**Dear Angels, Helpers, Volunteers, Foundations, Sponsors and Supporters ~**

**WHAT A YEAR!**

In 2019 we lost one of our beloved founders, Shirley Harrold Rusk. Shirley passed away after a brief illness, and just after moving herself and Wayne to Grants Pass. Shirley founded the nonprofit, convened and directed the first boards, set up legal structure for the organization, continued throughout her life to be a major donor for the center and gave so very much of herself, not just to the center, but also the greater community. Her compassion and intelligence will be deeply missed.

We are so very grateful for all the help the center has received, but especially to Wayne and Shirley Rusk. After founding the organization, they donated their property to it, continued to guide the board for several years, made inumerable donations of funds, volunteer time and useful items. And finally upon moving on, they donated their home to the organization. Without the Rusks, Rusk Ranch Nature Center could not have become a reality. All of the children’s programs, visitor experiences, nature conservation, the Butterfly Pavilion and the ONE Discovery Center…simply would not exist. Such generosity and selflessness is rare and precious. On behalf of our entire community, a deeply heartfelt THANK YOU to Shirley and Wayne Rusk!

Here is where we are currently with various programs and activities:

**Children’s Programs**

**SUN School** summer outdoor learning camp completed its fourth year. SUN School is sliding scale and funded by parent fees and also our participation in “Cans 4 Kids”.

SUN School is for elementary age children to prevent summer learning loss. Sliding scale, two days per week over four weeks, children explore nature, learn about animals, visit the river daily - all while immersed in a STEM program complementing the state curriculum.

The new **EarthWorks!** program of Permaculture for Kids began with a summer session at the nature center. Then in October, the program partnered with the CJ Farmers’ Market “Cultivating Kids” program for a fall session at the Takilma Dome School. So far, these have been funded by our participation in the IVCDO. “Cans 4 Kids” program of recycling redeemable cans and bottles on Saturdays in Cave Junction. This is allowing us to offer the programs at no cost for our valley kids.

These free or sliding scale programs offer enrichment and connection to nature for our valley kids, (K - 6th grades), that would otherwise not be available.
The Nature Center

In the 2019 visitor season we attracted approximately 7% more visitors to the Butterfly Pavilion.

At the Butterfly Pavilion this year we served several large school groups. (Students can come by donation and adults were charged a fee). It was a blast to see these kids google-eyed at the life stages of the monarch up close and personal. We hope to increase our school field trip visitors for next year.

New features at the center included:

Visitor Center
~ The living Forest ecosystem exhibit (in process), Gift shop featuring local arts and crafts.
~ Touch and feel nature for kids

Frog Town
~ Zillions of tadpoles and froggies in their own element!

Butterfly Pavilion
~ New Butterflies this year: Red Admirals, Painted Ladies, and Oregon and Anise Swallowtails
~ Monarchs were here as well!

Permaculture Garden
~ Featuring Hugelkultur and companion planting. Hugelkultur is a grow method with no-dig raised beds with a naturally decomposing base. They hold moisture, build fertility, maximise surface volume and are great spaces for growing fruit, vegetables and herbs.
Our progress toward building the Oregon Nature & Environmental Discovery Center received a big boost this year. From our Master Plan and research on visitor data, we know once the center is built that we can self-support the organization. However, one of our greatest obstacles has been how to keep the organization running until we can get the O.N.E. Discovery Center built.

This year we began a new mission-based program called Nature Service. This program offers visitors, as well as longer term local people, the opportunity to share in the excitement of regenerating and sustaining the wildlife preserve portion of the organization’s property. Following a national trend in service vacations, Nature Service participants pay to camp at the center while they participate in the program as Forest Workers. This fee-for-service program will now allow us to graduate from being a 90% volunteer organization to mostly paid staff with 10-20% volunteer. We are SO excited about this!

Organization Support

This year we are so very grateful to the Carpenter Foundation and the FourWay Community Foundation for their support in building our Nature Service Glamping facilities. We also deeply appreciate the help of the Meyer Memorial Trust in this second year of funding for support of staffing.

Our wonderful Angel group of donors have made this progress possible, and we love them! HUGE HUGE Thank you to our family of supporters and donors who recently helped us with all of our community services throughout the year! John, Jan, Christophe, Sonya, Neilia, Mary, Joel, Shop Smart, Diggin Livin, Funky Kitchen, Carla Angel, Edith Angel, Evergreen Bank Angel, Beth Angel, Kimberlie Angel, Diane Angel, Divonna Angel, Bonnie, Steph, Libby, Jerry, Susan, Tucker, Christie, Kaci, Erica, Gray Family Foundation, Soroptimists, Zonta, Shirley Harold Rusk, Wayne Rusk, and all who donated to the various Facebook fundraisers!

The Volunteers who help with events, being docents, doing building, planting, weeding, and so much more, are a testimony to the “can-do” nature of our community. Thank you so much Volunteers!

“Mothathon II” this year turned a small surplus which we hope to increase for next year. We offered a new fun Halloween event for families that broke even, but will likely produce revenue next year.

The remainder of the support for the organization and its programs has come from individual donations and visitors to the Nature Center and from the new Nature Service program.

We thank you so very much for all of your kindness, your support and your belief in our community!

Warmest regards, Board of Directors for Rusk Ranch Nature Center.