

# New Canaan Nature Center

2025  
ANNUAL  
REPORT





# Nurturing connections between people and nature



“ Together, we are building a healthier, more sustainable future – one deeply rooted in the beauty and resilience of the natural world. – BILL FLYNN ”





**BILL FLYNN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear Friends and Supporters of the New Canaan Nature Center,

I am pleased to present our Annual Report for the fiscal year 2024 – 2025. This has been an exciting and productive year on our campus, made possible through your generous support.

As the seasons change across our 40 acres of gardens, meadows, forests, and wetlands, I am reminded daily of the powerful connection between people and the natural world. At the New Canaan Nature Center (NCNC), that connection begins early and deepens over time — with preschoolers exploring woodland trails, families learning together at community events, and volunteers restoring native habitats that will sustain future generations.

### Your support makes all this possible.

Our **Nature-Based Preschool** continues to inspire young learners through hands-on exploration, curiosity, and outdoor play. Each day, children discover the rhythms of the seasons, learn where their food comes from, and develop a lifelong appreciation for the environment. Similarly, our **Summer Camp** provides hundreds of children each year with opportunities to wade through streams, build forts, catch frogs, and connect deeply with nature — experiences that shape how they see the world.

Beyond early childhood education, NCNC serves thousands of students and adults annually through our **Environmental Education** programs, fostering ecological literacy and stewardship across the community.

We are also proud to be leaders in **sustainable, non-chemical land management**. Our staff and volunteers have been hard at work removing invasive species and replacing them with native

plants to restore ecological balance. Using innovative techniques such as solarization, buckthorn baggies, tailored mowing schedules, and targeted native plantings, we are creating healthier habitats for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife and making our trails and landscapes more vibrant and inviting for all who visit.

Looking ahead, several major initiatives are underway that will strengthen our mission and expand our impact:

- Construction of a new greenhouse to support our native plant propagation program, providing locally grown species for habitat restoration and community distribution.
- Renovations to our Education Building classrooms, enhancing the learning environment for students of all ages.
- A new multi-use building to replace our aging greenhouse — creating a flexible, sustainable space for education, community events, and conservation work.

Each of these projects reflects our ongoing commitment to education, stewardship, and community. Together, we are building a healthier, more sustainable future — one deeply rooted in the beauty and resilience of the natural world.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Your partnership enables us to continue nurturing both people and the planet — right here in New Canaan.

With gratitude,

Bill Flynn  
Executive Director

# Community Events

## SPECIAL EVENTS and 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.



### Adult Programs

We are continually enhancing our adult programs. Over the past year, offerings have included guided hikes throughout Fairfield and Westchester Counties, local birding and nature walks with our renowned ornithologist Frank Gallo, and a variety of classes, workshops, and lectures.



Information about upcoming opportunities is always available on our website and through our regularly updated Instagram and Facebook pages.

On May 8, 2025, we welcomed Amanda Lindroth as the keynote speaker of our Eighth Annual Lecture and Luncheon. She shared stories from her newly released book, *Island Dreaming*. Thanks to the support of our community, this much-anticipated event has grown into a cherished springtime tradition.





**5,000+**  
 ATTENDED COMMUNITY  
 PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL  
 EVENTS IN FISCAL YEAR  
 2024-2025.



**Looking ahead, we are excited to share the 2025-26 schedule for our annual events:**

- Holiday Market . . . . . November 22
- Thanksgiving Weekend Waddle . . . . . November 29
- Winter Wonderland . . . . . December 13
- Adopt-A-Tree Kickoff . . . . . January 24
- Owl Moon Night Hike . . . . . January 31
- Syrup Saturday . . . . . March 14
- Great Egg Hunts . . . . . April 2,3,4
- 9th Annual Lecture and Luncheon. . . . . May 7
- Great American Campout . . . . . June 27- 28
- Night of 1000 Fireflies. . . . . July 11
- Creatures of the Night Hike . . . . . August 22
- Cider Saturday . . . . . September 2026
- Fall Fair . . . . . October 2026
- Halloween Spooktacular . . . . . October 2026
- Awesome Autumn Day . . . . . November 2026

Please see our website for a monthly list of events and activities  
[www.newcanaannature.org](http://www.newcanaannature.org)

“  
 Time spent amongst the  
 trees is never wasted.  
 – KATRINA MAYER  
 ”

# Education Programs

## 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: [www.newcanaannature.org/preschool](http://www.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: [www.newcanaannature.org/little-explorers](http://www.newcanaannature.org/little-explorers)



## Summer Camp

Each summer, we welcome hundreds of campers - from age 3 through 9th grade - to our campus to learn and play in the great outdoors. Every week features a unique theme with hands-on activities designed to spark curiosity and deepen children's understanding of the natural world. Summer Camp fosters meaningful connections with nature - connection that are at the heart of our mission. Registration for this program begins in March each year—watch our website for exact dates.



In fiscal year 2024-2025, **OVER 250** both on and off-site, including  
our Environmental **PROGRAMS** 19 at various New York Public  
Educators delivered Library locations.

## Environmental Education Programs

The Nature Center has a long history of servicing 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 our neighboring communities and beyond.

One program we are especially proud of is the Haley Project, a donor-funded water ecology program for 5th graders in Norwalk Title 1 schools. Offered free of charge, this experiential program begins with a day at the Nature Center focused on the connection between one's actions and their consequences on the environment. A second day is spent on the shores of the Long Island Sound where students collect water samples, explore the intertidal zone, and discuss strategies to keep the water clean. The program culminates with a beach cleanup, reinforcing the connection between personal actions and environmental health.

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](http://newcanaannature.org/programs)



# Our Campus



## ANIMAL AMBASSADORS

Our animal ambassadors are an essential part of our educational programming, giving people meaningful, hands-on experiences with the natural world. For example, students might be interested to learn that ferrets are trained to pull electric wire through small pipes, conduits and wall cavities. However, they are truly captivated when they meet our ferrets – Luna, Sarah, and Lucy – join them on walks around the property and watch their playful antics and energetic romps.

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.





## 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. For the past five years, we have focused on eliminating invasive plants and replacing them with native flora without the use of chemical herbicides. During this time, we have tested innovative techniques such as invasive plant-eating goats, solarization (as pictured above), cardboard mulch and buckthorn baggies. As invasive plants are removed, we continue to replant with native species that attract pollinators and provide a rich habitat for insects and other small wildlife.

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.

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

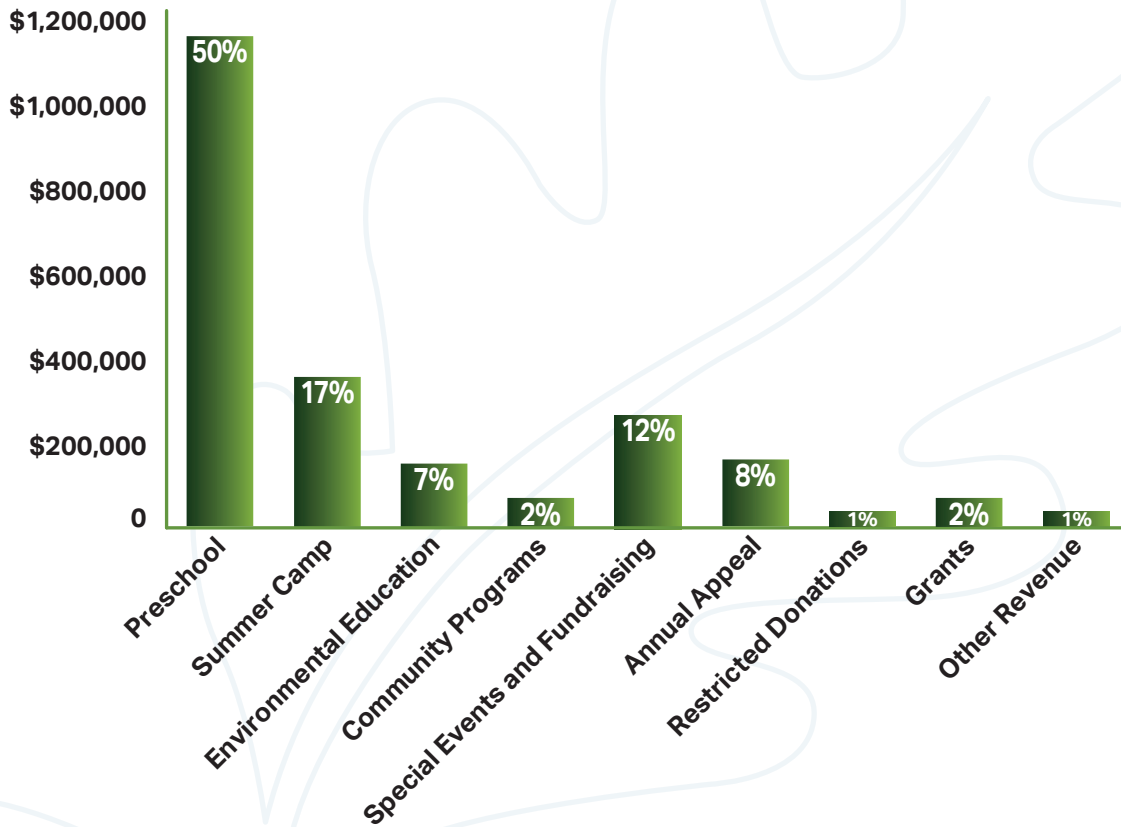
For information on getting involved or planning a visit, please see our website at: [newcanaannature.org/visit](http://newcanaannature.org/visit)



# Financials

Fiscal Year 2023-2024  
Audited Financials  
July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

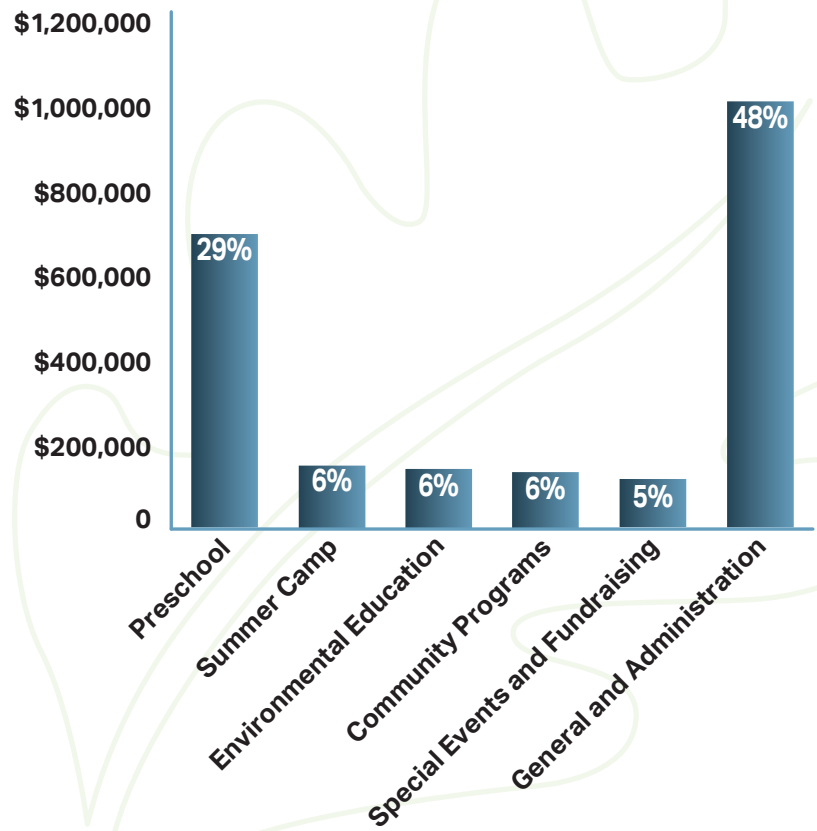
## REVENUE



<b>PRESCHOOL</b>	<b>\$1,177,085</b>
<b>SUMMER CAMP</b>	<b>\$384,399</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>\$174,599</b>
<b>COMMUNITY PROGRAMS</b>	<b>\$43,370</b>
<b>SPECIAL EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>\$290,708</b>
<b>ANNUAL APPEAL</b>	<b>\$192,687</b>
<b>RESTRICTED DONATIONS</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>GRANTS</b>	<b>\$49,000</b>
<b>OTHER REVENUE</b>	<b>\$24,600</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,341,448</b>



# EXPENSES



<b>PRESCHOOL</b>	<b>\$ 655,858</b>
<b>SUMMER CAMP</b>	<b>\$ 146,091</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>\$ 131,609</b>
<b>COMMUNITY PROGRAMS</b>	<b>\$ 128,452</b>
<b>SPECIAL EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>\$ 104,814</b>
<b>GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>\$ 1,087,933</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,254,757</b>

# Leadership



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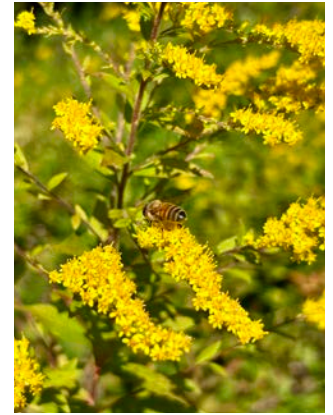
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## IN LOVING MEMORY

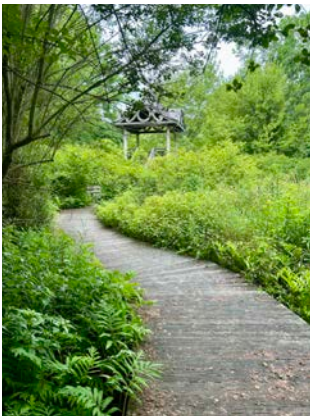
We are deeply grateful for the leadership, guidance, and dedication of Advisory Board member and former Board Chair Linda Andros. Her steadfast commitment to the Nature Center and its mission continues to inspire us all.

As a 1990s pre-school parent, former Board member, and current Advisory Board member, I am particularly pleased that the Nature Center has created a long-range development plan for its 40-acre site that includes the elimination of invasive plants and reintroduction of native species that support local insect and wildlife populations.

This exciting new "Pollinator Pathways" initiative will directly support the Nature Center's mission of environmental awareness and education, as well as the resurgence of the native plant population in the New Canaan area.



~ DAVID PRILL, FORMER PRE-SCHOOL PARENT AND BOARD MEMBER; CURRENT ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



The New Canaan Nature Center Preschool is a true gem! In this increasingly digital world, our children are taught to pause, explore, and appreciate their surroundings. Nature-based play allows them to build confidence and learn and practice life skills that will benefit them for years to come. We are so incredibly lucky to have this amazing asset in our community!

~ CAROLINE BUCH, CURRENT PRESCHOOL PARENT AND CHAIR, PRESCHOOL PARENT COMMITTEE

It is doubtful if there was ever before so much happiness and thanksgiving in evidence in any Town Meeting as there was on that September evening when the magnificent gift of Miss Susan Bliss was accepted with a joyous shout. May we prove worthy of her generosity.

~ GENEVIEVE SALMON, 1960, NEW CANAAN RESIDENT, COMMENTING ON THE DAY SUSAN BLISS GIFTED HER PROPERTY TO THE TOWN OF NEW CANAAN FOR THE CREATION OF A NATURE CENTER.



We discovered the Nature Center when we moved to town 20 years ago. Our four children all participated in the Mommy and Me Program and Summer Camp, and we fell in love with walking the trails, watching the animals, and celebrating the many events such as Fall Fair, Winter Wonderland, and the Adopt-a-Tree Maple Syrup Program. As the Preschool Health Consultant for the past 10 years, I have loved stopping in to see the preschoolers exploring in the woods, getting dirty, and learning through nature. The Nature Center is a true gem, right in the middle of our community, open to people of all ages and abilities to learn, to explore, and to grow.

~ MARIA MAGLIACANO, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

# 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 2024-2025!

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