

**KIDS for
the BAY**

**2023-2024 School Year
ANNUAL REPORT**

Everyone Is an Environmentalist!

A Message from Mandi Billinge

Executive Director and Founder of KIDS for the BAY



KIDS for the BAY recently had the exciting opportunity to interview one of our former students, Angel Gonzalez. Angel attended Cesar Chavez Elementary School in Richmond and is now the Garden Manager and Environmental Educator at Urban Tilth's Verde Partnership Garden in

North Richmond. Angel's KftB Educator, Jonah Landor-Yamagata, now Urban Tilth's Native Plant Nursery Manager, also joined the interview. Angel shared how his KftB program, back in fourth grade, inspired him to pursue a career in environmental education and transformed his education experience with place-based, hands-on science learning.

"It was empowering to have the opportunity to see what scientists do," said Angel. "We weren't learning about places across the world, we were learning about our watershed and Wildcat Creek in Richmond. Jonah took us on a field trip to Alvarado Park, and I don't even think I realized as a child that Alvarado Park was right in my city. That experience was what guided me to choose to study botany in college. It opened my eyes to what science looks like, and how science helps us understand the world from our own backyard." **Read the full interview on our website blog page: kidsforthebay.org**

Angel's story of how he grew as a young scientist and Environmentalist in his fourth grade KftB program is so inspiring to me!

"My KftB program gave me an idea of what a naturalist is. I remember all the activities we did in Wildcat Creek, sampling techniques and learning about all the invertebrates in the water, like the dragonfly nymphs and all the little critters and small fish. That was really cool! I think having that connection with the local ecosystem made me specifically want to work in Richmond. When I was in college, I was always thinking about coming back to my community, and working in my local environment."

— Angel Gonzalez, Former KftB Student



Left to right: Jonah Landor-Yamagata and Angel Gonzalez

"It's important, especially in urban settings, that kids are put into these natural environmental spaces, so they know they're there, first of all, but also, as they learn about it, it becomes important to them, and that incentivizes them to want to protect it and learn more about it."

— Angel Gonzalez,
Former KftB Student

He is now helping our KftB students at Verde Elementary School grow their love of nature and their local watershed environment. **This story clearly demonstrates the power of environmental education** to inspire young Environmentalists in their life choices and career pathways.

In the past 32 years, KIDS for the BAY has provided engaging environmental science programs to more than 109,700 school students. I am sure that many more of these young Environmentalists have gone on to give back to their communities and local environments just like Angel!

Thank you so much for your support for our life-changing work in environmental science education!

Mandi J. Billinge

KIDS for the BAY Staff 2023-2024 School Year/Summer Camp

Mandi Billinge
Executive Director/Founder

Corey Chan
Education and
Outreach Manager

Amy Asmussen
Communications and
Grants Coordinator

Yvette Diaz Samayoa
Program Manager/
Environmental Educator

Sakshi Srivastava
Program Coordinator/
Environmental Educator

Grace Bedecarre
Program Coordinator/
Environmental Educator

Anais Wilson
Program Coordinator/
Environmental Educator

Maeve Gallagher
Program Coordinator/
Environmental Educator

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Leilani Alo, Advisory Board President

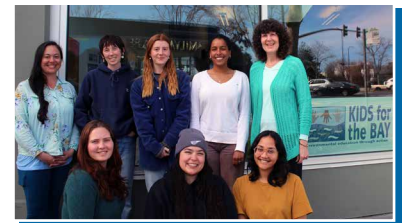
Shefali Shah

Kimberly Aguilar

Kate Gallagher

Sheela Shankar

Clifford Thompson D.Ed.



Above: KftB Staff, 2023-2024 School Year
Below: KftB Coastal Cleanup Team, 2024!



A Project of



Partnerships Spotlight

KIDS for the BAY is excited to continue developing our partnerships with the **Richmond Outdoors Coalition** and **Oakland Goes Outdoors** to continue to increase the impact of our work in Richmond and Oakland schools. We have also begun a new partnership this school year with the **EBMUD—Wastewater Division** to help increase awareness about reducing pollution to wastewater and water treatment plants.

KIDS for the BAY is thrilled to announce that we are one of the first-ever recipients of the inaugural **CalEPA Environmental Justice Action Grants**. This funding will support our Richmond Parks and Watershed Rangers Program, which **empowers young Environmentalists in Richmond to beautify local parks and help reduce the pollution burdens in their communities.**

In a very competitive application process, KftB was awarded a new five-year contract with the **Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program** to provide our Schoolwide Storm Drain Rangers Program to schools throughout Alameda County. We are very excited to continue **empowering students to take action to reduce storm drain pollution and become environmental leaders** in their school communities. We were also thrilled to receive a new **Whale Tail Grant** from the **California Coastal Commission** to support our Watershed Action - Coastal Connections Program, which delivers vital environmental education that **encourages students to become stewards of their local watersheds and explore, study and clean up bay and ocean habitats.**

“I am so excited for KIDS for the BAY to be one of the inaugural recipients of the EPA Environmental Justice Action Grants. Our three partner schools in Richmond are thrilled to continue to work with us to help protect and clean up their local watersheds and beautify parks and green spaces in their neighborhoods.”

— Mandi Billinge, Founder/Executive Director, KIDS for the BAY

“The Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program is thrilled to have KIDS for the BAY continue to provide high-quality, hands-on watershed education programs in elementary schools throughout Alameda County! Their creative and fun curriculum really engages students and promotes environmental stewardship within their communities.”

— Cynthia Butler, Alameda Countywide Public Information and Participation (PIP) Subcommittee Chair



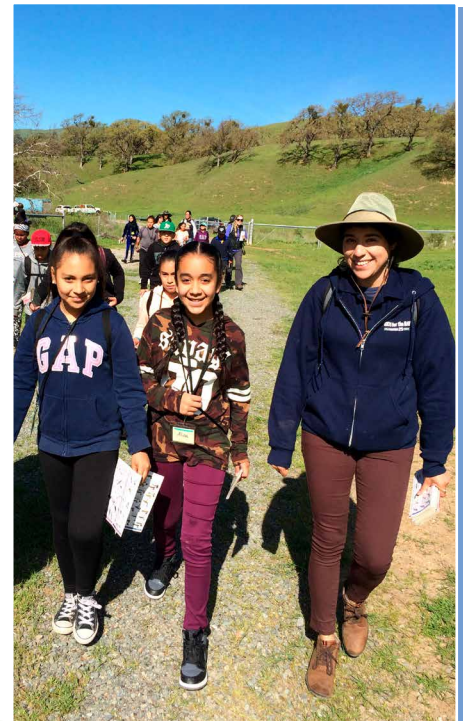
Donor Spotlight: Cynthia de la Fuente

Past KIDS for the BAY staff member, Cynthia de la Fuente (originally Cynthia DeLeon), was a Program Manager from 2018 - 2019. She is now the Communications Program Specialist at Sonoma Water and is pursuing a Master of Public Administration degree at California State University East Bay. Cynthia is a KIDS for the BAY Evergreen Monthly Donor and a major donor and we love that she has kept in touch and continued her support for our work for so many years. Thank you so much, Cynthia, for all your support!



“I believe in supporting KIDS for the BAY because all children deserve the opportunity to connect with nature and care for our environment. KIDS for the BAY not only teaches environmental science but also instills lifelong skills to make a real impact. My small contribution is a way of supporting young people to be the future stewards of our planet and create lasting change for our communities and environment.”

— Cynthia de la Fuente



Cynthia leads KftB students on a hike in nature

IN THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR, KIDS FOR THE BAY PARTNERED WITH 173 TEACHERS AND 4,593 STUDENTS!

Turning Students onto Science

Discovering Jobs in the Watershed

KIDS for the BAY Environmentalists from Glassbrook Elementary School in Hayward had the unique opportunity to visit Sheep Camp Creek, a beautiful watershed area in Sunol that their drinking water flows through. This special restoration site is managed by **Avila and Associates Engineers Inc.**, as part of their work with the **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission**, and is a protected habitat for the California red legged frog and the tiger salamander. Partner volunteer biologists and engineers from Avila helped our KftB watershed scientists dissect owl pellets, observe owl hatchlings, investigate aquatic invertebrates, and witness metamorphosis up close when a dragonfly nymph emerged into an adult dragonfly right before their eyes!

“Why do the birds and their habitats matter?” asked Volunteer Naomi. Guadalupe replied, **“Birds bring music to the world and color to the sky!”** The Glassbrook Environmentalists learned about the **important roles that biologists and environmental engineers play in protecting the delicate ecosystems that make our local habitats unique**, and how all organisms and ecosystems, big or small, are worthy of protection, conservation, and care. Some students began to consider pursuing environmental action and restoration in their future careers!



“We are so proud to partner with KIDS for the BAY. The ‘Jobs in the Watershed’ program is such a joy, sometimes I’m not sure who enjoys it more, the students or our staff! The enthusiasm, curiosity, knowledge, and delight the students show during our field trips leaves such an impression on our staff. The KIDS for the BAY staff are superstars and wonderful to work with!”

**— Melissa Kent, Biologist,
Avila and Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc.**

Inspiring Environmental Action

In the 2023-2024 school year, KIDS for the BAY Environmentalists accomplished the following projects:

- **4,593 student leaders** created and shared informational performances, interviews, posters, videos and environmental pledges at special presentation and assembly events to teach their families and school communities about the importance of keeping the local watershed and the San Francisco Bay clean and healthy. They also made and distributed green pesticides for school gardens, and led safe bay/delta fish cooking presentations to teach their families how to reduce intake of toxins and protect their health. Student leaders completed creek restoration activities including planting projects and ivy removal
- KftB student rangers cleaned up **2,447 gallons of trash from their local watershed environments, including school campuses, local parks, creek, bay, delta and ocean habitats**
- KftB student Environmentalists **completed 6,245 environmental stewardship hours**, cleaning up and protecting the environment we all share, and educating others about protecting the environment.

Pam’s Watershed Rangers Remove Trash Pollution from their Watershed

In KftB’s program created in honor of our beloved former partner teacher Pamela C. Auxter, **Watershed Rangers at Dover Elementary School in San Pablo had the opportunity to lead trash cleanups in several watershed habitats** and learn how the impacts of trash pollution can spread throughout their watershed. The third graders walked to nearby Davis Park with a strong mission: to **pick up as much trash pollution as possible to prevent it from harming the special Wildcat Creek habitat** and the surrounding environment at Davis Park. “Someone put their beer cans and cigarettes in the creek. Now the water is dirty and animals can’t live in it or drink it because they will get sick,” said Laritza. “Why

continued on page 5

would anyone leave trash here in our park! Don't they know students come here and play? We need to make sure no more trash ever stays here!" exclaimed Arturo, determined to improve the health of the creek.

"It is so important for us to work together as a community to make our city a safer and cleaner place to live and enjoy. I love that my students have this opportunity to clean up Davis Park, because it suffers from heavy trash pollution burdens."

— Imelda Lopez, Third Grade Teacher, Dover Elementary School, San Pablo

Pam's Watershed Rangers continued their efforts to keep their watershed clean and healthy by **leading a trash cleanup at Keller Beach in Richmond.** "The water we saw in Wildcat Creek during our Walking Field Trip at Davis Park is connected to the water we see here in the San Francisco Bay!" exclaimed Diego.



Up-close encounters with shore crabs, marine pill bugs, pile worms, beach hoppers, mussels and barnacles made Pam's Rangers even more passionate about caring for this important bay ecosystem.

Students searched Keller Beach for trash, determined to protect the local bay organisms from plastic pollution. "I found a plastic spoon and a Mr. Wafer wrapper!" called Alessandro. "I already picked up 54 pieces of trash!" said Aiden. "I picked up 103 pieces of trash!" boasted Ariana. The opportunity to lead trash cleanups in diverse watershed habitats **helped Pam's Rangers recognize their power to improve the health of their community** and care for the natural habitats right in their school neighborhood and beyond.

Pam's Watershed Rangers program was made possible by a legacy gift from Dover Elementary School partner teacher and friend, Pamela C. Auxter.

Connecting Students with Nature

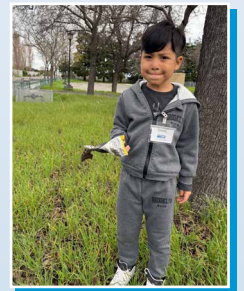
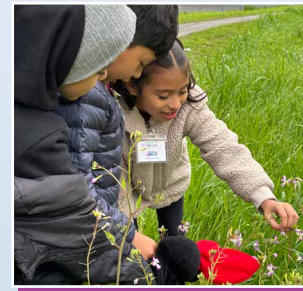
In the 2023-2024 school year, KIDS for the BAY students went on special nature-based field trips to:

- Alvarado Park, Wildcat Creek, Richmond
- Barbara and Jay Vincent Park, Richmond
- Berkeley Marina
- Big Break Regional Shoreline, Oakley
- Civic Park, Walnut Creek
- Crab Cove, Alameda
- Davis Park, Wildcat Creek, San Pablo
- Dimond Park, Sausal Creek, Oakland
- Heart of Richmond Park
- Keller Beach, Richmond
- Lake Merritt, Oakland
- Martinez Marina
- Muir Beach, Marin County
- Rodeo Beach, Marin County
- San Francisco Bay Trail, Richmond
- Strawberry Creek, Berkeley
- Sunol Regional Wilderness, Sunol

Richmond Environmentalists Connect with Nature

"You walk on the bridge over Wildcat Creek twice a day, every time you come to school. I am glad you had the opportunity to explore the creek you cross every day and make these important nature connections."

— Brenda Cazares, Second Grade Teacher, Verde Elementary School, Richmond



Second grade students at Verde Elementary School were thrilled to explore Wildcat Creek, which flows right past their school grounds. They learned about the importance of healthy waterways, and how we are all connected to the nature around us, as part of a **KIDS for the BAY-Richmond Outdoors Coalition partnership** program. The Verde Environmentalists observed a variety of birds, met isopods and lady beetles, and practiced the 'Honorable Harvest' by asking permission from a wild radish plant to harvest and taste its flowers. Students tracked the migration pathway of steelhead trout, a special species of fish they learned about in their KftB program. Determined to protect this keystone species, the young Environmentalists **led a trash cleanup to prevent obstacles from blocking the fish migration** pathway in their creek. The Verde students left the field trip **feeling connected to the local creek habitat and empowered to protect it.**

KIDS for the BAY Guardian Award 2024

KIDS for the BAY Guardian Awards are bestowed on teachers and principals who show their commitment to one or more of our programs and continue to teach our programs year after year.

Beth Levine and Ethan Sorscher, Montalvin Manor K-8 School, Richmond

KIDS for the BAY is thrilled to present our 2024 Guardian Awards to Montalvin Manor K-8 School teachers Ms. Beth Levine and Mr. Ethan Sorscher. This dynamic duo co-teaches two classes of fifth grade students in Richmond and has gone above and beyond in working with KftB for the past three years to implement hands-on environmental education schoolwide.

Our award winners discussed why they love KftB: "I think the power of place-based learning is amazing. It was so impactful that we could walk to Montalvin Park, and that students could see their local environment and connect with it. The value of seeing that there is this beautiful park right here is immeasurable. And we picked up tons of garbage!" said Ms. Levine.



Pictured: Ms. Levine, Mr. Sorscher, and KftB Program Manager Yvette Diaz Samayoa

Ms. Levine and Mr. Sorscher are pioneering schoolwide trash cleanups in collaboration with the Montalvin Manor Green Team. "We are collecting data on locations where we're finding lots of trash and what kinds of trash," said Mr. Sorscher. "Students are picking up trash on the way to the lunch room voluntarily, so that's a pretty big change from how it used to be."

Thank you so much to these two wonderful teachers for their support for engaging, meaningful and place-based environmental education!

"The Schoolwide Assembly Action Project was very powerful. I saw students differently than I had all year. They took a lot of ownership over these environmental issues. Some families came to watch and I thought it was an amazingly positive experience. We never would have pulled that off without KIDS for the BAY!"

— Beth Levine, Fifth Grade Teacher, Montalvin Manor K-8 School, Richmond

"Some of our students are so quiet and they never want to participate and 'everything is lame,' and then we take them on this KftB bus field trip and they're out there meeting crabs and it's so exciting to see them come alive. This program is about something real. It's about science and about the world and all of these great content standards that they couldn't care less about when we're just talking about them from a textbook."

— Ethan Sorscher, Fifth Grade Teacher, Montalvin Manor K-8 School, Richmond

Current KftB Program Manager Yvette Diaz Samayoa just began her fourth year working with KIDS for the BAY. Yvette grew up in Richmond and attended Montalvin Manor K-8 School. She was thrilled to have the honor of presenting this year's KftB Guardian Award to two teachers from her own elementary school, where she has been teaching KftB programs for the past three years. This is a wonderful full-circle story for Yvette, KftB and Montalvin Manor School!

KIDS for the BAY Past Staff Highlights

Shefali Shah: Celebrating a Twenty-Five Year Legacy

Shefali joined KIDS for the BAY as a Program Coordinator back in 2000. She was an inspiring Environmental Educator and very involved in developing our programs and curricula. During her twelve years working at KIDS for the BAY, Shefali was dedicated to best practices in environmental education, to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and to staff development. In her role as our Education Director, Shefali led engaging training workshops for our staff as well as teaching observations to help everyone improve their teaching strategies. Shefali received a Masters Degree in Education and a California Teaching Credential at New College in San Francisco.

After leaving her position with KIDS for the BAY, Shefali continued to support our work as a consultant and as an Advisory Board Member for the next 13 years. She has now stepped down from these roles, but she continues to stay involved with our work. We were thrilled that Shefali and her son Amari joined the KIDS for the BAY team for Coastal Cleanup Day this past September.

Thank you SO MUCH Shefali, for your incredible dedication and support for our work for the past twenty-five years and beyond!



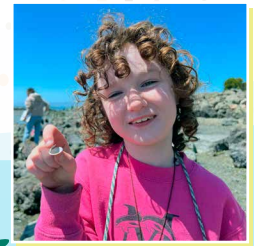
Jocelyn Manuel, Shefali Shah and Sheela Shakar worked together at KftB in 2000!

"I'd like to thank Mandi for your trust and confidence, for your commitment to sustainable professional development for the organization, and for the opportunity to contribute and collaborate with this most critical organization. I feel extremely grateful to have worked with everyone at KIDS for the BAY to support such a wonderful organization!"

— Shefali Shah



Summer Camp 2024 Highlights



"I'm so enamored with KftB. The staff are super, the camp size is small which is great and the locations and activities are wonderful. Really enriching and fun! Couldn't ask for more!"

— Chloe's Parent



"We think the creek is healthy because we found two organisms that need to have a healthy, unpolluted environment to survive, but we also found one organism that is from the group that can survive in a variety of water qualities."

— Fiona,
Week One Camper

KIDS for the BAY Summer Camp was full of hands-on science, aha! moments, nature exploration, sunshine, and summer fun! This year, we debuted a new Summer Camp theme, Animal Habitat Engineers, to help our campers discover the animals that create important habitats in our local watershed environments. Campers were thrilled for the opportunity to learn hands-on science and explore creek, pond, forest, meadow, bay and ocean habitats around the San Francisco Bay Area. All of our campers learned how to pack a zero waste lunch and made **Environmentalist Pledges** to continue caring for our watershed environment.

Some of our favorite moments included:

- Discovering anemones, bryozoans, sea squirts and sea sponges during Belly Biology
- Cleaning up creek, bay, and ocean habitats and reducing plastic pollution by practicing the Five Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot)
- Water play and making solar s'mores at Lake Anza
- Investigating plant and animal specimens, pelts and natural history artifacts and doing a scavenger hunt at the Tilden Nature Area Environmental Education Center
- Field trips to the Exploratorium, Codornices Park Rose Garden, Lawrence Hall of Science, Blake Garden, and Rodeo Beach
- Meeting Native California species, including grizzly bears, gray wolves, California condors, and American bison at the Oakland Zoo
- Testing water quality, observing plankton, creating algae presses, and learning about birds and marshland habitats at Lake Merritt with Rotary Nature Center Friends
- Making ink from oak wasp galls, saltwater art, bird nest lanterns, butterfly baths and survival shelters
- Creating volcanoes and dinosaur eggs, dissecting owl pellets, and investigating animal paw prints.

We can't wait to see our campers again in 2025!



"It's so cool that the data we collect today will be shared with real scientists to help them monitor and care for Lake Merritt. I guess I have a new career to consider!"

— Luca,
Week Six Camper



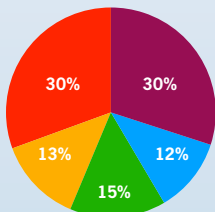
"Daniel loved learning about nature and interacting with your amazing camp staff. Not only is there great outdoor education but the program is fun, interactive, and we feel safe leaving our child with your competent staff. We could tell that staff really cared about the kids and their education."

— Daniel's Parent

Statement of Financials July 2023 – June 2024

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Total Support and Revenue..... \$752,359



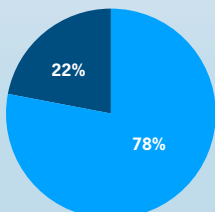
■ Government Contracts.....	\$225,654 (30%)
■ Foundation and Corporate Grants	\$86,715 (12%)
■ Service Revenue.....	\$111,366 (15%)
■ Donations & Donor Advised Grants	\$98,624 (13%)
■ Bequests	\$230,000 (30%)

Financial Position as of June, 2024

Assets	\$707,445
Liabilities	\$104,058
Net Assets	\$603,387

EXPENSES

Total Expenses:\$660,030



■ Program	\$514,823 (78%)
■ Administration, Development and Fundraising	\$145,207 (22%)

Thank you to our generous funders and donors for the 2023-2024 School Year!

Foundations, Corporations, Public Agencies, and Other Funders

Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program
Alameda County Fish and Game Commission
Altamont Education Advisory Board
Angora Ridge Foundation
Anonymous Foundation Funder
Avila and Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc.
Berkeley Garden Club Conservation Committee
California Coastal Commission
• Whale Tail Grants Program
California Environmental Protection Agency
• Environmental Justice Action Grants
Cestra Butner Family Foundation
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City of El Cerrito
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City of Richmond
City of San Pablo
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Zac and Amy Weinberg

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Kyle McCulloch
Kyoko Aoki
Lisa Hsia
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Naomi Odean
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