

Seedling news



“Can my job be studying trees or birds? What about fish, can I do that?”

As students head back to school, we're thinking about what happens when learning extends beyond the traditional classroom.

Environmental education gives young people the chance to explore nature, ask questions, get hands-on, and see the world around them in new ways.

Sometimes, a new experience can spark a question they never thought they'd ask and open the door to possibilities. At TreePeople, we want that curiosity to stay with young people long after the lesson ends, and help them imagine what might be possible.



Cassie's trees in her North Dakota home



James Monroe High School students doing restoration work

A Note from our Fielding Family CEO, Cassie Rauser

Growing up in rural North Dakota, nature was part of my everyday life. As a child, I won tree seedlings in a “Keep North Dakota Beautiful” drawing contest and planted them at home. Decades later, those trees still stand—now more than 20-30 feet tall. I know firsthand how an early connection to nature can stay with you and shape what you imagine for your future. I'm proud that TreePeople creates those opportunities for young people today, and grateful to you for making them possible.

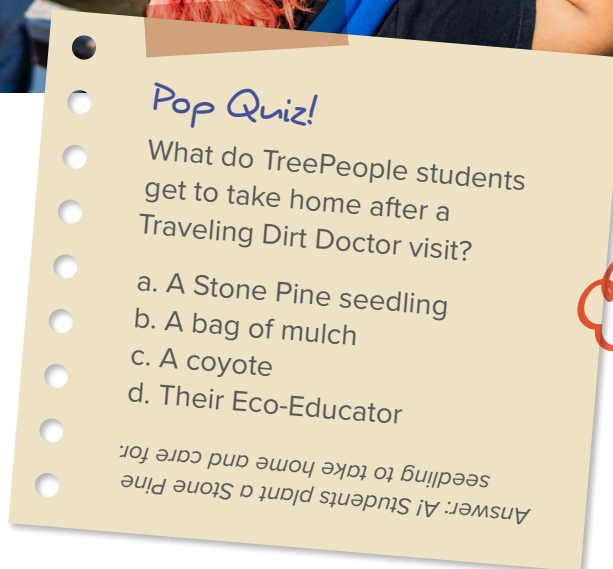


South Gate Middle School field trip at the Ballona Wetlands

Today's Lesson: Get Outside

At the canyon overlook, students howl like coyotes, listen for the echo, and take in the urban forest around them. These are the moments that make learning outside the classroom so memorable.

At Coldwater Canyon Park, TreePeople's Eco-Tours invite students to experience nature firsthand. Along the trails, they explore water, soil, trees, native plants, and the wildlife through hands-on learning.



For some students, it's their first time experiencing nature up close. And for our Eco-Educators, seeing that sense of wonder never gets old. One Eco-Educator shared that her favorite moments are when students exclaim, **"I've never been to a place like this!"** or **"This is the best field trip I've ever been on!"**

But not every classroom can make it up to Coldwater Canyon Park. So TreePeople brings environmental learning to students where they are.

Our Traveling Dirt Doctor program brings hands-on environmental learning directly into schools. Designed for K-5 students, the interactive program introduces young learners to the importance of healthy soil, ways to reduce waste, and the basics of planting and caring for trees. Students even get to plant a Stone Pine seedling to take home and care for.

Whether in a canyon or a classroom, we create opportunities for students to learn through seeing, touching, questioning, and exploring.



Eco-Tour at Coldwater Canyon Park

Putting Learning to Work



Generation Earth Environmental Youth Summit 2026

Learning about the environment can raise an even bigger question: **What could my place in this world look like?** As students grow, so can the ways they engage with the environment.

For middle and high school students across Los Angeles County, Generation Earth turns environmental learning into action. Students identify challenges in their own communities—from food and textile waste to the need for native habitat—and develop hands-on projects to address them.

And for some students, that first experience becomes the beginning of something much bigger.

Fill In the Blank!

Environmental learning can lead to _____.

Answer: Action. Confidence. Connection. Leadership. Our interns told us it can lead to all of the above!

"...honestly I didn't feel that connected to my city or neighboring cities, [but] it made me realize we are connected to people just by living close by. I gained social skills, it made me want to talk to a lot more people. [...] It made my connection to my community a lot deeper than it was before."

Through paid internship opportunities like the Outdoor Equity Program and Cindy Montañez Young Leaders Program, high school students have stepped into environmental work themselves. Interns have explored green careers, participated in hands-on field experiences, practiced community outreach, developed and presented projects, and built skills they can carry into their next chapters.

Many have even learned to lead the same Eco-Tours that introduce younger students to nature at Coldwater Canyon Park.

And when we asked interns what stayed with them, their answers went far beyond what they learned about the environment. They talked about confidence, friendships, public speaking, leadership, feeling more connected to their communities, and discovering places they had never explored before.



Cindy Montañez Young Leaders Program conifer study field trip

"I loved that we were able to plant trees in the seed station, that showed [our community] how something small can turn into something big..."

Where Can It Lead

Sometimes, the opportunities students encounter today can become part of where they go tomorrow.

Cesar Hernandez first connected with Generation Earth as a high school student in Southeast Los Angeles. But his involvement didn't end there. He continued showing up, first as a TreePeople volunteer and later as a volunteer supervisor, taking on more responsibility along the way.

What began as a high school experience eventually grew into a career. Cesar joined TreePeople's Community Forestry team before bringing his experience back to environmental education.

Today, he serves as one of TreePeople's Education & Outdoor Equity Coordinators, leading classroom projects, presentations, and field trips for high school students in South and Southeast Los Angeles.

Today, Cesar is helping a new generation of students discover where their own curiosity might lead.

"There's not a lot of nature in my area, but through this internship, I was able to explore more nature around me in my community. I'm glad I had this internship so I could connect my community to having a connection to nature like myself."

- 2025 Outdoor Equity Intern

Invest in the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

Sometimes, a greener future begins with a young person seeing their world—and their place in it—differently.

Your support creates opportunities for young Angelenos to discover, learn, take action, and imagine what's possible. From outdoor learning and environmental projects to paid internships, your generosity makes experiences like this possible.

Invest in the Next Generation



Cesar Hernandez at a Huntington Park tree care event

Extra Credit: Thinking Beyond Today

The lessons and opportunities we give young people today can shape how they care for our environment tomorrow. Your support can reach into the future, too.

By naming TreePeople as a beneficiary of an eligible retirement account, life insurance policy, or other asset, you can help ensure future generations continue to have the opportunities to learn, explore, and care for the world around them.

Learn More About Beneficiary Designation

Smart Giving Pop Quiz!

Which of the following can help you make a meaningful gift to TreePeople?

- a. A credit card
- b. A donor-advised fund
- c. A beneficiary designation
- d. All of the above

Answer: D!