



ANNUAL REPORT  
2022-2023



founded by the  
Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District

[willowbendcenter.org](http://willowbendcenter.org)

# About Us

## Mission:

To provide educational outreach services that build environmental awareness and an ethic of responsible stewardship of our natural and cultural resources.

## The Willow Bend Story:

Willow Bend Environmental Education Center was founded by Jim David, a schoolteacher, and Jim Alam, a supervisor with the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District (CNRCD). Since then it has served as Coconino County's only year round, full time environmental education center. Willow Bend provides environmental, place-based educational experiences for schools, community groups, residents, and visitors.



**[willowbendcenter.org](http://willowbendcenter.org)**

# Willow Bend Board of Directors

Willow Bend has an active all volunteer board of directors and a governing CNRCD board. Our board supports every aspect of our operations including fundraising, event organizing, and budget oversight.



Willow Bend Board of Directors (not all pictured):  
Top (from left): Michele James, And Rogers, Jana Sterling, Whitney Owens  
Bottom (from left): Jillian Wagner, Ariel Leonard,, Eric Souders, Dany Foley, Jillian Worssam

# Willow Bend Board of Directors

Ariel Leonard, Board President

Danny Foley

Neil Weintraub, Vice-Board President

Tom Hanecak

Michele James, Vice President

Stacey Hamburg

Mary McKell, Treasurer

Whitney Owens

Jana Sterling, Secretary

Eric Souders

Andi Rogers, Senior Program Associate

Jillian Wagner

Karen Cordasco

Jillian Worssam

## Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District Board Members

Benny Aja, Chairman

Jim Parks, Vice Chair

Tabi Bolton, Treasurer

Sam Whitted, Board Member

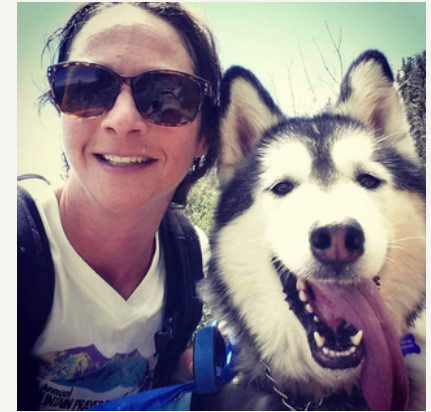
Kit Metzger, Board Member

# New Board Members

We are thrilled to announce the addition of our new board members to Willow Bend. These individuals bring a wealth of expertise, experience, and passion to our cause, and we couldn't be more excited about the fresh perspectives and insights they add to our board.

Their contributions, coupled with the dedication of our existing board members, will enable us to achieve goals and create a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Willow Bend extends our warmest welcome to our new board members and look forward to the invaluable contributions they will make as we continue our journey towards providing environmental education. With their support, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and the positive change we can create together.



Stacey Hamburg



Jillian Worssam



Karen Cordasco



Jillian Wagner

# Meet The Staff

## WILLOW BEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

This year we bid farewell to our Education Director, Cassandra Roberts, after an incredible 11 years of service and wish her the best of luck in her new role as Expedition Director for Grand Canyon Youth. On the bright side, Melissa Eckstrom has been promoted from Education and Outreach Coordinator to the Programs and Operators Director! And in September, we welcomed new staff member Ash Shields to fill Melissa's former role.

We are elated to welcome our newest employee, Ash Shields, to the team. Ash's profound passion for environmental education and unwavering commitment to positive change in our community have undeniably revitalized our programs, expanded our reach, and elevated the overall quality of our initiatives.

Ash was initially hired on as the Education and Outreach Assistant in September of 2022, but she transitioned to full time in just under a year and is now our Education and Outreach Coordinator!



### Ash Shields, Education and Outreach Coordinator



Ash joined the Willow Bend team in September of 2022. She holds a B.S in Environmental and Sustainability Studies from NAU. She has served as an AmeriCorps member for the U.S. Forest Service and state trail crews throughout Colorado, Oregon and California and has also volunteered as a land steward on farms and eco-villages in Hawaii and Washington. She is inspired by biophilia, the idea that humans possess a natural urge to seek connection, interaction and affiliation with nature and the “greater earth community”. In her spare time, she finds herself writing poetry, admiring local flora, slacklining and playing music with friends.

# Meet The Staff

## WILLOW BEND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Willow Bend Environmental Education Center's day-to-day operations, program management, teaching, and event organization are carried out by a team of passionate and skilled professionals. Our staff members are exceptionally qualified and deeply committed to the organization's mission and overall achievements.



### Moran Henn, Executive Director

Moran joined Willow Bend in 2015. She holds a B.S in Conservation Biology and Outdoor Recreation Tourism from the University of Idaho and an M.S in Environmental Sciences and Policy from NAU. She has worked for governmental and state agencies, managed non-profit organizations, taught as a graduate assistant at NAU, and has a lot of experience in community organizing. Moran has two adventurous teen-age girls and together they love exploring, hiking, and horse riding.



### Melissa Eckstrom, Programs & Operations Director

Melissa joined the Willow Bend team in August 2017. She holds a B.A in Sustainable Agriculture from Sterling College in Craftsbury Common, VT. She served in AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps in the American Midwest, as well as the United States Peace Corps in Jamaica. She is passionate about environmental education and has shared her love of the natural world while creating programming for schools and camps, managing gardens, and playing songs about worms on her ukulele. Melissa loves to ride her bicycle, bake bread, and draw silly comics in her sketchbook.

# Willow Bend Volunteers

Willow Bend is blessed with dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. We express our heartfelt gratitude to those who've made a significant impact on our organization this year. Mike Dechter and Mike Masek have been exceptionally generous with their time and expertise, volunteering to lead engaging Adult Workshops. We extend our appreciation to Norm Lowe for his unwavering support in maintaining the center and addressing various technical needs. We want to also express our gratitude to our volunteer board members who've assisted in our many Science Saturdays, tours, and outreach events.

Moreover, we must underscore the profound impact of the Friends of the Willow Bend Gardens, with much thanks to volunteer Susan Lamb's leadership. Their extraordinary and unwavering efforts to restore and preserve the habitat gardens have been nothing short of remarkable.

Our volunteers, the very heartbeat of our organization, deserve the utmost recognition and gratitude for their altruistic contributions. Their boundless passion and steadfast dedication have not only propelled us forward but also empowered us to wholeheartedly fulfill our mission.

# Major Partnerships

Willow Bend proudly engages in collaborations with numerous federal, state, and local government agencies, organizations, individuals, and businesses. We are immensely grateful for all our partners, as their support plays a crucial role in the success of our programs. In recognition of their exceptional contributions, we would like to spotlight a select group of partnerships. For a comprehensive list of major donors, foundations, grants, and business partners, please refer to the financial report provided below. Presented in alphabetical order, we are delighted to present this year's top 10 partners (in alphabetical order):

1. AES
2. Arizona State Lands Department
3. The Azulita Project
4. City of Flagstaff (Open Space Program & Sustainability Office)
5. Coconino County
6. Flagstaff Unified School District
7. KidWind
8. Liberty Wildlife
9. Prometheus Solar
10. Repowering Schools

# Program Summary

## K-12 School Programs

Willow Bend was initially established with a primary focus on serving Coconino County's schools and their students. Our organization holds a crucial position in K-12 education, as we strive to provide exceptional and unconventional learning experiences. These experiences encompass classroom visits, demonstrations, and field trips that go beyond traditional methods, thereby expanding the scope of effective learning opportunities. We are thrilled to report that this year, we've expanded our reach more than ever before.

Aligned with state standards, our programs embody the principles of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Through the implementation of proven strategies that promote enhanced learning, such as experiential, hands-on, and place-based education, we consistently deliver valuable educational experiences. Our collaborative efforts extend to over 25 public, regional, and charter schools, establishing a broad reach within the educational community.



Top Left: Students at Aspen Corner learning how to bird watch



Top Right: Students at Picture Canyon listening to Melissa give introduction



Bottom Left: Moran teaching students at Sechrist about waste

At Willow Bend, our K-12 programs and field trips cover a diverse range of topics, including botany, archaeology sustainable living, hydrology, wildlife, and geology. By offering such a comprehensive selection, we ensure that students are exposed to various scientific disciplines, fostering a well-rounded understanding of the natural world and its interconnections.



# Program Highlights

## K-12 School Programs

### New Climate and Weather Program

This year, our very own Melissa created a new weather program specialized for young students called, "Sun's Shining Qualities". Meeting two Arizona State standards for Kindergartners, we learn about why the sun is important, how shadows work, and how living things respond to the sunlight through hands-on activities and an engaging lesson. We visited schools such as Kinsey and Kilip Elementary, and their students had a blast!



Bottom Left: Melissa teaching group of Kindergartener students new Sun Program



Top Right: Students at Picture Canyon outdoor classroom

### Picture Canyon Field Trip

Over the past decade, Willow Bend Environmental Education Center has cultivated a valuable partnership with Flagstaff Unified School District and City of Flagstaff Open Space. This partnership leverages multiple funding sources and maximizes resources to provide enriching and impactful field trips and classroom programs for students and teachers. This year, 31 FUSD Classes Visited Picture Canyon (3rd+6th Graders) totaling over 750 individual FUSD students reached with Picture Canyon programming, which includes the pre-Picture Canyon lesson and the field trip itself.

# Program Highlights

## K-12 School Programs

### Waste Classroom Programs & Field Trips

This school year was jam-packed with waste & recycling programs and field trips to the Recycling Center. Thanks to the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office, The Azulita Project and AZ Community Foundation, we were able to provide over 60 programs inside the classroom and at the Materials Recovery Facility. We learned about waste, where it comes from, how to dispose of it properly, the recycling process, reusable vs. non-reusable products, solutions to reduce waste, and more!



Top Right: Students at the Materials Recovery Facility



Bottom Left: MEMS Students receiving our Climate program

### Climate Classroom Programs

Willow Bend offers a free (funded by the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office, AES, Prometheus Solar REpowering Schools, and KidWind) three-part program series that covers the basics of climate change literacy including important terms and concepts, exploration of the science behind climate change, understanding global and local effects of climate change, exploring solutions and learning about renewable energy. This year we taught over 20 climate programs to 4th-7th grade students.

# Program Highlights

## K-12 School Programs

### Flagstaff Youth Climate Summit

Willow Bend Environmental Education Center, in collaboration with the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office, hosted a highly engaging one-day event aimed at fostering climate leadership among students in grades 4th through 12th, called The Flagstaff Youth Climate Summit. Participants were encouraged to showcase their commitment to climate action by taking part in one of three distinctive challenges:

Climate Action Challenge: This challenge called upon students to devise and execute a meaningful climate-related project that would contribute to enhancing climate action within their neighborhoods, schools, or the broader community.

KidWind Challenge: In this hands-on design competition, teams were tasked with conceptualizing and constructing small wind turbines to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the realm of renewable energy, with a specific focus on wind energy.

Solar Structure Challenge: Participants explored the potential of solar energy by creating a solar-powered object of their choice. The scope of creativity was broad, ranging from building a solar-powered house or ferris wheel to devising solar-driven machines, cars, or even a phone charging tree – the possibilities were limitless, allowing each team to showcase their innovative ideas.

The event reached over 100 people and provided an enriching platform for young minds to actively engage with climate-related issues and sustainable practices. By encouraging the youth to take charge and apply their knowledge in practical challenges, the Flagstaff Youth Climate Summit and the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office aimed to nurture a culture of environmental consciousness and empower the leaders of tomorrow.



Top: Participants from the Youth Climate Summit



Bottom: Willow Bend and City of Flagstaff Sustainability Office staff at the Flagstaff Youth Climate Summit

# Program Summary

## Center and Community Programs

In addition to our school programs, Willow Bend takes pride in its extensive range of offerings catering to adult, family, and community education.

Partnering with the City of Flagstaff's Open Space Program and Mountain Sports Flagstaff, we provide guided tours of notable locations including Picture Canyon and Flagstaff's downtown geology. These tours serve as informative excursions, shedding light on crucial aspects of our community's environmental and cultural significance.



Left: Board member, Dany, leading Downtown Geology Tour  
Right: Mike Masek leading Salve Making workshop



Typically held at our center once a month, adult workshops connect our visitors with experts from a variety of fields through hands-on activities and presentations. Past workshops have included Wildlife Tracking, Basket Making, Salves, and more.

# Program Summary

## Center and Community Programs

Our Family Science events are family-focused presentations typically involving live animals and insects. Subjects this year included arthropods, eagles, and raptors.

Our Science Saturdays are held on the first Saturday of every month. Each event features a different theme which includes hands-on activities, games and sometimes guest experts. New this year was our Earth and Planetary Science event in partnership with Lowell Observatory!



Left: Liberty Wildlife staff holding up Eagle at our Annual Eagle Celebration



Middle: Outside Willow Bend Center at our Junior Naturalist Science Saturday



Right: Willow Bend staff member, Ash, tabling at Festival of Science, Wheeler Park

Willow Bend takes great pride in actively engaging with the community and fostering environmental awareness by participating in various events throughout the year such as Earth Day at Bushmaster Park, STEM celebrations at Ft. Tuthill, and Festival of Science at Wheeler Park.

# New Community Programs & Year Highlights

## Beale Wagon Road Living History Tour

This year, thanks to our board members, Eric Souders & Neil Weintraub, and the Kaibab National Forest, we were able to offer our first Beale Wagon Road living history fundraiser to the public. In 24 hours, participants learned about 10,000 years of cultural history on the U.S. Forest Service - Kaibab National Forest, retraced the footsteps of Lieutenant Beale's survey crews who used camels to help construct the first federally funded wagon road across the southwest between 1857 and 1859, discussed forest restoration that has helped bring back to life several springs on Sitgreaves Mountain, camped near Laws Spring, were entertained by Lieutenant Beale's stories and his banjo playing, ate Dutch oven elk enchiladas for dinner and the duck egg/elk sausage burritos for breakfast, and then finally toured the Native American petroglyphs and historic inscriptions at Laws Spring. It was a great success!



Left: Beale Wagon Road Tour participants riding camels



Right: Native Herb Festival expert, Peggy Sue Sorensen, selling her goods

## Native Herb Festival

In June, Willow Bend Environmental Education Center, in collaboration with the Forager's Path School of Botanical Studies, hosted an all-day Native Herb Festival full of expert-led workshops that included hands-on opportunities and informative plant walks. The idea for this festival came from Mike Masek as a way to fundraise for Willow Bend. Throughout the day, our nine experts led insightful workshops such as "Making Aromatic Fresh Plant Infused Oils", "Gourd Uses and Art Forms" and "Using Mesquite for Food" to name just a few. Our first year hosting an all-day event of this capacity was a huge success with more than \$1,800 raised!

# New Programs & Year Highlights

## Family Science: Nature's Orchestra

In June, we were thrilled to offer a new Family Science event, "Nature's Orchestra", in partnership with Little Music Makers of Flagstaff LLC. This was a great event for families with littles. Most participants were under 3 years old! We went for a nature walk and collected items to make a musical shaker. Then, we made jingle sticks and performed with both instruments to create our very own nature orchestra!



Left: Jody Laura, Program Director and Teacher of Little Music Makers of Flagstaff LLC teaching young participants



Middle: Robert Chambers showing the design of his mural



Right: Willow Bend staff member, Ash, posing in front of finished mural

## Center Upgrades

In January, we sent out a call to mural artists looking to create an installation for our outdoor art Pollinator Project! Through generous support from a Creative Flagstaff Arts and Science Project grant, the City of Flagstaff BBB Revenues and a City of Flagstaff Beautification in Action grant, the project came to life. It includes a butterfly mural painted by local artist, Robert Chambers, and a free little library made by our volunteer, Norm Lowe, along with photography artwork by photographer, Tom Alexander. Visit Willow Bend to take your picture with the two-tailed swallow tail butterfly!

# Year Reflection

Number of Community Events  
(Adult Workshops, Family  
Science, Science Saturdays,  
Community Events, and more):

**50**

Amount of Students and  
Teachers Reached:

**6657**

Number of Community  
Members Reached:

**2752**

Summary for Total Willow Bend Reach  
(K-12 Programs, Workshops, Center and  
Community Events and Programs, Center  
“walk-ins”, and Guided Tours):

**9409**

Number of Classroom Programs and  
Field Trips:

**294**

# Financial Report

## Balance Sheet

### Willow Bend Environmental Education Center Balance Sheet As of June 30, 2023

	Jun 30, 23
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
▶ Checking/Savings	160,771.34
▶ Accounts Receivable	4,243.24
▶ Other Current Assets	(3,876.66)
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>161,137.92</b>
▶ Fixed Assets	303.19
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>161,441.11</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
▶ Equity	161,441.11
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u>161,441.11</u></b>

## Profit and Loss

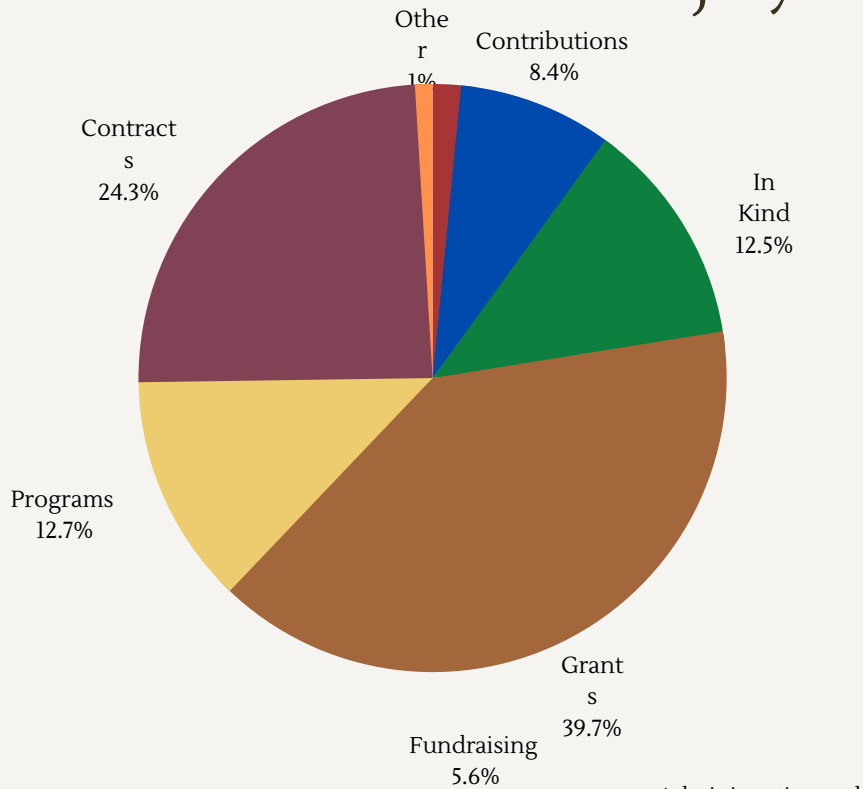
### Willow Bend Environmental Education Center Profit & Loss July 2022 through June 2023

	Jul '22 - Jun 23
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
Contract	52,033.66
▶ Contributions Income	18,096.85
Fundraising Event	3,322.50
Grant Income	85,025.82
In-Kind Rent	26,736.00
▶ Misc Income	206.13
Programs Community	14,154.59
Programs Schools	12,995.03
Rental Income	1,857.50
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>214,428.08</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>214,428.08</b>
▶ Expense	190,662.14
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>23,765.94</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b><u>23,765.94</u></b>

Our financial information\* is entered and tracked in QuickBooks with advice from a professional CPA and Board oversight. The information presented is on an accrual basis and is unaudited (pie chart representation below rounded up to the nearest decimal) \*Note: Willow Bend has an endowment fund at the Arizona Community Foundation not included in the above figures.

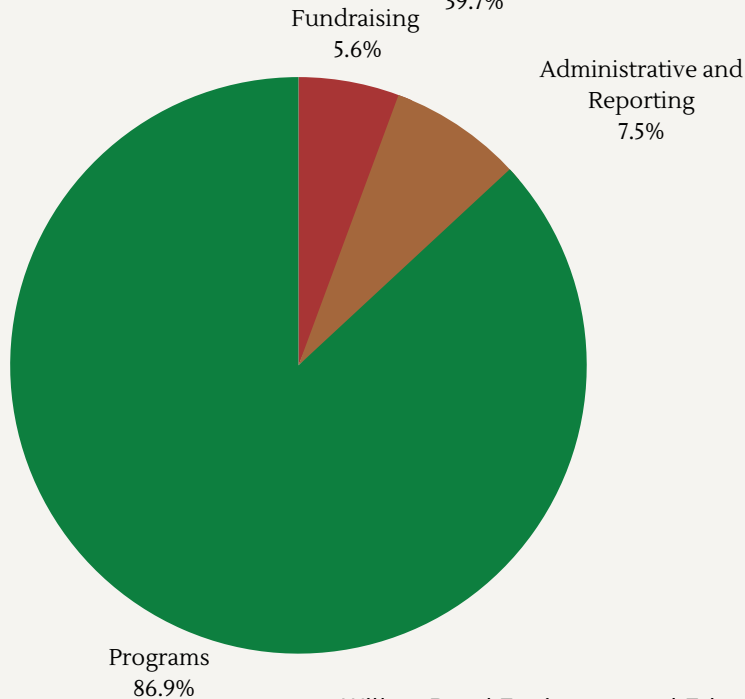
# Financial Report: Income and Expense

## July 1st 2022-June 30th 2023



### INCOME

Contracts	\$52,033
Contributions	\$18,096
In Kind	\$26,736
Grants	\$85,025
Programs	\$27,149
Fundraising	\$3,322
Other	\$2,063
Total	\$214,424



### EXPENSE

Fundraising	\$10,759
Administrative and Reporting	\$14,211
Programs	\$165,692
Total	\$190,662

# Thank You to Our Supporters!

Major Business Support & Sponsors (In Alphabetical Order) :

Applied Energy Services

Campbell Global LLC

Mountain Sports

Prometheus Solar

Rooftop Solar

SWCA Inc.

# Thank You to Our Supporters!

## Individual Donors\* (\$200 and above, by Last Name)

Avery, A.	Cortner, R. & H.	Horstman, P.	Schaafsma, K. & P.
Barotz, C.	David, J.	Karen, E.	Souders, E.
Biggerstaff, D.	Giovale J. & G.	Macy, T.	Walters, K.
Borthwick, C	Giovale D.	Poore, M.	Welch J.
Cordasco, K.	Hirst, S. & L.	Rae, T.	White, N. & J.

## Foundations & Grants (In Alphabetical Order):

Arizona Community Foundation	City of Flagstaff Beautification in Action Grant
Arts and Science Grant	Creative Flagstaff & Flag 365
Azulita Project	GeoFamily Foundation
City of Flagstaff BBB Revenues	Rosenberger Family Charitable Trust
Coconino County Board of Supervisors	W. L. Gore and Associates

# Thank You For Another Incredible Year!



## Willow Bend Environmental Education Center

703 East Sawmill Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86001.

(928) 779-1745 [www.willowbendcenter.org](http://www.willowbendcenter.org)

Willow Bend is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization