nearly 700 times. Additionally, we hosted four [family-focused webinars](#) for more than 1,800 attendees.

## ENCOURAGING FAMILIES TO GET MORE “VITAMIN N”

We hosted the annual [Vitamin N Challenge](#), with support from Nature’s Way, to help families set and commit to a goal of spending more time outside. From virtual events to guest columns and promotions, the 2023 Vitamin N (for “nature”) Challenge achieved a record level of engagement, including more than 3,600 downloads of Challenge [trackers and resources](#).



*During this fantastic Vitamin N program, [my children] learned a lot about the relationship between humans and nature and the forest. I am sure that from now on, they will respect the wonderful wildlife even more.*

— AMREIN TASÁSNÉ MISKOLCZI BOLGÁRKA,  
A VITAMIN N PARTICIPANT FROM HUNGARY



## MEMBERS DRIVE OUR MOVEMENT

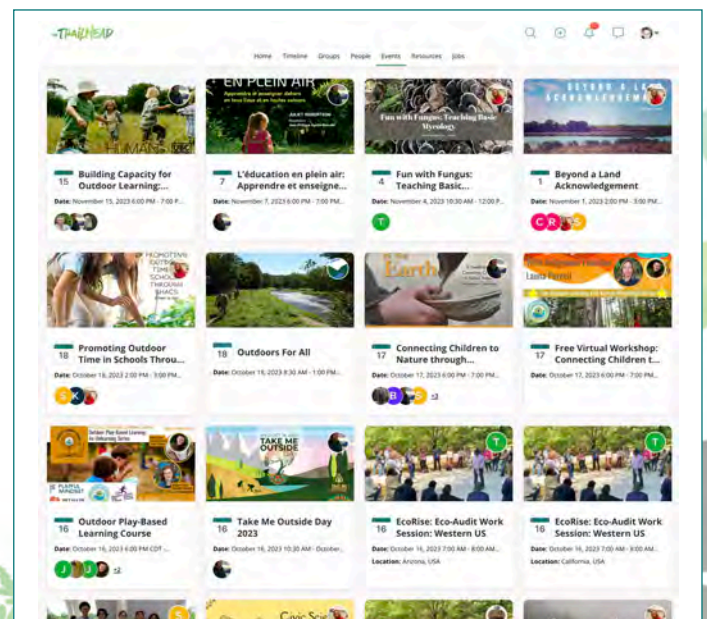
From the U.S. to Norway to Singapore, our membership base grew to represent an impressive 22 countries in 2023. We're honored that nearly 600 individuals and organizations support our work through [memberships](#), strengthening the global movement to connect children to nature. Membership benefits included members-only newsletters, special discounts to events like our annual conference and a member appreciation event that highlighted upcoming trends in the children and nature movement.

*We have to be a voice for the children who don't even know what they are missing. Getting the word out is so important and the Children & Nature Network does that so well.*

— CINDY COPPA, FOUNDER OF THE ELIZABETH CONSERVANCY AND C&NN MEMBER

## FORGING NEW PATHS IN THE TRAILHEAD

We continue to improve [The Trailhead](#), an online community of changemakers dedicated to increasing equitable access to nature worldwide. In 2023, we observed an increase in user engagement. Examples included 71 job and internship opportunities posted by Trailhead users and a 40% increase in event postings. Additionally, we introduced a new Nature Everywhere Peer Learning group, offering a suite of resources designed to support Nature Everywhere Community Teams.



## 2023 BY THE NUMBERS:

# 548

attendees represented 42 U.S. states and 13 countries at the Inside-Out International Conference

# 1,803

people attended 11 webinars, including 4 Families Together in Nature events

# 56

scheduled events, break-out sessions and workshops at the Inside-Out International Conference

# 590

individuals and organizations, representing 22 countries, supported our work as Children & Nature Network members

# \$15,000

awarded to Luis Alberto Camargo, recipient of the second annual Richard Louv Prize

# 134%

increase in social media reach and a 93% increase in web page views for the 2023 Vitamin N Challenge campaign (compared to the 2022 Challenge)



### **2023 Inside-Out International Conference highlights video**

Watch this short video for inspiring testimonials, key takeaways and memorable moments from our 2023 conference.

[READ MORE](#)



### **Thinking like a river: A recap of the 2023 Inside-Out Conference**

Learn more about the Children & Nature Network's effort to "unconference" the conference, and create an event focused on new ways of thinking, being and doing.

[READ MORE](#)



### **2023 Richard Louv Prize winner Luis Alberto Camargo creates transcendent moments for children in nature**

On June 15, Luis Alberto Camargo was named the 2023 Richard Louv Prize recipient, in recognition of his life's work, which has impacted 130,000 children and youth across Colombia.

[READ MORE](#)



### **General sessions at 2023 Inside-Out Conference emphasize dismantling conventional systems**

Read on for a deeper dive into the 2023 conference sessions and their inspiring presenters.

[READ MORE](#)

# CHANGING CORE SYSTEMS



## CITIES LEAD IN CONNECTING CHILDREN TO NATURE

Since 2014, nearly 50 cities across the United States have taken steps to prioritize nature connection by participating in [Cities Connecting Children to Nature \(CCCN\)](#), our joint initiative with the National League of Cities. In 2023, the CCCN team partnered with an independent research firm to explore which of

their nature connection strategies were having the most impact. The subsequent [report of lessons learned](#) indicates that CCCN contributes to local change across multiple systems and highlights activities that best support cities' efforts to connect children to nature. [Read more.](#)

*CCCN staff have been such great coordinators, facilitators and partners. They have connected us with information and examples. They have been an amazing sounding board to sort through next steps and partnerships.*

— A MEMBER OF THE CCCN REGIONAL AND STATE COHORT  
FROM VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON



## NATURE EVERYWHERE COMMUNITIES

In 2023, we officially launched [Nature Everywhere](#) Communities in partnership with the National League of Cities and KABOOM!. This initiative is designed to advance equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play in 100 communities by 2025. It builds on what we've learned over the past decade of providing technical assistance, resources and funding through the [Cities Connecting Children to Nature](#) initiative. Through a competitive application process, 19 communities were selected

to join a two-year Nature Everywhere Communities cohort, which will provide strategic planning and technical support, peer learning opportunities, and start-up funding to support development and implementation of community-driven plans for connecting children to nature-based experiences and learning. The inaugural Nature Everywhere Communities cohort kicked off with Vision Labs held in Austin, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. [Read more.](#)

*The Vision Lab was a critical first step to building a shared vision for our Nature Everywhere Community. As a non-profit organization that leads our efforts, it was hard to know if critical stakeholders, like local units of government, would be involved – I saw government leaders become more excited as the Vision Lab progressed.*

— BRAD BOURN, NATURE EVERYWHERE COMMUNITY  
TEAM MEMBER AND VISION LAB PARTICIPANT

## HEALING AND HOPE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We continued our partnership with Casey Family Programs (CFP) social welfare services with a shared goal of improving the health and well-being of children and families. Through our partnership, Casey Family Programs prioritizes the healing power of nature to support children in healing from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) through field offices

across the U.S. We also launched a technical assistance cohort with five CFP service sites to support the integration of nature-based interventions into social workers' daily practice with children and families, including our suite of [evidenced-based tools](#). Additionally, CFP promotes the power of nature internally as a form of self-care for staff.

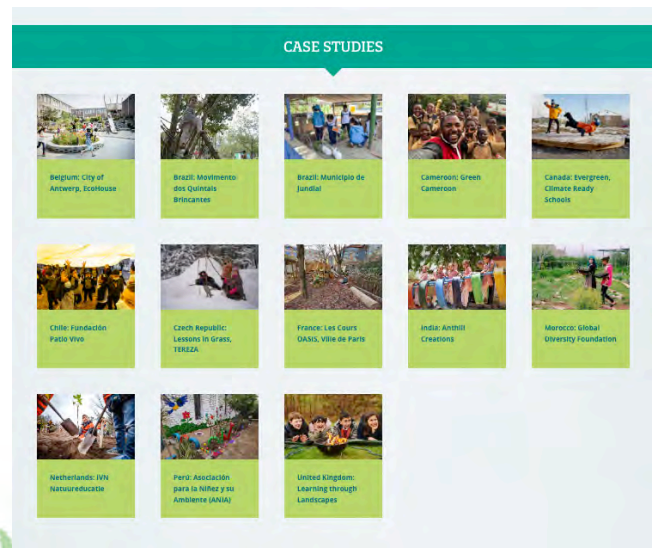


## ADVANCING NATURE-CONNECTION POLICIES

The Children & Nature Network continued to strengthen its policy and advocacy work at the local, state, federal and international levels. In 2023, we worked with policy partners to support and promote the [Youth Outdoor Policy Playbook](#) – an online resource that tracks and highlights state-level policies and funding, while also providing opportunities to learn how advocates and policymakers have successfully advanced and passed legislation that increases equitable access to nature for youth.

## A WORLD TOUR OF GREEN SCHOOL GROUNDS

In early 2023, we launched the [Global Lessons on Greening School Grounds and Outdoor Learning project](#), highlighting some of the world's most creative efforts to bring nature to children where they spend a good portion of their time – schools. Developed with a group of international partners, the project features video case studies from 13 distinct geographic regions, each illustrating how nature-filled school grounds can enhance health, learning, play, community engagement and climate resilience.





***In search of a greener schoolyard: As the planet heats up, green schoolyards offer a world of benefits***

Research on temperature and humidity in Austin, Texas elementary schools is helping make the case for green schoolyards.

[READ MORE](#)



***Using a data-driven approach to invest in Atlanta's children***

In Atlanta, Georgia, a cross-sector partnership used data to align values, center equity and chart a feasible path toward a shared vision.

[READ MORE](#)



***In Prescott, Arizona, GIS maps give technical language to families in search of nature***

In Prescott, Arizona, GIS maps provide families of young children with the technical language needed to advocate for more accessible green spaces.

[READ MORE](#)



***The perfect pairing: Youth development and nature connection***

Discover three organizations that inspire youth through their intentional focus on youth development and nature connection.

[READ MORE](#)

**2023 BY THE NUMBERS:**

**19**

new communities selected for the inaugural Nature Everywhere Communities cohort

**\$3.1 MILLION**

leveraged to support green schoolyards in CCCN cities across the country

**82%**

of CCCN participants said they could not have done their work without CCCN toolkits and planning resources

**\$9,175**

was awarded to 19 projects and personal development opportunities through our Youth Outdoor Equity Leadership Fund

**90%**

of CCCN participants said that the initiative supports their efforts to convene and/or build partnerships with community and government leaders

**90%**

of CCCN participants also said that CCCN supports their efforts to engage city leadership in supporting nature initiatives

# 2023 FINANCIALS

## STATEMENT OF POSITION

### ASSETS

Current Assets:	2023
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 6,843,305
Accounts Receivable	15,325
Grants Receivable	745,000
Prepaid Expenses	33,676
Property and Equipment – Net	15,125

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<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>7,652,431</b>
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### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### Liabilities

Accounts payable	55,779
Payroll Liabilities	121,082
Deferred Revenue	579,711

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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>756,572</b>
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#### Net assets

Unrestricted	4,390,728
Temporarily Restricted	2,505,131

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<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>6,895,859</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>7,652,431</b>
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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

### Support and Revenue

Grants and Contributions	2,204,652
Government Grants	0
Program Income	882,619
Other Income	148,455
Special Events	

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<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>3,235,726</b>
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### Expense

Program Services	2,543,916
Support Services	
Management and General	521,286
Fundraising	332,040
Total Support Services	853,326

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<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>3,397,242</b>
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Change in Net Assets	(161,516)
Unrealized Gain (Loss)	103,407
Net Assets Beginning of Year	6,964,105

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<b>NET ASSETS END OF YEAR</b>	<b>6,905,996</b>
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## AUDIT STATEMENT

Our 2023 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](mailto:admin@childrenandnature.org).

# 2023 SUPPORTERS

## FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

The Children & Nature Network is grateful to the 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 2023:

Brandwein Institute  
The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation  
Casey Family Programs  
The Colorado Health Foundation  
Dancing Goat Fund  
Great Outdoors Colorado  
International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Commission on Education and Communication  
The JPB Foundation  
Kikkerland Design Inc.  
Kresge Foundation  
Lampert Byrd Family Fund  
Landscape Structures  
The Kim Larson and Gary Knell Impact Fund of Schwab Charitable  
Macy's  
National Wildlife Federation  
Nature's Way  
Pisces Foundation  
PlayCore  
The Hannah B. Quimby Gift Fund of Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund  
REI Cooperative Action Fund  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Swantz Family Foundation  
Turner Foundation  
Betsy and Charles Townsend  
The Walker Family Foundation  
Wilderness River Foundation

## MEMBERS

We also thank the nearly 600 Children & Nature Network members who 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  
KABOOM!  
Learning through Landscapes  
Learning Planet Institute  
North American Association for Environmental Education  
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators  
National League of Cities Institute on Youth, Education and Families  
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project  
Outdoor Alliance for Kids  
Percent for Place Coalition  
[Re]Building America's School Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC)  
Salzburg Global Seminar  
The Big SandBox  
Trust for Public Land  
UNESCO

# TEAM CHILDREN & NATURE

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

[MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS](#)

[MEET OUR FOUNDERS' COUNCIL](#)

This report was developed with input from the Children & Nature Network team, working to ensure equitable access to the benefits of nature everywhere children live, learn and play.

[MEET OUR STAFF](#)



**HELP US CONNECT CHILDREN TO THE  
BENEFITS OF NATURE**

[DONATE TODAY](#)

[CHILDRENANDNATURE.ORG](https://CHILDRENANDNATURE.ORG)  
[OUR ONLINE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT](#)