

a Lêtter from our Executive Director

AS A 14-YEAR-OLD I was led by adults into the Sierra Nevada in Northern Yosemite on a 20-day backpack trip. During that time of being on foot, climbing peaks, swimming in rivers and lakes I also experienced a three-day solo - meaning I was given the opportunity to find a place away from our group to just be with myself. Of course, the trip leaders knew exactly where I was and would check on me.

This was a profound experience of having time to think, feel, observe and to imagine who and what I could be in this world. It was important to have time without anyone telling me what I should do and how I should do it; I was thinking for myself during those three days in the best classroom on earth – the natural world.

With a river nearby to lullaby, the stars, the moon, and caring adults who took the time for us – everything made sense. You could be yourself.

Even to this day, over 45 years later, that 3 day solo trip stands out as one of the most important opportunities to begin building a foundation with the reality of living with the earth.

The next thing we did was rock climbing. I knew a little about Yosemite and the legendary climbers like Royal Robbins and Yvon Chouinard, in fact my cousin told me it would take 20 years to be as good as Yvon. My imagination after the three- day solo allowed me to really consider this.

During our day of climbing I was making all the climbs they were putting up for our group. There was one climb in particular that everyone was having trouble with and our teacher, Loren Lansberry, bet a milkshake for anyone who could make it. It inspired me to try even harder and I made the climb.

Youth have so much energy and it can be a potentially risky time with the many directions that you can be led into. With the support of our high school and the incredible leaders who helped us have such an adventure, those 20 days changed my life in a way that gave me direction, passion and discipline. It led to a life of climbing in the incredible nature of Yosemite; Learning the art of protecting yourself, through a deep respect for the natural laws.

The reflection of this time shaped me and inspired me to follow the natural way of life, a way that supports the authentic self, and is something we feel all our youth should be given the chance to discover. They have all come into this world with gifts to share, and now it's my job, our job, to support our youth to imagine what's possible for them, to find their gift that comes through passion(s) and discipline.

The beauty we see in Yosemite can be reflected in the beauty we see in ourselves and can provide a foundation to build a life off of, not just in the pursuit of climbing, but in all things we do – everything we do matters and has an effect on us and others.

It's an honor to work with our diverse group of people who make Sacred Rok. We are committed to making the world a better place by following the way the sacred nature shows us, through our stages of life just as the seasons (spring, summer, autumn and winter) keep the rejuvenation going for all life. It's this wisdom Sacred Rok respects as a way to remember what it means to be human through nurturing and love and that something as simple as a milkshake and the encouragement from an adult could change your life.

With respect,

Ron Kank

95% of participants
say they better
understand nature
after trips
with Sacred Rok

86% of participants feel more confident in nature

77% of participants feel less stressed and anxious

67% of participants say Sacred Rok trips make them more patient, able to think before they act

63% of participants say they get along better with others after Sacred Rok trips

64% of participants say they expect to do better in home and school

Overview of Sacred Rok

IN 2005 RICHARD LOUV WROTE "Last Child in the Woods," an in depth look at what he called nature-deficit disorder, which is the idea that human beings, especially children, are spending less time outdoors and the belief that this change results in a wide range of behavioral problems. Sacred Rok was yet to be born, but this book set forth a series of ideas that we had been feeling for some time. It was becoming evident in observing the way the tourist crowds interacted with nature in Yosemite- treating it more like a picture or a theme from Disney Land, rather than a place of understanding or familiarity. It was alarming to see how far away from the natural world we had become.

Time spent in nature is a concept we have been behind since our inception in 2009. Some 9 years later we are still committed to this and have been shown the benefits to our emotional, mental and physical selves over and over again. As our modern times accelerate technology and youth are influenced more by screens than they are trees we know that prioritizing the nurturing of nature is paramount to getting back to a general well-being.

Access to the outdoors has been shown to not only improve self-esteem and decrease negative emotions but to improve overall satisfaction with our lives in general. Exposure to natural beauty elicits feelings of awe which in turn give us a mental boost. Neuroscience research increasingly shows the positive impact on the brain and behavior from being in the outdoors – even walking in the park among greenery. Being in nature actually allows the brains command center (the prefrontal

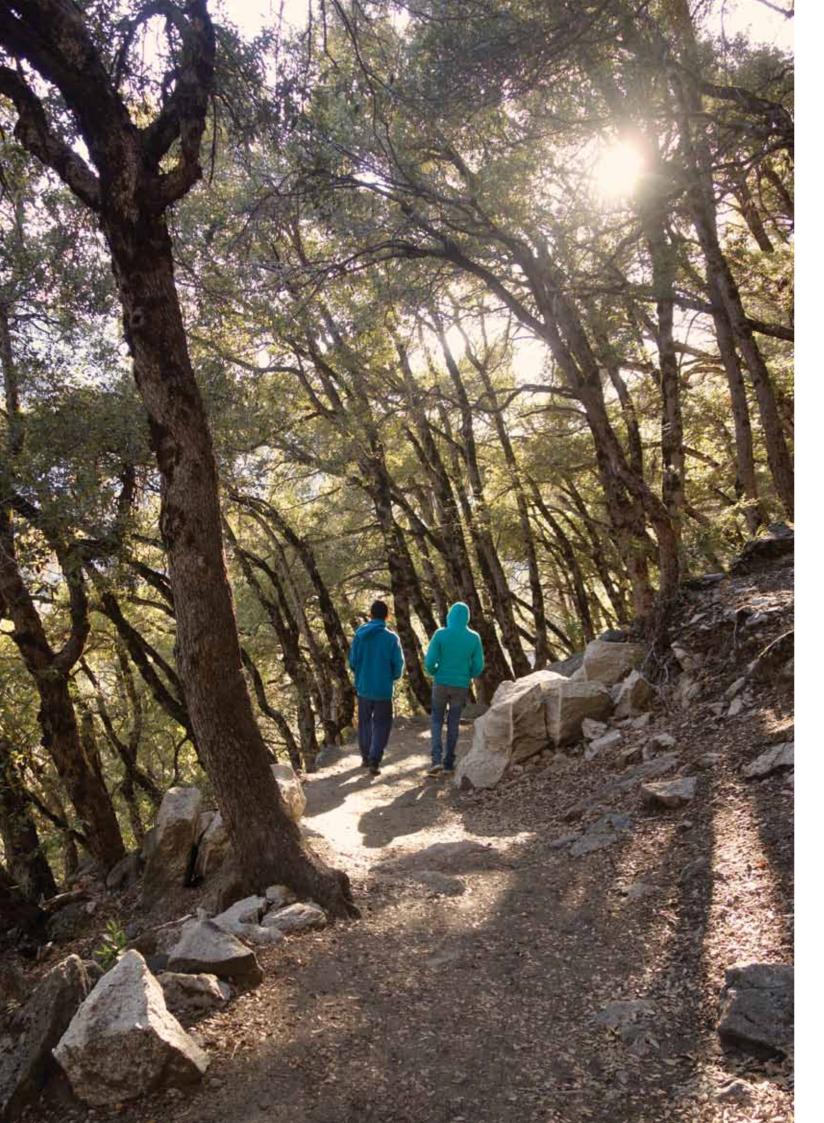
cortex) to quiet down and relax, which is restorative to our health. Studies have shown people are not only more creative after spending time in nature but that students who can see trees and grass perform better at school. Additional research on children with ADHD has shown that time in nature resulted in improved attention span.

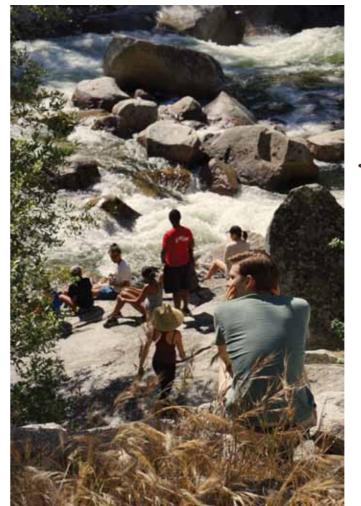
Places like Pinnacles and Yosemite National Parks are the greatest classrooms on earth, where basic human senses are evoked, and feelings of understanding come together. In these environments, we open up our senses to the reality of seeing, hearing, touching, and above all feeling, and being able to talk about how we feel.

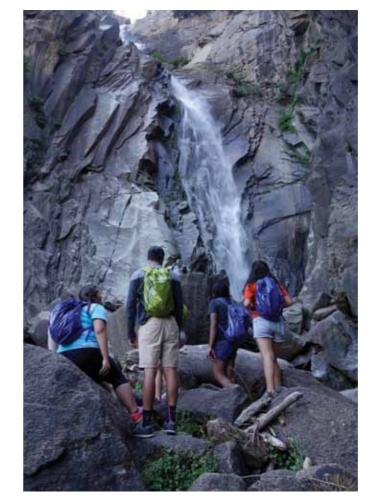
The power of the approach we have taken through Sacred Rok comes from nurturing a sense of awe in our young people through observation of landscapes and reflecting on natural beauty. The experiences that we provide them through trips to Yosemite and Pinnacles National Parks help to create a connection to the earth. Simply walking, communing, and communicating in such environments can be life-changing.











The Year in Review

WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR donors, Ron led twelve day trips and five overnight trips to Yosemite and Pinnacles National Parks, including Yosemite Valley trail work in partnership with Yosemite Conservancy and the National Park Service. We partner with local Native tribes, youth serving agencies, probation departments and foster care agencies, as well as supporters and advisors who share our vision to help young people return to their roots, learn to be human, and to thrive.

We led trips with incarcerated youth from the juvenile halls in both Merced and San Benito counties, as well as trips for young people from Building Healthy Communities in Merced, the Merced Youth Council, students from Stanford University, Uplift Family Services in Santa Clara County, and high school students from Southern California as well as the San Francisco Bay Area. These trips provide the opportunity for young people to experience Sacred Rok's commitment to education nature's way.

Ron gave a Google Talks presentation at Google headquarters in Mountain View and made presentations at Patagonia locations and other venues in the San Francisco Bay Area, in addition to showing his movie, Return to Balance: A Climber's Journey, at the Yosemite Visitor Center on weekend nights during the spring, summer, and fall.

Day Trips and Camping Trips

OUR PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES ARE DAY trips and overnight camping trips, primarily to Yosemite National Park and also to Pinnacles National Park. Ron Kauk leads the trips, and camping trips are supported by Katie Lambert, our extraordinary cook and camp manager, who has a Masters degree in Nutrition and is responsible for procuring and preparing healthy, local, organic food for the trips.

Our model is to work with small groups of young people with their adult staff and mentors, and to lead multiple trips over the months and seasons, building trusting and respectful relationships over time. We limit each trip to 4-6 young people in order to be able to focus on the healing experience of the ceremony of nature, the setting, and the building of rust and relationships.

Nature provides the curriculum and the structure – wind, weather, and water are our guides. A typical day trip in Yosemite Valley might include a stop at Fern Spring to fill water bottles and appreciate the ancient water flowing from the ground, a hike from Tunnel View up to Old Inspiration Point, or a walk to the base of El Capitan. Day trips in Pinnacles National Park include hikes on the many trails in one of our nation's most recent national parks. Our camping trips are typically at Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows Campground. At 8,600 feet elevation, Tuolumne Meadows is only open in the summer months and is less crowded than Yosemite Valley. A camping trip might include a hike along the Tuolumne River past Pothole Dome, a walk to Parsons Lodge and Soda Springs, a dip in Tenaya Lake, or a hike up the back of Lembert Dome. Longer hikes include Cathedral Lakes, Elizabeth Lake, and Gaylor Lake.

Here are some highlights:

Merced County Juvenile Half

SACRED ROK LED SIX DAY trips (including trail crew work days) with Merced County Probation youth who are incarcerated in Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice facility.

For the 10th year Sacred Rok continues to work closely with Merced County Probation Department juvenile hall and Bear Creek Academy (BCA) a short-term program for incarcerated youth who have been committed by the Juvenile Court and are incarcerated for at least a year at the Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correction Complex in Merced.

The youth created BCA Mission I'mpossible to share their stores about their experiences in Yosemite with Sacred Rok. Their mission: "To seek wisdom by learning from nature and life's experiences to find purpose in life, be more responsible, and respectful while being human."

The probation department brings the selected youth based on good behavior to the park in the facility van. Day trips often include service work like trash cleanup or trail repair. Under the guidance of the National Park Service and funded by the Yosemite Conservancy, Sacred Rok and the Bear Creek Academy youth are helping to restore climbing and hiking trails as well as removing old rubble and asphalt from the Merced River Corridor.

Ron also attends lunch meetings at the juvenile hall, bringing healthy and organic food to share with the youth as they talk about their experiences in Yosemite. The juvenile hall has built Sacred Rok into its curriculum and programming for these young people.

"This trip has made me see I can enjoy life without being on my phone all the time."

San Benito County Juvenile Half

SACRED ROK LED 2 DAY trips to Pinnacles National Park and hosted a two night camping trip in Yosemite National Park for San Benito County Probation Department youth from juvenile hall.

Sacred Rok and San Benito Juvenile Hall have an ongoing relationship with trips to Pinnacles National Park, which has also led to camping trips in Yosemite. Ron Kauk and Sacred Rok Board member Steve Shackelton, former superintendent at Pinnacles National Park and former Chief Ranger at Yosemite National Park, lead the trips to Pinnacles.

BEING IN THE CLASSROOM OF nature allows us to learn from each other. It is a kind of honoring of the higher education that the natural world provides that brings us into a sense of unity that can benefit our community.

We are honored to continue to facilitate the ceremony of nature with these youth.

Merced youth Council

SACRED ROK LED TWO TRIPS with young people from the Merced Youth Council.

The Merced Youth Council represent the youth of Merced by communicating with the City Council in order to promote youth involvement, their general welfare and to improve the overall quality of life for the youth of Merced.

We continue to have ongoing camping and day trips with the Merced Youth Council. This relationship is another example of the importance of having ongoing relationships that build off of each trip. Each time together we strengthen our bond and support our ability to commune, communicate and build a stronger community. The young people in this council are dedicated to building healthy communities and come to Yosemite to connect with the natural world to rejuvenate and get inspired so that they can continue to make their own community a better place.

Building Healthy Communities

SACRED ROK LED A DAY trip with Merced's Building Healthy Communities staff.

Sacred Rok has always felt like our message and way of approaching nature was for all ages. Within the circle of people that we've met we've teamed up with Building Healthy Communities in Merced. They are a coalition of residents, young people, agencies, and community-based organizations working together to create and encourage thriving communities where all children and families can live healthy, safe and productive lives.

A group of adults from this coalition asked if Sacred Rok would facilitate a trip for them to come to Yosemite so that they could bond and communicate with one-another. We welcomed the opportunity to commit further into what we call community. This trip has opened a door that we're excited to continue to develop; the example that everything is connected – youth, adults, elders – this is what community can look like

During this day outing we went to serene places where we could socialize and get to know one-another by sharing stories. We went to Cascade Falls and met local native elders. This is a great example of how people can get to be acquainted and familiar with each other by making the time for relationships.





Patagonia staff, Chile

SACRED ROK LED A DAY trip to Yosemite National Park with staff from Patagonia Chile.

Coming from the climbing world and industry, Ron's relationship with Patagonia and its founder Yvon Choinard shares strong ties and mutual philosophies that sometimes call on Sacred Rok to facilitate groups that represent Patagonia's commitment to environmental causes.

A group of Patagonia employees from Chile were given the opportunity to come to Yosemite and be hosted by Sacred Rok. This opportunity further expressed our commitment to protecting nature and bringing it into our awareness and consciousness, reflecting everything Patagonia is involved in and that Sacred Rok is committed to.

We were honored to not only represent Yosemite but also Patagonia which does so much good work. We are endlessly thankful for Patagonia's support of our own work

School Groups: Castro Valley

SACRED ROK LED A DAY trip to Yosemite Valley with journalism students from Castro Valley.

Castro Valley High School journalism class students came to Yosemite for a day trip with Ron Kauk. The trip inspired one of the students to even write an article in their school newspaper about the work Sacred Rok has been doing. One student said about the trip, "I came to Yosemite

for a journalism field trip and I never met a person who shared so much similarity of my view towards nature than Ron. I love being surrounded by tall green trees and not the grey dirty air I see every morning here in Castro Valley.

Talking to Ron and seeing his movie made me think back to the forests in Japan. It showed me where I belong. I think bringing juvenile delinquents to Yosemite is a wonderful idea. Ron is absolutely right about the nature's power of nurture. There is no love in a room with bars and other kids who could easily influence each other to hate. Humans have to realize that we are creating violence by chopping down trees and creating a town full of drugs and alcohol. In nature, drugs and alcohol does not exist as a coping method."

Jaylfwild arts School

SACRED ROK LED A DAY trip with art school students.

Idyllwild Arts school travelled to Yosemite seeking inspiration for their creative projects. It was exceptionally fun and interesting to visit with these young people who came to be creatively engaged in the experience that Yosemite offers, to inspire the human ability to express him or herself through art. This motivated interesting conversations and opportunities for Ron to share stories about climbing El Cap - watching sunrises and climbing through snowstorms and what can be learned in the context of the reality of being human in nature. These kids were very open minded which was great to experience and brought the realization of the importance of the uniqueness of

"It helped me understand why nature is therapy with the clean air and the cold air and that beautiful waterfall."

nature and of Yosemite to help us all learn something together through the art of communication. We look forward to seeing them again.

Stanford University, East House

SACRED ROK LED AN OVERNIGHT trip to Yosemite National Park with Stanford University students who reside in EAST House.

Kenji Hakuta, Sacred Rok Secretary and Treasurer of the Board as well as Emeritus Professor from Stanford University, connected Sacred Rok with students from Stanford University through a program run by the Stanford Faculty Emeriti Council that connects retired faculty to students in the undergraduate Residential Education Program. An idea was born for a connection of Stanford students with Sacred Rok.

Daniel Scott Smith (a graduate student who staffs the programs at EAST House) wrote a proposal that connected the philosophy of Sacred Rok to what Stanford students might appreciate about spending time with us and submitted it to the emeriti program. We put together a weekend that was appropriate to what students in the last weekend of spring quarter might appreciate, given upcoming final exams, term papers, and in the case of the seniors, graduation. We hosted them with good organic food.

Our connections to nature resonated with their need to slow down and reflect. We found solitude along various spots known to Ron along the Merced River, Cascade Falls, and El Cap Meadows. We made time for the students to meditate, write, and sketch. On the final day, we found time to share our experiences – and Katie shared some of her climbing videos that absolutely captivated the students because of her commitment as well as humility that elicited a "Really, that's YOU?"

Whether our young people are in prison or a university, simple contact with the elements of nature can spark our humanity in amazing ways.

Uplift Family Services

SACRED ROK LED AN OVERNIGHT trip to Yosemite National Park with a foster group at Uplift Family Services.

This was our fourth summer working with Uplift Family Services, a foster care and adoptions agency in the Bay Area. Uplift Family Services brought a family from their Santa Clara County program to Yosemite for an overnight trip. Time was spent walking along the river, collecting and chopping firewood, sharing good meals and stories.

Sacred Rok and Uplift Family Services are committed to continuing our relationship with this agency and their youth.

Presentations

RON GAVE 6 PRESENTATIONS AT Google Headquarters, Merced Boys and Girls Club, Merced Probation, Nature Bridge, Redwood City, and Tennyson High school in Hayward.

Sacred Rok is committed to getting the message out to the world in every way possible that would help us remember to respect nature and ultimately understand that respecting nature is respecting yourself. This is the conscious commitment through Education Nature's Way that must come into the realm of memory and learning for our future generations.



a Note from The Camp Kitchen

OUR CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND Nutritionist, Katie Lambert, reflects on the importance of nutrition and how it has affected her own personal journey:

A deep connection to food runs in my blood, having grown up in Louisiana my family was a huge part of this as any real southern-fried fellow knows. Family gatherings were centered around seafood boils, dark roux's, dirty rice, etouffees, gumbos, king cakes, pies and the delectables from our Lebanese heritage.

When I left home and started to fend for myself out in the world my food IQ grew significantly. I came to understand that those flavorful and heavy meals of my youth, while steeped in a rich history of culture, lacked a lot of good nutritional value. With a strong desire to be healthy I delved into recipes making alterations, tweaks and entirely new creations. I filled my mind with food and cooking literature like "Healing With Whole Foods," "Food Combining for Health," the "Moosewood Cookbook," "Wise Traditions," and anything by Alice Waters.

When Sacred Rok established itself as a non-profit and needed a cook, it seemed like a timely opportunity for me. Since 2009 my time with the non-profit has evolved and shaped me into the cook I am now but it was also the impetus for me to obtain my master's degree in Nutrition.

Through my time as a cook and work as a nutritionist I have learned much about what Samin Nosrat calls "the four cardinal directions of cooking." Salt, fat, acid and heat are the four elements that make any meal a tasty and versatile event. But, aside from taste there is also the nutrient density of a meal to consider.

It has been my dedication to procure and create the tastiest, most nutrient dense and healing foods for our youth participants. Working with local, wild foraged, and seasonal foods as my base has created a very solid foundation for the Sacred Rok kitchen. We don't sacrifice flavor in exchange for health, but rather combine those characteristics for something uniquely good.

As we close the year and move into the next the kitchen is rife with ideas and we are eager to keep sharing the path to holistic health through the nutrition nature provides.

In Good Health and Flavor,

Kati Lamlit

"Working with local, wild foraged, and seasonal foods as my base has created a very solid foundation for the Sacred Rok kitchen."



Impact

Through nature and our small group approach, Sacred Rok transforms the lives of young people, one person at a time, who often feel that society is closing in on them. We strive to help youth, including incarcerated youth, to heal and to become part of a caring and nurturing community that loves and trusts them. We want them to feel good about nature and themselves, feel at peace and less stressed, build long-term relationships with trusted adults, and return to their home community empowered to make positive choices at home and school. Building a community and breaking the cycle of violence and trauma takes time and commitment. This trust cannot be built overnight. We are committed to building long-term relationships with the youth and their mentors.

Looking at our impact data collected over the past six years, survey results and observations of the mentors after the trips support the Sacred Rok approach. Although Sacred Rok is not a panacea for a difficult neighborhood or a challenging home life, we are heartened that participants are learning about nature and the earth, and learning to be human again. Post-trip, youth said they knew more about nature and felt more confident in nature.

We wanted them to have a positive and supportive experience of nature, and our survey results indicate that we were successful. Ninety-five percent said they knew more about nature after the trip and 86% said the trip made them feel more confident in nature. One participant reflected, "Being around nature brings a whole different way of thinking." They recognized the power of the different environment, with one fifteen year old saying, "I smelled fresh air. Here in Merced you smell weed at the corner of a street, or smoke." One teen said, "I will always remember the smell of the dirt, it is different."

During the trips, the youth participants often pick up trash around the Valley floor. The mentor commented that one participant who never cared about the environment was now very eco-friendly, asking to do community cleanup or clean up the parking lot. Posttrip, youth said they felt better about themselves, less stressed and anxious.

Seventy-six percent said the trip made them feel better about themselves, and 77% said the trip made them feel less stressful or anxious. One participant reflected, "It allowed us time to be introspective and reflect on our priorities, actions, and thought processes." Another said, "It made me feel more open and to get to know my inner self," and one said, "I feel better because I enjoyed nature and wasn't on my phone." Still another youth participant said, "I just felt closer to myself, more open-minded to how I feel about others' point of views and their struggles. It made me more aware of how to act towards others and myself." Post-trip, youth said they were more patient and better able to handle anger.

Sixty-seven percent said the trip would help them be more patient and think before they act. The Boys and Girls Club mentor identified the changes in one young teen, saying, "She used to do everything in a rush, and now she is calmer and more patient." Thirty-nine percent said that trips like this would help them react better when they got angry; one said, "When I get angry I might be able to take a walk." Post-trip, youth said they got along better with others, and expected to do better in home and school.

Seventy-three percent said the Sacred Rok trips would help them get along better with other people, and 64% they thought they would do better in home and in school. One participant said, "This trip made me realize I hold grudges a lot and that I should try to forgive people in order to be happy." One participant said, "I felt more comfortable talking to people while hiking," and another said, "It helps you form stronger bonds with people."

"I'm more peaceful and I can relax to solve any of my problems."

Sufforters

WE OWE SPECIAL THANKS TO our supporters, without whom our efforts would not be possible. We are so grateful for the many donations that we receive from people who are touched by our story, who read our newsletter, attend our events or meet Ron when he shows his movies at the Yosemite Visitor Center.

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Patty Payne-Zajac & Mark Zajac

Donna Piedrafita

David Pierner

Phillip Powers

Philip Purvis

Jackie Raine

Craig Reynolds

Geni Sola & Robert Linguanti

Kara & Bill Rosenberg

Nancy Schwabe

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23 Education Natures way.



Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Profit and Loss Statement FY 2018

JUNE 30, 2018

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INCOME

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\$3,426.38 Government Grants and Contracts Foundation Grants \$42,625.00

Total Restricted \$46,051.38

Unrestricted

Individual Donations \$37,330.97 \$5,150.00 Corporate Donations \$71.75

Total Unrestricted \$42,552.72

TOTAL INCOME \$88,604.10

EXPENSE

Camping and Day Trip Costs

\$52,420.43 Program Staff \$6,957.94 Food and Camping Supplies \$4,795.06

Total Camping & Day Trip Costs \$64,173.43

Outreach and Education Costs

Printing \$1,476.29 Design \$1.959.00 **Total Outreach and Education Costs**

\$3,435.29

Fundraising Costs

\$3,902.66 **Fundraising**

Total Fundraising Costs \$3,902.66

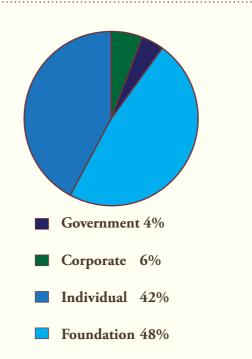
Organizational Costs

Administrative Support Staff \$2,400.00 Postage and Mailing \$481.27 Telephone and Telecommunications \$1,136.51 \$3,172.00 Office supplies, misc administrative \$1,304.75 Bank and PayPal Fees \$69.75

Total Organizational Costs \$8,564.28

TOTAL EXPENSE	\$80,075.66	
NET ORDINARY INCOME	\$8,528.44	
NET INCOME	\$8,528.44	

FISCAL YEAR REVENUE



FISCAL YEAR EXPENSES Outreach 4% ☐ Fundraising 5% Organizational 11%

Program 80%

Sacred Rok Fiscal Year-End Balance Sheet FY 2018

JUNE 30, 2018

ASSETS

U.II	rren	T A	SSE	ts

Checking/Savings \$88,274.51 Supplies/Inventory \$1,468.23 **Total Current Assets** \$89,742.74 **Fixed Assets** \$49,746.53 TOTAL ASSETS \$139,489.27

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity

Retained Earnings \$128,728.07 Opening Balance Equity \$2,232.76 Net Income \$8,528.44 **Total Equity** \$139,489.27 **TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY** \$139,489.27

