

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

## 2020 - A YEAR OF BIG CHANGE!

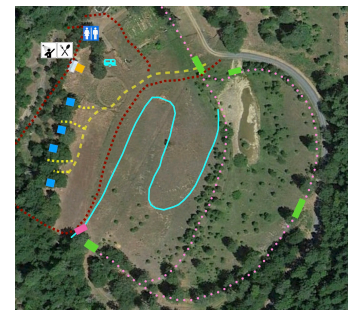
In the midst of the pandemic, political upheaval and climate crisis - the Rusk Ranch Nature Center is moving forward with our vision to serve the community. Here is where we are currently with various programs and activities:

### Nature Service

In 2019 our beloved founders, Shirley Harrold Rusk and Wayne Rusk donated their home for use by the center. This has allowed us to more extensively develop our Nature Service Program where people can stay at the center, pay to serve and help with work such as gardening, tree planting and trail maintenance.



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. With the help of an SBA long-term loan and The Fourway Community Foundation, we were able build four **Glamping decks** and purchase wall tents for each one. We also created a rustic camp shower and camp kitchen facility within an existing



barn. We completed the building at end of summer 2020 and plan to complete landscaping during the fall and winter with help from volunteers. We will open for participants in the program in early May. Revenue from this mission based program will allow us to pay for staffing - a real breakthrough for us, since we have been mostly volunteer since our founding! This is a huge step for us and will allow the organization to maintain itself as we do the long-term work necessary to build the **Oregon Nature & Environmental Discovery Center**

### Children's Programs

**SUN School** summer learning camp moved online to accomodate the pandemic restrictions. This was our 5th year offering the program to help prevent summer learning loss. With the support of a generous grant from the Oregon



Community Foundation, we are able to offer this popular program free through 2021. We felt this was so important due to the job loss and other pressures families are experiencing during the pandemic.

From SUN School Coordinator and Adventure Club Instructor Kaci Elder and Sun Tribe Instructor Sara Kinstler: *"Another summer season of SUN School has concluded! Thank you for bringing your beautiful selves to the screen for our online gatherings."* ~ Kaci

*"It was an honor to spend another summer of Sun School with the "Sun Tribe", which has been renamed by the students as the "Dragonfly Circle". I enjoyed seeing familiar faces and getting to know new ones too! We had a wonderful time learning online about Odonata, or dragonflies and damselflies, and then "oding" and exploring nature in our own backyards. Thank you all for sharing your adventures and inspiring one another to feel curious and connected to nature. I hope to see you again next year!" ~ Sara*

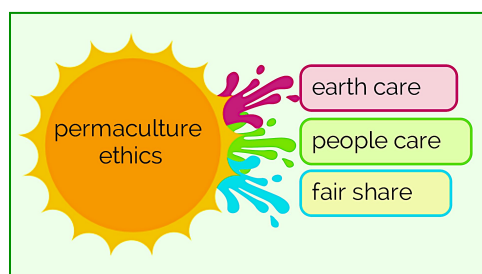
We are planning two mini-rounds of SUN School for the school year: a **Winter Session** in January/February and a **Spring Session** in March/April. It will again be free.

**EarthWorks!** Permaculture for Kids, offered a spring session at the nature center, with masks and social distancing. The sessions are also free through 2021. Due to the emergency evacuations from the Slater Fire, the fall four week session on Fridays was temporarily canceled, but will resume in November.



**Earth Works!**

Garden Fun & Eco-friendly Play  
Permaculture for Kids



The program uses hands-on games like **The Interconnections Cards, the Poop Patrol, the Pollinators and the Win-Win-Win Ecosystem Challenge**. Kids have fun outdoors while learning the concepts of sustainability and regeneration, observation, mimicry and nurturing support of nature.

This year both Christie Fairchild, Primary Instructor and Chad Free, Assisting Instructor, participated in a twelve hour/three day Permaculture For Children training out of Scotland, online.

These free kids programs offer enrichment and connection to nature for our valley kids, (K - 6th grades), that would otherwise not be available. Families who participate come back year after year because the kids LOVE them!

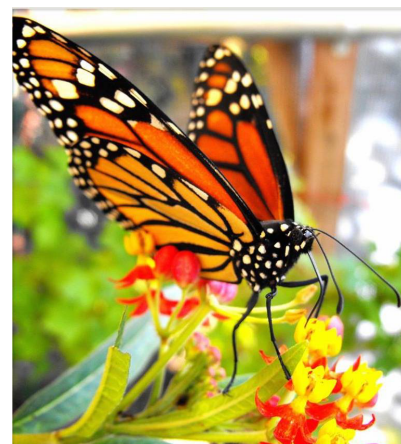
## The Nature Center

In the 2020 visitor season we attracted approximately the same number of visitors to the Butterfly Pavilion as in 2018, but in the summer the number diminished earlier than in 2018 because of the effect of the fires.



We had a very healthy number of Painted Lady and Monarch butterflies and a few Red Admirals early in the summer.

We again served several large school groups. (Students can come by donation and adults were charged a fee). We now have a guidelines handout for schools that makes it easier to accommodate large groups.



## Oregon Nature & Environmental Discovery Center



Our progress toward building the **Oregon Nature & Environmental Discovery Center** received a big boost in 2019-2020. 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 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 was a difficult year, as we successfully stayed open with low attendance and then the fires. And we are so very grateful to the Oregon Community Foundation and the FourWay Community Foundation for their support in building our Nature Service Glamping facilities and with our Children's Programming.

We simply could not do what we do without our wonderful Angel group of donors, who 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! ANGELS: Carla, Edith, Evergreen Bank, Beth, Kimberlie, Diane and Divonna, together with BOARD MEMBERS John, Jan, Susan, Bonnie, Kaci, Patty and Christie, STAFF Mary and Neilia, VOLUNTEERS Christophe, Christine, Sonya, Joel, Steph, Libby, Jerry, Erica, Grace, Anila, the "Cat" Crew, and SUPPORTERS Shop Smart, Funky Kitchen, The IV Garden Club, the Grants Pass Garden Club, Siskiyou District Garden Clubs and all who donated online and to the various Facebook fundraisers! . We will ever remain indebted, of course, to benefactors Shirley and Wayne Rusk.

**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! This was the best volunteer year ever!**

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 sincerely for all of your kindness, your support and your belief in our community!

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