

CITY OF VANCOUVER ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Summer Nature Day Camp | Columbia Springs Volunteer Program | Columbia River Watershed Festival

The City of Vancouver provides critical base funding for a number of Columbia Springs and environmental community programs including Summer Nature Day Camp, the Columbia Springs Volunteer Program and the Columbia River Watershed Festival. This report highlights some of the achievements in the last year, made possible by this on-going support.



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

- 59 campers were reached over the course of two weeks of summer camp! **9 of these students participated with a full scholarship**, through partner organizations like Habitat for Humanity and SHARE.
- **32 campers were returning for their 2nd, 3rd or even 4th year in a row!**
- Four high school summer camp interns and three volunteers contributed **403 hours** to summer camp programming, including training, preparation and working directly with campers.
- **556 hours were spent by volunteer docents hosting educational activities**, up from 66 hours last year, thanks to a new model for reaching families.
- We hosted **27 park stewardship events**, engaging 476 volunteers.
- Volunteers gave **7,941 hours**, more than ever before!
- **944 students, teachers and chaperones** attended this year's Columbia River Watershed Festival at Lewisville Park.
- **21 community organizations** came together with staff and volunteers to offer environmental learning stations at the Columbia River Watershed Festival. In total, **72 individual partners, staff and volunteers were on site** to make the event a success.



PARTNER SUPPORT

In addition, as part of the grant agreement, Columbia Springs Staff supports a number of City of Vancouver programs including Critter Count, Watershed Congress and Sturgeon Festival.

To help us maintain the property, including sections owned by the City of Vancouver, our volunteer program partners with VolunTOUR, Friends of Trees, Vancouver Rotary, and corporate groups like Hewlett Packard and Underwriter's Laboratory.

City of Vancouver Event	Number of people reached by CS		
	# Students	# Adults	Total
Critter Count	12	8	20
Watershed Congress	25	5	30
Sturgeon Festival	260	140	400
Watershed Festival	802	142	944
Summer Nature Camps	59	0	59
Totals	1158	295	1453

Summer Nature Day Camp



The City of Vancouver and Waste Connections Inc partner with Columbia Springs each year to bring Summer Nature Day Camp at Columbia Springs to the community. **This program allows students to learn the important skills of caring for our planet**, while spending their days outside and immersed in nature. From hiking to sampling bugs out of the wetland, campers learn important scientific skills and connect to nature in fun and meaningful ways.

- 59 campers attended in 2019, with **32 returning for their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year in a row!**
- Campers in 2nd-5th grade attended from **33 different local elementary schools.**
- 88% of campers came from Vancouver, but students also traveled from Portland, Gresham, Ridgefield, Battleground and Camas to participate in this unique program.
- Four high school summer camp interns and three volunteers contributed **403 hours** to summer camp programming, including training, preparation, and working directly with campers.



*"Our daughter learned so much about **taking care and providing for the environment**"*
- Jodi, Parent

Summer Nature Day Camp is focused on waste reduction as a critical and practical way for each camper to take action to protect the environment. From feeding lunch scraps to the worms to playing recycle relay, **campers absorb valuable information about waste-reduction, recycling, composting and more!** A zero-waste lunch challenge invites students to take action while bringing the important conversation of waste reduction home to their families. Students take great pride in reducing the waste they bring each day.



SUMMER CAMP SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

One in six campers attends on a full, needs-based scholarship. Through partnerships with homeless service non-profit Share and Habitat for Humanity, families and campers are identified who would not normally have access to this type of program.

Sisters Aubriella and Jayleona, attended camp in 2019 through Share. When they first arrived, they were not sure about summer nature day camp. All day Monday they repeated, "I'm not doing that" again and again. It was clear that this immediate unwillingness to participate came from fear and discomfort in a new space, so Kushi, their camp leader, met their needs with patience and acceptance. Sure enough, with gentle reminders that **they were welcome to participate in whatever way they felt comfortable**, and by reminding them, "you decide where your boundary is," they came out of their shells and **began to connect with the other students.**



Throughout the week, despite their initial claims of "I'm not doing that," they became excited about dissecting owl pellets, searching for aquatic macroinvertebrates, and tracking down their friends in the forest. On the final day **they eagerly spread nature paint on their faces, in a final show of comfort with their surroundings!**

*"I love that this day camp is an outdoor learning experience. Kids need more of these and there are so few around! **My son loved the outdoor time, adventures and learning new things.** He only complained that the days were too short."* - Alissa, Parent

SUMMER CAMP HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS

High school interns learn to lead through a for-credit high school internship program. The internship is designed to build career skills and includes training on engaging elementary students, emotional safety, environmental science, waste reduction and more.

“It’s amazing to feel like **you’ve altered a kids life, even slightly, for the better.” - Claire, Age 15**

“Working at Columbia Springs was different than other places I’ve worked...It really feels like **we are trying to educate everyone in the best way possible, rather than make money or cut corners. Everything was more personal, and the people here really do care about and believe in what we’re doing.” - Brooke, Age 17**

“The absolute best part of this internship is sharing the experience with such amazing people. I **found great joy in the interaction with the children and my co-workers” - Malachi, Age 16**



LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUMMER CAMP 2020

What worked: Our less is more strategy was a huge success! We were able to have a less rushed and more grounded experience for educators and campers. Using and preparing less materials really modeled the “reduce” ethos of our waste reduction camp and all the activities and lessons were a huge hit with the students! We did not have as much materials prep and were able to streamline the training and focus on team building and skill building. Also, less prep time allowed staff to be less stressed and more focused on student needs, especially at the beginning of the day.

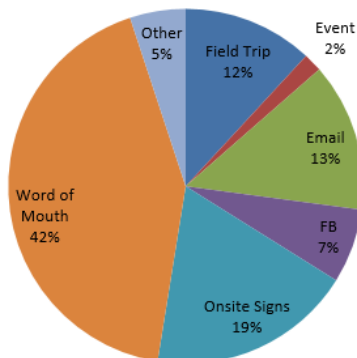
What didn’t work: We had some communication issues with our new partners for internship coordination. We ended up with much fewer applicants than we thought.

What we’ll do differently in 2020: We will continue with our less is more strategy, doing less materials prep and using the spaces and tools around the property (stream table, water bug collection, microscopes, worm bins, etc). We will also work on intern recruitment earlier in the year and improve our communication lines with the internship coordinators.

SUMMER CAMP MARKETING STRATEGY

How did you hear about camp?

Most families heard about camp through a connection to Columbia Springs.



Summer Camp posters and flyers were distributed to partners, displayed on-site, e-mailed and used on social media.

Small quarter page “bookmarks” were given to each child who attended a field trip or event.

Columbia Springs Volunteer Program



Between site maintenance, community contacts, and more, Columbia Springs is by all measures a volunteer driven organization. We are happy to report that this foundational program had another year of positive growth and change. Fresh opportunities like the development of our Native Plant Demonstration Garden, recurring events like Family Nature Days, and various serve-and-learn projects, provided **new ways for volunteers and community members to engage** with the site. As a result, volunteer participation has continued its steady increasing trend.

- Total Volunteer Hours: 7,941 (16% growth from 2018).
- 1,922 total volunteer shifts (up 15%) filled by 393 volunteers, including field trips and off site programs.
- We hosted 27 park stewardship events, engaging 476 volunteers.
- Docents provided 556 activity hours to visitors during the new Family Nature Days series!



VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

Our site saw a number of exciting improvements during 2019 through partnerships with local clubs and area businesses. Some of these improvements, like our Native Plant Demonstration Garden, opened up brand new areas for visitors to explore. Some of them helped to improve the health of areas that already see heavy use, such as corporate stream clean ups. These projects are important supports for the site and help it better absorb the impact of increasing numbers of visitors!



Native Plant Demonstration Garden:

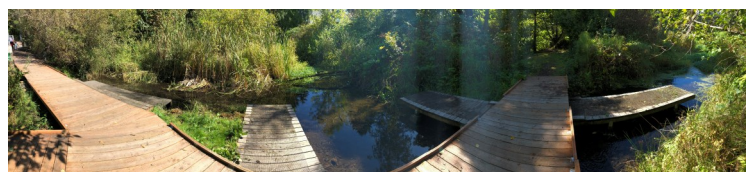
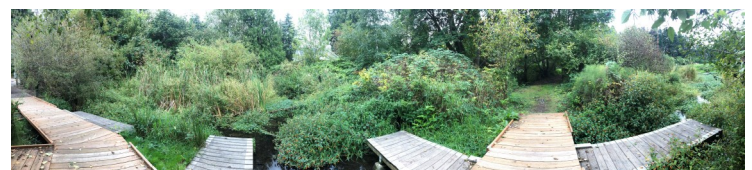
Over the course of four volunteer days, the space behind the Visitor Center was reborn into a Native Plant Demonstration Garden. The project team included the Rotary Club, recurring Columbia Springs volunteers, and members of the community. Together, they provided over 150 hours in 89 volunteering shifts. An archway was recently added to serve as an inviting entry point for site visitors.

The garden features a large stone gather space that can be used during events and workshops,

Docents are currently working on interpretive materials for the garden, including a self-guided plant tour for adults and scavenger hunt for kids.

Stream Clean-ups:

We had two major stream clean events this year! First, Vancouver Urban Planners worked to removed a truckload of jewelweed, pennywort, and reed canary grass that was congesting our wetland and encouraging sedimentation. They also deepened channels to increase the flow rate. Then, volunteers with Underwriters Laboratory planted trees and native plants in areas previously cleared of invasive species, including the Wetland. They also helped hatchery staff on a large pennywort removal project that alleviated backflow that was headed over the East Biddle Dam.



Wetland Before and After

DOCENT PROGRAM GROWS WITH NEW PROGRAM

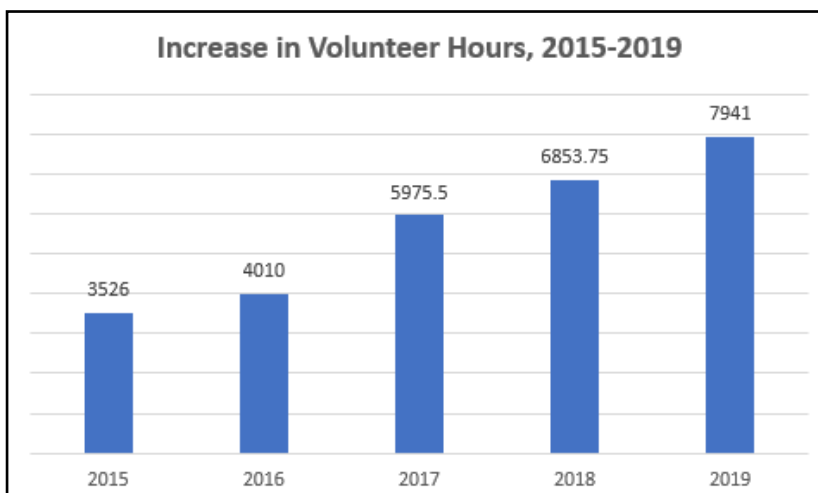
As ambassadors for Columbia Springs, docents are impassioned volunteers who help visitors interpret the site. **They make science and nature accessible to the average community member.** They share their enthusiasm for exploring and being curious. They empower people of all ages to see themselves as “citizen scientists”; showing them how to make observations and ask questions. Some have even taken our mission on the road, delivering our activities to classrooms, summer camps, and even State Parks! Our docent team is maturing into a valuable community resource, and Family Nature Days was the catalyst it needed to get going.

For 2019, in response to docent feedback, we changed our onsite interpretive program into a more structured format, featuring once a month events called “Family Nature Days.” Several activities were scheduled for the last Saturday of the month, from Spring into Fall. The season launched with our *Visitor Center Open House* in April, and ended with *Family Nature Festival* as the big October finale. Through the 7 events, **our docents connected with over 1000 visitors!** Based on docent feedback, each event was prepped and attended by a supporting staff person. In response to the new model, Docent Activity time increased to 556 hours this year, compared to 66 in 2018. The added staff support was an important factor in the season’s success! The reopening of our Visitor Center was also pivotal, as it provided for a welcoming starting point to orient guests. **Looking into the future, we are excited to further develop the Visitor Center as a hub for interpretive activities, and to extend scheduled activities into the winter months.**



Another great use for the Visitor Center has been as a launching point for our Guided Walks. In 2019, we scheduled a guided walk for every 2nd Wednesday of the month, April – October which resulted in 7 events total. **We had an average of 17 participants at each walk, with a total of 118 guided walk attendees.** Each walk was led by either one or two docents, with a total of 12 volunteers shifts filled. After last year’s success, we decided to work with one of our volunteers to develop a history themed guided walk geared toward Senior Citizens. This walk was lead 4 times and attracted 16 new visitors. For 2020, we will continue to explore ways to engage different segments of Vancouver’s population, like senior living communities and bring our message to more people.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM GROWTH



Volunteer Hours by Category

- K-12 Education (including SITC and Summer Camp): **2,243.75**
- Repair Clark County: **1,978.25**
- Stewardship & Park Maintenance: **1,761.25**
- Development & Administrative Support: **779**
- Docent Activity Hours: **556.25**
- Events & Outreach: **476.50**

Columbia River Watershed Festival



The Columbia River Watershed Festival is a **science and nature field trip for 4th grade students** that takes place each September. The event rotates to a new location each year, and local schools are invited to participate to **kick off their year with environmental learning**.

Students rotate through presentations from local leaders in the environmental field who lead activities including **guided hikes, story telling, music, games and more**. All presentations connect back to the Columbia River Watershed and what we can do to keep it healthy.



2019 at Lewisville Regional Park:

- **7 schools** attended from Battle Ground, Ridgefield and Evergreen Public School Districts.
- A total of **30 classes** of 4th graders attended.
- Over **944 people** attended the festival including students, teachers and chaperones.
- **21 community organizations** came together with staff and volunteers to support the event and offer learning stations.
- In total, **72 individual partners, staff and volunteers** were on site throughout the event to make sure students had a successful learning experience.

What people are saying about the Columbia River Watershed Festival:

- "The Columbia River Watershed Festival has engaging performers and quality academic content" - Dylan May, Silver Star 4th grade teacher
- "I was very pleased with the event. My students really enjoyed it and were repeating things they learned and heard the next day" - Leah Kleeberger, 4th grade teacher
- "My favorite part of the event was seeing how engaged the children were because of skilled and prepared presenters, educators and event planners" - Volunteer
- "The best part is that students and teachers were interested and engaged, asking questions and participating in the activities" - Ellen Ives, presenter from Waste Connections of SW Washington
- "I learned that a house by Mt. Saint Helens was buried in 200ft of rock! I also learned that I can protect the watershed by cleaning up the roads, so bad stuff does not get in the drain." - Blake, age 9, Daybreak Primary
- "I learned that some of the things I've thrown away don't belong in the trash!" - Demari, age 9, Silver Star Elementary



2019 COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED FESTIVAL PARTNERS INCLUDED:

Water Resources Education Center, Urban Forestry, Clark Public Utilities, Stream Team, Waste Connections, Clark County Green Schools, Master Composter Recycler, Clark County Clean Water Services, Clark County Parks, Evergreen Public Schools, Mount Saint Helens Institute, Watershed Alliance of SW WA and more.



Addendum: An example of the stewardship award/newsletter that each camper receives at the end of the week is on page 7.





Each camper receives a stewardship award at the end of camp with a short newsletter on back that they can share with their parents about environmental stewardship and waste reduction!

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TALES FROM THE TRAIL

Nature Nuts Summer Day Camp | July 26, 2019 | Columbia Springs Environmental Education

Time flies when you're having fun!!!

Our camp week started with a bang on Monday! After playing a few games in our cabin groups to get to know one another, campers got right to exploring, no time to waste!! The Worm Cabin spent time in the wetlands doing stream monitoring, the Ferns explored the inhabitants of our worm bin, and Ms. Snail's campers showed off their teamwork by building an amazing model river.

On Tuesday, we welcomed two special guests! Ellen Ives, an educator from Waste Connections, joined us to share an inside look at where our garbage and recycling go. Afterward, the Snail Cabin had a special owl presentation from Ellen aka "Lichen", one of our education volunteers. Worm campers built their own (impressively complex) model river and the Ferns explored water bugs and practiced being stealthy through the forest.

By Wednesday, Snails just couldn't wait to get out to explore the wetland critters. They were so careful and scientific. The Fern campers impressed themselves by making some delicious Douglas Fir sun tea, and the Worm Cabin found the coolest bugs and then got crafty with some Shrinky-Dinks, a camp favorite!

Thursday was a good day! Ferns got a turn to make Shrinky Dinks and made some really creative trinkets! The Worms went on an "un-nature" scavenger hike and explored some indigenous uses for plants in our forest. Snail campers went on a Heron Loop adventure, while practicing their Naturalist Superpowers.

How is it Friday already?! Where does the time go?! Busy campers played their favorite games and explored the forest with their camp friends one last time. Our week ended with a splash—playing our all time favorite water games together!

It has been so much fun to share this slice of summer with your children! From our education team at Columbia Springs, thank you so much for joining us at Nature Nuts Summer Day Camp. See you next year!

— Ms. Dragonfly

PICTURE THAT! (Photo descriptions):

1. Jadey Bird introduces Hedgehog to her special tree!
2. Skull Cap gets dressed up like an owl during Mrs. Lichen's demonstration. Did you know Great Horned Owls use their ear-shaped tufts to express themselves, a lot like a cat?
3. Kingfisher, Mongoose, and Fish explore life in the wetland.



Back-to-School Challenge!!

As you gear up for back-to-school, brainstorm with your camper which things they can use again from last year, like a backpack or lunch box! It can be a fun challenge to work on as a team!



Partners Make it Possible

The City of Vancouver and Waste Connections partner with Columbia Springs each year to bring Nature Nuts Summer Day Camp to the community. These partnerships allow students to learn how to care for our planet, while spending their days outside and immersed in nature.

When we feed lunch scraps to the worms, play the recycle relay, and have fun without needing a lot of resources, campers absorb valuable information about waste-reduction, recycling, composting and more!

Campers have learned that, while recycling is very important, using less ("reducing") is really the **most important step** we can take. Camp gives kids a chance to see that fun is *right outside their front door*, and that you don't need a lot of "stuff" in order to find it!!

