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Youth Programs Handbook

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Welcome

Whole Earth Nature School is dedicated to mentoring kids of all ages to develop a close, personal connection to the natural world. Awareness and nature connection is one of the primary ways that we help kids grow into mature, responsible adults. We believe, and research has shown, that direct experience with nature helps kids to be more calm and focused as well as learn better throughout the rest of their lives. We also know that inspired attention is always more effective than directed attention. That's why we fill our programs with real and exciting skills, games and activities. Kids who attend Whole Earth Nature School will come away with new skills and a new awareness of the world around them. We also know that the best mentoring relationships give kids plenty of direct attention. That's why we always insure that there is a minimum of one professional instructor for every six kids at a program. That is an exceptional amount of personal attention in an outdoor program.

Working With Parents

It is our goal while working with your kids to compliment the mentoring and development that is provided to you as parents. We have also drafted the following policies to ensure the best relationship between Whole Earth Nature School and our students and families that support us. We are always open to feedback on any policy we have implemented and we appreciate your constructive suggestions. All decisions about changes to policies will be made by our team of Directors. We reserve the right to modify our policies at any time.

C.R.O.W. Learning Pathways to Nature Mastery

C.R.O.W. stands for Cougar, Raccoon, Owl, Wolverine and represents each of our four Learning Pathways to Nature Mastery. We developed the Learning Pathways to give kids a framework for further development of outdoor skills. The skills and techniques that are taught at our beginning programs are just the tip of the iceberg of outdoor skills and nature awareness. Our intention is to launch our students on a lifetime journey of learning and exploration. The C.R.O.W. Learning Pathways provide inspiration and incentives to kids to follow their passion and develop new skills. Each Pathway includes a "family" of skills that are all related. Everything we teach fits into one or more of these Pathways. Each Pathway includes several levels of achievement that get progressively more challenging and encourage kids to learn more advanced skills. See [Appendix A](#) for details on each Learning Pathway and the available Achievement Levels.

Sit Spots

Nature learning doesn't stop when students leave our program. We encourage each student to find his or her own "Sit Spot" near home. The concept of a sit spot is not familiar to most modern people so I want to take the time to explain this really important core routine. In the simplest terms, a sit spot is a place that a person visits on a regular basis to practice nature study. Nature itself is our most important teacher and if we want to really understand the

natural world the best thing to do is to visit one place on a regular basis. The sit spot routine is one that has been practiced by people all over the world. It allows the student to experience and learn about a part of nature that isn't able to be easily experienced when with others, and when being active in nature. A good sit spot can be anywhere from deep in the wilderness to your back porch. Here are a few things to look for in a sit spot in order of importance. A sit spot should:

- Be nearby and convenient
- Be outside
- Feel safe to you so that you want to be there
- Allow you to feel "alone" to have your own quiet space without distractions

There are a few more things that are *nice* to have at your sit spot but that are not critical (in other words, if you don't have these nearby, don't worry about it):

- Near transition zones between different types of habitat
- Near water
- Near an animal trail but not right *in* an animal trail
- Open enough to be able to see what is happening around you

A Note About Poison-oak and Other Hazards

Many normal activities in life carry inherent risks such as crossing a busy street or playing sports. Spending time in nature is no different. And just like with the hazards involved in crossing the street, taking a few appropriate steps can mitigate most of the serious dangers. One of the primary lessons that kids learn at nature camp is how to deal with hazards by better understanding them and how to take risks in an appropriate way. Here are a few common hazards of the woods and how you can help your kids deal with them safely.

Poison-oak

Poison-oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) is a common native plant of western North America. This plant is present at most of our program sites (except Big Bear Camp). Contact with the plant can cause an itchy rash due to an oil the plant produces called urushiol. It's characteristic three-leaflet pattern is easily recognized by many hikers. However, Poison-oak takes on many appearances depending on the time of year and where it is growing. Our first protection against poison oak is to learn to know what it looks like in our area at this time of year. That helps us to avoid contact with the plant. We also highly recommend wearing long pants and closed toe shoes to reduce exposure. If exposure to poison-oak occurs there are a few things that you can do to reduce the chance of developing a rash. The most important thing is to scrub all exposed skin well with cool water and lots of soap as soon as possible after exposure. Wash all clothes that may have been exposed separately to avoid cross contamination.



Insects and Bugs

There are several varieties of stinging insects that we are likely to encounter while walking in the woods. The ones that we encounter most commonly are “yellow jackets” (*Vespula spp.*). The yellow jackets like to nest in cavities underground during the summer and fall where an unsuspecting explorer might accidentally step on their nest without knowing it. Yellow jackets will defend their nests aggressively if they feel threatened and they are capable of stinging multiple times. We take several precautions during the yellow jacket season to reduce the risk of being stung. First, when travelling off of established trails instructors always go in front in order to watch out for ground nests that might be hard to spot. Second, we teach students to react calmly when yellow jackets are present (such as during lunch time). When we don’t antagonize these insects they mostly leave us alone. In addition to these precautions, all staff are trained on the assessment of severe allergic reaction and anaphylaxis. Each group carries Epi-pen devices to treat severe allergic reactions and has someone trained in how to use the device. Severe allergic reactions to stings are actually quite rare and in most cases when a child is stung we invite them to apply a medicinal plant to the sting to help reduce the pain and swelling. Finally, we sometimes encounter ticks while travelling in the woods. These parasitic arachnids like to hang out on tall grasses and grab on to hikers as we pass by. They will often crawl around on a person for a long time before biting and our best protection against tick bites is regular tick checks. We encourage campers to check themselves twice a day during springtime when ticks are most prevalent. Typically it works well to check for ticks while in the bathroom as they prefer to be in warm, moist areas of the body, under clothing. If a tick does bite it can be removed by pinching it gently at the head with a pair of tweezers and pulling straight out.

Extreme Weather

Here in the Willamette Valley we are blessed with a very mild climate and we are able to participate in outdoor activities year round. You can ensure that your child has a good time outdoors by coming to camp prepared for all likely weather conditions. In warm weather we recommend loose, breathable clothing as well as the use of a sun hat and/or sunscreen. Also, bringing enough water to drink is essential to staying healthy. We recommend carrying at least 1 liter of pure water (in addition to any juice or other sugary drinks) when at camp. There will be opportunities to refill your water bottle. In cold weather it is important to dress in layers. Try to avoid cotton clothing. Good quality rain gear, including waterproof boots, is a must for staying comfortable outside in the winter. Finally, in rare cases of extreme weather we do seek shelter indoors.

Large Mammals

The most common large mammals in our area that may pose a risk to humans are black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and cougars (*Felis concolor*). These animals are native to our area and range commonly throughout the valley and foothills. However, bears and cougars are very shy of people and will try at all times to avoid the sights, sounds, and smells they associate with humans. Being with large (and often noisy) groups of kids makes it unlikely that we will ever encounter one of these animals during camp. However, as an additional precaution we make students aware of how to react if they do see a bear or cougar. There are differences in each but generally it is advisable to stay together as a group. Don’t turn your back on the animal and back away slowly. In some cases it is appropriate to make noise to scare off the animal. Nevertheless, in most cases the only indication we ever get of the presence of large mammals in our area is the signs and tracks they leave behind.

Coyote Kids! After School

General Info

Our staff will meet your kids at their school meeting locations listed below. Coyote Kids! programs all take place in nearby parks and natural areas adjacent to the schools. All activities will be within walking distance of the school. Instructors will be available outside the classrooms during the first few weeks of camp to help students find their way to the appropriate meeting place, until they get used to where to meet. Pick up will occur two hours after the end of school. Detailed location is listed below. There is a 15 minute grace period for pick-ups. Please see our late pick-up policy below for more details.

How to Prepare

Please come to Coyote Kids! Ready for adventuring. Kids will need:

- Appropriate clothing for the outdoors (Warm hat, rain gear, boots, etc.)
- Water
- A backpack or other way of carrying their own possessions while leaving their hands free
- Suggested: Healthy snack

Program Locations:

Adams: Meet in front of the school on the downhill (West) side, pick-up at the same location.

Camas Ridge: Meet in the grassy area in front of the lower (West) building. Pick-up in the same location.

Centennial: Meet in the pine trees on the south end of the school. Pick-up in the same location.

Charlemagne: Meet at the picnic tables in the back of the school. Pick up will be at the ramp next to the parking lot loop.

César Chávez: Meet at the courtyard by the school garden on the South side of the school. Pick up will be on the front (North) side of the school by the bus loop.

Edgewood: Meet at the upper parking lot near the large boulders. Pick up is in the same location.

Edison: Meet in front of the school. We gather to the east of the front door. Pick up will be in the same location.

Family School: Meet in the grassy area West of the bus loop. Pick up will be at the same location.

McCornack: Meet in the concrete area outside behind the school office. Pick up will be on the south side of 25th avenue between Chaucer and Hawkins. [Click for a map](#)

Village School: Meet in the hallway outside your classrooms, then join the larger group on the East side of the building near the sand pit. Pick up will be at the intersection of 30th and Lincoln Streets at the back entrance to Wayne Morse Family Farm. [Click for a map.](#)

Coyote Kids! Home School

General Info

Program drop off will be at 10:00am. Pick Up will be between 2:00pm and 2:15pm. We invite parents to come early around 1:50 each week to listen to our “story of the day” as kids share about what they did that day.

How to Prepare

Please come to Coyote Kids! Home School prepared. Kids will need:

- Appropriate clothing for the outdoors (Warm hat, rain gear, boots, etc.)
- Water
- A nutritious lunch
- A backpack or other way of carrying their own possessions

Program Location:

Coyote Kids Home School is held at Mount Pisgah Arboretum. [Click here for map and directions.](#) You may drop off and pick up your children in the “bus turnaround” area without needing a pass. However, if you park your car for any amount of time in the parking lot you must purchase a pass. You can purchase a day pass on site for \$4 or you can purchase an annual pass for \$40. Lane County Parks has been known to be aggressive in ticketing cars and if you receive a ticket we will be unable to intervene on your behalf. Please be sure that all cars parked at the Arboretum display a valid pass.

F.O.R.E.S.T.

The F.O.R.E.S.T. Program consists of several elements listed below. This information is general. Refer to the [F.O.R.E.S.T. Program web page](#) for current meeting dates and times.

Fall Orientation Meeting

This meeting will be held mid-September and parents as well as students are invited. During the meeting our staff will run parallel orientation activities for parents and students.

Weekly Clan Meetings

Each student will be assigned a clan based on a combination of experience, skill level, and schedule availability. Each clan will meet with their instructor from 6-8pm on a weekday. These meetings will occur once per week from September-May.

Monthly Field Trips

Once per month all students will head out for a planned field trip. Trips will be held on the second and third weekends of each month. Each student will attend one trip per month. Three of the 9 planned field trips will be overnight.

Communications

When enrolling in the program, parents will be added to an email list that will be used for regular program reminders and communications. These emails will be sent a couple of times per month and will include details about upcoming trips, meeting locations and times, and trip-specific packing and preparation information.

Day Camps (Summer, Winter Break, Spring Break)

General Info

Check-in begins at 9:00 at the camp location.

During Summer Pick up is between 3:30 and 3:45 for 6-16 year old camps; between 1:00 and 1:15 for 3-6 year old camps. During Winter and Spring break camps pick up is between 3:30 and 3:45 for all students. (Please read section below about late pickups.) After-camp care is available during summer.

Allergy Policy

Childhood allergies are unfortunately very common these days. The most common and dangerous allergy we encounter is to peanuts. For this reason, and to ensure a safe and positive experience for everyone we are asking that no one bring food containing peanuts, peanut butter, peanut oils, etc. to any day camps. This is in addition to our usual policy of kids not sharing food. We appreciate your understanding and sensitivity to the needs of all our campers. Please do not send your child to day camps with any peanut-containing foods in his or her lunch or snacks. If you are having a difficult time coming up with alternatives to the good ol' PB&J please [refer to this list of ideas](#).

How to Prepare

- Your child will be exploring in the woods and if all goes well, she or he will get dirty. Please dress your child in clothing that can get dirty and that is appropriate for the weather. (i.e. Sun hat, sunscreen, or raincoat. Layers are a good idea. Closed-toe shoes are highly encouraged.)
- Nutritious lunch (no peanut products please, see allergy statement above) and snacks
- Water in a refillable container (yes, water in addition to any other beverages)
- A backpack (be sure your child can carry his/her belongings independently)
- Age 9 and older only: Locking-blade pocket knife (optional). [See this video to learn more.](#)

Program Locations (follow the link for maps and directions):

- [Lane Community College \(LCC\)](#)
- [Hendricks Park](#)
- [Mount Pisgah Arboretum](#)

Camp Little Bear

- For the most part, Camp Little Bear runs just like any other summer day camp. However, Camp Little Bear also includes a one-night overnight on Thursday. We will be having a community potluck on that Thursday evening. Please come to our Thursday Potluck promptly by 6pm with a dish to share and plates/cups/utensils for your family. We will meet you at the drop-off/pick-up location and walk you out to the picnic location which is also next to a large fire pit (where we'll say goodbye to you as the kids transition into the nighttime routine around the fire).

What to Bring for the Camp Little Bear Thursday overnight

In addition to their usual day-camp items, they should also bring:

- Sleeping Bag
- Extra blankets if needed
- Sleeping pad
- Pillow
- Sleeping clothes to stay warm during their night in the shelter they build
- Stuffed Animal if needed
- Toiletries (children will be encouraged to brush their teeth)
- Personal Medications (to be given to acting camp medical director)

Reminder: Camp Little Bear ends at Noon on Friday.

Overnight Camps (Big Bear Village, Camp Artemis, Advanced Survival Skills)

General Info

Drop-off and Pick Up for Big Bear Village and Advanced Survival Skills:

Sign in begins at 2pm on Sunday. Note that the driveway gate will be locked until 2pm. Please drive no faster than 20 mph on the gravel road to preserve the health and wellness of our human and natural neighbors. We will be wading in the creek as one of our first activities. Please come dressed in water shoes or sandals and wearing swim suits or clothing that can get wet.

Camp will end at 4pm Friday followed by a Camp Showcase. Your campers will be showing off some of the skills and activities they have been doing during the week. The Camp Showcase might go as late as 5pm. Even if you cannot attend the showcase, please pick up your child no later than 5pm on Sunday. After 5pm our usual late pick up policy applies.

How to Prepare

[Click here for a printable packing list for all overnight camps](#)

- Sleeping Bag
- Sleeping Pad
- Water Bottle (2 needed, but one will be given to you on camp arrival)
- Toiletries (showers and bathrooms will be available)
- Sunscreen
- Personal Medications (to be given to camp medical director)
- Day pack
- Personal Snacks
- Fixed blade knife (3-5 inch blade). (See About Knives)
- Flashlight
- And finally, clothing that can get dirty (earth tones preferred):
- Long pants
- Shorts
- Swimsuit (please come wearing it under your clothes as we will have a water activity the day you arrive)
- Hat
- T-shirts
- Socks (at least 1 pair wool)
- Underwear
- Warm jacket
- Raincoat
- Sunglasses
- 2 pairs of shoes (one should be sandals or water shoes)
- Bandana
- Towel

Please leave at home:

- Non-locking knives (i.e. Swiss army knives)

- Electronics (iPod, DS, cell phone etc.) A dedicated camera is OK
- Non-biodegradable soap or strong-scented cosmetics
- Wristwatches
- Lighters/Matches

A Note About Camp

Our overnight camp programs, are an opportunity for teens to connect deeply with their natural environment, develop team skills, and begin to become self-sufficient adults. Participants in this camp will be expected to make and keep a set of group agreements for the week regarding behavior toward each other and our environment. We encourage campers to bring whatever is necessary to stay safe and comfortable but please leave at home anything that will distract from your interaction with your peers and natural environment. We also recognize that when teens get together in a new environment, hormones are likely to run high. We will take necessary measures to keep campers safe and appropriate, such as separating sleeping quarters and having same-gender instructors available in all groups but we also expect campers to maintain our trust by making good choices for themselves. In case of an emergency: Cell service is limited at the camp. If you have a true emergency and you need to get a hold of us call 541-937-5437. We may not be able to answer right away, however we will be checking the phone for messages twice a day.

Diversity and Inclusion

We are dedicated to welcoming all students, regardless of race, culture, religion, sex, gender, or national origin. If your student needs extra support to feel welcome and supported at camp please contact us using the information at the bottom of this page so that we can work with you to find the best solutions. For example, we'd like to hear from non-cisgendered students about their needs prior to camp so that we can assure camp is a welcoming and inclusive place for all. Because of the wide variety of terrain at the site, students with physical limitations should contact us prior to registration so that we can make sure this camp will be able to serve your needs.

Program Locations:

- [Big Bear Camp](#)

Policies:

Late Pick-Up Policy

We understand that sometimes there are unforeseen circumstances which could cause you to be late. We allow 15 minutes after the end of the camp for you to pick up your child without penalty. From 16-25 minutes late, we charge a flat fee of \$5. For every additional minute after this, we charge \$1 per minute. We do this in order to make every effort to support and compensate our instructors for the time they invest. We need our team leaders to be able to go home, rest, and return refreshed to care for your children the next day.

Refund Policy

Whole Earth Nature School has implemented the following cancellation policy based on the time, resources and staffing that goes into planning a camp. We cannot recover these expenses if you cancel. Cancellations made on short notice can also prevent others from attending.

If you ask to transfer to a different camp you may do so up to 15 days prior to the start of your camp. There will be a \$25 fee per camp transferred. Less than 15 days before camp transfers will be subject to our cancellation policy below. All programs have a non-refundable, 25% deposit.

If you cancel, or ask to transfer to a different camp, for any reason:

- Cancellations made at least 15 days prior to the first day of camp will receive a full refund, minus the 25% non-refundable deposit.
- Cancellations/transfers made between 8 and 14 days prior to the first day of camp will receive a refund of 50% of the total camp tuition.
- Cancellations/transfers made 7 days or less prior to the first day of camp, or after the start of a program, are not refundable.

Oops Policy: You have 48 hours from the time of purchase to cancel your registration with no penalty. (Cancellation must be requested prior to the start of the program.)

Release of Children

Children will only be released from a program to their parents or any person specified as an authorized pick up person in the student's registration. We must have written or verbal authorization from a parent to release the child to anyone not listed on that child's registration form.

Adult Disorderly Behavior

The safety of our students is paramount. If the parent or guardian picking up a child is visibly drunk, obviously under the influence of drugs which is impairing their safe behavior, or acting violently, we will refer to the following procedure:

1. Ask the parent/guardian if there is anyone else available to pick up the child that day.
2. Call all parent and emergency contact numbers provided in the student's registration to attempt to find another person to pick up the child.

3. If the parent/guardian insists on taking the child we will note a licence plate number and call 911.

Illness and Absence

If you are ill it is important that you stay home to rest and recover. It is important for the health of the sick child as well as the rest of our students that sick children stay home. If you were too sick to attend school you may not attend the Whole Earth Nature School Program that day. Please stay home if you are experiencing any combination of the following symptoms or conditions in the previous 24 hours:

- Fever over 100 degrees taken under the arm (same as 101 oral)
- Hallucinations
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Diarrhea (more than one incident in a day)
- Severe cough
- Unusual yellow color of skin or eyes
- Head lice
- Difficult breathing, or wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain
- Skin, eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above.

Inclement Weather

Whole Earth Nature School encourages students to be outdoors and experience nature on their own terms. However, some extreme weather conditions make it hazardous to be outside. In general, we will follow the lead of the 4J School District with regard to “snow days”. If 4J Schools are closed for the day there will be no Coyote Kids! Program that day. If unanticipated extreme weather occurs while we are running a program we will retreat indoors for protection.

Discipline Policy

The foundation of the guidance and discipline policy at Whole Earth Nature School is to encourage positive behavior in the individual which will support a positive experience for everyone.

Whole Earth Nature School provides a supportive and nurturing environment where communication from each student is valued and encouraged. We create an environment where positive behavior is reinforced and where inappropriate behavior is not necessary. We remind students to use words to express what they want, what they need, and how they feel. We guide them to treat themselves and others with respect, and we facilitate verbal problem solving when students are in conflict.

We do reserve the right to remove kids from camp if their behavior endangers the physical or emotional safety of the other participants.

Please learn more about our Guidance and Discipline Policy by visiting our [full Guidance and Discipline Policy page](#).

Contacting Us

If you need to contact us during the program, please call our main school phone number: 541-937-KIDS (5437). We always do our best to answer the phone. However, if we are currently teaching kids we may not be able to pick up immediately, so do leave a message with all pertinent information including the best number to reach you.

If you have questions about anything relating to the program you may also email us at ContactUs@WholeEarthSchool.com. We do our best to respond to you within one full business day.

Appendix A: Learning Pathways Description

Connecting deeply with nature is not something that comes from any one teacher or any one class. Nature connection is a life long journey in which we eventually discover how we, ourselves, truly *are* nature. Whole Earth Nature School has devised this passport to guide our students in their discovery of nature awareness and outdoor living skills. View this as a trail map with four Learning Pathways, and skills which build upon each other marked along the way. The farther you travel down any Pathway, the deeper you go into connecting with nature—and recognizing your own place in it. A map can show you majestic mountains and voluptuous valleys...it is up to you to make the journey. We are here to support you on whichever paths you choose, and to help you discover what wild fun you can have along the way!

How It Works

As you demonstrate new skills, a Whole Earth Nature School instructor will initial a Learning Pathways Passport to indicate the skill in which you have achieved competency. Once you have completed all of the skills necessary to achieve a level, your instructor will sign and date that section of your *Record of Achievement*, and you will be acknowledged with a *Certificate of Achievement* in that Learning Pathway.

The Pathways

Each Learning Pathway is comprised of a set of related skills or activities. Students who have studied one Pathway are encouraged to develop skills in all of the Pathways to gain a well rounded skill set.

Way of the Cougar [North] This Pathway encompasses the skills of the ancient Scouts. Students of the Cougar master the skills of invisibility, camouflage, stealth, and navigation to support and protect their family and village. This is the path of the peaceful warrior and includes a focus on mentoring others in nature connection.

Way of the Raccoon [West] This Pathway is focused on the skills of home and hearth. It encompasses gardening, food preservation, wildcrafting, healing, self-sufficiency and caretaking of the land.

Way of the Owl [East] This Pathway is focused on physical awareness and animal studies. Nothing can be learned without awareness. This is the path of the tracker and naturalist. It includes skills of tracking, bird language, mammal studies, and sensory awareness.

Way of the Wolverine [South] This Pathway is focused on the skills of wilderness survival.

Students of the Wolverine are able to use their knowledge of their environment to comfortably live in the wilderness. This Pathway includes skills of fire making, shelter building, finding safe water, hunting and trapping, tool use and first aid.

Clan of the CROW is the synthesis of all four Learning Pathways: Cougar, Raccoon, Owl, and Wolverine. Students of the Way of the CROW attain at least a moderate level of proficiency in all Pathways, and a high level of skill in one Pathway of their choosing.