



Environmental Volunteers

Innovative environmental science education that improves student learning

Annual Meeting 2010 State of The EV Address *Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director*

What a difference a year makes. Last year I stood before you and delivered a bleak message. The economy had fully tanked and we were not immune to its effects. We reduced staffing levels; we asked our remaining staff to work more and receive less; and we dipped into operating reserves to cover a modest deficit. What a difference a year makes.

My message to you this year is 180 degrees from last year's reality. We had an absolutely superb year. Programmatically and financially we exceeded our expectations and we succeeded in dramatic fashion so soon after the year we'd like to forget. Let me tell you about it.

PROGRAMS

We'll begin with programs and mission fulfillment. We not only met our commitments; we exceeded them. Because of you, our wonderful volunteers, we delivered 407 classroom programs and 164 field trips.

We delivered 65% of those programs through our Educate For Depth & Science By Nature initiatives. Let's remind ourselves about the goals of Educate For Depth and Science By Nature. Educate For Depth is a variation on our traditional delivery model. We now give preferential registration to schools that commit to our programs for a minimum of two consecutive years for two consecutive grades. Our goal is to create what we call a 'continuum of learning' over several years. This means that students are guaranteed to receive science programs year after year. And it means we can deliver reinforcing education and a curriculum that makes more sense. It is simply a better way to educate.

Science By Nature is our groundbreaking collaboration project. We link the existing programs of multiple partners – Hidden Villa, Youth Science Institute, Audubon, and more – we link all of these organizations' existing programs and focus them on the same schools. We built a website where teachers can search for programs from all Science By Nature partners. They can search for programs that meet their specific topical interest or programs that help them meet their state-mandated science standards. And then they register for programs using one common application for all the organizations in the collaboration. Science By Nature is groundbreaking and it is being recognized as such.

This year we achieved success in other areas, too. We launched our **new website**. It is attractive, easy to navigate and an important conduit of information for the community. We decided to shake up S.N.A.K.E. **Camp** and offer new and exciting themes and more weeks. Camp will run 5 weeks this summer and the kids will whale watch, geocache, build buildings, and even fly. We are finishing a 2-year project **renovating and refreshing every kit** in our collection. New visuals, uniformly formatted scripts, content review, and soon brand new bags with our logo on them.

Looking ahead, what does the future hold for our mission fulfillment? 100% of schools participating in Educate For Depth this year have already renewed their commitment. Some schools added grades to their commitment; and some new schools are joining the program. Up next for Science By Nature is to attract more teachers who become familiar with it and utilize it. John Armstrong is our collaborations projects manager and he is on it.

And there is a very exciting development to announce. Our collaboration model has caught the attention of the leadership of the Mountain View-Whisman School District. They have committed to embracing coordinated environmental science education for every school in the district. We and our partners are making plans to deliver coordinated programs, beginning this September, to every 4th and 5th grade class at every school in the district. The year after that we would look to add 3rd grade. We think this model has potential to be embraced by others throughout the state. And it all began right here with us!

Bottom line: this was a very good year for mission fulfillment. We should all be proud.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT OUR FINANCIAL PICTURE

Our operating budget this year anticipated revenues of \$567,000. Our goal was to generate a \$25,000 surplus and add back to our operating reserves. Our actual revenues will be approximately \$601,000; producing an estimated \$45,000 surplus

We received very strong support this year from corporate and foundation funders. One statistic is startling. Our foundation grants income budget was 146k. Our year-end actual foundation grant income is 278k. That's 90% better than budget. Why are we suddenly so popular? A few thoughts:

1. Our new delivery models, Educate For Depth and Science By Nature, are very popular with funders. They understand that it is a better way to educate, leverages their philanthropic investment, and they are rewarding us for our innovation and courage to change.
2. And I have a theory which is a 2nd reason we are popular with funders. Foundations, by law, must give away a minimum 5% of their assets each year. We know that last year was a terrible year and foundations had fewer assets due to declines in the market. My theory: in troubling

economic times, when foundations have less actual dollars to give out, they give their dollars to tried and true, trusted nonprofits who they know will deliver impact. We are among those who can be trusted to deliver on our mission and to use their money efficiently, wisely, and for maximum impact. We should feel very good about that!

In one short year we have turned our finances around.

Where do we go from here? We have begun adding back staff so that our staffing levels will better carry us into the future and we are restoring the cuts we were forced to impose on our hardworking staff. We are developing a long-range plan to increase revenues and increase capacity. We aspire to be a well-funded, appropriately staffed organization with the capacity to significantly increase our educational impact on the community. For us, it is not about being 'the biggest' or building an empire. It is about increasing our impact and doing even better work. Thus we are creating budgets and development plans several years out so that we have a clear picture where we are heading and how best to get 'there'.

ECOCENTER

The better economic climate will also have a positive impact on the EcoCenter project. We took a break from the project last April due to the economy. The EcoCenter campaign was diverting resources from general operations, something we could not afford in those straining times. So we paused the project.

Last month our Board of Trustees voted to start up again. Our plan is this: we are increasing the cap campaign budget and hiring an outside campaign consultant to direct the campaign. Though I will still be involved, this approach will take enough pressure off me and allow me to stay focused on the good progress we are making. Our Project Management Group, the team that manages the project for us, is now interviewing consultants. We expect it will take 18-24 months to raise the funds and complete the project. For the record, if someone walks up to me right now with a \$1million check, it will take a lot less time.....OK, 18-24 months it is.

Let me share a few words **about our staff**. Our staff has worked very hard under very difficult circumstances for the last year and a half. We operated with two-less full time positions during that time and our staff never complained. They regrouped, picked up the slack and got the job done. They endured a pay reduction and still worked hard and with good cheer. I want to publicly thank our staff for their professionalism & dedication during these trying times. And I want to ask you, our EVs, to find an opportunity to personally express your appreciation to them.

And finally, let me announce **a very wonderful event** that will take place November 7. This year two of our EVs – Anne Page & Joan Coston, receive their 35-year patch. Stop and think about that: for 35 years now, they have been teaching kids as EVs. And they are both still actively teaching kids in classrooms

and on the trail! But you know what? Right behind them is Jan Fenwick at 34 years. And then we have Irene Estelle and Louise Levy at 33 yrs.. And we have 4 non-teaching volunteers – Jan Whitmer, Bob McIntyre, Mary Paine, and Christy Holloway – who have worked to support the EV for over 30 years. In total there are nine EVs who have been at it for 30 years or more and we are going to celebrate our '30-Somethings' with a party on November 7. Details will follow but I want you to hold the date. You don't want to miss this event. It will be fun; it will be a walk down memory lane; it will be inspiring. November 7. Hold the date. More details later this summer.

So thank you one and all for a great year. And as I always say at this time, have a good summer, relax, re-energize, 'cause in September it starts all over again and there are thousands of kids out there who need you!. Thanks.