







Dear Friends and Supporters of the New Canaan Nature Center,

It is my pleasure to present our Annual Report for the fiscal year 2023-2024. This year has been one of growth, innovation, and profound impact on our community, thanks to the unwavering support and dedication of our community, donors, patrons, volunteers, and staff.

Celebrating Our Achievements

This year, we have made significant strides in our mission to promote environmental education and conservation. Our programs have reached thousands of individuals, from young children to adults, fostering a deeper appreciation for nature and encouraging sustainable practices. Highlights of our achievements include:

Robust Programming

Our preschool and summer camp continue to be our two largest and most successful programs. Last year we had over 140 students enrolled in our preschool and Little Explorers programs. Our summer camp welcomed over 1,000 campers to our grounds to connect with the natural world. In addition, our environmental education team taught and inspired over 5,000 students throughout New York and Connecticut, and hundreds of adults attended our workshops, classes, hikes, and programs.

Conservation Efforts

Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to preserve and enhance the natural habitats within our 40-acre property. This year, we successfully restored several native plant species and implemented new conservation strategies that have improved the biodiversity of our ecosystems. We welcomed back our goats to help diminish invasive plant species in our upper meadows, implemented a solarization project to eliminate invasive species in between our apple orchard and the First Presbyterian Church, and continued to hand weed our meadows and natural areas to avoid the use of herbicides.

Community Engagement

Our numerous community events, including our annual Fall Fair, Harvest Festival, Lecture & Luncheon, Syrup Saturday, and many more reached over 5,000 people. We are deeply grateful for the over 300 volunteers who dedicated thousands of hours to help us fulfill our vital mission. Thank you to all who participated.

Financial Health

Our financial health remains robust, thanks to the generous contributions from our supporters and prudent financial management. This year, we grossed over \$2.2 million through donations, grants, and program fees, which has allowed us to invest in new initiatives and maintain/improve our facilities and grounds. Please review our financial summary on pages 15-16 of this report.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, we are excited to build on our successes and explore new opportunities for growth. Our strategic priorities for the coming year include:



BILL FLYNN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Enhancing Our Facilities

Currently, we are creating a strategic plan for our campus to ensure that our facilities and grounds continue to meet the needs of our community. Specifically, we are studying the utility of the large greenhouse and exploring potential renovations of that space. In addition, each summer, we devote the time between summer camp and the start of preschool to upgrading our classrooms. These upgrades include fresh paint, new floors, new furniture and other improvements to ensure a great preschool experience for our youngest nature lovers.

Strengthening Partnerships

We continue to forge strong partnerships with local schools, businesses, and other organizations to engage our whole community with the natural world.

None of these achievements would be possible without the incredible support of our community. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, and patrons. Your commitment and generosity are the backbone of our success, and together, we are making a lasting difference. Also, thank you to the Town of New Canaan. As a town-owned park, we work together with the Town of New Canaan to maintain and improve the buildings and grounds. We are grateful for this 64-year partnership.

Thank you for being a part of our journey. I look forward to another year of growth, learning and conservation at the New Canaan Nature Center.

Warm regards,

Bill Flynn

Executive Director

New Canaan Nature Center

"Study Nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."

- FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

SPECIAL EVENTS & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The New Canaan Nature Center offers something for everyone. We are a place for visitors of all ages to gain hands-on experience with nature. Each year we offer a wide variety of family programs and special events to engage and educate our guests. These programs include Cider Saturday, Fall Fair, Harvest Fest, Halloween Spooktacular, Awesome Autumn Day, Holiday Market, Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle, Winter Wonderland, Owl Moon Night Hike, Adopt-A-Tree Syrup Program, Great Egg Hunt, Great American Campout, Night of 1000 Fireflies, Creatures of the Night Hike, and so many more.

Please see our website for a monthly list of events and activities – www.newcanaannature.org



Adult Programs

We are continually evolving our adult programming. In the past year, we offered guided hikes throughout Fairfield and Westchester Counties, local birding and nature walks led by our renowned ornithologist Frank Gallo, classes, workshops and lectures. Our biweekly newsletters, Instagram and Facebook posts, and our website are regularly updated with information about our latest offerings.

On May 9, 2024, we welcomed Bunny Williams as the keynote speaker of our Seventh Annual Lecture & Luncheon. She shared stories from her newly released book, *Life in the Garden*. This event has become a much-anticipated and well-loved spring tradition in our community.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share the 2024-25 schedule for our annual events:

Harvest Fest October 5 Fall Fair October 11-13 Halloween Spooktacular October 26 Awesome Autumn Day November 5 Holiday Market November 23 Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle November 30 Winter Wonderland	Cider Saturday September 21
Halloween SpooktacularOctober 26Awesome Autumn DayNovember 5Holiday Market.November 23Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle.November 30Winter Wonderland.December 14Owl Moon Night HikeJanuary 25Adopt-A-Tree KickoffFebruary 1Syrup SaturdayMarch 15Great Egg HuntApril 17,18,19Dog Days.May 38th Annual Lecture and Luncheon.May 8	Harvest Fest October 5
Awesome Autumn Day November 5 Holiday Market November 23 Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle November 30 Winter Wonderland December 14 Owl Moon Night Hike January 25 Adopt-A-Tree Kickoff February 1 Syrup Saturday March 15 Great Egg Hunt April 17,18,19 Dog Days May 3 8th Annual Lecture and Luncheon May 8	Fall Fair October 11-13
Holiday Market November 23 Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle November 30 Winter Wonderland December 14 Owl Moon Night Hike January 25 Adopt-A-Tree Kickoff February 1 Syrup Saturday March 15 Great Egg Hunt April 17,18,19 Dog Days May 3 8th Annual Lecture and Luncheon May 8	Halloween Spooktacular October 26
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Winter Wonderland December 14 Owl Moon Night Hike January 25 Adopt-A-Tree Kickoff February 1 Syrup Saturday March 15 Great Egg Hunt April 17,18,19 Dog Days May 3 8th Annual Lecture and Luncheon May 8	Holiday Market
Owl Moon Night HikeJanuary 25Adopt-A-Tree KickoffFebruary 1Syrup SaturdayMarch 15Great Egg HuntApril 17,18,19Dog DaysMay 38th Annual Lecture and LuncheonMay 8	Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle November 30
Adopt-A-Tree KickoffFebruary 1Syrup SaturdayMarch 15Great Egg HuntApril 17,18,19Dog Days May 38th Annual Lecture and Luncheon May 8	Winter Wonderland
Syrup SaturdayMarch 15Great Egg HuntApril 17,18,19Dog Days May 38th Annual Lecture and Luncheon May 8	Owl Moon Night Hike January 25
Great Egg Hunt	Adopt-A-Tree Kickoff February 1
Dog Days	Syrup Saturday
8th Annual Lecture and Luncheon	Great Egg Hunt April 17,18,19
-	Dog Days
Great American Campout June 28-29	8th Annual Lecture and Luncheon
Creat, and Campage	Great American Campout June 28-29
Night of 1000 Fireflies	Night of 1000 Fireflies
	Creatures of the Night Hike August 23
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NATURE-BASED PRESCHOOL

We boast the oldest nature-based preschool in the country. Our philosophy is that children learn best through play in an environment that is suited to their age and developmental needs. We emphasize hands-on, indoor and outdoor sensory experiences, incorporating the natural settings of the Nature Center as an integral part of our curriculum. Our preschool celebrates children's natural sense of wonder and their innate love of play to build foundational skills needed for a successful life.

Learn more about our unique program and curriculum by visiting: **newcanaannature.org/preschool**

Little Explorers

For our youngest nature lovers, we offer caregiver & child classes. Children 18-36 months and their caregivers spend time inside and outside learning about and enjoying all Mother Nature has to offer.

More information about this program can be found at: newcanaannature.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/ 05/little-explorers-description-schedule-fall-2024.pdf









ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Nature Center has a long history of serving the greater Fairfield County community and beyond, reaching as far as New York City. Our environmental education programs offer experiential learning opportunities for all ages, from toddlers to seniors. We are proud of the diverse age groups we serve and our outreach to neighboring communities and beyond.

We are especially proud of our Haley Project, a donorfunded water ecology program for 5th graders from Title 1 schools in Norwalk. Each spring, hundreds of children spend a day of experiential learning at the Nature Center, focused on breaking down the connection between one's actions and their consequences on the environment. A second day is spent with our environmental educators on the shores of Long Island Sound where students wear waders and collect water samples to explore the intertidal zone, learn how all the waterways are connected, and discuss strategies to keep the water clean. The program culminates with a beach cleanup activity.

We offer a wide variety of customizable programs designed to appeal to groups of all sizes and ages. These programs are available both on our campus and off-site. For more information, please visit: newcanaannature.org/programs





ANIMAL AMBASSADORS

We are fortunate to have a diverse array of animals - ranging from invertebrates and fish to amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals - that provide positive connections to the natural world. These animal ambassadors are an essential component of our educational programming, providing tangible experiences with the natural world. For instance, students might be interested to learn that chinchillas are one of the softest animals on the planet because they have 60-80 hairs per follicle. However, they are truly captivated when they meet our chinchillas, Blossom and Dustin, and they can feel how soft they are!

This last year, we welcomed two new birds to our aviary. While we mourned the loss of Jasper and Glory, who both lived for decades and died of old age, we welcomed Mort the black vulture and Archimedes the barred owl.













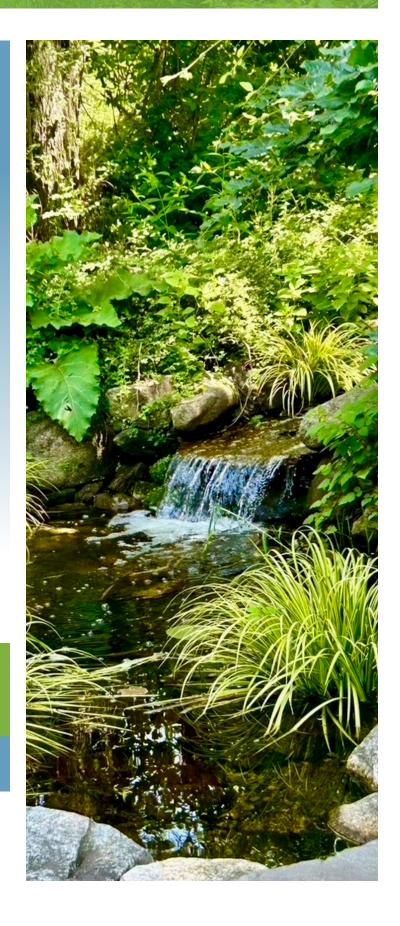
NATURE SANCTUARY

The Nature Center's 40-acre property encompasses nearly every habitat found in New England, including natural fields, streams, ponds, wetlands, and forests. In 2020, the Nature Center began working with Larry Weaner Landscape Associates to develop and implement a land management plan to address the invasive plants that permeate the property. This multi-year project aims to eliminate invasive plants and replace them with native flora without using chemical herbicides. So far, we have utilized various techniques such as different mowing practices, digging, solarization, and employing invasive-eating goats, and the progress is exciting. We look forward to continuing this important work in the years to come.

Our campus features over 2 miles of trails that wind through our property, connecting the community with nature. We invite you to visit and explore all there is to see. To help plan your visit, check out our website at: newcanaannature.org/visit

320+

Over 320 volunteers assist with animal care, garden and ground projects, special events and programs.

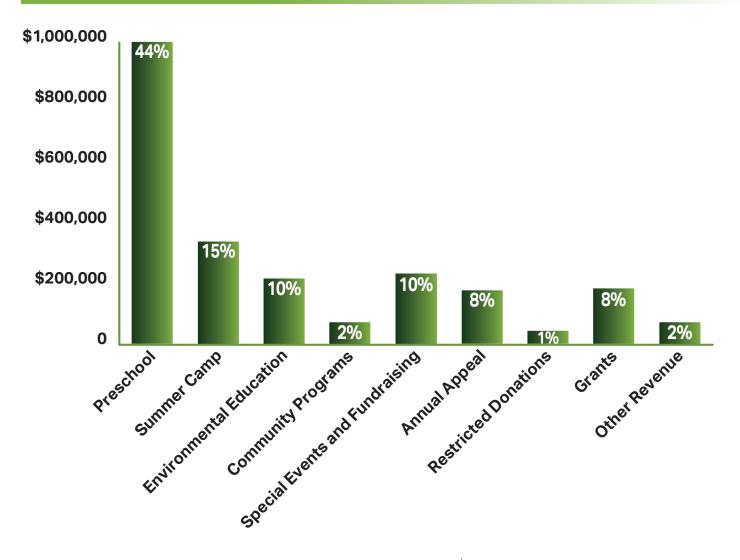






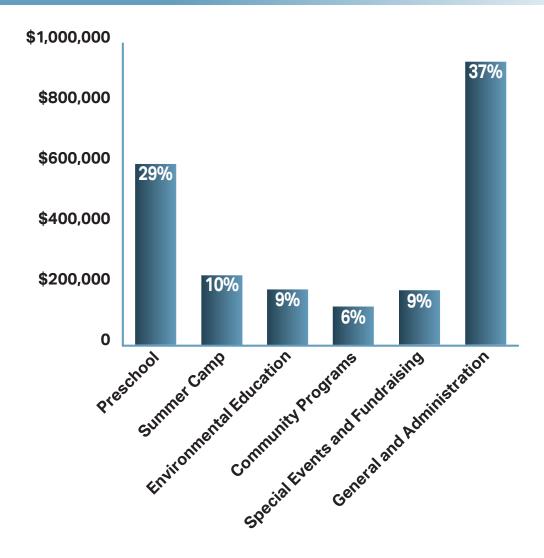


REVENUE



PRESCHOOL	\$991,609
SUMMER CAMP	\$342,661
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION	\$218,731
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS	\$49,147
SPECIAL EVENTS & FUNDRAISING	\$231,421
ANNUAL APPEAL	\$174,474
RESTRICTED DONATIONS	\$21,409
GRANTS	\$187,348
OTHER REVENUE	\$41,162
TOTAL	\$2,257,961

EXPENSES



PRESCHOOL	\$589,347
SUMMER CAMP	\$201,713
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION	\$191,463
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS	\$127,740
SPECIAL EVENTS & FUNDRAISING	\$185,897
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION	\$768,068
TOTAL	\$2,064,228







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We welcomed Elizabeth DeMuth, Richard Grosbard, and Jane Schoenholtz to our board in June 2024.

^{*} Board term expired June 2024.



SUPPORTERS THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

A sincere thanks to those who supported our Annual Appeal, Special Events, and made Restricted Gifts & Grants in Fiscal Year 2023-2024!

\$10,000 + Anonymous

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