



Singing Creek Educational Center

Annual Report 2023



Our Mission

To inspire children and families
toward an appreciation of local history
through hands-on learning.

PO Box 1012 Cottage Grove, OR 97424 | director@singingcreekcenter.org | 541 968-1986
www.SingingCreekCenter.org

The Year in Review

In 2023, Singing Creek Educational Center (SCEC) partnered with many local organizations in Western Oregon and brought our programs to more counties than ever before. Being mobile allowed us to branch out to schools as far away as Portland, Salem, and Roseburg. We also launched the Acorn Circle program in partnership with three local libraries, bringing Indigenous children's education to hundreds of families. Our Executive Director worked closely with tribal partners to bring education on traditional Kalapuya ways to children and adults at three summer events in Linn County. We served more people than ever before!

Featured Community Partners and Initiatives

Los Pueblos Summer Camp at the Park

SCEC had a successful third year of this popular program, funded by the Yarg Family Foundation and the City of Cottage Grove. We partnered with the Family Resource Center and hired our Latina instructor from there. This program served 22 low-income Guatemalan children with a free day camp based on the history of Mexico and Guatemala, including transportation and meals.



Native American Cultural Encampments Partnership

We partnered with the Native American Cultural Association of Oregon and Deitrich Peters to bring Kalapuya Ways education to three campout events at Linn County parks. Hundreds of families learned about indigenous culture and made handcrafts while enjoying food and traditional music and dancing. We have been invited back for the next year and have been asked to expand into one of their tipis with storytelling and children's books.



Acorn Circle Library Program: 3 Libraries

We adapted children's curriculum from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to teach younger children about local Indigenous culture. Cottage Grove, Creswell, and Springfield libraries received sessions including a story, game, and craft, highlighting language arts learning. Each library hosted a cultural presentation with our Executive Director and Deitrich Peters, a local Kalapuya culture-bearer. These presentations allowed local families to learn about indigenous culture directly from Mr. Peters, including flute playing and storytelling. This program is funded by Woodard Family Foundation, the City of Cottage Grove, and participating libraries.

SMJ house History Homeschool/Field Trips

Our hands-on homeschool was full again this year, with 10 kids coming to the historic Shelton-McMurphy-Johnson House in Eugene once a month for a day of unique educational experiences about history and nature. This year several classes came from Portland and Salem for our history field trips, as word is spreading about our high-quality programs. These history programs include learning about the pioneer settlers, fur trappers, and Native Americans.



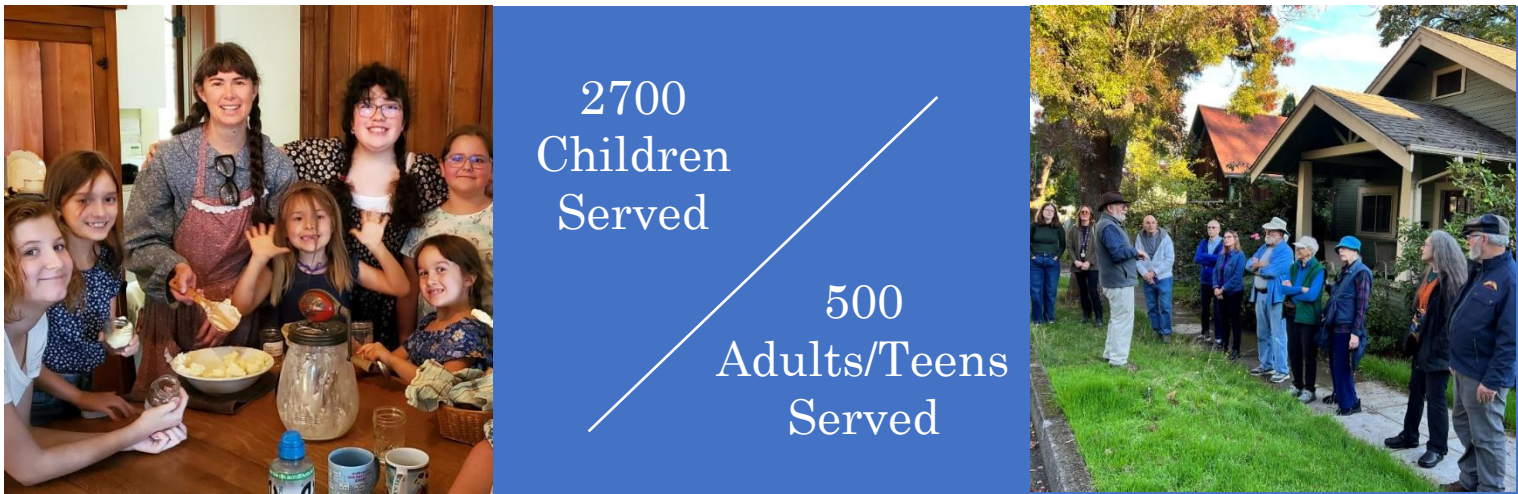
Our Impact

In 2023, SCEC served 3200 people across seven Oregon counties and six school districts from Portland to Riddle. We reached new audiences in libraries, schools, and parks, and requests come in regularly from new areas.

We taught 484 students at outdoor school presenting Kalapuya culture and atlatl throwing (a hunting tool). **One Native boy, after throwing the atlatl for the first time in the field, said excitedly, "I feel like I've finally come alive!"** His statement reflects the enthusiasm for our programs we see repeatedly.

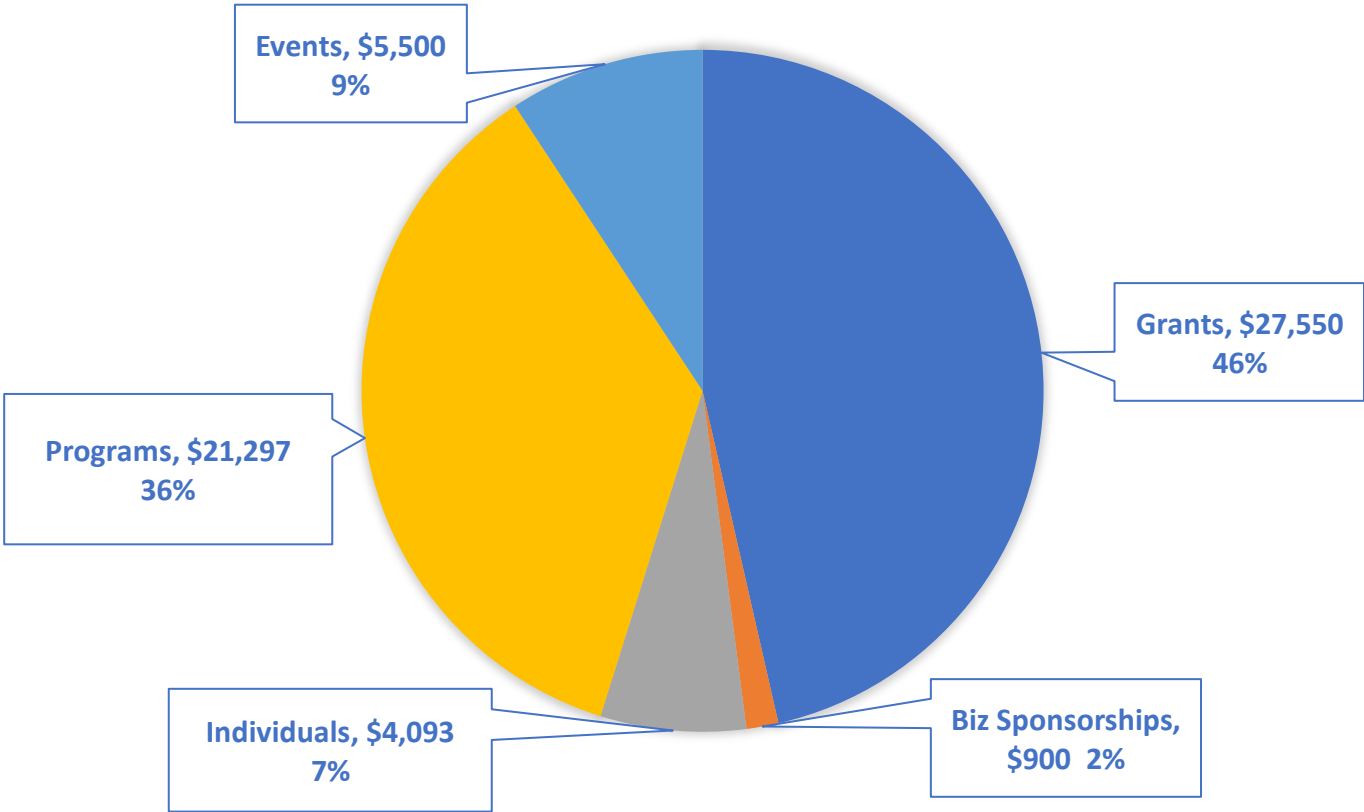
Our homeschool remains full, including 20% children with autism, special needs, or learning disabilities. Our students learn about Oregon's history and how our choices today impact the future through engaging activities.

Creswell Youth Librarian Lindsey Quigley-Johnson says “The Acorn Circle program provided kids with unique opportunities to engage with Indigenous culture through a historical lens as well as focusing on elements of the present day. We loved how the fun activities and crafts pulled the story together. Overall, it was a great experience for everyone involved.”



2023 Revenue Sources

Total Revenue: \$59,339
In-Kind Community Support: \$7,200



Executive Director Karen Rainsong

Our founding Executive Director, Karen Rainsong, has led Singing Creek since 2007. Karen engaged in many professional development opportunities in 2023, including a workshop at Five Oaks Museum in Portland and history/culture presentations by indigenous people such as Dr. David Lewis. Karen continues to support initiatives and projects that center BIPOC voices and histories for greater justice and equity. She is also the webmaster and membership coordinator for ALHFAM (the Association for Living History, Farm, and Agricultural Museums), an international organization.



Our Board of Directors



Board President - Steve Williamson

Retired from a career working with developmentally disabled adults/Historian
Steve is a huge supporter and is always giving of his time and finances to help us grow and connect with important community members.
storiesbysteve@gmail.com



Treasurer- Justin Ahrenholz

B.S. in Sociology
We call Justin our "CFO", or Chief Fun Officer, as he brings a ready sense of humor and joy of being with children to all our endeavors.
justinahz@gmail.com



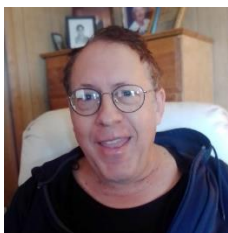
Secretary- Beth Armbrust

Occupational Therapist/ M.S. degrees in Entomology and Occupational Therapy
Beth is very capable and manages our online marketing since she lives in Washington state.
betharmbrust@gmail.com



Board Member- Ann Dockendorf

Alpaca Farm Owner/ M.S. in Early Childhood Education
Ann hosts several gatherings a year for us at her Alpaca farm and brings her fiber arts skills and enthusiasm for education to our programs.
ann@aragonalpacas.com



Board Member- Tom Romano

Author/Illustrator/M.S. in Education

Tom is passionate about local history and working with children; he teaches our nature drawing classes.

thomasromano3829@gmail.com



Board Member- Amanda Ferguson

Land Use Planning/Project Management

Amanda joined the board to share her experience with non-profit management and grant writing. She is a professional land use planner who works for the U of O.

amandafergus@gmail.com



Board Member- Karen Williamson

Retired Music Teacher

Karen loves kids and music and has a background in managing a radio station.

karen.williamson232@gmail.com

Board Member Ann Dockendorf

"I recognize how important it is for children in these days of hyper-technology to learn self-reliance, respect, and collaboration, and to be comfortable in the outdoors where privileged attitudes tend to slip away. Digging in the garden, embroidering a sampler, writing in a journal, woodworking ~ the wisdom of simpler times encourages both peaceful moments and critical thinking skills which will be translated into many situations and levels of life. By participating with Singing Creek, I can extend this vision to more children and families than I can connect to by myself."



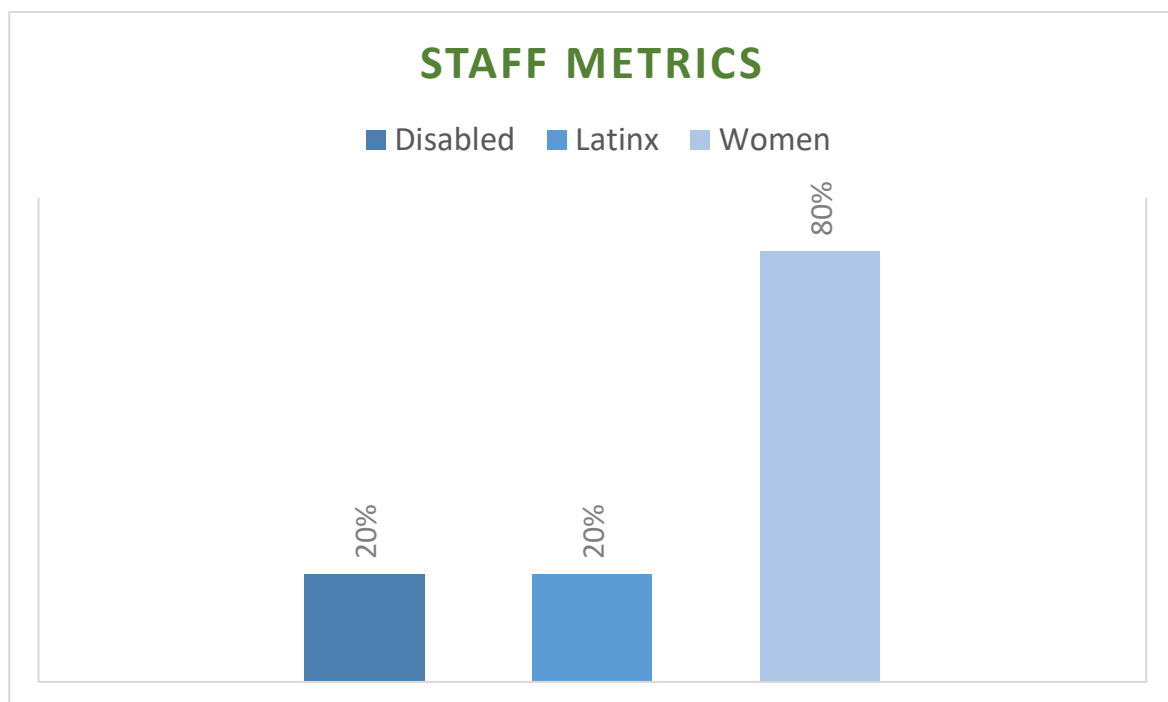
Key Staff and Volunteers

Liza Starr-Lily and Kevin Prier have been with us for many years, teaching children in our programs and events. Other SCEC instructors include Janet Hernandez who taught our Los Pueblos Summer Camps, and Sam Johnson, a local history educator. In 2023 we also hired Willow Chester, a student in the Education Program at the University of Oregon.



Many of our volunteers come from the Cottage Grove/Creswell area and step in to support us with special events such as the Pleasant Hill Pioneer Day and the Grandparents' Pioneer Tea. Children often volunteer with their parents to help at our booths at fairs, such as the Bohemia Mining Days Festival. In 2023, we worked more extensively with the Assistance League of Eugene volunteers who provide living history programming at the Lane County History Museum. SCEC donated more authentic materials to their Kalapuya teaching kit and brought our Kalapuya Ways presentation to their adult volunteers to further their learning.

Approximately 300 Volunteer Hours for SCEC in 2023



SCEC Parent, Yvette LeClair

Yvette is a member of our DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) Committee



"I homeschool my daughter who has developmental delays and is autistic. Karen was more than welcoming to us and encouraged us to join. Though there was excitement coming from my daughter, I still questioned if this was the right program for her. Then one day, my daughter started playing 'nature school' with her dolls. My daughter, despite not always participating, was absorbing everything that Karen and the children did, and enjoyed replaying this experience with her dolls. This was a real 'a-ha' moment in my parenting. I hope anyone with a special needs child feels encouraged to contact Singing Creek. You won't be disappointed!"

Looking Forward

SCEC is actively looking for a new home in the Cottage Grove/Creswell/Eugene area. Key priority areas also include the development of our Board of Directors and strategic planning.

As we grow, maintaining close relationships with Tribal partners and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) organizations in Oregon will continue to be important. Our goal is to relate Oregon's history in an accurate and respectful way, providing resources and talking points for teachers and parents in our community. New programs and events will be developed through this lens of equity and compassion. When history is taught honestly, students gain a better understanding of current systemic issues and feel empowered to take action to ensure equity and justice are a reality for all.

As we add new board and committee members from the community, we seek to become more sustainable for the long term and forge new and stronger partnerships with other organizations and cities. Our reputation in the community is very positive, with great name recognition and participation by families and schools. This success should help us launch more programs and grow our staff, volunteers, donor base, and budget in future years.