



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Connecting Our Community to Nature Through Education





# Environmental Education for Everyone



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Mark Ceneri

### Environmental Educator

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### Environmental Educator

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### Marketing Intern

Tali Mogilnitzky

## About the Patrons of the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center

**The Patrons of Trumbull Nature & Arts Center (TNAC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to provide nature-rich experiences to all members of our community.**

The Patrons board supports the Town of Trumbull Nature Commission by running programs and fundraising. We fulfill our goals by providing STEM-based environmental education programs to students and families in Trumbull, Bridgeport, and the wider region. TNAC programs promote an understanding of the environment, which in turn helps to foster an environmentally literate society. We reach our community through curriculum-based field trips and in-school visits, summer fun programs, family events, and volunteer opportunities.

## President's Letter

I'm happy to report that 2024 was another banner year for the Patrons of TNAC. Once again, our Environmental-STEM programs engaged young people by the thousands in fun and educational lessons. Our highly-acclaimed activities are more than just a diversion—students are tasked with real world problems to solve. We are amazed at the creativity and imagination they use to find practical solutions to flooding, erosion and other environmental concerns.

Since 2015, we have provided over 32,000 individuals with environmental education programs. Over that time, we have met older students and adults who tell us their fond memories of taking field trips to TNAC in elementary school. Some of the students who volunteered for us have enrolled at Cornell, Tufts, and Syracuse University where they have studied environmental science and green architecture. This feedback lets us know that we are making an impact on the lives of the children we serve.

We feel rewarded to have made such an impact on our community through these E-STEM programs, and are excited about the new programs we have in the works for 2025. These upcoming programs will increase environmental awareness and build STEM skills for young people throughout the Greater Bridgeport Region.

On behalf of the students, their teachers and all of us at TNAC, I want to thank our supporters for making these achievements possible.

*Kevin S. Malone, President  
Patrons of the TNAC, Inc.*

# Environmental-STEM Programs for Students

## Supporting and Enriching the Classroom

The Patrons of TNAC follow **CT Environmental Literacy Plan 2020 -2025** and **Next Generation Science Standards** guidelines as we continually review our program curricula and develop new programs. As an informal nature education center, we are a key component of integrated learning. Our connections with community and schools provide opportunities for lifelong learning, starting at a young age.

TNAC is a valued resource for schools and teachers throughout their students' elementary school years. From teaching pre-K students how to plant seeds to showing third graders how to focus a microscope, we give students the opportunity to "learn by doing."

This past year, 4,302 students participated in our E-STEM programs, through field trips to our Center and direct classroom instruction. Students came from Trumbull, Bridgeport, Newtown, Norwalk, and even as far away as Meriden and Woodbridge to participate in TNAC programs.

At our in-school visits, Kindergarten and first-grade students learn fundamental nature concepts to build upon as they advance through elementary school. For example, in our Animal Homes & Structures program, students learn about nature's engineers, and then in second grade and beyond, they apply their own engineering skills to learn important environmental concepts.

Teachers depend on TNAC programs to provide science enrichment to their classrooms. In Trumbull, Kindergarten students hatch chicken eggs in their classrooms. Our Lead Environmental Educator Mark Ceneri visits these students' classrooms to "candle" their eggs so the students can view the growing embryos.

On field trips to TNAC, fourth grade students dissect flowers, make mountains to withstand erosional forces, and build cities to learn about sea level rise. These learning experiences provide valuable enrichment that students take back to their classrooms and bring home to share with their families.



## Exploring the Environment with Second Graders

Our most popular field trip program is our Exploring the Environment field trip. This program combines science, art, and engineering as students work in teams to develop solutions. In our biodiversity hike, they role-play to discover the consequences of ecosystem disruptions. They act like beavers as they engineer dams to hold back water and alter their habitat. They design and build their own seed models to learn the ways seeds disperse in varying environments. Like all our programs, Exploring the Environment provides a "wow" factor to keep students interested, and able to retain lessons learned.



# Environmental Literacy for All

## Equitable Access to Environmental Education

Since our non-profit was formed in 2011, the Patrons of TNAC have been committed to providing equitable access to our environmental education programs. It is our belief that all children deserve the opportunity to engage in high quality Environmental-STEM enrichment activities, regardless of any prohibitive barriers. Generous private and corporate donors have allowed us to provide thousands of students with programs that they would not have otherwise received.

In 2024, we provided programs to 1,582 students who attend Title I schools. Many of these students are offered little in the way of science education due to schools' focus on reading and math. Some teachers have minimal science training, and schools are not provided with enough funding to purchase science equipment.

TNAC provides a consistent E-STEM education to these elementary school students. Whenever possible, we visit the same students as they progress from Kindergarten

through Grade 5, building upon lessons learned in their younger grades. In third grade, students view pond life through microscopes, in fifth grade, they create their own bioactive terrariums to observe during the school year. This scaffolding provides a secure ladder to ensure that these students will become eco-literate adults.

For the first time this past year, we provided field trips to Harding High School's special education students. We customized our program to fit the abilities of the students.

One of the ways we measure the success of our programs is by following up with the teachers we serve. Feedback from this past year included this comment from a Bridgeport teacher:

***"The program ran flawlessly and my students were engaged and excited."***

*- Cesar Batalla School Teacher*



## Summer Fun for Lighthouse Program Students

During the summer, 410 participants in the City of Bridgeport's Lighthouse program came to TNAC for half-day-long field trips. They went on hikes through the meadow and forest, using their senses along the way, including tasting wild sorrel and spearmint leaves, and smelling the sweet aroma of birch bark.

They used nets to catch and release tadpoles, crayfish, and other freshwater dwellers from the pond. For creative fun, they learned about the connection between modern day birds and prehistoric dinosaurs as they made their own dinosaurs and bird gliders to take home.

# Bringing Families Together for Nature Fun

## Creative and Educational Seasonal Programs

Families made memories at TNAC's seasonal programs throughout the year, day and night.

In March, conditions were right for the sap to flow from our maple tree and visitors searched for the end of the rainbow at our **St. Patrick's Day Rainbow Search** program.

In spring and fall, our youngest visitors read book pages posted along our trails. Our programs didn't stop at night, as we hosted a **Beaver Moon Night Hike**, **Great Firefly Roundup**, and **S'mores and Storytelling**. When weather conditions weren't favorable, we made it work! Drought conditions prevented marshmallow roasting, so we lit the fire pit with lanterns, while guests ate cookies and took home s'more kits. A cold December brought our visitors inside our building to make their wreaths this year, even in the garage! We brought back our popular **Fishing 101** and **Intro to Archery** programs, and introduced two new craft activities for adults and families to create together.

At our **Third Annual Earth Day Celebration**, our visitors were treated to a fun and educational afternoon, thanks to State of CT funding, generous local businesses, and community partners. Bartlett Tree Experts offered cherry picker lifts for kids and gave away tree saplings, and Jeff Roy of Bridgeport's Sound Coffee was on-hand with samples of his local brews.

Master Gardener Pam Roman and volunteers from the Long Hill Garden Club provided plant and gardening tips. Trumbull High School volunteers helped with kids' crafts, and Furry Scaly Friends brought small animals, including an adorable axolotl.



Maple Sugaring



TNAC Trail Tales



Science Adventure Trail



Fishing 101



Earth Day Celebration



Furry Scaly Friends



Great Firefly Roundup



Wreath making



S'mores & Storytelling



Intro to Archery



# Community and Corporate Partnerships

## Community Groups and the Town of Trumbull



We brought our nature crafts and activities to Town of Trumbull and school events. At the Madison Middle School Health Fair, students at the TNAC table played interactive games to learn outdoor safety.

In February, we hosted a collaborative program, **Recycle, Reuse, Kazoo!** along with Trumbull Community Women and Sustainable Trumbull.

TNAC participated in Trumbull Parks & Rec programs, including Trumbull Day, the Trumbull Arts Festival and Fall Festival, and the Farmers' Market. Visitors to the TNAC table at the Farmers' Market made fun crafts and picked up a special scavenger hunt activity that encouraged visitors to explore beautiful Twin Brooks Park. TNAC partnered with the Trumbull Historical Society again this year for the annual CT Trails Day Hike and the Hike Through the Valley.

For the second year in a row, Tashua Knolls Golf Course

raised monarch butterflies, and donated the proceeds of their "Name a Butterfly" initiative to TNAC.

Participants from Goodwill of Western and Northern CT once again helped with TNAC grounds and small projects. We also partnered with The Kennedy Collective to offer volunteer opportunities for their vocational training participants. We are grateful to these two organizations for helping to keep our gardens beautiful, assisting with projects, and keeping our building tidy.

We grew our Trumbull High School Business Student Internship program, due to its success in the two previous years. Raya Karim is our THS Student Business Intern, and in a newly created position, Tali Mogilnitzky is our THS Student Marketing intern. Both Raya and Tali also volunteer at TNAC outreach events.



## Corporate Volunteer Days

Volunteers from Henkel, Unilever, and M&T Bank held employee volunteer days at TNAC this year. We thank these caring corporate volunteers for all their hard work to improve TNAC's grounds and operations!



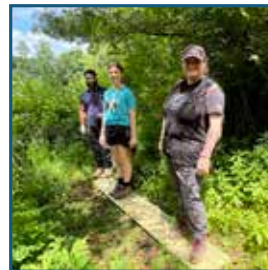
### Henkel Corporation

Henkel held volunteer days in the spring and fall again this year. In May, Trumbull employees completed several projects both inside the building and outside. Projects included removing an old shed (remnants of the Wagner Christmas Tree Farm), repairing inside doors and the garage access door.



In October, Trumbull, Stamford, and Darien employees worked

outside to prepare the grounds for the winter, and to build convertible benches for use in our outdoor classroom.



### Unilever

In June, Unilever employees cleared our pond trail and built a wooden walkway to protect this wetland area and make it safer for hikers. They also weeded our gardens and built shelving to store program supplies.



### M&T Bank

In hot, summer-like weather, M&T Bank employees picked up shovels to spread mulch behind our playground. Their weed-pulling made the pollinator garden even more beautiful for our visitors!

# TNAC's Impact, Revenue, and Expenses

**947**

Seasonal Program Participants

**4,302**

Educational Program Participants

**136**

Programs Held

**955**

Volunteer Hours

## The Power of TNAC Volunteers

We have always been aware of the dedication of our volunteers, but for the first time this year, TNAC Operations Manager Scot Kerr led a new initiative to use database platform Airtable for tracking events, grant expenses, and volunteer hours.

We have gained valuable insight by tracking these activities, and are heartened to learn that 71 people volunteered for a total of 955 hours in 2024. While we value all of our volunteers, we want to recognize Patrons of TNAC board members Kevin Malone for his many years as President and Instructor, and Scot Kerr for his financial expertise as Operations Manager.

## Donor Appreciation

Our budget goals were met this year thanks to donations and earned income. Our biggest donors were (\$1,000+):

### Foundations

**John and Ethel Kashulon Foundation:** \$20,000

**Werth Family Foundation:** \$2,400

**Mallett Charitable Trust:** \$1,500

### Corporations

**Henkel Corporation:** \$21,300

**M&T Charitable Foundation:** \$2,500

**Town Fair Tire Foundation:** \$2,000

**Malone Environmental, Inc.:** \$1,000

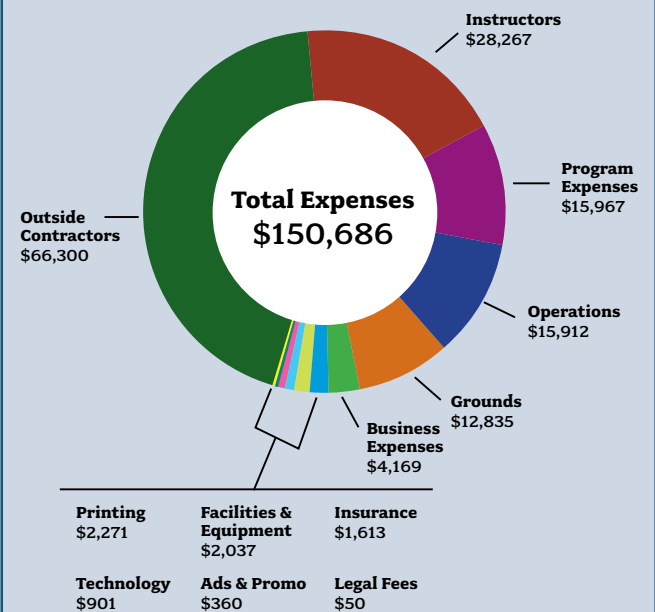
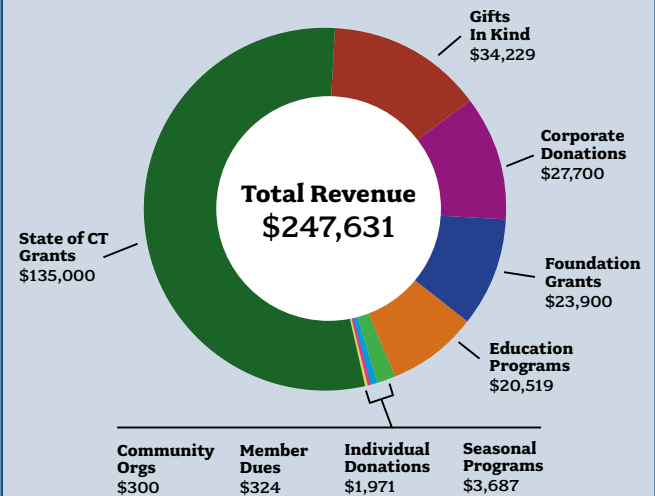
### State of Connecticut

**Dept. of Economic and Community Development:** \$100,000

**Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection:** \$35,000

We would also like to thank Sound Coffee for its \$367 gift, Unilever for its \$500 in-kind donation, Amazon for its \$1,420 in-kind donation, and Scot Kerr and Emily Bloom for their donations towards operational subscriptions.

## Revenue and Expenses



*In-kind volunteer hours have been included in the Program Expenses, Instructors, Operations, and Grounds categories using rate calculations as estimated on independentsector.org*



# Environmental Education is an Investment in the Future

## Our Focus for 2025: Education and Operations

To reach more of our community, and to provide improved visitor experience, we will be focusing on new programs and a plan for an upgraded building.

### Curriculum Development

At the end of 2024, the Patrons of TNAC were informed that they were awarded an ARPA grant from the Town of Trumbull for a new program for Trumbull students. This program, developed with a grant from Henkel, with additional funding from Horizon Foundation, is a Climate Change interactive lesson. Thanks to this funding, TNAC will bring this program to Trumbull public schools' fourth grade students.



Additionally, TNAC is bringing an E-STEM Sustainability program to Trumbull High School students in 2025. In this Henkel-funded after school program, Trumbull and Bridgeport students will create sustainability plans for their communities, while being mentored by Environmental-STEM professionals.



### TNAC Building Plans

The building on the TNAC grounds is an over 60 year old three bedroom ranch house where the Wagner family lived when the property served as their Christmas Tree Farm. The Patrons use the building for small classes and meetings, program preparations, storage space, and restrooms.

The Patrons of TNAC has outgrown the building, and its family-home configuration. To better serve our community, the Town of Trumbull has included the building in its 5-year capital plan. The first phase of renovations is a feasibility study and preliminary designs for renovations and expansion, currently in development. The Patrons of TNAC thank the Town of Trumbull for its continued support of our nonprofit organization.



## The Patrons of the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center

The Patrons welcome community members to join us in providing environmental education programs to students and families.

Location: 7115 Main Street, Trumbull, CT 06611  
P.O. Box 110438, Trumbull, CT 06611  
contact@trumbullnatureandartscenter.org  
203-452-4421  
trumbullnatureandartscenter.org



The Trumbull Nature & Arts Center is supported by the Patrons of the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization



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