



A Case for Giving

Executive Summary

Founded in 1972, the Environmental Nature Center, known simply to thousands of visiting students through the years as “The ENC”, is a fascinating combination of 15 California native plant communities (ranging from desert, to oak woodland, to fresh water marsh, to redwood forest); wildlife habitats; walking trails; and sustainably designed, LEED Platinum certified learning center. For over 40 years, the ENC has been shaped and caressed into a 5 acre landscape for learning, a sanctuary from life’s pressures and a place of preservation and instruction. Serving over 21,000 students and thousands of visitors annually, the ENC is recognized as a leader in science and social science education providing opportunities for increasing our community’s knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

The ENC is a non-profit 501(c)-3 public benefit corporation. It relies on funding provided by individuals (through both memberships and gifts), corporate contributions, educational awards, operational grants and endowment support. The Center is administered by a small, hard-working staff under the policy guidance of a volunteer board of directors comprised of dedicated community leaders committed to the goals of the ENC. In addition, the ENC depends on an army of dedicated volunteers to run programs, raise funds and help maintain the plant communities.

The ENC is driven by its mission to provide quality education through hands-on experience with nature and its vision to inspire all generations to protect the natural world by serving as our community’s foremost authority on ecological responsibility, sustainable practices and environmental education.



History

In 1972, dirt excavated from the construction of an Olympic-size swimming pool at Newport Harbor High School was dumped near a gully that ran behind the adjacent Newport-Mesa Unified School District administrative offices, on land deemed otherwise useless. But that was not how a group of dedicated and determined science teachers, students and community volunteers saw it. They formed the soil into a landscape on which they created a living nature laboratory. From that beginning, students from throughout the community were invited to share its treasures, help maintain it, nurture it and learn from its resources.



Facilities

The 5 acre ENC property has shared ownership. The original 2.5 acre site is owned by the Newport-Mesa Unified School District and is leased by the ENC for one dollar a year. An additional one-acre that fronts the Center on 16th Street was purchased by the ENC as the result of a successful \$1 million dollar capital campaign entitled “Save Acres for Nature” that culminated in April 2000. An additional 1.3 contiguous acres located at 745 Dover Drive was acquired in December 2012.

The property features 15 native California plant communities: Channel Islands Flora, Chaparral, Closed Cone Forest, Coastal Sage Scrub, Coastal Strand, Desert, Foothill Woodland, Fresh Water Marsh, Mixed Evergreen Forest, Northern Oak Woodland, Redwood Forest, Riparian, Southern Oak Woodland, Valley Grassland and Yellow Pine Forest. Additionally, the property has walking trails, demonstration areas (including a fossil specimen area), a butterfly house, a recycling stream and pond system, an amphitheater, log learning area, propagation area, picnic tables, benches, a Compost Learning Lab and maintenance storage buildings.



It is truly amazing how this land has taken on a character and personality of its own. It has continued to grow, develop and evolve in its 40 year history. The Environmental Nature Center’s state-of-the-art facility offers a comprehensive indoor-outdoor educational “habitat,” where students and visitors can increase their understanding and deepen their appreciation of California’s natural resources and wild places.

Green Building

The Center's 8,500-square-foot learning center was dedicated in June 2008 and is the first building in Orange County to achieve the highest level of "green" building certification by the U.S. Green Building Council — LEED Platinum Certification. The learning center was constructed after a successful \$7,000,000 capital campaign entitled "Raise the Roof." The building provides indoor classroom space, a museum, gift shop, resource library and administrative offices. Visitors see examples of natural ventilation, renewable and recycled materials, reduced water usage, and on-site energy production in the form of solar and wind energy production. Other sustainable features include daylighting, light pollution reduction, storm water management, recycling, composting, and green housekeeping methods. Guests learn how to implement sustainable features in their own homes and businesses. Educational exhibits in the new museum revolve around the theme of California's biodiversity. The building has enabled the Center to acquire additional earned income through facility rentals. The site is available to rent for "green" events such as weddings, corporate meetings and parties, family gatherings or school banquets.



Featured Programs

In fulfilling its mission to provide quality education through hands-on experience with nature, the ENC offers numerous educational programs based on natural science and Native American studies. More than 21,000 Orange County students participate in ENC programs annually receiving over 45,000 hours of instruction. Students are provided a hands-on experience with nature during school tours whose program curricula are aligned with the California Science or Social Science Content Standards and the Science Framework for California Public Schools. Students participating in programs at the Center receive valuable science lessons that schools do not have the resources to provide. In addition, throughout the year students of all ages are engaged in programs including **Student Enrichment Programs** held after school and during school breaks; **Nature Camp Science Summer School**; programs to fulfill the badge or service requirements for **Scout and Community Groups** including **Campfire and Overnight Programs**; **Little Naturalists** program for pre-schoolers; **Home School Programs**; **Traveling Naturalist** program that visits schools; **Adult Education** programs; **Birthday Parties**; programs for high school students including **Service Learning Programs**; **Independent Study** projects and visits from English, Drama, Photography, Science and other classes utilizing the ENC's unique outdoor setting; and **Family Programs** including Full Moon Walks, Astronomy Nights, Wildflower Walks, themed family hikes, craft workshops and more. The ENC also offers a wide range of volunteer programs including: land steward volunteers, corporate volunteer days, high school community service, docent trail guides, court referred, Eagle Scout Projects, and Girl Scout Gold, Silver and Bronze Projects as well as opportunities for developmentally disabled adults.



Expansion Property

The ENC's vision is to incorporate the 1.3 acre parcel into an extension of the Nature Center to provide additional education resources for our community. An expansion that will increase the learning opportunities for our student and family visitors, resources that will provide the hands-on experience with nature so needed in today's world. Improvements to the site will include expansion of the ENC's natural habitat, development of a nature play area and the construction of our community's first nature based pre-school.



Nature Pre-School
 At The Environmental Nature Center
 NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA



How the ENC is Unique and Important for Our Community

The ENC is a one-of-a-kind educational facility. The ENC represents many native plant communities on a single 5 acre site offering educators, students and visitors unparalleled learning opportunities. The hot and dry, yet beautiful cactus-filled desert contrasts with the nearby heavily vegetated, green valley grassland that is adjacent to a babbling stream and waterfall pond, which is just a short trail away from the lush, towering redwood forest, which is but a stone's throw from a majestic oak woodlands, which is around the corner from the wet, cattail filled fresh water marsh. As an outdoor learning facility, the ENC provides students a hands-on educational experience that is not available in any school classroom. Additionally, students participating in our California Native American Indian tours gain a respect for cultural diversity that carries through to their everyday life.

Hundreds of thousands of students have participated in the ENC's educational programs since its inception in the early 70's. Many students received their first experience with the outdoors and natural science at the ENC and have gone on to contribute to society as scientists, landscape architects, teachers, or simply as individuals who have a deep appreciation and respect for our natural world. Many have attributed their success and appreciation for the outdoors to their ENC experiences.

At the ENC, students and the community experience our native habitats first-hand to better understand nature's complex systems. Activities at the ENC vividly demonstrate the balance of nature on which we all depend. The ENC helps us and especially our children learn our responsibility to the natural world while inspiring protection of our natural resources through hands-on education.

About the Community We Serve

Located in the heart of the Newport-Mesa Community, the ENC serves school and community groups from all over Orange County and welcomes visitors from throughout Southern California and beyond.

Why Should You Support the ENC?

1. To provide the hands-on education that children need to make informed decisions about the future of our environment.
2. To provide a natural sanctuary for individuals and families to escape from life's pressures and gain or enhance their appreciation for the natural world.
3. To maintain and expand what the ENC has been doing effectively for over 40 years.

Current Funding Needs

Annual Operating Budget for 2013/14: \$686,500

Capital Expansion Campaign: \$10,000,000