



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-25-125  
Meeting 25-28  
October 8, 2025

**AGENDA ITEM 6**

**AGENDA ITEM**

Visitor Services Youth Partnership Program

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

Receive an informational report on youth engagement between 2023 - 2025 as part of the Visitor Services Youth Partnership Program. No Board Action required.

**SUMMARY**

Since 2023, the Youth Partnership Program (YPP) has engaged 340 youth in grades K-12, representing a diverse mix of peninsula and coastside communities within both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The YPP has increased youth engagement by 37%. The total number of youth served since 2023 was 1,259. Spaces and Species field trips engaged 919 youth and 340 youth were served through the YPP.

**DISCUSSION**

Interpretation & Education Program (I&E) staff in the Visitor Services Department, along with volunteer docents, offer continuous programming that connects youth to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) preserves. Since 2002, Outdoor Education Docents and program staff have facilitated approximately 25 Spaces & Species field trips annually to 400 students in grades 3 to 5 at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve. Furthermore, staff and docents participate in classroom visits, community presentations, tabling events, family-oriented Docent Naturalist-guided activities throughout the preserves, and Nature Center Docents connecting with young visitors at the Daniels Nature Center. The hiring of a full-time Environmental Education Specialist in late 2022 sparked increased capacity and new ideas for broadening youth programming and opportunities for collaborating with partners serving local youth.

In 2023, Public Affairs and Visitors Services staff informed the Board that the then-named “Youth Outreach Pilot Program”, now referred to as the “Youth Partnership Program,” could achieve greater success if it was led by I&E staff who have the programmatic expertise to elevate these education experiences. Separately, Public Affairs continues to manage community partners that support youth and other target audiences through their community outreach program. Since 2023, the youth-exclusive partnerships that Public Affairs has managed include the Boys and Girls Club of the Coastside and Student Conservation Association. Other partnerships may include youth as part of their broader engagement but are not solely dedicated to youth-focused programming.

Since the presentation to the Board in 2023, the Youth Partnership Program has:

- Engaged with schools, non-profits, county agencies, and community-based partners that serve youth – a comprehensive summary of partnerships is provided below.
- Developed a feedback survey for partner organizations to assess program quality and the health of partnerships.
- Expanded collaborations with communities with historically limited access to parks and open spaces, thereby contributing to Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) objectives (Refer to the Youth Participant Demographics below).
- Emphasized a balanced geographic distribution of partnerships between bayside and coastside communities.
- Provided financial contributions to partners who serve youth, for a cumulative amount of \$10,000 each fiscal year.

Youth Partnership Program overarching goals include:

- Develop meaningful, positive, long-term and mutually-beneficial relationships with youth-serving organizations, where ongoing programmatic collaboration and support are emphasized.
- Sustainably grow the number of experiences offered to youth on District land and lands within our sphere of influence.
- Support Midpen's mission of providing ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

### **Youth Program Participant Demographics**

Although individual demographic information of youth participants was not gathered, the publicly-accessible, school-wide metrics compiled annually by the California Department of Education offer a general context based on their registered school. These metrics align with the program's commitment to engage communities identified in its objectives, as well as with the District's DEI goals. The weighted average for the schools attended by participants shows that:

- 66% of students are considered socio-economically disadvantaged (defined as students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals; or have parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma).
- 35% of students are considered English Language Learners (defined as students who are learning to communicate effectively in English).

Each of these percentages are well above the combined averages for both San Mateo and Santa Clara County schools (34.5% socio-economically disadvantaged, 21.7% English Language Learners), indicating the program's effectiveness in reaching its intended youth demographic.

### **Partner Summary**

#### ***Canopy – Teen Urban Forester (TUF) Program – (Area: East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Eastern Menlo Park)***

Canopy's mission is to collaborate with communities to grow and sustain equitable urban forests for all. The Teen Urban Forester (TUF) workforce development and youth leadership program prioritizes BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) applicants and equips high school students with confidence and skills in urban forestry, preparing them to lead conversations on tree equity while highlighting intersectionality, storytelling, and environmental justice. Since

2023, TUFs explored the Daniels Nature Center at Skyline Ridge Preserve and took part in two “Career Days” hosted by the I&E team at the Los Altos Administrative Office.

In 2025, the District provided \$1,500 from YPP funds to Canopy to support the TUF program.

<b>Career Day Date</b>	<b>Number of TUF Attendees</b>	<b>Number of Staff/Departments Represented</b>
November 29, 2023	17	11 staff, 6 departments
May 8, 2025	18	9 staff, 6 departments

***Climate Resilient Communities (CRC) – (Area: Peninsula Region)***

The Resilient Education Program is a CRC initiative aimed at cultivating climate-resilient communities, particularly among frontline populations that have historically experienced the disproportionate effects of climate change, especially youth. Their educational programs foster a deep understanding of climate-related issues while facilitating active engagement and participation in developing solutions. The Youth Climate Collective serves as an educational initiative that encourages the engagement and leadership of young individuals (from teenagers to young adults) in matters of climate justice and environmental topics in the greater Peninsula region. In 2025, the District provided \$2,300 in financial assistance to this organization in support of their youth-oriented initiatives within local communities.

***San Mateo County Department of Sustainability – Youth Exploring Climate Science (YECS) Programming: (Area: San Mateo County)***

The YECS program provides free, hands-on, and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)-aligned educational field trips for students in middle and high school. These excursions are designed to assist young individuals in developing a deeper understanding of local climate challenges, including sea level rise, biodiversity threats, and wildfire management, while also exploring real-world examples of climate solutions provided by local agencies and organizations.

In 2024, the District established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with San Mateo County’s Department of Sustainability to jointly lead Wildfire Science field trips at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve. During these trips, students acquire knowledge about fire safety, mitigation efforts, and related career paths while participating in a guided hike with the District’s Environmental Education Specialist and a supporting docent.

To date, two YECS Wildfire Science field trips have been offered, serving 45 participants from Connect Community Charter School in North Fair Oaks and Pescadero Middle and High Schools. Additional field trips are planned for the fall of 2025.

***Save the Redwoods League (SRL) – (Area: San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties)***

Following a 5-year hiatus caused by Covid-19, SRL and the District’s I&E program staff, along with Outdoor Education Docents, successfully piloted the return of the *Redwoods and Climate Change* field trip for 12 students at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve on May 15, 2025. This field trip served Carlmont High School located in San Mateo County, which has 10% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and 4% English Language Learners. The Transportation

Assistance Fund (TAP), a distinct funding source managed by the District’s Visitor Services Department, provided financial support for this field trip. As the docent experience and support in leading this particular field trip continues to grow, the aim is to extend invitations to additional schools that lack access to similar site-based environmental education opportunities.

***Siena Youth Center (SYC) – (Area: San Mateo County)***

SYC is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the North Fair Oaks Community in Redwood City, home to a linguistically diverse population where numerous neighborhoods have limited park or open space access. The staff at SYC provide after school care, summer programming, and leadership mentoring opportunities for youth. Additionally, they provide community services and events for families.

Since 2023, I&E staff have created an informal partnership with SYC to facilitate environmental education field trips for youth aged 7 to 17 to District preserves. The programming has been collaboratively led by I&E staff and docents, along with SYC staff and high school-aged interns from SYC.

- In 2023 and 2024, youth visited Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, where they engaged with the Daniels Nature Center, explored life in and around Alpine Pond, and hiked the surrounding trails to discover various plant communities.
- In 2025, youth visited El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve, immersing in the redwood forest, seeing the “Methuselah” tree, and learning about redwood ecology.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Field Trips</b>	<b>Total Youth Involved in Programming</b>	<b>Funding Contribution per Fiscal Year</b>
2023	6	90	\$2,500
2024	5	84	\$2,500
2025	5	74	\$3,000

***Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action (SVYCA) – (Area: Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties)***

Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action is a youth led non-profit that empowers teens and young adults to combat climate change through impactful policy and education initiatives. A total of 40 high school students participated in their 2025 Summer Climate Leadership Academy. The goal of the academy is to support climate literacy and connect these young people with local organizations and policy makers that are active agents in mitigating climate impacts here in the Bay Area.

On July 17, the District’s Governmental Affairs Program Manager, General Manager and Environmental Education Specialist presented alongside Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority staff to the academy participants on the topic of Nature Based Solutions for mitigating climate impacts and the protection of open space. The following day students took a field trip to Coyote Valley and the Cathedral Oaks area of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve where staff shared insights on restoration efforts, climate resilience, and opportunities for community involvement.

***Youth and Young Adult Outdoor Education (YAYA) (Area: Coastside – OVY camp in San Gregorio)***

YAYA is a week-long overnight camp designed to empower youth through outdoor experiences that integrate environmental education and wellness through the lens of identity. Their program equips students with tools to advocate for their communities, the planet and themselves, fostering resilience and leadership. YAYA is set to launch its pilot program in the fall of 2025. I&E staff have engaged with the Executive Director and Founder of YAYA to explore potential partnership opportunities. In 2025, the District contributed \$1,000 toward a special event originally scheduled for August 2025 (which will be rescheduled) and an additional \$1,500 to support YAYA with their programming needs.

Finally, and separately through the Grantmaking Program, it is important to also highlight that the District has sponsored the work of external youth program providers to expand its reach and impact. Since 2023, the Grantmaking Program has funded six unique grants totaling \$154,854 to five youth focused organizations, including two from the 2023 grantmaking cycle and four continued from the 2021 cycle. These grants have served approximately 4,100 youth throughout the Bay Area.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None

**PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

- On August 12, 2020, the Board approved the Youth Outreach Plan ([R-20-88](#), [Minutes](#))
- On August 9, 2023, the Board received an informational update for the Youth Partnership Program ([R-23-85](#), [Minutes](#)).

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

**NEXT STEPS**

Staff will continue to coordinate the Youth Partnership Program and will continue to track participation. Responsible Department Head: Matt Anderson, Visitor Services

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