

2022 Annual Report



Earthroots Field School
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As we take this next step in our journey and embark on this exciting new year, we are grateful for the old friends who have stood by our side and the new friends who have joined our community.

Everyone is welcome as we work together toward our shared vision for the future.

Mission and Vision

Earthroots is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization dedicated to cultivating a sense of care and connection between people and the natural world. Earthroots' vision is to create a world where people of all ages, abilities, cultures, and affiliations understand how our actions influence the world around us. With this understanding, the hope is to inspire choices that improve the health of the earth, themselves, and each other. Earthroots is firmly committed to supporting people from all backgrounds and abilities to connect with nature.

Since its founding in 2005, Earthroots has grown both programmatically and structurally to enable the organization to serve an ever-broadening range of local residents including school children, families, universities, and businesses. This growth and community engagement has further allowed Earthroots to purchase and conserve a beautiful 39-acre property in Orange County, known as Big Oak Canyon.

Land Acknowledgement

Earthroots programs are held on ancestral lands of the Juañeno Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation and Tongva/Gabrieleño and Payómkawichum/Luiseño tribes in the area known as Orange County, California.



Grinding acorns with students from Long Beach Unified School District

Overview of January to December 2022

In the past year, Earthroots participants and volunteers have engaged in over 15,000 hours of nature connection. These amazing adults, teens and children have come from all parts of Orange County, and as far as Riverside, San Diego and Los Angeles Counties. The following summarizes Earthroots' impact in 2022

739

Program participants

194

Days of Programming

142

Volunteers

15,736

Total Number of Hours in Nature

Year in Review

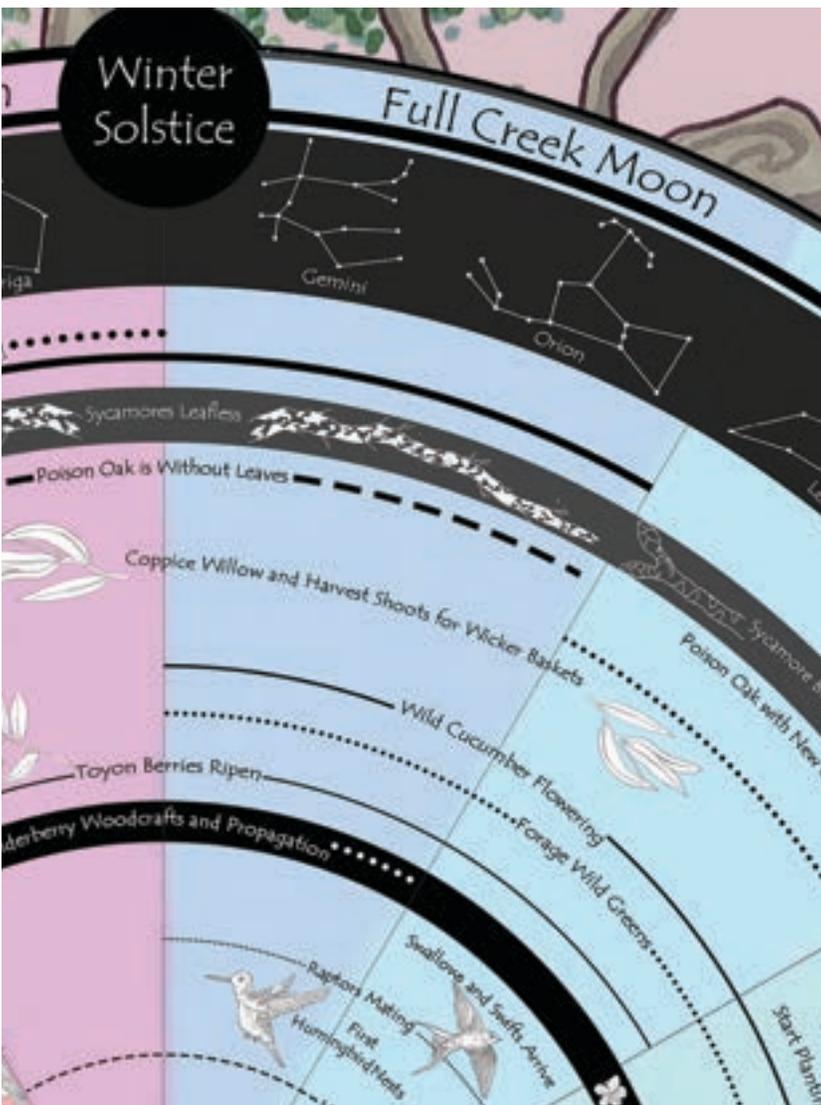
Kinship Calendar

The Earth speaks in rhythms and patterns. The turning of the seasons, the changing shape of the moon, the transformation of seed to fruit, the cycles of life... these are all guiding messages. Knowing how to interpret these patterns enables us to live more deeply in connection with the natural world.

As a way to share the patterns that guide Earthroots programs, we are excited to present the Earthroots Kinship Calendar. This calendar was created by Earthroots instructors Karen Graham and Shane Brown, as a guide to live in relationship with the living and nonliving beings (kin) that share the local environment of Coastal Southern California.

Their inspiration for the calendar grew from the Indigenous perspective that the natural world is not a resource, but rather a deeply respected relative who cares for us, and whom we care for in return. The observations noted are approximate and vary by location and are intended to orient the user to the time of year. The illustrations and calendar design were created by ecological artist, Lindsay Hansen.

Posters will be available for purchase on our website as well as **free digital downloads**. We hope that when you look at this calendar you will think of Earthroots and be inspired to connect with the patterns of nature around you.



Up close winter section of Earthroots Kinship Calendar



Jodi as a Visionary

This year, the **TimesOC newspaper** introduced a new annual publication, *Orange County Visionaries - Trends, Updates & Visionaries*.

The publication showcased 50 individuals in Orange County who are making a significant impact in their respective fields. Our own Jodi Levine was selected in the field of Education and Non-Profit.

Each of those selected are viewed as contributing to the needs and demands of a growing population within Orange County. Earthroots, as shepherded by Jodi, stands ready to assure that as a community we never lose sight of our connection to nature, and the importance that nature plays in the physical, mental, and emotional health of us all.

Residents of Big Oak Canyon

We know that Big Oak Canyon is home to abundant wildlife, but it's rare to see mammals on the trail when walking in a group. Thanks to three individuals who monitor trail cameras at Big Oak Canyon and trails nearby, we can all enjoy watching the animals move through the land. Thank you Jason Andes, Robert Detrano and Mark Girardeau for showing us the resident animals of Big Oak Canyon. Learning about animals through studying their footprints, signs, behaviors and identification characteristics brings us closer into connection with them, empowering us to care for the habitat that they need to survive.

Watch a compilation of trail camera videos from Big Oak Canyon and surrounding areas, and try to identify them all: bobcat, mule deer, mountain lion, fox, coyote, skunk, raccoon, woodrat, and raven.
Video by Jason Andes



www.youtube.com/watch?v=AajuR0rvrRc

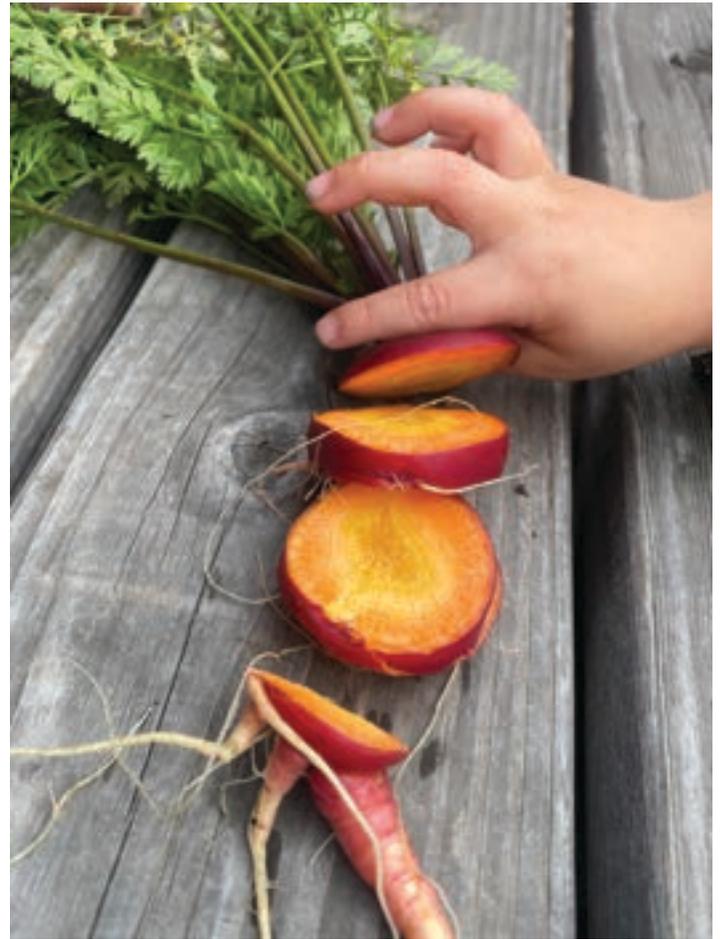


Fox at Big Oak Canyon. Photo: Mark Girardeau

Children's Garden

In 2021, our caretaker, Shane Brown, suggested that we move the Children's Garden, named in memory of Phyllis Fischer, to a more accessible spot with ample sun. A group of dedicated volunteers loosened the compacted soil, rebuilt the beds, added compost and protected the plants with wire mesh to keep the critters out. The garden grew more bountiful this year in its new home than in the previous location, and we are so grateful!

In 2022, the Children's Garden provided opportunities for students to grow medicinal herbs, salad greens, and many vegetables. The harvested plants were either eaten fresh, cooked into soups, dried for later use, or used to make a healing salve.



Freshly harvested carrot from the Children's Garden



Sifting compost for the nursery plants and Children's Garden.



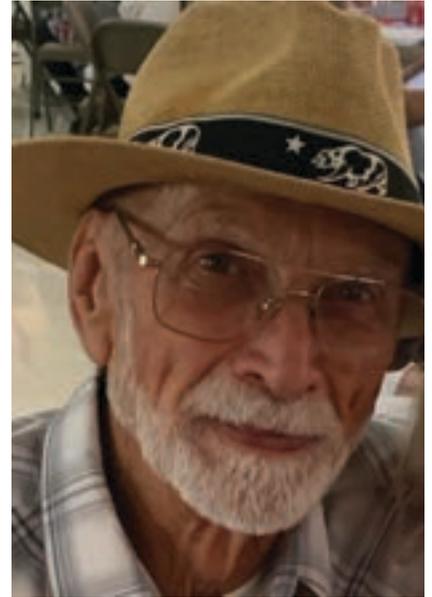
Tending the garden.

Honoring Cle Robinson

In 2011, Earthroots was looking for a place to call home. Jodi reached out to friends and acquaintances throughout the canyon areas of Orange County asking if anyone knew of a piece of land that would suit our needs. Surprisingly, two friends suggested, independently, that we take a tour of Big Oak Canyon; it happened to be for sale. Well, when we walked the trails and took in the views, there was no turning back. Earthroots began spending time on the land later that Fall. Our new neighbor, Cle Robinson, was the first to welcome us to Big Oak Canyon. As the previous resident caretaker at Big Oak Canyon, Cle knew the land like the back of his hand, and answered every question we had about the property. For the questions he didn't know, he put us in touch with those who knew. During Earthroots' first year at Big Oak Canyon, Jodi and Cle took many walks on the land together, and Cle always pointed out details that we would need to be aware of in order to better care for the land.

When a water line broke, Cle was first on the scene to repair it. When new radios came in for the Silverado emergency communication system, he offered to train us on how to use them. He is often the first to offer help anytime we need a hand. Going from no land, to managing 39-acres was a big step for Earthroots staff. Cle's support meant the world to us, especially in the early years of getting to know Big Oak Canyon.

Thank you Cle! We are grateful for your support at Big Oak Canyon through the years. As you take your next adventure in 2023 to become a "flatlander", as you call it, know that we will miss you, and that we welcome you back anytime you need a dose of Big Oak Canyon.



Cle Robinson clearing a water line at Big Oak Canyon in 2012.

Program Highlights

Eco-Literacy

This year Earthroots expanded our commitment to Ecoliteracy by seeking partnerships with foundations and other donors to bring our programs into more public schools. As of the printing of this document, The Frances R. Dewing Foundation and the Western Digital Foundation each have provided support in the form of \$5,000 grants. This money will enable children in grades K - 3 to have Earthroots instructors offer grade appropriate Ecoliteracy programs on their school's campus. These programs will support state academic core standards and curriculum currently being taught by their teachers.

It is our hope that this program will expand in both the number of schools involved, number of students participating, and number of programs offered as additional partnerships are created.

Classes, Camps & Field Trips

Earthroots classes continue to draw and delight students of all ages to new experiences in nature. Whether stargazing, exploring tidepools, learning to make a survival shelter, hiking the trails, turning the compost, analyzing water quality in the creek, or eating from the garden, participants of all ages have been connecting with nature for more cumulative hours on average than any previous year in Earthroots history.

Field trip participants or volunteers may have experienced 3 hours per person, while participants in the weekly Homeschool Enrichment in Nature program totaled 288 hours per person with Earthroots in 2022. We are proud to know that people who find Earthroots come back for more and more experiences throughout the year.

Our current weekly classes offer children ages 3-14 the opportunity to connect with nature at a variety of locations throughout Orange County. Forest Kindergarten is helping our youngest learners (ages 3-6) **develop a positive relationship with the natural world** around them.

Participants of all ages have been connecting with nature for more cumulative hours on average than any previous year in Earthroots history.

Through songs, games, and hands-on activities at Big Oak Canyon and other local open spaces, these young students are developing a curiosity for and connection to nature that will stay with them for a lifetime. Older students are deepening these connections in our Homeschool Enrichment in Nature



Taking a break on the trail to journal leaf shapes.

program & Homeschool Field Class as they learn about gardening, natural building, animal tracking, bird language, ancestral skills, and so much more.

Summer is the perfect season for making memories. By providing 7 different camps and programs for a variety of age ranges, we were able to give over 120 participants memorable experiences including nature camps, tidepooling, a sunset picnic, and nocturnal nights to name a few. Our Astronomy Nights are always a community favorite throughout the year, and especially in the summer months as we exchange a warm day for a cool evening under the stars.



Nature art inspired by a day of tidepool exploration.



This year we've brought new students onto the land through partnerships with both public and private schools via field trips. Some groups come to give back through community service projects while others come for enriching educational programs to supplement their at-school curriculum. In addition, scout groups have visited Big Oak Canyon in order to hone their survival skills and build comradery amongst group members. Every opportunity we have to bring youth onto the land, is another step toward fulfilling our mission.

Students taking a rest at Silverado Creek, Big Oak Canyon.



White sage seedlings being transplanted by a field trip participant into bigger pots in our on site nursery. Many of the native plants grown in our nursery are started with seeds harvested at Big Oak Canyon to continue the unique genetic variety adapted to this land.





Land Connection Blessing

Adelia Sandoval, Spiritual Overseer for the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation, led a Land Connection and Blessing at Big Oak Canyon this year. A land blessing is an opportunity to reconnect with the land. It's a moment that you take to show your respect for the land, your interconnectedness with all living creatures, and your appreciation for the bounty of nature. It's something you do for yourself, those you care about, and the generations to come.

As one participant shared,

“Thank you for creating such a meaningful, healing, and important event today. My life has been greatly enhanced by the experience.”

Partnerships

Thank you **Journey School** for entrusting us with your students for 13 years!

In 2009, Earthroots proposed an after-school gardening program at Journey School in Aliso Viejo. Parents were eager to have their kindergarteners spend a couple of hours after school planting seeds and caring for plants in their school garden. Little did we know that relationship would grow through the years to become such a transformative partnership. With the support of parents, administrators and teachers, that after-school program quickly became an on-campus requirement for grades 2-8, then shifted to grades K-5. The Earthroots Ecoliteracy program provides hands-on, outdoor lessons and activities, developed specifically for each grade level. Gardening, ancestral skills, habitat restoration, food preservation, and bird language, are a few examples of the topics covered in the curriculum developed to deepen students' relationships to the natural world around them.

We are honored to provide these programs at Journey School each year.

Thomas Coyne Survival School has been teaching monthly classes at Big Oak Canyon on topics including wilderness first aid, survival skills, apothecary, shelter building, and finding and purifying water.

180 Degrees Consulting is the world's largest consultancy for non-profits and social enterprises. These student volunteers provide their services free of charge so that organizations can improve and expand their services, achieve their full potential, and help

Thank you **Gail Warner** for 15 years of hosting Earthroots classes at **Pine Manor**, and for sharing your love and passion for earthen buildings. We are touched by your dedication to the youth, the earth and humanity, and we are grateful for your inspiration. We look forward to meeting the new caretakers of Pine Manor, as well as seeing what your next adventures bring!



Cob house at Pine Manor



After touring straw bale, cob and hybrid natural buildings at Pine Manor, students mixed a batch of sand, straw and clay to make their own miniature cob houses to take home.

more people in need. This year, their UC Irvine branch offered their services to Earthroots Field School. After 10 weeks of meetings and working together, 180 Degrees Consulting submitted a 44-page final report identifying 6 areas of growth for Earthroots, each with

its own implementation plan, return on investment and risk analysis. Their guidance was invaluable, and the Earthroots team is excited to begin acting on these suggestions in 2023.

Honoring Tradition

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is knowledge gained over generations of living in close contact with nature.

Earthroots had the honor of hosting two workshops this past year led by TEK teachers and members of the **Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation**. These special events highlighted local indigenous traditions and provided Earthroots community members both new and seasoned, the opportunity to connect with the land.

The first of these workshops focused on the traditional artform of basket weaving and was led by **Heidi Lucero**,



Above: Heidi Lucero leading a basket weaving workshop at Big Oak Canyon.

Left: Ellen Sue Sneider teaching basket weaving to Karen Graham, Earthroots Director of Curriculum and Instruction.



Chairwoman of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation and board member for Earthroots Field School, along with **Ellen Sue Schneider**, Basketweaving Committee Director from the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation. Heidi and Ellen Sue shared stories, led a discussion on the value of native plants, and taught participants how to weave a round reed basket. The basket weaving workshop was sponsored by Tree of Life Nursery, with a donation of native basket weaving plants.

Heidi Lucero joined us again for a second workshop, along with fellow tribe members **Adelia Sandoval & Mariah Doyle**. This workshop taught valuable information about Southern California medicinal herbs. Participants carefully carved out the soft, pithy inside of the elderberry branches and created a keepsake elderberry medicine tube, complete with a unique wood-burned design, to later fill with dried mugwort.

We offer our sincerest gratitude to Heidi, Ellen Sue, Adelia, and Mariah for spending time with us on the land sharing their stories, songs, knowledge, and skills.

Right: Elderberry Medicine Tube



Far right: Proud basket weaving participant



Volunteers

The saying goes, "Many hands make light work." We are so grateful to those who volunteer with Earthroots. From individuals to families, and field trips to corporations, the many hands who have provided over 800 volunteer hours this past year, have made a huge impact on the vision we have for Big Oak Canyon.

On the first Saturday of most months, we host a Volunteer Day where we welcome local community members, both individuals and families, to lend a hand in various special projects on

the land. These projects have included installing irrigation, moving garden boxes, removing invasive plants, making and assembling natural paint kits, and inspecting, sorting, and organizing supplies, to name a few.

In addition to our monthly volunteer days, we've also hosted several community service-based field trips. Cabrillo Point Academy students made a potting mix with compost and transplanted seedlings into larger pots, while students from Waldorf School

Orange County helped clear invasive English Ivy from the land, and spread mulch to inhibit grasses from growing in one of our activity areas.

We are able to accomplish so much more with the help of our invaluable volunteers!

Students from the Waldorf School of Orange County helped prevent weed growth by spreading mulch at Big Oak Canyon.



Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) Council Updates

Scholarships

At Earthroots Field School, we believe that nature connection is a public health issue. More and more research comes out each year showing how spending time in green spaces and connecting with nature benefits our physiological and mental health. Earthroots' scholarship program is supported by the efforts of our DEI Council along with funds raised by the generosity of our community.

Earthroots offers a needs-based and a BIPOC scholarship. The goal

of the needs-based scholarship is to make it easier for families with financial hardship to participate in Earthroots classes and events. **The BIPOC scholarship is offered to lift and strengthen the voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Color in the field of nature connection.**

Earthroots acknowledges that Black, Indigenous and People of Color face varying types of discrimination and prejudice in our country, are three times more likely than white people to live in

places that have no immediate access to nature, and are less represented in outdoor recreation activities.

This BIPOC scholarship aims to contribute to the well being of the individuals who it serves through removing barriers that limit access to connecting with nature.

“He has a natural curiosity for animals. However, we live in an urban area in Los Angeles where there aren’t always opportunities for people of color to get exposure to nature, which is why we have been driving over an hour weekly to get to the Earthroots locations.”

Earthroots Scholarship Recipient

“After struggling to find friends that understand traditional cultural lifestyle, this year [our son] was able to meet some new friends that are also people of color through Earthroots that also practice the traditional ways of their culture.”

Earthroots Scholarship Recipient

Ecoliteracy Program in Title 1 Public Schools

Thanks to funds generated at our Acorn Fundraiser, the DEI Council was able to sponsor two Ecoliteracy classroom programs in 2022 at Title 1 schools in Long Beach, CA. Karen Graham, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, summed up the experience by recounting how students were riveted by cooking with acorns, touching furs and skulls of wild animals, learning about tracking animals and weaving with plants. As she was walking from the classroom to her car with the bins of class materials, one of the teachers followed her out, expressing how engaged the students were and how unique this on campus experience was for them. When a student has a personal connection to something they are learning in a book, the learning comes to life.

We anticipate many more classrooms benefiting from this program in 2023.

“The ‘Earthroots’ lessons helped the students understand Karana (from Island of the Blue Dolphins) in a whole new way. These lessons brought them closer to the text, because they shared the same experiences that she had in the book, whether it was tracking animals or making food from the plants she found on her island.”

Teacher, Long Beach Unified School District

Continued Growth

In addition to the programs described, Earthroots has continued to grow our DEI efforts in the following ways:

- Strengthening our hiring practices to be more inclusive.
- Acknowledging Indigenous ancestral land, sharing the history of Indigenous people during class, and building relationships with members of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation.
- Acquiring additional funding through grants, donations, and fundraisers to fund DEI efforts
- Providing DEI training for staff
- Incorporating techniques in programs to address inherent bias and inclusivity
- Creating an online curriculum platform designed to help children who may not have access to natural spaces learn and connect with nature



Nature is for Everyone

The Nature is for Everyone campaign was spearheaded by our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council to raise funds for scholarships for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community. 100% of the profits from “Nature is for Everyone” merchandise (magnets, stickers, and shirts) go towards the BIPOC scholarships and DEI efforts. We love the artwork created by Meg Handler of the Human Nature Center, based in Ventura. Read more about it and see all the Nature is for Everyone items for sale on our [website](#).

What’s Next?

In 2023, our DEI Council will be engaging the community in conversations to amplify the experiences of BIPOC community members. By broadening our understanding through shared experiences, combined with reflection, Earthroots intends to weave the insights gained into our Earthroots practices. We are dedicated to providing a welcoming, inclusive place for people of all abilities, backgrounds, and walks of life.

Earthroots Treehouse Learning Portal

This year, the Earthroots Treehouse Learning Portal gained support and momentum as a result of a \$9,000 grant from the Mara W. Breech Foundation. These funds enabled Earthroots staff to do a deep dive into content creation. That, in turn, enabled us to reach out to other potential stakeholders in the Treehouse, both funders and end-users alike, for input, feedback, and guidance as we move forward with the physical development of the portal.

All of our outreach has resulted in positive feedback that what we have to offer is both needed and wanted in a variety of communities. As additional partners come on board we look forward to furthering the project and delivering an initial version of the Treehouse that will begin to be utilized in 2023.

Looking Forward to 2023

When I was a young girl, I had incredibly meaningful experiences exploring the natural world behind my home in San Clemente. Being in wild spaces gave me a sense of freedom, of belonging, of joy. That wild landscape is long gone. Like so much of our region, development has filled up so many special nooks and crannies of childhood's magical places.

I started Earthroots 17 years ago to share my love for adventuring outdoors, connecting with nature, and enjoying the gifts of the earth with others. Back then, I could not have imagined the way this community would grow, or the impact Earthroots would have on countless lives and the meaningful experiences that would come to be. I am so grateful for this community!

Growing Earthroots and conserving Big Oak Canyon has at times felt like an act of rebellion in Orange County, fighting for our right and ability to have nature connection at the forefront of our lives in such a built up environment.

The land, the animals, the plants, the water, the people... w go hand in hand. It is hard work to tend the land with care. And it is meaningful work that brings a smile to my heart

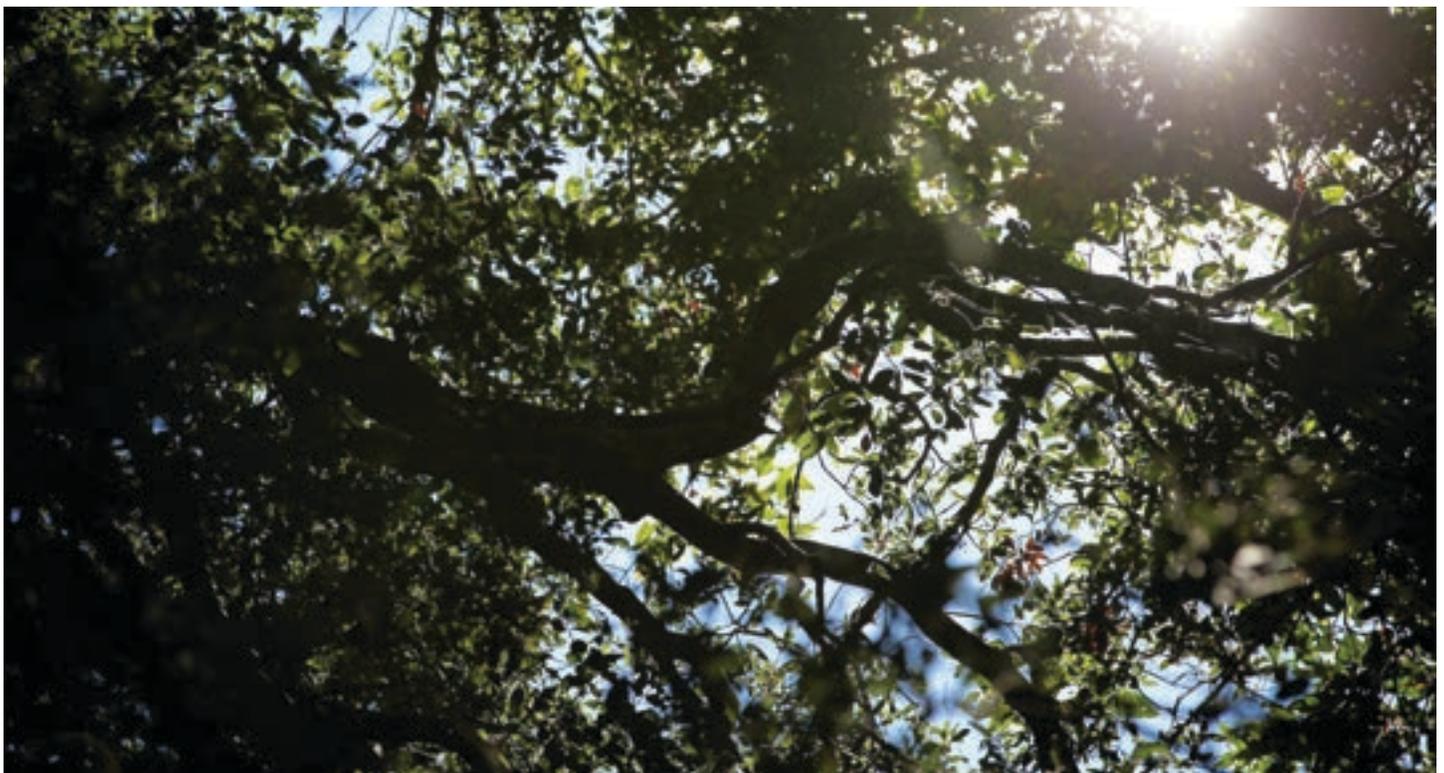
because it touches on the childhood memories that are like gold to me. Earthroots does the hard and meaningful work to care for Big Oak Canyon so that today's youth and the generations that follow will have a place to build their own unique nature connection memories. These memories will inspire their lives into adulthood, and this unique landscape will be preserved as a place of rejuvenation into perpetuity.

In 2023, I only see this vision growing. As Earthroots extends our reach to new schools, a new audience of learners online, and our community at Big Oak Canyon, I imagine a deepening of the human-nature relationship in our community, for the long-term health of people and planet. This brings my life meaning. I'm so glad you are here to share the journey.

With gratitude,



Jodi Levine
Executive Director



“There’s no way that we can help children to learn to love and preserve this planet if we don’t give them direct experiences with the miracles and blessings of nature.”

Anita Rui Olds