

Community Action of Napa Valley Opens Outdoor Learning Center & Playground Thanks to CalFire Grant

The new center expands Community Action of Napa Valley's mission to nurture, educate, and empower children in need.

NAPA, CA, UNITED STATES, July 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Community Action of Napa Valley \(CANV\)](#) and CANV Kids Development & Family Program proudly marked the Grand Opening of its new [Outdoor Learning Center & Playground](#) at the Old Sonoma Road campus on Thursday, July 24th. The event drew families, community partners, and CalFire representatives for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of the newly renovated grounds.



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A Shade-Rich, Hands-On Environment

“

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Drene Johnson, Executive Director of Community Action of Napa Valley

CANV Kids provides affordable, full-day, year-round, high-quality childcare for more than 90 children ages 18 months through pre-kindergarten at two Napa locations. Until now, the Old Sonoma Road site lacked sufficient shade, and its expansive rear play area was overgrown and underutilized. Leveraging a [CalFire Urban & Community Forestry Grant](#)—focused on creating tree canopies over asphalt play areas and establishing outdoor classrooms—CANV's grant writer had the idea to integrate tree planting with an innovative agriculture and firewise learning curriculum.

“Growing” Play Stations

Inspired by the concept of fitness “stations,” the new playground features interactive zones that guide children through the planting process: germination, growth, harvest, and composting.

Additional stations include building workshops, art creation spaces, and water play areas, all anchored by an open-air classroom and a vibrant butterfly garden. Nine mature shade trees were strategically planted to cool the play surfaces and provide a living laboratory for learning.

Curriculum That Speaks to Every Child
Designed specifically for toddlers and pre-K students, the multilingual curriculum emphasizes hands-on activities such as bug identification and plant care, complete with watering responsibilities. Spanish language materials ensure accessibility for many of CANV Kids' Spanish-speaking families. Sensory boards and tactile educational elements were incorporated to support children with special needs.

Community Collaboration and Support

Landscape Nirvana of Pacifica, CA, generously provided the initial design work pro bono to secure grant approval and created the final plans once approved. Napa Roots Landscaping then turned those plans into reality in under 90 days. Although CalFire's grant covered the bulk of the project, two Sacramento-based agencies stepped in to fund critical play surface upgrades on three aging areas.

Voices of Leadership

"We're thrilled to offer a space where our youngest learners can explore agriculture, art, and firewise safety in a shaded, natural environment," said Kathy Peebles, CANV Kids Program Director. "This project embodies CANV's commitment to innovative, inclusive programming."

"CalFire's grant has had an enormous impact—especially today, when funding for vital community programs like ours is increasingly under threat," said Drene Johnson, Executive Director of Community Action of Napa Valley. "We are deeply grateful to CalFire and all those who fight fires across California to protect our communities and for making our playground come to life."

Looking Ahead



Thanks to a generous CalFire grant and the support of local partners, the new outdoor space features shaded play zones, nature-based learning stations, and inclusive activities for Napa's youngest learners.



COMMUNITY ACTION OF NAPA VALLEY

Food Bank ♦ Meals on Wheels ♦ CANV Kids

CANV delivers vital services to over 15,000 individuals a month throughout Napa County via a network of programs, including the CANV Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, Wellness on Wheels, and CANV Kids.

CANV Kids invites other community groups to reserve the Outdoor Learning Center & Playground on weekends for educational workshops and family events. For information on scheduling and program registration, please contact CANV Kids at (707) 253-6100 or email canv@can-v.org.

About CANV Kids Development & Family Program

CANV Kids offers affordable, full-day, year-round childcare for families in Napa County, serving more than 90 children from 18 months through pre-kindergarten. Through play-based learning, family engagement, and community partnerships, the program nurtures each child's potential in a safe, inclusive environment.

About Community Action of Napa Valley

Community Action of Napa Valley (CANV), founded in 1965, delivers vital services throughout Napa County through a network of programs, including the CANV Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, Wellness on Wheels, and CANV Kids. With eight pantry locations and ten free markets, each month CANV feeds more than 15,000 neighbors and empowers vulnerable residents by providing the resources and support they need to achieve stability and self-sufficiency.

For more information, please contact Drene Johnson, Executive Director at Community Action of Napa Valley, at (707) 253 6100 canv@can v.org or visit www.canv.org for additional details.

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