

Your Support Helps Young Women Forge New Friendships and Paths to Success

For a young teen who is working hard to interact with and trust others, learning to connect with a small, vulnerable animal can be vital for breaking down boundaries. Community and donor support has allowed The Nature Connection to bring this opportunity to build friendships through nature to at-risk young women in Concord, MA.

Rejuvenating Kindness, New Relationships

Walden Street School is a therapeutic residential school for adolescent females who are struggling with serious past trauma. The Nature Connection supports the school's focus



Alexa enjoys comfort and connection from "Dilly", our volunteer program rabbit.

...they don't realize they're pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone, because it's with animals and hands-on activities.

Stephanie Sotis, Assistant Director,
Walden Street School, Concord, MA

on encouraging positive personal growth, building self-esteem, and fostering healthy relationships. With our increasing capacity, The Nature Connection has provided more than 200 programs for Walden Street School over the past decade and is able to continue supporting Walden Street School as demand for services and their resident population changes over time.

Many students need "parallel play" activities to learn how to connect with others and navigate social settings. Assistant Director of Walden Street School, Stephanie Sotis, notes that The Nature Connection's programs offer new students an ideal introduction to therapeutic programming by engaging them in safe, hands-on activities that feel like play. Sotis also values the subtle risk-taking and personal growth component of The Nature Connection's programs, saying "It is an interesting way for kids to push themselves and they don't realize they're pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone, because it's with animals and hands-on activities."

Justine Tibbits, our Program Coordinator, recently brought a terrarium with snails and saw students' moods change in a matter of minutes. "When youth are introduced to our snails they are able to hold a small, vulnerable, and non-threatening life

in their hands, which I think allows them to show the snails kindness and, eventually, do the same with their peers."

Connecting with Chi-Chi

Sotis explains that students often arrive at Walden Street School with the stigma that they are "bad kids" or "program kids", which they feel they will never escape. Like all teenagers, they thrive when they are able to connect with others, and feel successful in some activity. The focus of Walden Street School's work is not to dwell on students' pasts, but as Sotis puts it, help them "find out who they are and what they can become."

One student, Jess, who has participated in our programs for many years, lights up at the beginning of every session. When she is around our program animals, she is the most talkative she's been all week. Through The Nature Connection's consistent support, Jess was able to demonstrate that she could handle the responsibility of caring for and owning a pet. Recently, she earned the privilege of having a pet chinchilla, "Chi-Chi", in her room. After spending years in the foster care system, this young teen now has a loving bond with an animal who will be her trusted companion for years to come.

The Nature Connection

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Program participants' names have been changed.



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2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

The Nature Connection has had an exciting year with record growth in 2018. With your help, our programming has grown by 25%. Our year-long programs now reach over 300 individuals per year across Greater Boston! In particular, we are reaching more children, at new sites such as Littleton Academy/JRI, a group home for very young children.

With each new partnership, we are on our way to meeting our goal to lead the effort to make animal and nature-assisted therapy widely practiced in Greater Boston. With each visit, a child is empowered by her newly found ability to plant a seed and grow her own food; an elderly man watches a hermit crab emerge from its shell, and is able to recall a lost memory of exploring tidepools in his youth.

We have taken our professional development to the next level too, integrating new best practices into our programs. Our program team has learned from industry leaders including: Justice Resource Institute, The New England Wildflower Society, and The Alzheimer's Association. Our Caregiver Training program, launched in 2015, has also blossomed: this year we trained over 200 professional and family caregivers to bring nature-based interventions to vulnerable individuals in their care.

Thank you for your belief in the healing power of nature, and for your generous support for changing lives in our communities.

With gratitude,

Sophie Wadsworth
Executive Director

Ron Bott
Board President

“When The Nature Connection is here, the behavioral issues go away. I’ve seen it. The program is powerful medicine because it grounds [the children] to nature and to themselves, and connects them to each other through the animals.”

— Erica Nazzaro
Clinical Coordinator of Intensive Foster Care
The Home for Little Wanderers

OUR MISSION

The Nature Connection is a non-profit organization that brings nature-based programs to people with limited access to the natural world. Founded in 1983, The Nature Connection brings individuals together with nature's capacity to teach and to heal.



The Nature Connection FY18 Financials*

REVENUE

Earned Income (Program Revenue)	\$70,992.00
Individual Contributions	\$95,783.00
Foundation	\$76,099.48
Government	\$3,800.00
Corporate	\$7,098.00

Total Revenue **\$253,772.48**

EXPENSE

Program Services	\$138,765.31
Fundraising and Marketing	\$62,128.89
Management	\$25,050.20

Total Expense **\$225,944.40**

*Preliminary unaudited results



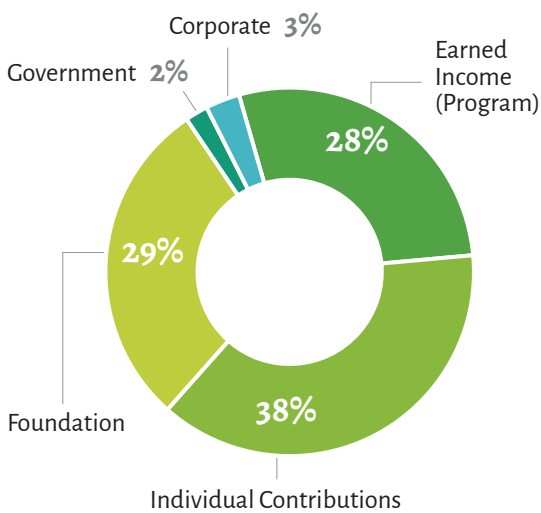
OUR VISION

Our 10-year vision is to lead the effort in making animal and nature-assisted therapeutic programming widely practiced in Greater Boston by the year 2027 for those who lack access to the natural world.

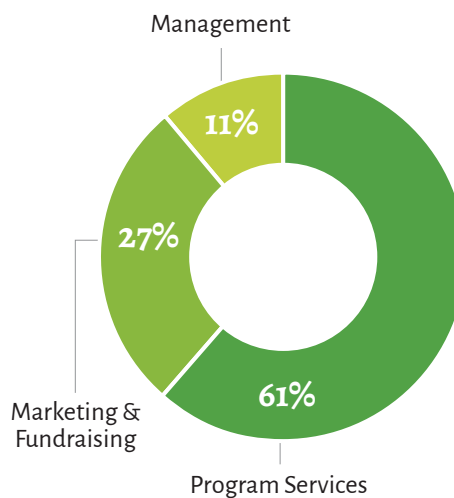
OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

From Aug 1, 2017 to July 31, 2020, our strategic goals include doubling the number of program sites we serve, and training 500 caregivers.

FY18 REVENUE



FY18 EXPENSES



FY18 by the Numbers

2,749

Total number of connections

15

Total number of program sites

325

Total number of individuals served

150

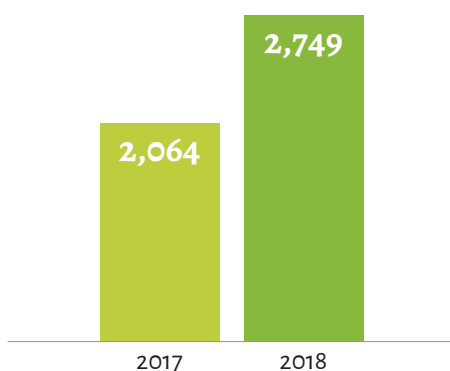
Total number of volunteers

163

Total number of caregiver trainees

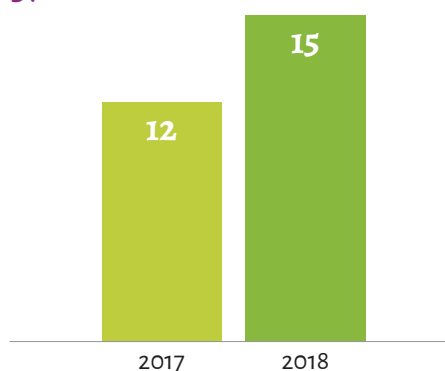
NUMBER OF CONNECTIONS*

33% increase



PROGRAM SITES

25% increase



6th Annual Inspire

Stay tuned for our
6th annual benefit
Inspire
in May 2019.

More details to come
about this night of
philanthropy and fun!

Inspire 2018



Jude Aronstein, Program Consultant, Maddie Phadke, Director of Development, Manish Phadke, and Robin Young, journalist and host of NPR's *Here & Now* at *Inspire* last May. Robin shared stories about how much nature and animals have meant to her throughout her life.

The Nature Connection Trains 145 Professionals at Alzheimer's Association Conference

For the first time, staff from The Nature Connection presented to 145 caregivers at this year's regional Alzheimer's Association Conference, *Map Through the Maze*, last May. Sophie Wadsworth, Executive Director, and Samantha Sheppard, Program Coordinator, led the training along with Concord Park Memory Support Director, Mary Baum. Professional caregivers learned how to incorporate aromatherapy, horticulture, and sensory activities to engage individuals with dementia through the healing power of nature.

