

## Aliveness Inside: Unique Approach Gives Children and Adults New Access to Nature

“Do you remember that one holiday song about chestnuts?” Joan had celebrated 87 Christmases, but she couldn’t remember the song. Joan, who lives in a locked-door memory care residence, furrowed her brow at the basket of chestnuts in front of her. A Nature Connection volunteer, Frann, cleared her throat and sang “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire”.

With a sudden spark of recognition, Joan sat up straight and cheerily sang the next line, “Jack Frost nipping at your nose!” She nodded and laughed, taking a chestnut and holding it up to her cheek. With a brightness in her eyes Joan exclaimed, “When I was a child I loved searching for chestnuts with my sister. We always found so many!”

### Nature Evokes Joyful Memories

For Joan, chestnuts and a holiday song enabled her to re-live a warm childhood memory. The Nature Connection tailors therapeutic nature programs to meet the needs of residents like Joan who are cut off from the joyful and restorative experiences nature offers.



Judy creates her own fragrant mix of spices.

“[The Nature Connection’s] team of staff and volunteers provide a unique educational and therapeutic approach... that gives our participants powerful opportunities to connect with themselves, their peers, and the larger world.”

— Susan Walsh, Day Habilitation Coordinator  
Work, Community, Independence (WCI), Waltham, MA

### The World Through Touch

The Nature Connection also brings unique programs to people living with physical and intellectual disabilities, including participants at Work, Community, Independence (WCI) in Waltham.

Amy, a WCI participant, senses the world primarily through touch as she lives with deafness and blindness. Throughout the day, Amy experiences activities via a WCI staff person who signs into the palm of her hand. The Nature Connection’s programs offer Amy accessible, tactile nature, regardless of any challenges she faces.

At a recent program, Amy ran her fingers through a rabbit’s silky fur. As she did, the rabbit shook its body like a wet dog. Amy lit up with excitement as she let out a joyful cry and mimicked the rabbit’s movement. Her peers clapped their hands and laughed along, some even trying out her motion too. Staff looked on and



Liza delights in bright blooming flowers.

smiled while Amy, with her exquisite sense of touch, brought brightness and aliveness to everyone in the room.

Susan Walsh, *Day Habilitation Coordinator* at WCI, sums up experiences like this saying, “[The Nature Connection’s] team of staff and volunteers provide a unique educational and therapeutic approach, through animals and nature, that gives our participants powerful opportunities to connect with themselves, their peers, and the larger world.”

## The Nature Connection

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Program participants' names have been changed.



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# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## Note from Our Outgoing Executive Director

Dear Friends,

What an exciting year it's been! Launching new partnerships and caregiver trainings, The Nature Connection brought nature's healing power to over 450 children, adults, and caregivers in need. The Cummings Foundation awarded NC a 10-Year Sustaining Grant of \$200,000 to support our future growth. Pilot programs reached kids at multiple sites in Greater Boston including Bethany Hill Place, serving families who have faced homelessness, violence, and loss. As one child wrote: "[The Nature Connection] helps me be more aware and interactive with nature and life itself."

Thanks to many of you who celebrated our mission at "Inspire" at The Barn at Gibbet Hill. Please mark your calendars for May 6, 2020 for next year's festive "Inspire" event.

As I transition to the next adventure of my career, I am deeply grateful to all of you who have collaborated and energetically supported NC's mission. You have made it possible for us to transform so many children's and adults' lives. Thank you for your generosity.

I am excited for The Nature Connection to make new strides in its mission. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Meeting and future events. Please keep in touch as The Nature Connection moves forward into its next amazing chapter.

With gratitude,

Sophie Wadsworth  
*Executive Director*  
[swadsworthone@gmail.com](mailto:swadsworthone@gmail.com) | 978.877.7976

## Note from Our Board President



As the incoming Board President, I have begun my tenure at an important time for The Nature Connection. As we look to the future we continue to

be grateful for Sophie's leadership which has been instrumental in our growth and success.

We are also fortunate to have hired an experienced nonprofit executive, Lee Swislow, as our Interim Executive Director. This transition offers us a unique opportunity for The Nature Connection to advance our strategic planning with Lee. This will be continued by our future permanent Executive Director, who will be integral to our process of developing our vision for the future.

Our staff and volunteers continue to deliver and innovate our transformative programming. NC has just hosted its first corporate volunteer event, which not only supports our work with program material prep, but also helps raise the organization's profile by connecting with new individuals in the community. As always please feel free to contact me at [arboardman@gmail.com](mailto:arboardman@gmail.com) if you would like to talk more about what NC has in store. I continue to be excited about what the future holds!

Sincerely,

Andrew Boardman  
*Board President*

## 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 FY19 Financials\*

## REVENUE

Earned Income (Program Revenue)	\$67,800
Individual Contributions	\$95,361
Foundation	\$62,618
Government	\$4,000
Corporate	\$9,733

**Total Revenue** **\$239,512**

## EXPENSE

Program Services	\$194,129
Fundraising and Marketing Management	\$16,681
	\$15,557

**Total Expense** **\$226,367**

## ASSETS

Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$106,863
Change in Net Assets	\$18,977

**Net Assets, End of Year** **\$125,840**

\*Preliminary unaudited results



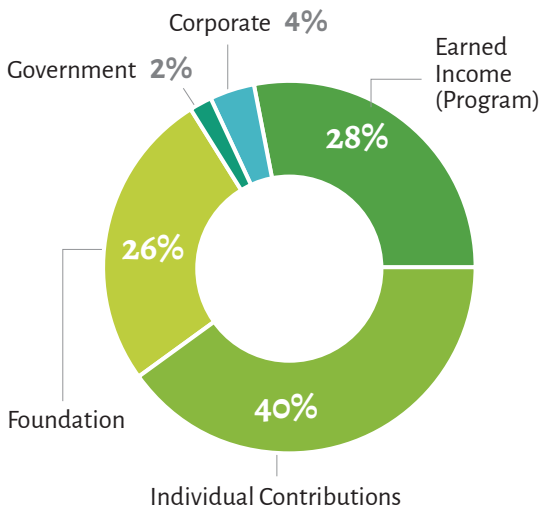
## OUR VISION

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.

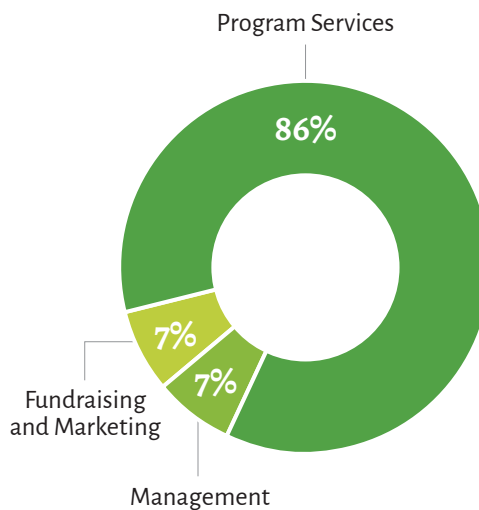
## OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

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

## FY19 REVENUE



## FY19 EXPENSES



## FY19 by the Numbers

**2,697**

Total number of connections

**18**

Total number of program sites

**397**

Total number of individuals served

**105**

Total number of volunteers

**50**

Total number of caregiver trainees

“The Nature Connection’s work is uplifting, and singularly focused, creating a positive, joyful impact. Moreover, it’s paving the way for important changes in therapeutic services.... This is a thriving model, and The Nature Connection has found a formula that works.”

— Cummings Foundation grant committee for Middlesex County



Marcus plays with bright summer grasses during a program at Bethany Hill Place in Framingham

## Dementia Caregiver Trainings in Fourth Year

The Nature Connection trained over 50 caregivers this past year at our free Dementia Caregiver Trainings. Every spring and fall, we empower personal and professional caregivers to incorporate nature and sensory-based activities into the lives of those with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Trainees learn to create hands-on activities using garden herbs, seashells, and other natural materials to engage those in their care with the healing power of nature.



“ I feel much more confident in my ability to engage my residents with nature. We practiced activities that I had never considered using for elderly and dementia patients. ”

— Program Director at a Metrowest memory care residence

### Interested in upcoming trainings?

Email: [info@nature-connection.org](mailto:info@nature-connection.org), or visit:  
[nature-connection.org/caregiver-trainings](http://nature-connection.org/caregiver-trainings)

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the Dana Home Foundation



# Inspire 2020

Join us at  
The Barn at  
Gibbet Hill  
for  
Inspire  
on  
May 6, 2020.

