



# KIDS for the BAY

CELEBRATING **25** YEARS



## Newsletter SPRING 2018

[www.kidsforthebay.org](http://www.kidsforthebay.org)

A Project of **Earth Island Institute**

## Celebrating Our 25 Year Anniversary!

### A word from our Founder and Executive Director, Mandi Billinge



*Mandi leading a KIDS for the BAY creek restoration in 1993 at Harwood Creek.*

**I will always remember when I first started thinking about KIDS for the BAY, 25 years ago in October 1992,** I had just arrived here from England. I had looked around for a job in environmental education for a few months, but I didn't find anything that really did the things I wanted to do. That's when I started thinking about creating my own environmental education program - but how was I going to do that?

I didn't have a computer, so I started writing down my ideas in a notebook at the kitchen table. Later, as I developed worksheets for my students and lesson plans for my partner

teachers, I went to a copy shop to type, print and make copies of these papers!

I initially reached out to some teachers at Malcolm X Elementary School in Berkeley, down the street from where I lived. One teacher in particular, Jane Barrett, was really excited to work with me. She took a chance on having me teach in her classroom and letting me take her and her students on nature field trips and she loved the programs that I was developing. She kindly told all her teacher friends about me and they all started working with me too! Then I reached out to new schools and pretty soon I had quite a few teacher partners. A big Thank You to Jane, who is still a donor to KIDS for the BAY and a good friend to me 25 years later!

I didn't have a car in the beginning, because I was trying to be an environmentalist! So I carried all my program equipment on the bus or on BART to my partner schools. That was

really hard, since public transport is quite challenging in the Bay Area, and after around two years I did end up getting a car!

One of my favorite

memories from my early days of teaching our programs was when one of my kindergarten students from John Muir Elementary School in Berkeley, named Kaia, stood up in front of all her classmates and said, "Mandi, I have excitement in my tummy because we're going to the creek today!"

Getting my first few foundation funding grants, when KIDS for the BAY became a Project of Earth Island Institute, was really exciting. Hiring my first Program Coordinator, Sharon Fuller, a wonderful environmental

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### 25 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

#### Inspired Environmentalists

**81,688**

school students



**3,363**

partner teachers

**10,000+**

engaged parents



#### Environmental Impact



**28,476**

gallons of trash collected

**19,103**

native plants planted



**32,028**

invasive plants removed

**Open  
House**

### 25 Year Anniversary Open House!

An evening of local food, refreshing beverages and special prizes to celebrate our 25 Year Anniversary and bring together all our supporters!

**Thursday, June 7, 5:30–7:30 PM**  
**1771 Alcatraz Avenue, Berkeley**

### Student Scientists and Biologists Join Forces to Improve the Watershed

"Look at those cows!" exclaimed the excited fifth graders as they streamed out of two large school buses onto a green hillside, the grazing ground for a herd of Black Angus cows. The Field Trip site at Sheep Camp Creek is part of the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir System watershed which provides the City of Hayward with approximately 85 percent of its drinking water.

Thanks to months of careful planning and a partnership between KIDS for the BAY, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), AECOM and Avila and Associates, Glassbrook Elementary School fifth graders from Hayward participated in a unique Environmental Action Project which focused on "Jobs in our Watershed." This project gave them special access to beautiful oak woodland and grassland habitat on private SFPUC watershed lands.

"Programs like this provide unique and lasting educational experiences and an appreciation for all that a healthy watershed provides."

— Sarah Flaherty, Avila and Associates Wildlife Biologist

Professional scientists and other experts were ready to take action with the student scientists at four special stations: birding, planting, ranching and biology. Together, these four important areas paint a complete



picture of the history and health of the Sheep Camp Creek watershed. This allowed students to get a glimpse of the intricate and complicated relationship between the ecosystem and the humans taking care of it.

"Were there trees here before or are we just now planting them on this land for the first time?" asked a fifth grader named Sa'Rye at the **Planting Station**, with a furrowed brow, as she planted an acorn and scanned the oak-covered hillside. An Avila and Associates Botanist named Leanne Feely guided students, like Sa'Rye, in

understanding that through planting acorns near the creek, they could grow new valley oaks to stabilize the soil.

"I loved the Ranching Station because I think ranching is great for the watershed," shared Jake after learning from a rancher named Clayton Koopmann at the **Ranching Station**, whose family has been ranching this land for over 100 years. Students were amazed as Clayton listed all the things that cows do for the watershed: provide fertilizer, assist with fire control and improve habitat for tiger salamanders by "mowing" the grass.



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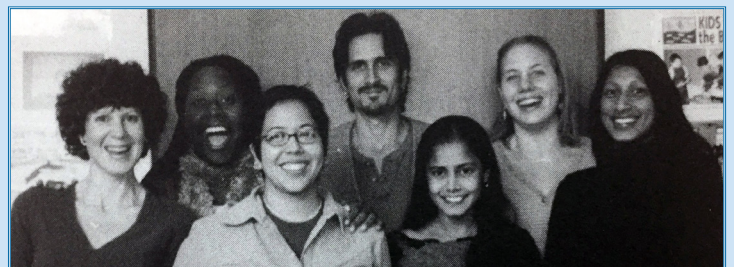
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educator from Richmond, was also a big highlight for me.

I am really thankful for all the staff of KIDS for the BAY, both past and present, and everything that they have contributed to our organization! Many of our staff have stayed in touch, volunteering as Advisory Board Members, leading trainings for new teams of staff, liking us on Facebook, being generous donors, sending their children to our summer camp and being connected in many other ways. I am also really thankful to all our wonderful Advisory Board Members. Leilani Alo, our Advisory Board President, has been a part of KIDS for the BAY for the past 20 years, Shefali Shah for 18 years and Sheela Shankar for 17 years!

It is amazing to reflect on our impact over the past 25 years! Looking forward to the future, we will continue to expand our programs and reach more teachers, students and parents each year, as well as more KIDS for the BAY campers. We are starting some new school-district-wide partnerships and we will continue to deliver high quality, engaging environmental science education programs that focus on environmental action and on equity and inclusion for all students.

**We are very thankful to all of our partner teachers, summer camp families, funders and donors, for helping us to inspire current and future generations of Environmentalists! Thank you so much for your support!**



*KIDS for the BAY staff team in 2004 (from left to right): Mandi Billinge, Krystal Robinson Justice, Kristina Cervantes-Yoshida, Anthony DeCicco, Shefali Shah, Keturah Ashfield, Sheela Shankar*



### The Barnacles are Alive! A Berkeley Marina Adventure

"Code green!" exclaimed Dominic and Eileen excitedly from opposite corners of the rocky shoreline area of the San Francisco Bay. This was the agreed upon code for having found something amazing in nature! The first graders from Caliber Beta Academy in Richmond were astonished to discover green shore crabs, acorn barnacles, sea squirts and blue mussels at their local Berkeley Marina. "This was my first time picking up a crab and it was so cool!" shared Princess. "These barnacles are alive because they are closed so they can keep their water in," observed Josue during Belly Biology on the dock. KIDS for the BAY Field Trips are in full swing this spring and student scientists are busy exploring creek, bay and ocean habitats. "I want to be at the Marina doing this every day!" exclaimed a third grader named Zoe, perfectly capturing the feeling of every Inspired Environmentalist experiencing a beautiful day of discovery in the outdoors with KIDS for the BAY!



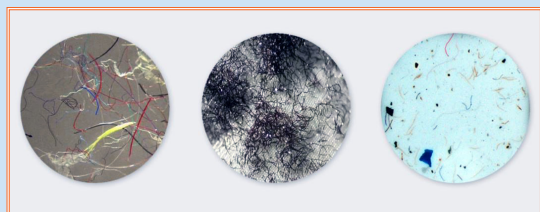
## Every Day is Earth Day!

### Understanding Microplastics

Plastic can break down due to exposure to sun, water and other elements, leaving microscopic particles in our water. Once microplastics are in the water and ingested by an organism, they bioaccumulate and travel up the food chain.

**You can help prevent this serious pollution problem by:**

- Buying a fiber filter bag to put synthetic clothes in while washing them.
- Not washing lint from your dryer down the sink. Dispose of it in the trash instead.
- Researching products and choosing not to buy beauty products with plastic microbeads in them.
- Picking up any piece of plastic pollution you see, especially near a body of water, before it has the chance to degrade.



*Photo credit: [www.patagonia.com/blog/2017/02/an-update-on-microfiber-pollution/](http://www.patagonia.com/blog/2017/02/an-update-on-microfiber-pollution/)*

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"I saw an invasive bull frog and a red-legged frog. I learned that red-legged frogs are native," reflected Giancarlo after learning about the delicate balance between native and non-native organisms at the **Biology Station**.

Groups of students could be seen on the hillside excitedly pointing at raptors and turkey vultures at the **Birding Station**. Kristin Tremain, an AECOM Scientist, taught students how to use binoculars and a spotting scope to observe a red-tailed hawk nest. Dulce shared, "My favorite thing was seeing how the turkey vultures soar in the sky."

Erika Isomura, a fifth grade teacher shared, "My students live and go to school in a neighborhood that doesn't have the best access to nature. The Sheep Camp Creek site was really an amazing location for them to visit," Her partner teacher, Martha Pena, reflected, "This Environmental Action



Project was incredible because it brought us so close to nature. My students looked at their surroundings with inquisitive eyes. They have more respect for nature, all creatures (big or small) and they have a better understanding of how even the tiniest animal can contribute to our environment in a positive way. They were yearning for this type of experience. After participating in the Watershed Action Program, they don't take anything for granted anymore; they stop and take a second look."

The Watershed Action Program provides students with unique opportunities to explore and improve special watershed habitats. In this case, it even brought together a larger community to achieve this important goal. Avila and Associates Wildlife Biologist Sarah Flaherty reflected, "Programs like this provide unique and lasting educational experiences and an appreciation for all that a healthy watershed provides."

## Donation Appeal

**KIDS for the BAY has been providing engaging environmental science education and inspiring the next generation of environmentalists for the past 25 Years!** Please consider making a significant gift to support our work for the coming school year and for years to come at this important time in our history!

**\$25**

The number of years

KIDS for the BAY has been providing environmental education!

**\$76**

The number of classrooms

our full scholarship programs will reach this year.

**\$126**

The number of creek, bay and ocean Field Trips that will be provided to schools this year.

**\$772**

The number of gallons of trash

our students have cleaned up from their neighborhoods so far this year.

**Visit our website to learn more and DONATE!**

**[www.kidsforthebay.org](http://www.kidsforthebay.org)**