

## 2018 GRAND PRIZE WINNERS - District-wide

	Teacher	Student
Banyan	Michelle Eby	Sylvie Rousseau
Cypress	Julie Herder	Trenton Brooks
Sycamore Cyn	Melena Murray	Myles Young
Weathersfield	Sheri Leiken	Kelsey Jo Sullivan
Westlake Hills	Sandra Rowlett	Derek Lai

### TWO WINNERS PER SCHOOL

	Enrollment	Teacher	# entries	Student
Acacia	5	Amanda Dorado (Sp Ed)		
	25	Lisa Henningsen	15	Amy Castillo
	23	Joyce Wheatly	20	Ava Maloney
Aspen	30	Samantha Birg	29	Audrey Cuico
		Samantha Birg		Aiden Keith
	29	Lori Brown	26	
	4	Shaela Larimer (Sp Ed)		
Banyan	31	Holly Henzell-Lopez	20	Isabella Clerico
		Holly Henzell-Lopez		Aiden Bond
	15	Michelle Eby	14	
	31	Kenneth Holland	20	
Conejo	24	Courtney Adler	19	Lindsay Castro
		Courtney Adler		Diego Cruz
	15	Heather Lane		
	24	Brian McLaughlin	16	
Cypress	27	Julie Herder	24	Isabella Greene
	28	Heidi Slattum	24	Banoo Nader
Glenwood	23	Denise Brown	18	
	23	Gloria Kinberg	19	Nelly Cedeño
		Gloria Kinberg		Kimberly Sugia
	1	Amanda Caldwell		
	3	Shauna Behm (Sp Ed)		
Ladera	14	Katie Collins	5	Marilena Bassil
		Katie Collins		Benet Fwilsake
	3	Jacqueline Luderer		
	34	Lori Shargel	3	

Lang Ranch	33	Clark Barnett	33	
	34	Lisa Cain	23	
	32	Kim Carroll	31	Julia Kirkpatrick
	33	Douglas MacDonald	25	Benji Covington
Madroña	28	Janet Dieterle		
	31	Allison Nazzaro		
	5	Kari Slattum		
Maple	17	Cheryl Babcock	17	Eloise Etheridge
	28	Deedra Bochat	23	Joana Farfan
	5	Ashley Clark (SpEd)		
	1	Tamara Pollard		
Sycamore Cyn	33	Tracy Abraham	12	
	34	Laurie Baron	20	
	34	Melena Murray	27	Cathleen Chen Sadie Le
	34	Tracy Tubb	26	
Walnut	19	Lisa LaMontagne	18	Devika Nair
		Lisa LaMontagne		Sydni Watson
	21	Alissa Floyd	17	
Weathersfield	23	Karen Smith	23	
	24	Sheri Leiken	25	Matthew Handy
		Sheri Leiken		Shiva Emily Sadri
Westlake	27	Rebecca Crowell	26	
	27	Christie McCarthy	23	
	27	Molly Upton	25	Jack Brinkman
		Molly Upton		River McFadden
Westlake Hills	30	Sandra Rowlett	25	Alesia Barry
		Sandra Rowlett		Daniela Setareh
	30	Melissa Sublette	28	
Wildwood	29	Jennifer Bouchard	27	Lauren Goodnight
	29	Jocelyn Dane	27	Geneva Hessee
	30	Joelle Soliz	29	
TOTAL	1110		802	

Grand Prize Winner - 2018 Writing Contest  
Sylvie Rousseau  
Teacher - Mrs. Eby  
Banyan Elementary School

April 27, 2018

Dear Fred Nuesca,

I enjoyed the Wildwood Hike on April 26, 2018. It was extremely interesting, and I learned many things from you. The foxtail plant tends to get stuck in dogs' or cats' fur and embeds itself deeper and deeper into their skin every time they move. The yucca plant's fibers can be used to make string, slippers, or baskets. I learned that a way to tell cats' poop from other animals' poop is because cats' poop has a pointy end. Coyotes' poop has fur in it, too. I also learned that poison oak can harm you, or even kill you, to the touch. I learned something I had never known before: deer shed their horns! Skulls of prey, such as deer, show that prey have eyes on the side of their head and have duller teeth. Skulls of predators, such as mountain lions, have eyes on the front of their head and sharper teeth to eat the prey.

In the workshops, I learned that some rangers' jobs are to make sure that trails are safe to the public. The thing is, we have to also be courteous to nature by not throwing trash anywhere. I learned that when porcupines get scared, their spikes go up. An opossum plays dead when danger is near. A vulture only likes to eat dead food, so it doesn't hunt.

From another workshop, I learned not to ever let your dog go loose without a leash, and always have at least two poop bags. You should also pay attention around you so you don't get hurt. Also, never stand behind a horse because it will kick you. If you are walking and you see a horse, you let it go by unless the rider says otherwise. Bikers have to stand by for hikers and horses.

We saw a Red Tailed Hawk and a duckling. The duckling was so cute! Wood Rat Nests were in many places, such as by the trees. It was so much fun going to the Wildwood Hike!

Sincerely,

SR

Apr. 126.018

Dear Tracker Rob,

Thank you for volunteering to take me on that amazing hike. You used really descriptive words to teach our group a lot. I now know what a pack rat's nest looks like. The lemonade berry was fun to learn about. The sagebrush smelled like a garlic tart and it smelled really good. You also taught me that there are 18 kinds of oak trees. I thought the oak tree was an oak tree and that was it!

The mountains and streams there were really cool to look at! I saw a snake slither into the brush. The Yucca was really high. I liked to see the porcupine dance its little jig and the great horned owl and the turkey vulture look very intimidating. I would not want to be a mouse and look up to one of those charging at me! I saw a poison oak and it was red and green. The plants were fun to learn about.

Thank you for teaching us about the native Americans that taught themselves how they used the plant. The natives used the lemonade berry to make drinks taste more palazzing. The use of these plants made me

want to try out it in an experiment.

One of the oak tree leaves was like crisp on one side but kind of like fluffy on the other. The sagebrush felt like touching a pine from a pine tree but its dull, not sharp like a real pine. I dont think I want to touch poison oak and get a rash. The yucca felt like a top of a palm tree.

I am very thankful that you wanted to volunteer to go to Wildwood to go on the hike with us.

From,  
TB

Trenton Brooks  
Mrs Herder  
Cypress School

Dear Susan Vivell,

Thank you so much for taking us on a hike in the beautiful, and colorful Wildwood Park. First, I learned about the wonderful plants that live in our area. One of these plants that I learned about was poison oak. I didn't know that poison oak has 3 leaves, and it could give you rashes that you wouldn't want to have. Another plant that I learned about was the yucca plant. One fact that I learned about yucca, was that you can make ropes, slippers, and many other things that I wish I could make for you. The last interesting plant that I learned about on the Wildwood Park hike, was the sagebrush. Sagebrush is also called, cowboy cologne. Also, sagebrush has a strong minty smell that if you touch it and smell your fingers, it would smell minty. Next, I learned about what helps the environment and ecosystem. One thing that helps the environment is the turkey vulture. Turkey vultures eat the rodents that are

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dead on the ground so the environment wouldn't stink. Without the vulture, the park would smell really bad. Fungi also helps the environment. Fungi decomposes all the dead leaves, or food. If we didn't have any fungi, now one would be able to do anything. Finally, I learned about some animals that live in this area. One thing I learned about was rattlesnake skin. Rattlesnake skin looks rougher than you think. This skin has interesting patterns all over. Another animal that I learned about was the grey horned owl. Grey horned owls can turn their head all the way around. They also have great eyesight and colorful eyes. The last two animals I learned about was the porcupine and the opossum. Porcupines dance to get attention and they have about 30,000 quills on it. One thing I learned about the opossum was that they can turn their paws 180 around. After all, I had a great time at Wildwood Park and I had a fun time learning about the environment.

Sincerely, M. Y.

Grand Prize Winner - 2018 Writing Contest  
Kelsey Jo Sullivan  
Teacher - Ms. Leiken  
Weathersfield Elementary School

May 1, 2018

Dear Niki,

I am writing this letter to describe the living and non-living characteristics of the Wildwood ecosystem.

In the beginning of the hike, I felt a soft sycamore leaf. I spotted animal signs such as scat. The scat had different things in it such as food. Another animal sign I saw was an eaten pinecone. A squirrel that lives in Wildwood ate it.

Later on, I saw a woodrat nest. It looks like a pile of sticks. It has a bathroom near the entrance so when predators enter they smell something gross and want to leave. Usually, one woodrat lives in a nest at a time.

After that, I saw two different plants that are used to make medicine. One of the plants is called Mugwort. The other plant is called the Willow. You can get medicine from the Willow's bark. I also saw some Yucca plant. I learned that the Indians native to Conejo would make rope, baskets, sandals, and sewing needles from the Yucca plants.

Towards the end of the hike, you told us that male ducks leave the nest to fight off predators and the lady stays hidden in it because her color blends in. The coyote has eyes that face forward to look for prey and teeth made for ripping and shredding. It is the same with the mountain lion. Prey have eyes to the side and teeth for gnawing and chewing.

I also learned that there is something called FBI. That is Fungus, Bacteria, and Invertebrates. They are the decomposers of Conejo Open Space and other places in nature. There are three native snakes which are the King Snake, Rattlesnake, and the Gopher Snake. The Rattlesnakes that live in and near Conejo Open Space are not aggressive. Rattlesnakes do not have ears.

I learned about some animals that live in the Conejo Open Space. One animal that I learned about is the porcupine. I heard that they have over 30,000 quills, they are a rodent, and that their teeth are orange because they have iron in them. I also heard that they are arboreal. That means that they live in trees. I also learned about the Turkey Vulture. They have a bald head so that they don't get blood and guts in their face. They also only eat dead things. They do not build nests. They also have a white or silver lining under their body.

To Conclude, I learned a lot about Conejo Open Space and the living and non-living things there. Thank you for teaching me these things that I did not know before. It made my field trip so special!

Sincerely,

*K.J.S.*



Grand Prize Winner - 2018 Writing Contest  
Derek Lai  
Teacher - Mrs. Rowlett  
Westlake Hills Elementary School

April 26, 2018

Dear Niki Stokols,

Thank you for leading us on a breathtaking adventure around Wildwood Park. Throughout the day, I was enthralled with all the scientific and historical facts presented to us. This helped me to realize how important it is for everyone to understand the importance of local conservation.

It all began with a mile long hike into the park. Along the way, I learned about the different ways the Native Americans used various plants. For example, Sycamore leaves are very soft and were often used as a natural toilet paper. Willow leaves were a great source of painkiller, much like aspirin. The Yucca plant, quoting you, is "The Home Depot for Native Americans." It provided countless uses such as being a natural soap, sewing needle, rope, and a sturdy material for making sandals and baskets. My absolute favorite plant was the sweet-smelling Sagebrush, or "Cowboy cologne." The fragrance of it was sensational.

Learning about all the local wildlife was thrilling and enlightening. The story of the Western Fence Lizard was especially interesting. One of the main reasons why people in the Western part of the country don't suffer from Lyme disease as often is because of a special protein in the blood of the Western Fence Lizard. This protein removes the harmful bacteria from the tick when it bites the lizard. Then when the tick bites a human, the tick doesn't have the bacteria, so the human isn't infected. I also learned about some tricks animals use to protect themselves in the wild. The wood rat, as an example, makes their bathroom in the front of their nest to repel predators with the vile odors. Another example is how some prey will burrow under Prickly Pear Cactus when threatened by a flying predator. The sharp needles of the Prickly Pear will keep the prey safe and sound.

Toward the end of the day, we learned about park safety during a very entertaining skit. What made the demonstration especially amusing is that the performers reenacted exactly what you shouldn't do when visiting a park or national preserve. After the performance, the audience was asked to point out all the bad choices and actions made during the play. Some of these things included riding a bike fast in front of a horse without a helmet, picking a flower and tasting it, trying to capture a live snake, littering, looking down at phone and spooking a horse, letting a dog run off a leash, and not picking up it's "Doggy deposit." It reminded me of a time when I was at a park and I watched people leave their trash on the grass. I asked my mom why they didn't clean up, and she said, "Some people just don't care about taking care of the Earth." This made me crestfallen that people would rather harm nature than clean up after themselves.

I'll never forget the terrific day I had at Wildwood Park. I learned from you and the other naturalists so much about nature. I appreciate you showing us the importance of taking care of the natural world and teaching us about how the ecosystem works.

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Sincerely,  
D.L.