

Vida Verde Summer Newsletter

August 2009

www.Vveducation.org

Dream of a Long-Term Home Becomes a Reality!

After years of searching, Vida Verde's dream of finding a longer-term home for its programs is finally within reach! For a long time now, we've been carefully searching for the perfect place where V.V. can put down roots and focus on the long-term vision for the organization.

V.V.'s history has been a transient one. Its programs have taken place in different beautiful locations on the coastside of California, from its "birthplace" at a private residence for 4 years, to a retreat center for 3 years, and now at a youth camp in San Gregorio.



After a trial year at this current location, the [Optimist Volunteers for Youth \(OVY\) Camp](#), Vida Verde and the Board of OVY (a nonprofit summer camp for low-income youth) have decided take the next step and enter into a longer term lease!

The camp is an ideal location for V.V.'s school-year programs. It is situated on about 100 acres, just five miles from the coast and tidepools, six miles from the redwood forest, and it's only a 10 minute drive to

Potrero Nuevo Farm. The camp is an excellent and appropriate facility with a dining hall & commercial kitchen, group bathrooms, office/nurse station, playing field, meadow that houses the Vida Verde teepees & campfire circle and cabins. It is also in an amazing natural setting with mature live oaks,



doug fir & redwoods, great trails, and the beautiful San Gregorio Creek! It's the perfect place for kids to explore, play, and be immersed in the outdoors.

The lease that's being negotiated will last from 3-5 years, which is an exciting and important step towards a solid and even longer relationship.

In addition, Vida Verde is thrilled to have also signed a 5 year lease with [Potrero Nuevo Farm \(PNF\)](#), which is a



brand new organic farm and education center that now houses V.V.'s goats, its main office, and its directors. The Vida Verde students visit PNF for 4-5 hours each week, where they milk goats and make cheese, get their hands dirty as they explore the gardens, see solar power in action, gather eggs from the chicken house, visit with the resident alpacas, and even use a composting toilet! [Please contact us if you'd like to visit one of our new homes!](#)

Stats from the 2008-2009 school year:

- 25 Classes of students attended Vida Verde for three day trips, that's 600 kids served!
- 21 of those 25 classes came from returning schools!
- 8 of the schools attending brought and entire grade level of students!
- 8 of the schools have been bringing students to Vida Verde each year for 4 years or more!

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2 New Faces Join the Vida Verde Team

Each summer we like to share with you some information on the awesome team of staff that we put together for the new school year. This year, we have 4 returning staff members: Shawn Sears, *Executive Director*, Laura Sears, *Director of Development*, Tim Ward, *Program Director and Grants Manager*, and Claire McMurtry, *Senior Naturalist Instructor*. You can read their bios on our website at www.Vveducation.org

In addition to these returning staff, two new incredible Naturalist Instructors will join us in September. You can get to know them a little bit below!



Alex Kielty

Alex grew up in central Minnesota and spent his first 18 summers at his family's summer camp in the Boundary Waters. A graduate of St. John's University, Alex has spent the past several years guiding wilderness therapy expeditions in Oregon, and working to create an academic horticultural program for a state children's home. Alex is really excited about gardening, cooking, and climbing, and does all of them in one day as often as he can. Alex believes in the power of wild places to help kids connect with themselves and the rest of earth.



Katie Khoury

Katie grew up in the urban jungle of Washington DC, where she was inspired to work to connect urban youth to the natural world. Since graduating with a Political Science degree from St. Mary's College of Maryland, she has worked in children's gardens of both the National Arboretum and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, teaching garden science and getting her hands dirty while planting, weeding and harvesting with her students. Last year Katie was introduced to the wonders of California, as she worked as a naturalist for San Mateo Outdoor Education. Her passion for creating a healthier, more sustainable world inspires her to help create more young lovers of nature every day.

Cherrie the Beast!

For many years now, Vida Verde's main utility/camp truck has been a 1985 Ford F250. It's been a great truck for the org, but in the past couple of years has been aging quickly. It needed ongoing work, was a challenge to start and difficult to drive. We decided it was time for an upgrade, and luckily the Bothin Foundation agreed with us! We received a grant for a newer truck this summer, and after a careful search found the perfect replacement for the old Ford. "**Cherrie the Beast**" will get tons of use, from moving students' luggage up to the teepees each week, to delivering loads of compost, harvesting teepee poles, transporting tools and materials for work projects, hauling loads of hay and grain for the goats, and much more. And though she looks like a gas-guzzler, Cherrie actually has a more efficient diesel engine and runs smoothly (and with fewer emissions) on 100% Bio-diesel made from used cooking oil! Thank you Bothin Foundation!



"The Vida Verde staff emitted a positive energy which was infectious. They were kind, knowledgeable, and highly committed to creating a fulfilling and unforgettable experience for my students."

-Andre Brunetti, 4th Grade Teacher, Cesar Chavez Elementary, Richmond, CA

Vida Verde's Admin Team Moves into New Office

Many of you probably didn't realize this, but for 8 years the Vida Verde office was run out of a small room in the founders/director's house. This 11'x11' room was so packed with stuff and people that a person could barely shift in their chair without having to apologize to the person next to them!

In December of 2008, Vida Verde received a grant from the Dean Witter Foundation to build a brand new Yurt Office (dubbed the "Yoffice")! Potrero Nuevo Farm generously granted V.V. a 5-year rent free lease on their farm in Half Moon Bay.



The old, tiny, one-room office



The beautiful & spacious new yurt office!

The Yoffice was built & erected by Casey Norton, volunteers & V.V. staff. Plumbing was donated by Simms Plumbing, and The Midland Cabinet Company donated gorgeous cabinetry that easily holds all the office supplies and records and keeps them organized. A few generous families donated most of the rest of the office furniture.

The three directors now have plenty of desk space, there's a friendly sitting area for meetings and visits with guests, a kitchenette, and even a separate quiet room for meetings or phone calls.

Our efficiency, productivity, and general quality of life has improved by leaps & bounds, which is great for program! Thanks to the Dean Witter Foundation and everyone! Please schedule a visit to check out the new yoffice anytime!

Fundraising Takes Off!

We know it's been a rough year for a lot of people and organizations financially. We were pretty nervous earlier this year as we set our budget goals and began our winter/spring round of grant writing. We were told to expect the worst, and doom & gloom was rampant within the nonprofit community. Would we make our goals for the year? Would we even get close? How would our community of supporters react to the economic climate? Nothing was certain and we were uneasy.

In December, at V.V.'s annual Benefit our community of individual donors set the pace and the stage by donating MORE money than any other

year in V.V.'s past! With this confidence from our individual donors, we went into our annual planning meeting with business consultant Eric Ryan. Building on our solid long-term fundraising plan that's been in place for several years, we set an optimistic and careful strategic plan for this year and went after achieving it aggressively right out of the gate. Tim and Laura took the lead in seeking grants, and the result is that Vida Verde is now receiving more grant money than in any other year! We believe that this has so much to do with the confidence and commitment shown by indi-

vidual donors at the December Benefit (especially with so many folks pledging their support over 5 years)! Thank You! What a catalyst. We continue to work very hard on securing a continual and solid foundation of support, especially as the economic climate remains uncertain. We are feeling grateful and extremely positive about the future!

Committed Grants so far for 2009

- ♥ As You Sow Foundation ♥
- Atkinson Foundation ♥ Bothin Foundation
- ♥ David B. Gold Foundation ♥
- ♥ David and Lucile Packard Foundation ♥
- ♥ Hartman Foundation ♥
- ♥ John and Marcia Goldman Foundation ♥
- Leshner Foundation ♥ Mountain Hardwear
- ♥ Silicon Valley Community Foundation:
- The Hancock Family Fund ♥
- Potrero Nuevo Fund ♥ Kimball Foundation
- ♥ Change Happens Foundation ♥
- ♥ TomKat Charitable Trust ♥

MARK THOSE CALENDARS!

for the 2009 Benefit Celebration!

Last year's celebration at Cesar Chavez Academy in East Palo Alto was a HUGE success, and our guests had a fantastic time. We hope you can join us this year on December 6th at International Community School in Oakland.

Our annual fundraising event is an exciting morning that includes inspiring student and teacher testimonials, great performances, a delicious local organic brunch, our documentary film, and much more. You don't want to miss it! This year, think about inviting a friend or two, and if you're really inspired by the mission, you can be a **table captain** and bring 7 friends!

The cost to attend this amazing morning? Nothing! It's free! You'll be asked to consider giving a donation, but you are not required to give.

Save the Date now,
so you won't miss this inspiring event!



Guests mill around and drink morning beverages before the program begins



Opening dance and spoken word performance by Destiny Arts, the East Bay urban youth dance troupe



V.V. Volunteers make the morning extra-special

When? Sunday, December 6th,
10:30am-noon

Where? International Community School
Oakland, California

Why? To get inspired and help make Vida Verde's programs and kids thrive!



Celebrating 8 Years of Educational Equity in the Outdoors!

The Mission: Vida Verde is a nonprofit that promotes educational equity by providing free, overnight, environmental learning experiences for students who otherwise don't otherwise get the opportunity.

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED WITH VIDA VERDE?

HERE ARE SOME GREAT THINGS YOU CAN DO:

1. VOLUNTEER TO HELP US PAINT ON THIS MON, TUE OR WEDS AUG 10-12.
2. CHECK OUT THE WISH LIST ON OUR WEBSITE AND SEE IF YOU HAVE SOME UN-NEEDED STUFF TO DONATE!
3. HELP MORE LIKE MINDED PEOPLE YOU KNOW JOIN OUR COMMUNITY: INVITE THEM TO THE DEC. BENEFIT!

Contact us at:
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And you can click here to:



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