



## **IMPACT REPORT: FIELD TRIPS 2023-2019**





Dear Community,

We are excited to share this report about our field trip program—a 30+ year running program, which made a significant impact on local schools and communities in the last few school years.

Since our inception, over 70,000 grade school students have had life-changing experiences on the Ranch, creating new opportunities to become dynamic learners, mindful leaders, and divergent thinkers. The field trip program evokes individual curiosity, self-awareness, and confidence to explore and a new love for learning. The program has grown exponentially: we can now host an entire grade with up to three classrooms—that's 90 students in one visit!

For the Bay Area's youngest learners (TK-3rd grade) there are limited field trips and experiential learning programs—most are geared toward 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. We meet this community need, providing rich, half-day field trips in nature for the lower grades. Children learn about animal husbandry; they work and explore in the edible and pollinator gardens and take nature walks. In these outdoor classrooms their spirits come alive!

Post pandemic, the field trip program evolved to be responsive to what children and schools now need. Our curriculum includes more opportunities to expand on students' current knowledge through collective questions, observations, and experimentation, to assess and take risks, deepen their relationship to the natural world and set aside more time for unstructured play. The average American child is said to spend 4 to 7 minutes a day in unstructured play outdoors, and over 7 hours a day in front of a screen. We are proud to provide a completely screen-free, 100% outdoor experience. Additionally, schools, after school programs, and other community-serving organizations have diminishing resources (time, financial, and otherwise) to engage with nature-based educational experiences with limited school resources.

We are proud to be able to respond to what our community needs, and to provide this magical learning environment for students, families, and neighbors.

Heidi Soldinger  
Executive Director

July 2023



## **OUR MISSION**

Connolly Ranch Education Center aims to encourage the next generation of environmental stewards by instilling children of all ages with a deep respect for the environment; a strong understanding of farming and sustainable agriculture; and a love for the natural world.

## **CONNOLLY RANCH FIELD TRIP OVERVIEW**

Connolly Ranch's field trip programs prepare future generations to not only improve their lives but their relationship with nature and others. Programs are shaped around a discovery-based curriculum, which focuses on cultivating students' 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication) in an outdoor environment.

Connolly Ranch field trips offer engaging, hands-on educational experiences designed to meet California state standards from preschool through high school.

A class visit to Connolly Ranch allows teachers to give their students a unique experience that aligns with their educational goals. Our discovery and collaboration-based approach works to evoke children's curiosity and imagination.

The lesson plans also allow for teachers to bring the experience back to the classroom and build upon it.



## WHY FIELD TRIPS ARE IMPORTANT

*“Field trips take students to locations that are unique and cannot be duplicated in the classroom. Each student observes natural settings and creates personally relevant meaning to the experience. Interactive exhibits help students play with concepts, activities often not possible in the classroom. Earlier course content suddenly becomes relevant as students assimilate and accommodate new understanding and cognition (Lei, 2010a). The connection between the field trip venue and the classroom links the field trip’s experiential learning with prior experiences and learning from the classroom (Lei, 2010b).”*

*As stated in International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*

## EVOLUTION OF FIELD TRIPS AT CONNOLLY RANCH



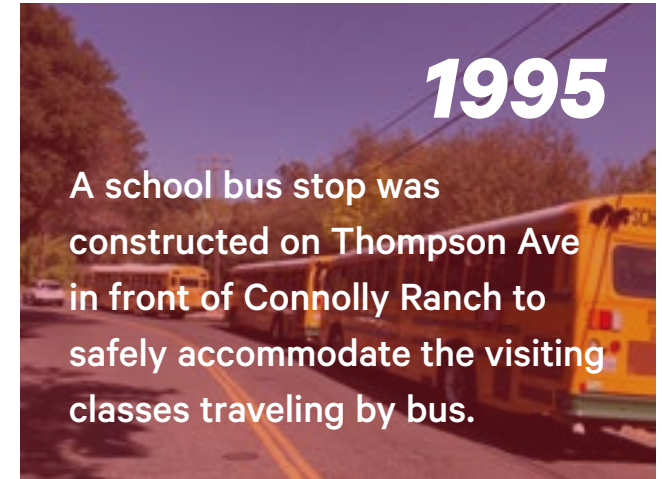
**1992**

Napa Parks & Recreation ran field trips on the Ranch.



**1993**

Connolly Ranch Education Center became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to serve the community and provide opportunities for children to deepen their connection to Napa's agricultural landscape and the natural world.



**1995**

A school bus stop was constructed on Thompson Ave in front of Connolly Ranch to safely accommodate the visiting classes traveling by bus.



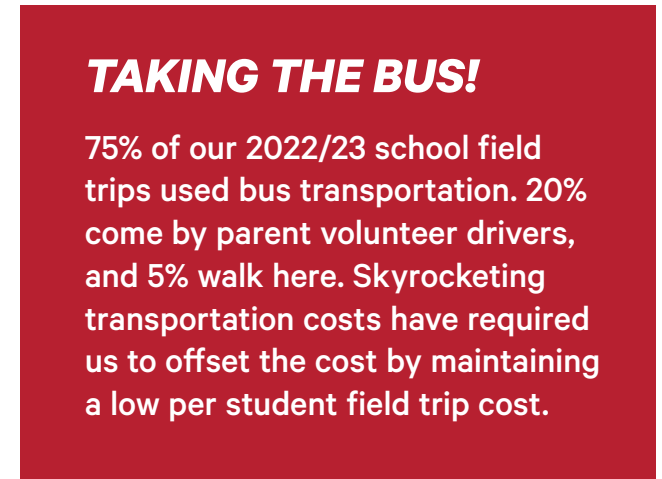
**2020**

Connolly Ranch launched its Adopt an Animal Virtual Field Trip for grades K-5 to support classes during the pandemic.



**2023**

Connolly Ranch served more than 3,000 students annually through its field trip program. Many past field trip students now come as adults as field trip chaperones with their children, making it a multi-generational program!



## NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED OVER THE SCHOOL YEARS

**3,000**  
2022/23

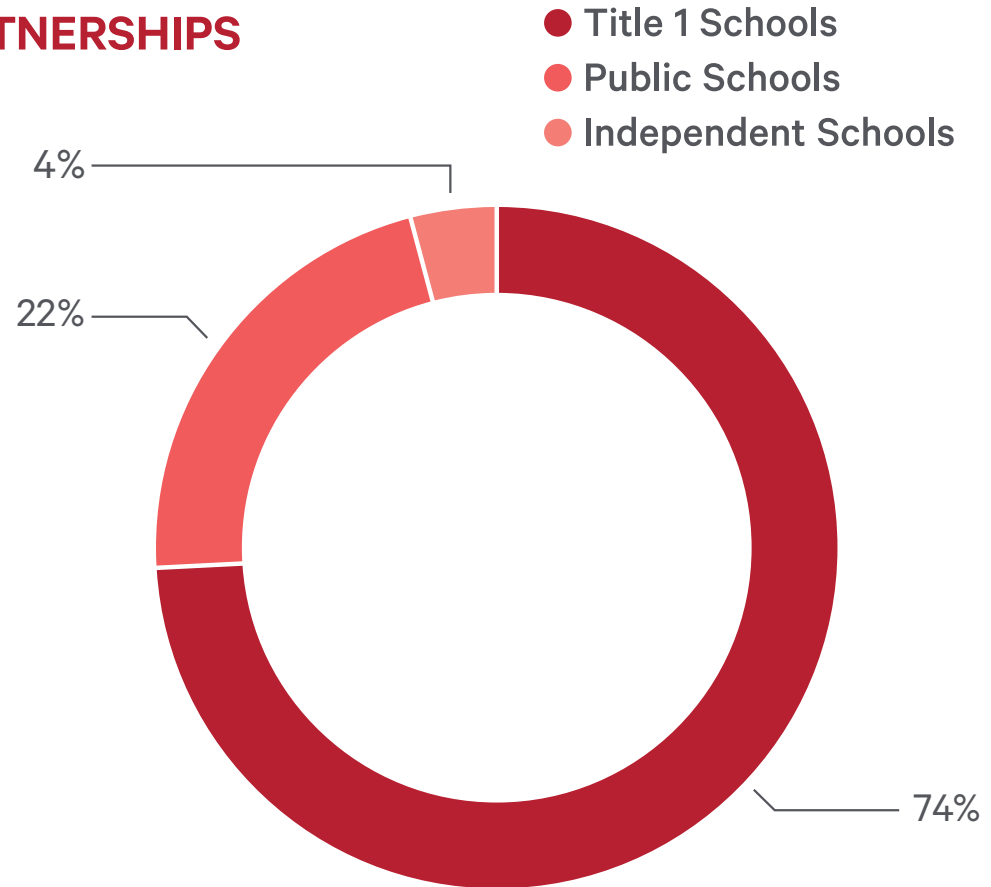
**1,860**  
2021/22

**558\***  
2020/21

**744**  
2019/20

\*Virtual field trips to support schools during the pandemic

## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## SCHOOL PARTNERS

Alta Heights Elementary • Bel Aire Park Elementary • Boys and Girls Club of Calistoga • Browns Valley School Calistoga Elementary School • Cave Language Academy • Compass Charter Schools • Cool school after school program at Shearer • Cordelia Hills • Dan Mini • Donaldson Way Elementary • Elmer Cave • Fairview Elementary School • Foothills Elementary • Grant Elementary • Happy Home Preschool • Howell Mountain School • Joe Henderson • Kairos School • Kolbe Academy • Lake County International School • Las Juntas Elementary School • Little Sunshine Learning Center • Marin Horizon • McPherson Elementary School • Mt. George Elementary School • Napa Junction Elementary School • Napa Valley Language Academy • NCOE EXL North Hills Christian • Northwood Elementary School • Phillips Magnet Elementary • Pueblo Vista Elementary River Middle School • S.P.A.C.E Preschool • San Francisco Day School • Sassarini Elementary School • Shearer Elementary School • Shearer Elementary School • Silverado Middle School Retreat • Snow Elementary • Sonoma Charter School • St Helena Primary • St John the Baptist • St. Apollinaris Catholic School • St. Basil School • St. Dominic School • Steffan Manor Elementary School • Tiburon Peninsula Club • Vallejo Charter School • Vichy Elementary School • Visions in Education • Visions in Education Homeschool • West Park Elementary School • Willow Elementary School • Yountville Elementary and many others

## 2022/23 SCHOOL YEAR NUMBERS

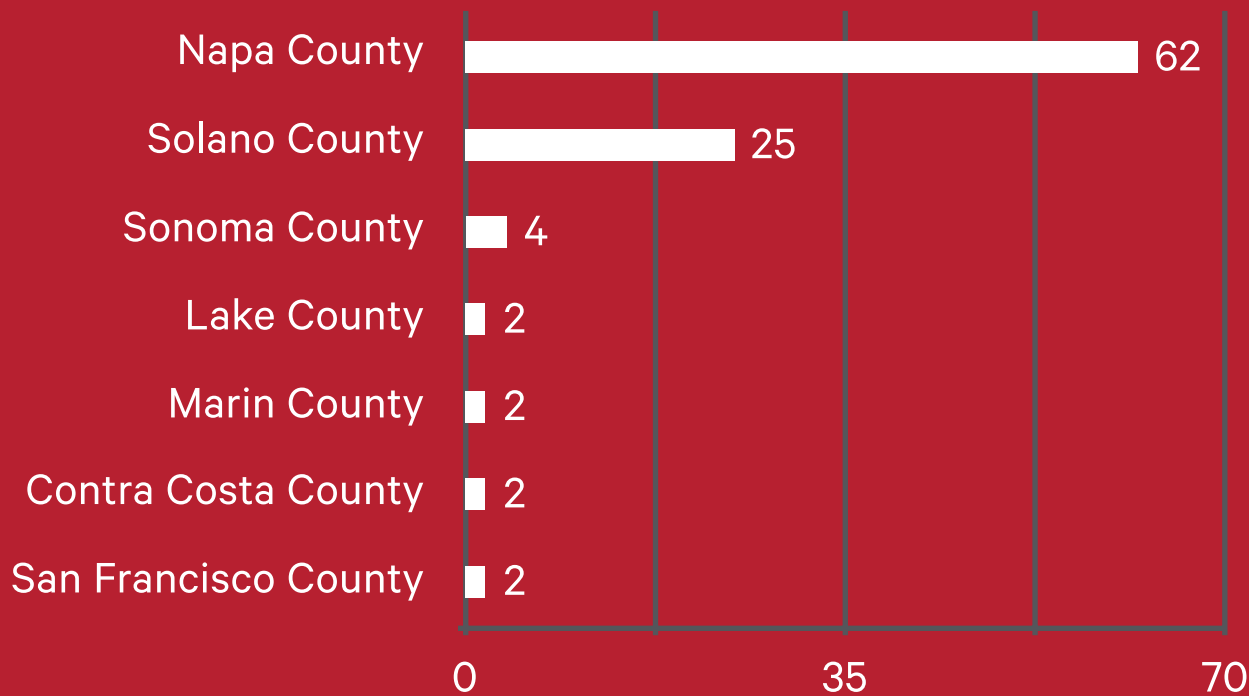
# of Students  
**3000**

# of Field Trips  
by Grade

GRADE	# OF CLASSES
TK	3
K	37
1 <sup>st</sup>	24
2 <sup>nd</sup>	20
3 <sup>rd</sup>	7
4 <sup>th</sup>	6
5 <sup>th</sup>	4
Mixed Grade Classes*	27

\*Mostly Grades 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>

### Field Trips by County





## **FIELD TRIP GOALS & OUTCOMES**

All Connolly Ranch Field Trips allow students to explore and learn hands-on in three unique, dynamic, and ever-changing outdoor classrooms: The Farm, Edible & Pollinator Gardens & WildSpaces.

## **OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: THE FARM**

### **Grades K-2**

To make a connection with the farm animals and understand that they are living things with thoughts and emotions just like humans.

### **Grades 3-5**

To understand domestic vs wild animals, including habits, food, and why animals live in groups and how they operate within the environment.





## **OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: EDIBLE & POLLINATOR GARDENS**

### **Grades K-2**

To understand the plant life cycle, seasonal foods, and fundamentals to nutrient and healthy eating.

To have every student be able to plant a seed and taste a vegetable directly from the garden.

### **Grades 3-5**

To understand the plant growing conditions—composting/healthy soil, pollinators, weather conditions, plant life cycle and harvesting seasonal vegetables.

To have every student be able to observe and/or touch a worm and taste a vegetable directly from the garden.



## **OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: WILDSPACES**

### **Grades K-1**

To learn about two different native forests—Bay Laurel and Oak Woodland—using 3 of their 5 senses—smell, touch, and observation.

To connect with the natural world through a silent nature walk.

### **Grades 2-5**

To understand the concept of an ecosystem and observe the difference in how trees grow to get sunlight based on our two native forests.

To gain perspective on tree growth through observing young planted oak trees and heritage oak tree sizes, and their role within our ecosystem. To have each class experience walking in nature..



## LOOKING AHEAD

Education is ever-evolving and changing, and the Connolly Ranch field trip program will continue to meet schools' needs and share the many benefits of nature-based education. Here are a few of our field trip program goals:

- To gain community support and funding to lower school's costs
- To increase trips for farther reaching Bay Area counties
- To rework middle school/high school team-building field trips
- To expand educational staff to better host larger classes
- To conduct onsite, environmental stewardship school field trips in partnership with school districts and fellow nonprofit organizations
- To expand on pre and post trip curriculum to help solidify the experiential learning process

## STUDENT THANK YOU NOTES

Dear CONNOLLY Ranch,

I liked the chickens & my horse & the natcher walk I liked the nourse because it was very fun, cut, funny & soft why I liked the natcher walk because it was a great exercise and fun to learn about stuff. like the plants and the donkeys like not to go behind them orals they will kick you with there back legs  
Thank you.



Thanks again  
loved the  
CONNOLLY Ranch. ♡

from a fourth grader.

Dear Mac & Jeff,

Thank you so much for letting us come to Connolly Ranch! I had a great time with a chicken I named Maple Silverwing and a new game I made called The Floor is Lava - Extreme Parkour Edition. I also liked the dankies. I loved your ranch cat.

Thanks for everything,  
River







## **SUPPORT CONNOLLY RANCH'S FIELD TRIP PROGRAM**

### **Gift or Sponsor a Class Field Trip!**

For \$900 you will provide 60 students a life-changing learning experience.

Make your gift today!

Check:

**Connolly Ranch Education Center  
3141 Browns Valley Road  
Napa, CA 94558**

Online:

<https://www.connollyranch.org/gift-a-field-trip>

***Make sure to include your organization's name for sponsorship recognition!***

To learn more about Connolly Ranch Education Center, please contact Heidi Soldinger, *Executive Director* [heidi@connollyranch.org](mailto:heidi@connollyranch.org)



## **FIELD TRIP TEAM**

Jeff Freed, *Community Education Director*  
Mackenzie Mills, *Lead Community Educator*  
Heidi Soldinger, *Executive Director*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Craig Finster, *Chair*  
Ann Danielson  
Katharine Falace  
Gene Kelly  
Chelsea Kohler  
Kris Kosta  
Arthur Roosa

## **THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS**

Annette & Doug Shafer  
Beckstoffer Vineyards  
Consign & Design  
Environmental Education Coalition of Napa County  
Ford Family Fund  
Hayes Family  
JAM Cellars  
Kelly Family Vineyards  
Marion Family  
Meredith Levy Fine Jewelry  
Napa Land Trust  
Napa Valley Community Foundation  
Tatjana Grgich Family Foundation



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