

Stories of Gratitude

How Your Giving Changes Lives

SUMMER/FALL 2026



WILDERNESS
AWARENESS
SCHOOL

The Confidence to Explore

by Sarah Weeldreyer

As a single mother, the scholarship we received from Wilderness Awareness School has been an incredible blessing for our family this year. Rainer has been attending the Village weekly program every Wednesday, and **I cannot express how amazed I am by the changes and growth I have seen in him.**



Thanks to you, Rainer is choosing to spend time outside on the weekends.

Every week at pickup, he bubbles over with stories and proudly shows me the things he has made, singing songs all the way home. While this may sound like typical childhood behavior, I assure you it is all new for my introverted and hard-to-impress 12 year-old.



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"He is excited about things in a way I have not seen in a long time."

With the kindness and gentle guidance of his instructors, **my son has discovered a whole new world of creativity and confident exploration.** He is *choosing* to spend time outside on the weekends, practicing new skills and eagerly sharing them with me. He is excited about things in a way I have not seen in a long time. He even asked me to buy wool felting supplies!

I especially appreciate the safe and welcoming environment his instructors create on the land. It has been a grounding influence during a difficult couple of years for our family.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the donors, instructors, volunteers, and elders who make this possible, and for the beautiful community that is Wilderness Awareness School.

Notes From the Eagle's Nest

by Warren Moon, Executive Director

I hope your summer has been filled with meaningful moments outdoors, laughter with loved ones, and quiet moments of wonder. As we move into fall, I am deeply grateful for you, our generous and compassionate community. Your support helps students of all ages find healing, confidence, belonging, and a deeper relationship with the natural world.

In this edition of *Stories of Gratitude*, you'll see how your generosity continues to change lives.

In *When I Was Ready to Answer the Call*, you'll meet Nadja, whose time in The Immersion helped her move through grief, rediscover her inner strength, and step into a new chapter of leadership rooted in compassion and connection. Your support gave her the space to heal and grow.

In *The Confidence to Explore*, you'll read how a scholarship helped Rainer find joy, creativity, and confidence through the Village program, giving their family a grounding and welcoming community during a difficult season.

Thank you for making these transformations possible. Together, we are helping more people grow resilient, connected, and alive to the wisdom of nature.

Nature teaches, community heals, and your generosity makes it all possible!

With gratitude,

Warren
Moon



Impacts Made Possible by You

"Foxes weekly program is the best part of my daughter's life. Yes, ideally we [have outdoor time] every day. But life gets in the way and enrolling her in WAS ensures that she will have the chance to enjoy and experience nature, develop skills, become more confident, be a problem solver and build friendships."

-Tessa Wynn, mother of Georgia (age 8)

"My son actually asked to start a nature journal this summer, and specifically asked to do it in the woods near a river. He calls himself a 'nature boy'"

-Roots and Wings parent



Your generosity is making a huge impact on today's youth!

"We have noticed a clear increase in our child's confidence over the past year as a result of their time in Crows monthly program. They are more willing to participate, try new activities, and express themselves without hesitation. We are very happy with this positive growth."

-Patricia K.

"Wild Within is my son's happy place. The weekends away at WAS are like a deep sigh, a breath out. Participating in the program provides a release each month that helps him return with renewed focus to power through the challenges of high school."

- Eva, mother of a Wild Within teen

"My son told his grandma to stop and listen to the birds on a walk."

- Sarah Rainwater, monthly program parent

I Was Ready to Answer the Call

by Nadja Vol Ochs



You make it possible for amazing adults to say 'yes' to The Immersion each year.

After finalizing an amicable divorce just as the COVID lockdowns began, I realized I was stepping into an entirely new chapter of my life. Until then, my world had felt grounded and predictable, centered around motherhood, caring for others, and supporting my community.

For the first time, the future felt wide open in a way that was both daunting and full of possibility. I knew I needed to learn how to care for myself, heal my heart, and rediscover who I was beyond the roles that had defined so much of my life.

"I sensed this was the path I had been searching for, one that had quietly existed close to home all along."

I found myself searching for a deeper relationship with the birds, plants, and living beings of the land while continuing to move through the grief of my divorce. Then the Immersion appeared on my social media feed. I applied from my phone almost immediately and received a call the very next day.

There was a moment during the program when I dedicated a challenging experience to all women and young girls. Looking up at the stars, I shouted into the night that they hold infinite possibilities within them, that they must never forget their inner strength, and that tending their own inner fire is just as important as caring for everyone else.

That moment marked a turning point. I realized I had moved beyond my fear of stepping into unfamiliar places, trying things that intimidated me, or worrying about what others might think.

I learned what it means to choose myself, to care for my own wellbeing, and to embrace the discomfort that often accompanies growth.

The Immersion taught me that life's edges, the places that feel uncertain, vulnerable, or challenging, are often where our deepest learning takes place. It is there that perspective expands, clarity emerges, and resilience is forged.

Looking back, those nine months became a catalyst for the life I am living today. They cracked me open in the most transformative way, helping me move through grief, reconnect with my inner child, and rediscover a profound sense

of aliveness and purpose.

Today, as **Executive Director of Vashon Wilderness Program**, I lead with greater clarity, calmness, and empathy because of what I experienced through The Immersion. My previous career in the tech world often emphasized command and control. The work I do now is rooted in compassion, collaboration, consensus, and relationships.

“I lead with greater clarity, calmness, and empathy because of what I experienced [in] The Immersion.”

The Immersion transformed far more than my connection with nature. It changed how I lead, how I show up for my community, and how I move through the world. I will always be grateful that Wilderness Awareness School was there when I was finally ready to answer that call.



Nadja now helps others step into their own nature connection journey, serving as the Executive Director of Vashon Wilderness Program

Yes! I want to be a lifeline for those needing nature connection!



- ☐ \$35 ☐ \$250
☐ \$50 ☐ \$_____ - the possibilities are endless!
☐ \$100



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