

YAKONA NATURE PRESERVE & LEARNING CENTER

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



FOUNDERS' STATEMENT

As one year closes and a new one begins, Bill and JoAnn would like to express our deep gratitude for the diverse elements that make Yakona, Yakona.

To the foundations and individuals who believed in our mission and invested in Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center, we offer our heartfelt thanks. With their help we've built programs, as well as structures, in fulfillment of our mission. It can be considered a leap of faith to invest in such a young organization, but they made the leap and we united to bring young dreams to fruition. Not a small matter.

Without our dedicated staff, none of it could have been accomplished. They labor days, nights and often weekends because they embody our mission and goals. As we often acknowledge out loud, "We may be small, but we are mighty." Our staff shows compassion, energy and enthusiasm in every endeavor they undertake.

JoAnn and Bill marvel at the assists generously given by a cadre of volunteers, knowing we couldn't achieve what we do without their hearts and hands. They bring deep backgrounds and passion to Yakona and we benefit tremendously. A mere Thank You never, ever seems enough.

Members of our Boards of Directors are outstanding, accomplished and reflect the best of community. The only perk they seek is knowing they're helping shape Yakona's present, but most importantly, her future. We recognize and appreciate the talents and insights they bring to the governance and guidance of our organization.

It may sound odd to be grateful to contractors, but those we employ throw themselves body and soul into Yakona. Their knowledge and love of the land show in everything they touch. They've been with us since the beginning, helping us grow and evolve, and we'd surely be far less without them.

Our final expression of gratitude belongs to Nature herself. When we model her patience and allow time to unfold as it will, many of our strivings fall aside and the path forward emerges. This has been proven time and again. For that, and all who help lead Yakona forward, we are humbled and grateful.

JoAnn and Bill Barton



THE TEAM

The Yakona Learning Center assumed management of the Yakona Nature Preserve January 1st. Led by Dr. Natalie Schaefer, Executive Director, Yakona's accomplishments are numerous. We served over 1,700 people in 2023, up from 600 last year. Over 800 of those individuals were served through Yakona's educational programming, aka Creating Connections and Connections of the HeART. We were awarded over 25 grants, leading to the building of an official Learning Center, our pavilion and plant nursery, and additional restrooms plus a plethora of educational equipment and supplies. We've partnered with Oregon Forestry Resources Institute and OSU's Oregon Natural Resource Education Program to disperse Yakona's monitoring protocols to educators across the state. This is especially gratifying, as we are serving so many more students by sharing our curriculum and resources with other environmental educators.

Rena Olson-Snyder, Yakona's Community Arts & Engagement Manager, has grown the docent flock, all of whom add so much to Yakona's capacity by working in the woods, helping with group hikes, or co-hosting school/youth groups. She's facilitated wonderful arts programs in collaboration with professional artists or alone, offering Yakona's visitors another way to engage with the forest and its inhabitants. Our educational programs are so much the better with Rena's input on the curriculum, and her artistic eye with the nature journals. Additionally, she is responsible for all the beauty of Yakona's communications – our website, newsletters, as well as this annual report.

Bob Langan spent the latter part of the year with us as Yakona's Forest & Lands Manager. His responsibilities included clearing roads and trails, overseeing a cadre of habitat docents, and ensuring that Yakona's forest and wildlife were protected. His attention to detail made him the perfect land steward. While he was only with Yakona for a short time, his part-time tenure with us made a marked difference and is greatly appreciated. We have a full-time position open in Forest & Lands and hope to fill it soon.

Yakona's board membership has expanded with the addition of Hunter Noack (musician), Susan Reese Painter (defense attorney), and Dr. Birgitte Rysling (President, Oregon Coast Community College). Since Dan Lara, formerly the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Oregon Coast Community College, is moving out of the area, we welcomed Birgitte to that chair. Between the Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center boards, we are guided and advised by a dedicated volunteer cadre of really engaged community members. We are so grateful for their support!

STAFF



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



VISION

To honor the past and secure the future by inspiring the present through partnerships in education, stewardship, and preservation.

MISSION

Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center is a living laboratory that serves to protect, preserve, and enhance the natural ecosystems and cultural history of Oregon's central coast spruce habitat and its wildlife through the arts, education, and stewardship.



VALUES

- **Habitat and Wildlife Protection:** Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center is representative of Oregon's remnant spruce-dominated coastal rainforest. This habitat and wildlife have inherent value to current and future generations.
- **Education:** Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center is a living laboratory for natural and cultural history, sciences and the arts. Partnerships with local K-12 and higher education institutions and the general public enable connections for people of all ages to explore nature.
- **Restoration and Stewardship:** Portions of Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center were historically logged, which segmented habitats and caused the disruption of natural ecosystems. Our goal is to restore the land to its native habitat with minimal impact and maximal results.
- **Partnerships:** Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center thrives because the community believes in its mission and executes on a passion to make our world a better place. We believe our strength and success is realized through community involvement and relationships built with organizations and individuals who share our values and offer unique expertise.
- **Sustainability:** Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center is managed to ensure environmental and financial acumen.
- **Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center encompasses a portion of the region once populated by the Yaqo'n, a people decimated by colonization and racial injustice. With respect to those who have gone before, Yakona will ensure that all who visit are welcomed, educated in the history of the land, and embraced as partners and stewards in our mission. Yakona is committed to supporting and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization and its programs.



JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

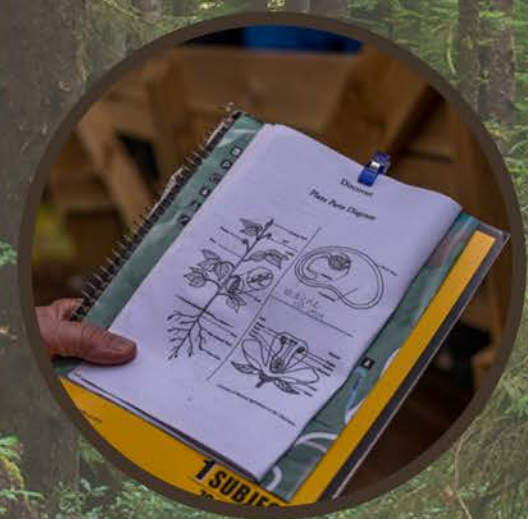
The effectiveness of Yakona Nature Preserve & Learning Center is enhanced when justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are practiced and protected throughout our organizational governance, culture, and staffing. We are committed to leadership in and serving as a catalyst for promoting JEDI. The organization does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, military, genetic information, ancestry, marital status, age, citizenship, or any other basis prohibited by law in any of its policies, programs, or operations. We welcome everyone.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Yakona's educational programming has become tremendously popular. In 2023, we served 322 elementary students, 94 middle and high school students, and another 52 college students. Between educator professional development days and field trips, 235 educators and chaperones availed themselves of Yakona's unique curricular experience.

Yakona centers "students as scientists" – all are actively engaged in experiential learning through climate science monitoring and data collection. At Yakona, elementary students collect climate data while learning ecological concepts by playing games and participating in art activities. High school students engage in Yakona through an Environmental Studies field course, earning science credits while participating in community science and service learning, gaining employable skills and knowledge. Postsecondary students are involved in collecting important data and gaining workforce training while tracking trends in animal migration, forest management, and water quality studies. Students learn through all modalities – visual, auditory, and kinesthetic – while improving their science, technology, mathematics, art, and history knowledge.

We also collaborate with organizations that serve traditionally marginalized communities. Through our efforts over the past year, we've integrated Yakona through Title VI programming for Indigenous students in the local school district, and we are working with the Arcoiris program (serving Hispanic, Guatemalan, and Meso-American children and families) to engage these populations at Yakona. Both paths require a personalized approach to infuse cultural traditions into our community science programming. Teaching students, youth and families the importance of Oregon's native coastal forest while engaging them as scientists creates empowerment, responsibility, and opportunity for this and future generations, which is why Yakona exists.



BY THE NUMBERS

FUNDRAISING

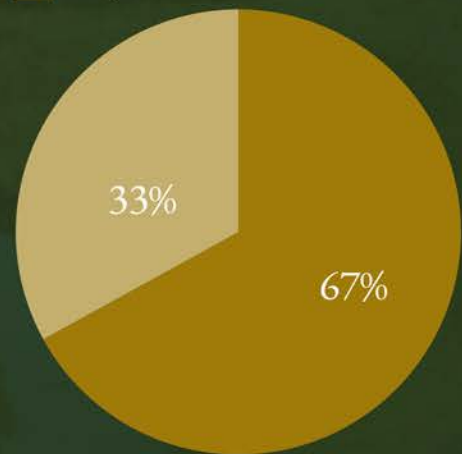
Twenty-five grants resulted in nearly \$350,000 dollars last year supporting habitat restoration and enhancement, construction of Yakona's built environment, and the Creating Connections and HeART Connections programs. Additionally, individual donations totaled more than \$717,000! Wow, that speaks volumes about the work we are doing, and the community support we enjoy. We are grateful for the support of so many foundations, corporations, individuals and families. Thank you for your belief in our mission!

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

\$1,064,990 RAISED

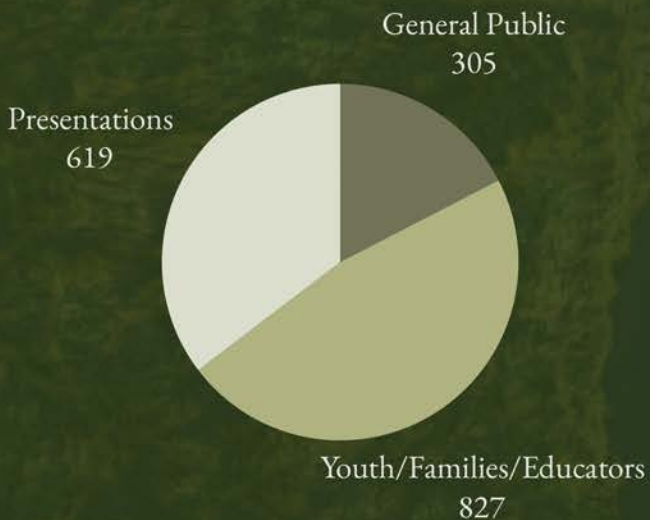


- Individual Donations
- Corporate & Foundation Grants

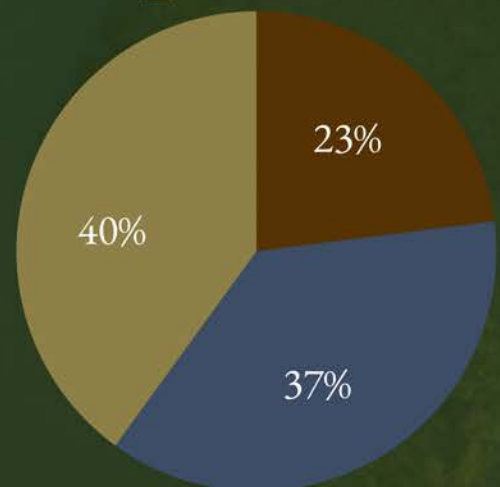


REVENUE

1751 PEOPLE SERVED



- Administration
- Education
- Forest & Lands



EXPENSES

COMMUNITY ARTS

Nature is a limitless source of inspiration, and one of the most delightful ways to connect with it is through art. The combination of art and nature allows people to explore the natural world, create more profound meaning for themselves, and deepen connections through shared experiences and emotions.

In 2023, Connections of the HeART continued to be interwoven within Yakona's educational programming.

We have an outstanding partnership with Oregon Coast Council for the Arts, which resulted in the creation of weather-proof nature journal covers for all students we serve.

We put "a little science in our art" through workshops with renowned art & science illustrator Nora Sherwood. Coastal youth educator Leeauna Perry co-facilitated youth and family workshops designed to deepen participants connection with Yakona's natural surroundings through handmade papermaking, botanical printing, and nature collage projects.

We took the show on the road this year by bringing an art activity to Arcoiris Cultural Center. Participants decorated photo frames with natural materials from Yakona, while learning of the myriad ways all cultures have used nature-found items in art throughout the centuries.

The Arc Achievement Program in Lincoln County visited Yakona over the summer. Participants created botanical print greeting cards while learning about the history and ecology of Yakona.

Recess Outdoor Adventure School, and local homeschool families made field trips to Yakona for multiple art activities. They decorated birdhouses with nature-found embellishments while learning how Sitka spruce forests are one of the most diverse plant and animal communities in the U.S. Participants went on a discovery walk along Yakona's trails while developing their observation skills, memory, and curiosity through the art of nature journaling.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Yakona's Docent Program has matured over the past year. We have oriented 22 individuals and have a strong core of 10 docents actively engaged in our Access, Forest & Lands, and Naturalist programs. Docent projects included trail maintenance, invasive plant removal, culvert mapping, trail camera operations and monitoring, pollinator plant cultivation, and so much more. Our Access and Naturalist docents served 490 youth and adults through Yakona's educational & arts programming and public tours. Collectively, our docents volunteered 775 hours in 2023, representing \$25,087 of in-kind support. Our gratitude is immeasurable!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals for their time and effort:

- Bill Posner
- Deb Myres
- Doris Posner
- Janet Krikava
- Julie Roth Carter
- Mike Clark
- Morgen Spiess
- Patty Fox
- Sue Solin
- Tom Solin

Lexus of Portland and Rotary of Newport and Lincoln City held service days at Yakona this year. They donned gloves and nippers and tackled our trails to help control Himalayan blackberry and salmonberry. Collectively, they contributed 23.5 hours to our cause.

Yakona was blessed with nearly 198 hours of in-kind services from the following people. You are all deeply appreciated!

- Cynthia Resendiz
- Dave Riveness
- Michael Clark
- Spencer Smith
- Rebecca Cheek
- Wayne Belmont



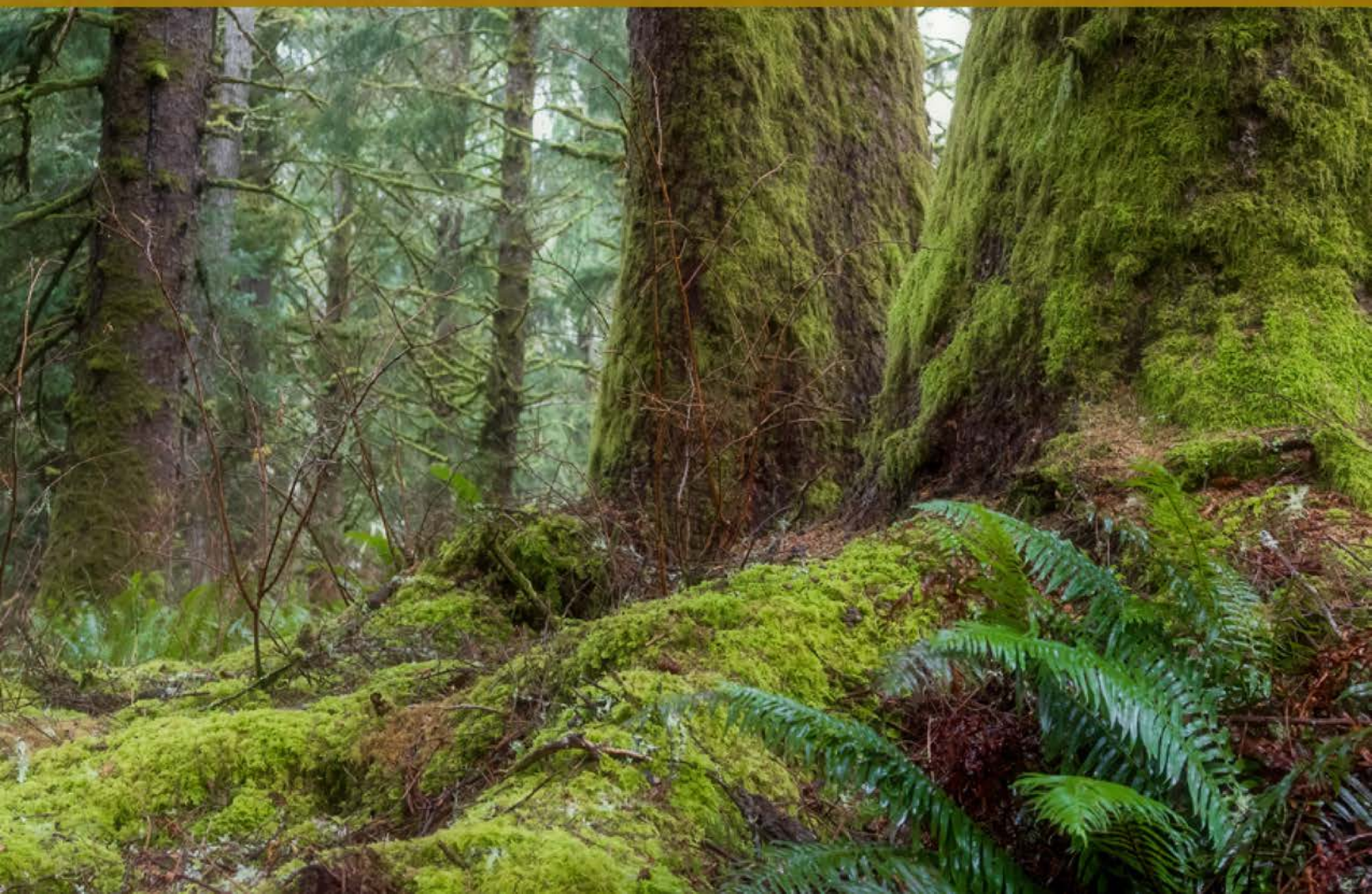
FOREST & LANDS

Over the past year, we accomplished so much, ranging from the completion of Yakona's first Forest Master Plan written by Silva Saunterra, to the near-eminant closing on a conservation easement with McKenzie River Trust, which will protect Yakona in perpetuity. Once the conservation easement is finalized, our plan is to enter into an agreement with Forest Carbon Works to receive payments under their carbon credits program.

Yakona was awarded a 5-year grant by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to reimburse some of the costs associated with restoring the land, abatement of invasives, and improving habitat. We've begun that work by plug-planting willow to encourage riparian habitat, and we've implemented a pollinator meadow.

The dilapidated Farm Gate was removed when board member Michael Clark designed and built a new, attractive entry gate from onsite Port Orford cedar, complete with solar powered electric gate opener.

Due to the unfortunate albeit small fire in August and continued incursions by cyclists, foragers, dog walkers and salal harvesters, Bill and JoAnn made the difficult decision to close the preserve to anyone not escorted by staff or volunteers. Signage reflecting the closure has been installed along the main road and all entry points.



IN CLOSING



Looking back over 2023, I continue to be amazed at the outpouring of support. We have board members and docents who are actively engaged, partnerships that thrive, and a community that really cares about what we do. Together, we have achieved so much!

The pavilion is built, the plant nursery is operational, the watering system for the nursery is almost complete, and the Learning Center is under construction. We served over 1,000 people at Yakona last year, and those buildings will make the experience of future visitors so much more enjoyable.

What remains to be funded are trail shelters to provide cover during heavy downpours, and two restrooms placed strategically along trails that students use when learning and conducting community science in Yakona. Your support is appreciated – thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Natalie Schaefer, Executive Director



WITH GRATITUDE

We are grateful to the following for their support of our efforts:

TimeLooper, Agents of Discovery, Lincoln County School District, Oregon Coast Community College, Oregon Coast Council for the Arts, Oregon Forestry Resources Institute, Oregon Natural Resources Education Program, Arcoiris Cultural Center, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Tillamook Estuaries Partnership, Mid Coast Watersheds Council, Wetlands Conservancy, McKenzie River Trust, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, The Ford Family Foundation, Healy Foundation, Gray Family Foundation, Barton Family, Oregon Coast STEM Hub, NW Natural, Lexus of Portland, Braemar Charitable Trust, H. A. Templeton Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Peter and Cathy Tronquet Fund of Oregon Community Foundation, Dan Gleason Fund of Oregon Community Foundation, United Way of Linn, Benton, Lincoln Counties...

...and many individuals and families.

Jeremy Ojua from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Carrie Wyler from Mid Coast Watersheds Council, Asa Skinner and team from Tillamook Estuaries Partnerships, and Matt Smith, U.S. Forest Service – their combined efforts advising on Yakona's plant nursery and the gift of plants and starts is greatly appreciated.

Anna Rodgers and Deborah Gwynn were so helpful writing curriculum over the summer months; and Dr. Sandra Jougard translated the nature journals for us.

Mike Clark designed and built the new gate at Yakona.

Our amazing docents - Bill Posner, Deb Myres, Doris Posner, Janet Krikava, Julie Roth Carter, Mike Clark, Morgen Spies, Patty Fox, Sue Solin, Tom Solin, who bring their joy and wonderment to share with others.

Our gratitude to Dan Lara, who served on Yakona Learning Center's founding board.
Stay in touch, Dan!

Visit our [website](#) for a full list of our partners.

