



NatureConnect Launches Community-Wide Initiative to Help Every Child Grow Up Connected to Nature

A group of Central Oregon organizations unite around a shared vision to ensure every child has the opportunity to experience the outdoors.

BEND , OR, UNITED STATES, July 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every child deserves the

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Katie Chipko

opportunity to grow up with a meaningful connection to nature. Today, NatureConnect announced the launch of the Youth Nature Access Fund, a new community-wide initiative designed to help make that vision a reality for children across Central Oregon.

For the first time, these Central Oregon organizations have come together around a shared fund and a shared vision: ensuring every child has the opportunity to grow up

connected to nature. Rather than creating another standalone program, the Youth Nature Access Fund strengthens a network of organizations already doing exceptional work by helping remove financial barriers to outdoor experiences such as transportation, field trips, outdoor learning programs, and camp scholarships.

Participating organizations include:

- Camp Fire Central Oregon
- Discover Your Northwest
- The Environmental Center
- High Desert Museum
- NatureConnect Central Oregon
- Think Wild
- Upper Deschutes Watershed Council

"At its heart, this initiative is about a simple belief: every child deserves the opportunity to grow up connected to nature," said Katie Chipko, Executive Director of NatureConnect. "We know that time outdoors supports children's health, learning, and well-being, but not every child has the same opportunities to experience it. NatureConnect has spent years bringing together

organizations that share a vision for connecting children with nature. The Youth Nature Access Fund now gives our community one way to invest in that collective work and expand its impact."

While Central Oregon is known for its incredible access to the outdoors, many children rely on schools and community organizations for meaningful outdoor experiences, opportunities that have become increasingly difficult to provide as costs rise and school and grant funding declines.

Each participating organization brings unique expertise—from wildlife education and conservation to outdoor recreation, environmental learning, youth development, and watershed restoration. NatureConnect serves as the regional convener, bringing partners together, identifying shared community needs, coordinating regional data, and helping direct resources where they can have the greatest impact. Together, the partnership creates a stronger, more coordinated approach than any one organization could achieve alone.

The Youth Nature Access Fund reflects a shared belief that every child deserves the chance to grow up connected to nature. By supporting a network of organizations already serving Central Oregon's youth, the fund helps remove financial barriers so more children can participate in meaningful outdoor experiences that support healthy development and lifelong connections to the outdoors.

Community members can learn more and support the initiative at natureconnect.org/ynaf.

About NatureConnect

NatureConnect connects kids and families in Central Oregon to nature through its own programs and by coordinating a growing network of outdoor education partners. By leading collaborative initiatives, supporting educators, funding transportation, and expanding access to outdoor learning, NatureConnect helps ensure more children have the opportunity to grow up connected to the place they call home.

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