



**The Grand Prize winners from the Trails Education Days writing contest were honored by the Conejo Recreation and Parks District board of directors on May 29. (See more TEDays news below.)**

***Left to right: Adelaide Greenbaum (Wildwood Elementary), Samara Smith (Westlake Hills), Emma Kang (Lang Ranch Elementary), and Tyler Kilgore (Banyan). Not shown: Emiiy Smith (Weathersfield). CRPD Directors George Lange, Marissa Buss, Chuck Huffer, Nellie Cusworth, and Doug Nichols congratulated the students on being champions of the open space.***

## A Few Words from Our President

The old adage “it takes a team” is certainly true. As the Conejo Open Space Foundation kicks off a busy summer schedule, I would like to thank the small but mighty COSF board for the group's ongoing and tireless efforts to bring education and to support philanthropy in our outdoor spaces this year. It is no small feat to fund and manage programs like Trails Education Days and our Speaker Series, but our team does it with energy and talent.

I'd also like to take this moment to welcome our newest board member to the COSF team, **John Noble**, who comes to us with tremendous experience on our trails and with a real

commitment to support the COSF mission. If you see John out and about, please welcome him.

**But we need your help.** COSF is looking for new board members who have a passion for the Conejo Valley open spaces and who want to give back to our community through volunteerism. Being a COSF board member gives you the chance to engage with critical issues facing the Conejo Valley environment and to be part of the promotion, protection, and preservation of this amazing place.

**Do you have the time and energy to be a part of our team? Let us know today! If you're interested in serving on the COSF board, please reach out to me at: [president@cosf.org](mailto:president@cosf.org)**

And don't forget to join us for the upcoming Speaker Series "Water: Where it comes from, how we use it, where it goes—and why it matters" on June 28 at 7:00 p.m. (More details and registration link below.)

We look forward to seeing you there!

**Tania Garcia**  
***President, Conejo Open Space Foundation***

## We Couldn't Do It Without You!

[COSCA](#) relies on volunteers to help build and maintain trails, act as extra eyes and ears for the rangers, carry out educational programs and support the open space in many other ways. Please consider volunteering for a program that interests you.

[COSF](#) depends on open space supporters for donations that help fund COSCA volunteer programs and so much more.

Thank you for your generosity. It makes a difference..

[Donate](#)

[Volunteer](#)

## Don't Miss Our 'Water Wisdom' Talk on June 28

Although the Conejo Valley received unusually abundant rain this year, water will continue to be of critical concern for Ventura County residents and our county's primary industry, agriculture. **Jennifer Lancaster, MS**, who is the principal resource specialist at the Calleguas Municipal Water District, will discuss the sustainability of Conejo Valley water resources as the next topic in COSF's 2023 Speaker Series virtual events.

In **“Water: Where it comes from, how we use it, where it goes—and why it matters”** Lancaster will cover the sources of our water, how it’s used, and where it winds up. And whether those practices are sustainable at their current levels. She will also cover new challenges that water managers face from the state’s changing hydrology, and how we can better use the water we get through conservation and planning.

A question-and-answer period for attendees will follow.

Lancaster received her Bachelor of Science degree in biology from University of California, Riverside, and her Master of Science in biology from California State University, Northridge. She began her career as a biological science technician for the National Park Service and has also taught at Moorpark and Pierce Colleges.

Scheduled for Wednesday, June 28, at 7:00 p.m., the event is free, although COSF encourages a \$10 donation to support future Speaker Series presentations. The number of attendees is limited, so please register now at COSF’s website!



**This spring’s unexpectedly heavy rainfall has kept local creeks flowing, but our long-term prospects for bountiful water may not be as good.**



**COSCA ranger Nick Ferrari talked to fourth graders at Trails Education Days about the role rangers play in the open space and the tools they use.**

## Trails Education Days Adds 'Whole Access' Day

During the last week of April, [COSCA](#), [COSTAC](#), and COSF hosted the **30th annual Trails Education Days (TEDays) at Wildwood Regional Park**. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, TEDays resumed in 2022.

The four-day event drew nearly **950 fourth-grade students, 45 teachers and more than 100 parents**. Participants hiked down to the Nature Center, attending workshops where students got to see local fauna up close, met with rangers from COSCA, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, and the National Park Service, and learned about trail safety and courtesy. Animal Actors of Hollywood even brought live animals to show the students, including a red-tailed hawk, a squirrel, an opossum, a porcupine, and a somewhat exotic desert tortoise.

Meanwhile, there was a noteworthy addition to this year's program. Geared to students of Madroña Elementary School who are dependent on wheelchairs, the session was held at the Whole Access Trail. Susan Baukus, special education professional and COSTAC member, led the endeavor.

To COSF board member Elayne Haggan, who was instrumental in founding Trails Education Days in 1992, this year felt particularly smooth. The weather was perfect for hiking, with chilly, overcast days. For the most part, timing was impeccable. "I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop but it never did," she quipped.

"It was also very good in terms of the number of volunteers we had," she adds. "The groups were small. In some cases there were eight or nine kids per hike leader. That was really nice, because then the students got a lot of extra attention."

And that personal interaction can have a big impact on students and even volunteers. Both come to TEDays expecting immersion in nature, but they often come out with something more: a sense of connection to the community and, for volunteers, the feeling that their work has culminated in a memorable and impactful experience for the students they take under their wing.

"We've been really fortunate to have loyal volunteers, many of whom were there every day," says Haggan. "Most of them are serious open space lovers—a lot of Sierra Club members and a lot of people who have worked hard for the open space over the years. They get a great deal of satisfaction from seeing the 'light bulb' turn on in the kids' heads."—Sean Crommelin

## Save These Dates: October 7 and October 21!

Two popular events will be returning this fall, so mark your calendars now!



**Board member Steve Johnson chats with some young visitors to COSF's booth at the inaugural Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest last year.**

**On Saturday, October 7, COSF will present the second annual family-friendly Native Plantpalooza & Eco Fest.** The free educational festival will feature dozens of exhibitors and fun activities for kids. Exhibitors will have native plants and other eco-related goodies for sale, as well as plenty of freebies.

Grown-ups can get questions answered about water-wise, fire-resistant native-plant gardening, learn how to fight climate change, and get tips on being a good steward of our public lands, while kids can learn about plants and animals and what they can do to help the environment.

Plantpalooza will be held rain or shine at the Lakeside Pavilion area in the Conejo Creek North Park in Thousand Oaks from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**On Saturday, October 21, the annual COSCA Fall Trail Work Day returns.** The Spring Trail Work Day was canceled this year due to rain, so this one is badly needed.

It's scheduled to take place at Wildwood Regional Park. Work begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at noon. COSF will provide a delicious lunch for all volunteers.

Registration for both events will open soon; please watch for it!



## Spotlight on...

**Daniel Conway**, a graduate of Oak Park High School, is one of our first two recipients of [COSF's \\$1,000 annual scholarship](#) for high school seniors planning a career in environmental stewardship. Daniel is at the University of California, Berkeley, and is on track to graduate a whole year early (now class of 2024)! We caught up with him recently to see how he's doing. An avid surfer, musician and chef, Daniel worked for Beyond Meat this spring as a consumer researcher. He also founded a student chapter of [Plant Futures](#).

### **Why is environmental stewardship important to you?**

I'm deeply concerned about the well-being of our planet and the future of humanity. I believe it's our responsibility to protect and preserve the Earth for future generations. I want my children and all individuals to have access to clean air, pristine natural environments, and a

stable climate. By actively working to reduce the impacts of climate change and address environmental injustices, I strive to contribute to a sustainable and thriving world for all.

### **What is your major and why did you choose it?**

Environmental Economics & Policy: I was drawn to it because I saw it as a unique approach to addressing environmental issues. I'm convinced that the most effective solutions to the current climate crisis will come from individuals who possess a deep understanding of business and economics, combined with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. While acknowledging the importance of collaboration with the public sector and nonprofit organizations, I believe that profit-driven approaches will play a crucial role in climate solutions, similar to how profit-driven decisions resulted in the current crisis.

### **Do you see yourself pursuing an advanced degree?**

Yes. My current plan is to gain work experience for 2 to 4 years and then pursue a business school degree. I'm actively preparing for the GMAT this summer so I can apply for deferred MBA programs. If accepted into one, I will have the advantage of securing a spot early and gaining access to the resources and opportunities provided by the school I'll attend. This will allow me to focus on my professional growth and career development without the worry of applying to a graduate program later on.

### **What has been your best college experience relevant to environmental stewardship to date?**

This spring, I had the privilege of working with Professor Gordon Frankie, the director of the UC Berkeley Urban Bee Lab, to plant a pollinator garden at Berkeley Hillel [where Daniel served on the Student Board as Vice President of Social Action]. It was particularly exciting for me because I had read his book [California Bees & Blooms] in high school while starting my Save The Bees club at Oak Park. Professor Frankie generously sponsored the garden by providing plants from his greenhouse. We planted 18 native, drought-resistant, pollinator-friendly plants, which marked the beginning of the Berkeley Hillel Pollinator Garden. This experience allowed me to actively contribute to creating a habitat for pollinators and promoting biodiversity on campus.

### **What's your dream job?**

While I haven't defined my dream job yet, I am deeply interested in the field of alternative proteins, particularly cultivated meat. I find the advancements happening in Israel and parts of the U.S. fascinating, and I aspire to contribute to the success of these companies by helping them expand their customer base globally and effectively compete with traditional meat products. In the future, I hope to start my own venture.

### **Any other thoughts or words of wisdom?**

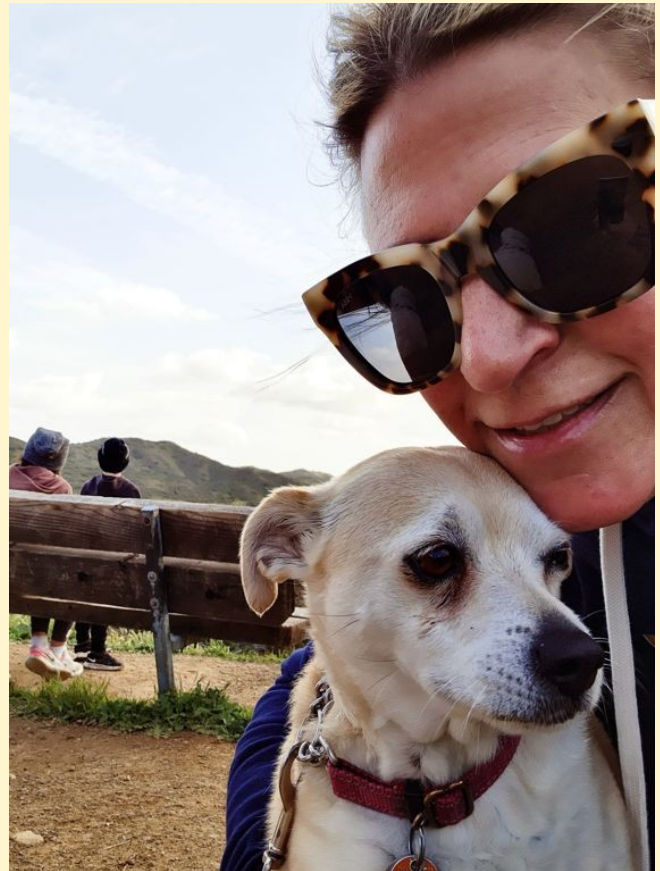
Your voice is powerful! Use it to make meaningful change and inspire others. [And stay up to](#)

[date with me on LinkedIn.](#)



**Challenge: Wildflowers**

Amanda Creamer won the May "You in the Conejo" contest with her wild, wild mustard selfie at Wildwood.



**Challenge: A Trail**

BenchSusan Baukus won the March contest with her selfie alongside her dog Cassie near Rancho Potrero.

## News In Brief

Congratulations to our March, April, and May winners of the **"You in the Conejo" selfie contest: Susan Baukus, Lynne Connell Henderson, and Amanda Creamer.** If you would like to be added to the email list for the contest, [please sign up at our website.](#)

**The 12th annual Conejo Open Space Challenge wrapped up May 31.** This year drew 160 participants, of which 130 completed the Challenge and documented all 10 trails in the Challenge. COSCA sponsors the event to challenge mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners and equestrians to familiarize themselves with less-used trails in the open space; the Challenge covers new trails each year. Over 80 Challengers attended the closing party June 2, winning prizes from event sponsors, including 8 gift cards from COSF and a \$1,500 Fathom 29 2 mountain bike from Giant.



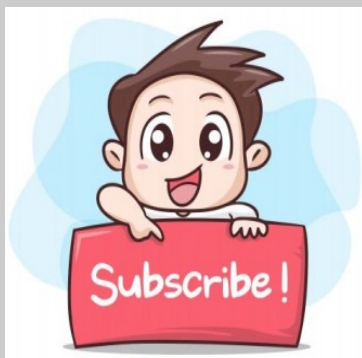
**COSCA is now accepting applications for the private citizen member of its Board of Directors.** The **COSCA** Board of Directors consists of two City Council members, two CRPD Board of Directors members, and one private citizen who serves a 4-year term. **To apply**, you must be a City of Thousand Oaks resident or reside within the CRPD boundary. **The recruitment period closes June 22 at 5:00 pm.**

Application material may also be requested from the City Clerk Department, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., (805) 449-2151 or [CityClerk@toaks.org](mailto:CityClerk@toaks.org).

**Join a free Open Space Appreciation Hike**, held monthly on the second Saturday, starting at 8:00 a.m., courtesy of Conejo Recreation and Parks! No pre-registration required. Rain, fire, or red-flag alert cancels. A responsible adult must accompany hikers under 18. For more info call CRPD at (805) 495-2163. This season's hikes will be:

- July 8, Paramount Ranch. Moderate 4.5-mile loop with elevation gain/loss about 1,000 ft. (3.5 hours).
- August 12, Los Robles Open Space–Los Padres to Los Robles and White Horse Canyon. Moderately strenuous 6-mile loop with elevation gain/loss about 1,500 ft. (4 hours).
- September 9, Conejo Canyons Open Space–Elliot Mountain Moderately strenuous 6-mile loop with elevation gain/loss about 800 ft. (3.5 hours).

Have a comment, correction, story idea or other input for the newsletter? Let us know! Email us at [news@cosf.org](mailto:news@cosf.org)



If you would like to have this newsletter emailed to you quarterly, along with other occasional messages about our activities, subscribe here.

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## Want to Volunteer? Here's How!

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make

sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about the specific volunteer opportunities below, and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [here](#).

- [Adopt-a-Trail Program](#)
- [Bike Bell Box Replenishment](#)
- [Trail Watch Program](#)
- [Trail Ambassador Program](#)
- [Trail Work Days](#)
- [Trails Education Days](#)



The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. Our [web site](#) illustrates ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

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