

# Summer Newsletter

## 'Educational Equity in the Outdoors'

info@Vveducation.org Vveducation.org 650-726-9210 1043 Tunitas Creek Rd., Half Moon Bay, Ca 94019

### Vida Verde's Founders Take an Adventurous Wedding Sabbatical

When Shawn Sears and Laura Dickerson founded Vida Verde in 2001 and moved into their shared cottage on Tunitas Creek Ranch, they did not imagine the successful program that would grow out of their vision. For the past seven years they have worked day and night, through the weekends, and through the summer to secure the funding and take care of the myriad details that running a start-up non-profit business entails.

Vida Verde is proud to say that, as an organization, that business has stabilized and the staff has been diversified enough that Shawn and Laura were able to plan and take a three month bicycle trip across the United States to commemorate their marriage after 10 years of partnership and 7 years of running Vida Verde!

Thanks to the miracles of technology (like the iphone) they have stayed completely tuned in to the needs and business of the organization. Beginning their bicycle journey in Maine on May 23, they will be returning to their home and back to work at Vida Verde on August 23. Check out their trip website to fulfill all of your curiosities and to drop them a line:



[www.bikewedding.blogspot.com](http://www.bikewedding.blogspot.com)



**W founders:**  
*On top of the Continental Divide.*

### What's New at Vida Verde?

#### Purchased 2<sup>nd</sup> 'Biodiesel' Van

One of the core values of the Vida Verde program lies in taking our students to publicly accessible open spaces and parks. Vida Verde builds the understanding that these amazing natural places are ones that the students can come back to again and again in their lives! This means that the student group must be transported around the area local to Vida Verde in order to see the coast, farms, and forests that are integral to our program. Vida Verde purchased a 2<sup>nd</sup> 15-passenger van, making it possible to transport the entire student group at one time!



**"Ok everybody, buckle up!"**

In this age of increasing fuel costs and the passage of peak oil, it is also very important to the staff at Vida Verde that the organization do what it can to be as low-impact as possible. So we are very proud to say that both of our 15-passenger vans run on 'biodiesel' made from 100% used-recycled vegetable oil!



**Every Vida Verde Trip ends with sharing reflections and appreciations from the trip.**

#### Students Speak Out!

"Vida Verde helped me face my fears."  
Machol, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, East Palo Alto Charter School

"I appreciate all the counselors for teaching lots of different things. I liked learning about birds and the forest. I really appreciated this trip." -Alejandro, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, East Palo Alto Charter School

"Vida Verde is like the gateway to the good life, making food, hiking, discovering the good things about the natures and the outdoors." -Ajani, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Lighthouse Community Charter School

"I felt relieved of all stress and I felt great. Now I want to go camping more often." -Jessica, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Lighthouse Community Charter School

"Vida Verde is a place where city kids like me can learn and understand nature a little better. Vida Verde helped me find that nature is never ending and beautiful" -Daya, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Lighthouse Community Charter

#### New Office and Farm Program

A fortunate twist of fate came for Vida Verde this year as the farm where Shawn and Laura's home and the V.V. office were located was sold to new owners that immediately began creating an educational farm on the property. ([www.patreronuevofarm.org](http://www.patreronuevofarm.org)) V.V. programs will use the farm this year.

The new owners quickly became supporters of Vida Verde both financially and otherwise. An agreement has been made with them allowing V.V. to construct a 30' yurt, rent-free, on the property to be Vida Verde's first office outside of Shawn and Laura's home!



#### New Pygmy Goats!

The only thing cuter than kids with goats is kids with pygmy goats! Vida Verde is very lucky to have had two, very cute pygmy goats donated this past year. They have long angora quality fur that can be spun into wool and so fit naturally into our "Natural Fibers" program.

# Save the Date: Sunday, September 14 The Annual V.V. Donor Appreciation Party

We're throwing a party for YOU!  
Huddart Park, September 14 2008, 4 to 7:30 PM

Join the VV staff team and community at Huddart Park, just outside of Woodside, in one of the Bay Area's nicest and most accessible parks. Enjoy a relaxing time and take a cheese and wine walk with our new naturalists in an amazingly beautiful setting. Be ready to enjoy good food, refreshments and company. Bring your bocce balls and sun hats! See you there!



We've prepared quite a feast. Join us!

## Rolling Strong as a Team of Six!

Vida Verde is enjoying the successes made possible by adding a sixth staff member last year and is ready for another year at this staff level. Three of the six staff, are seasonal, instructors who will work 3 or 4 days per week during the school year. The three, full-time, administrative staff members, Shawn, Laura, and Tim, are looking forward with excitement to the Vida Verde staff training in September, where we will be able to better get to know the new staff of experienced instructors and they will learn the special ways that V.V. successfully works with it's awesome population of kids! We feel strongly about the experience, abilities, and enthusiasm that our new staff has to create the magical and positive experiences for the Vida Verde students having their first experiences in nature. Here's a brief introduction to each:



### Hope Swank

We are very excited to have Hope back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year as a VV instructor. Apart from the VV admin staff, Hope is the first ever 2nd year (returning) instructor! She is an incredibly positive and enthusiastic member of our team. She has spent many summers leading teen adventure backpacking trips that include hiking, whitewater canoeing, and community service. A graduate of St. Mary's College in Maryland, Hope has worked as a Social Work Intern in Santiago, Chile, a youth Swim Coach, a camp counselor, and as a Naturalist the past two years. Hope is fluent in Spanish, and is certified in Wilderness First Aid and Lifeguarding. She believes in "the importance of creating community within a group of children."



### Marisa Lindsay

Marisa is a great example of someone who lines up perfectly with the vision and values of Vida Verde. Marisa graduated from college at UC Berkeley with a BS in Conservation and Resource Studies and a Minor in Education. As a senior she did an honors project looking at the lack of access to outdoor education for inner-city students. She spent the last two years as first a Naturalist Instructor and then Site Director at San Joaquin Outdoor Education here in the Pescadero area.



### Claire McMurdy

Raised in the East Bay area, Claire has a BS in Botany from Humboldt State University and two years of Instruction experience at two different California Outdoor Science Schools. She has also been involved from camper to leadership at the same environmentally focused summer camp in Point Reyes for the past 15 years. Claire thinks that, "environmental education programs offer children a chance, under the guidance of positive, caring adults, to connect with nature in a way that can be life changing."

## Donations Make ALL the Difference!

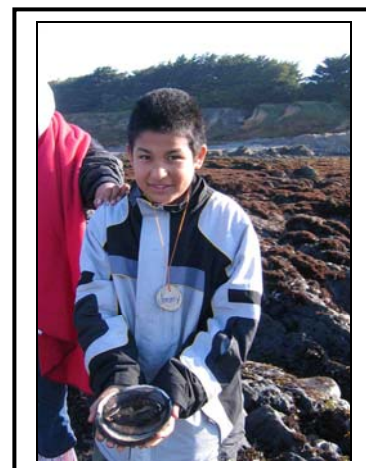
Vida Verde wants to thank you for helping us to have our most successful year of fundraising yet! As our community grows each year, more generous individuals and families decide to pledge financial support, planning ahead for future years. These long-term pledges allow V.V. to confidently plan and strategize for years into the future.

We are beginning the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Vida Verde programs and our first season running exclusively 3-day, 2night programs! This type of program expansion is being made possible by the generosity of donors like yourself. This year is looking to be our most successful year yet!

**Remember to spread the word:** When you connect other people with the Vida Verde program, it helps our community to grow and also aids in creating opportunities for amazing, underserved students each year! For many it is exactly the fulfilling connection they are looking for.

### '07-'08 Granting Foundations

As You Sow Foundation  
Atkinson Foundation  
John and Marcia Goldman Foundation  
June And Julian Foss Foundation  
Katz Family Foundation  
Leshner Foundation  
Potrero Nuevo Foundation  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
TomKat Foundation  
Van Loben Sels/ Remberock Foundation



Amazing what fortunes await our students when they get a chance to explore the world! This abalone certainly was treasured.

### **Online donations are possible:**

To simplify, you can make **online donations**, automatically recurring, in monthly, quarterly, or annual intervals!

[www.Vveducation.org/donate](http://www.Vveducation.org/donate)

# THANK YOU DONORS!!