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WILDERNESS
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December 2018

Dear Friend,

Today is a beautiful autumn day,
perfect for cooking our lunch over the
fire. **Life is good!**

Or is it?

Our country is struggling mightily to
keep inequity, intolerance, and
violence at bay.

We all want our children to experience
that carefree feeling of sitting around a
campfire with friends...

But we have to ask ourselves— are we running away from some of the most pressing issues of our time? Just having fun up here in the peaceful hills of Vermont **while the world burns?**

LOTS of people are coming to Vermont Wilderness School lately. Our programs are full, with waitlists. We can't find enough staff to meet the demand. People want what we're offering. **Are they running too?**

I want to be clear that the Vermont Wilderness School is not trying to help people run away. On the contrary, we see our work as an essential component of social change.

We work very hard to keep these programs going, and here's why:

We believe the future of our species depends on more humans being in balanced relationship with nature.

- We are helping **create grounded kids who will thrive as adults**, even in a difficult world. The benefits of nature connection* include:
 - Improved concentration
 - Stronger ties to community
 - Deeper long-term connections with family
 - Improved sense of environmental stewardship

*Rosen, L. 2015. 7 SCIENCE-BACKED REASONS TO GET YOUR KIDS OUTSIDE. Children and Nature Network.



- We are **bucking the disturbing trend of kids spending almost all their time indoors**. The average American 8-12 year-old spends less than one hour a day outdoors.* Whereas in a day at Vermont Wilderness School, a child will typically spend six hours outdoors. In our programs this year, *kids have collectively spent the equivalent of three years (26,500 hours) outside!*
- We are **making these nature connection experiences affordable**. Every year we provide over \$30,000 in scholarships to 80+ families.
- We are **employing over 20 adults** as mentors in our programs. Our goal is to ensure no teacher ever burns out or can't afford to keep teaching. Their knowledge of how we can live close to the earth is a gift too precious to lose.
- We are **part of a global movement demonstrating that a healthy culture must be connected to nature**. Vermont Wilderness School collaborates with a network of over 300 schools that share our approach to long-term mentoring in nature. **Together we envision a world of social, racial, and economic justice, in which a profound personal relationship to nature is every person's birthright.**

**Kellert, S et al. 2017. The Nature of Americans: Disconnection and Recommendations for Reconnection.*

Please help us fill our 2019 Scholarship Fund.

We need to raise \$30,000 by December 31.

So far we've raised \$9,500, and we have \$20,500 to go!

With gratitude,

Sam Stegeman
Executive Director

On behalf of
The VWS Board
&
The VWS Staff

P.S. 100% of your donation will provide scholarship funds, so that our programs are accessible to all, regardless of their financial situation.