

Dear Friend of YES,

November 2020

My name is Tana Monteiro. I live and work in Richmond and I'm writing to you as a fellow YES Nature to Neighborhoods (YES) supporter. I'm the parent of four YES youth, a former YES staff person, and as of 2019, a proud member of the Board of Directors.

Today, I'm reaching out to share my perspective on YES's current work in the community and invite you to join me in making a year-end gift.

From where I sit as a parent and educator, I see that YES has provided invaluable support for families in this time of extreme hardships. I've seen distance learning struggles playing out, families with kids losing their housing, and folks struggling to cope with ongoing racial and environmental injustices.

In this context, YES staff have:

- Made wellness calls to participants with the intention to provide resources and keep people connected;
- Hosted ongoing virtual leadership programming;
- Adapted to the challenges of COVID-19, and the wildfires to design Nature Day Outings in local parks for families; and
- Established a Resilience Fund providing \$500 cash assistance grants to over 130 families in need.

This level of personalized support and responsiveness has brought hope and joy to so many, as well as a much-needed break from the challenges we've been facing.

To share a personal example, my 17-year-old son was part of YES's Youth Engagement Team this past year when COVID-19 happened. The pandemic deeply affected him. He was feeling cut off, angry, and didn't want to talk to anyone for weeks at a time. I'm so grateful that he had YES and the Youth Engagement Team to hang onto because that kept him engaged. Having his peers and some routine and normalcy was vitally important for him.

If you'd ask me why it is important to support YES's work, I'd say that YES is one of only a handful of organizations in Richmond that is offering in-



YES's new Nature Day Outings program has empowered families to get out into local parks for exploration and recreation. So many Richmond families are emotionally and economically stressed, and haven't had access to nature, organized sports, camps, or even play structures for most of 2020. So having a whole park outing planned for them by YES – complete with lunch as a family, being out in the sun, smiling and laughing, learning about nature in a way that's fun and interactive – has been revitalizing.

person learning opportunities right now. Learning online can only go so far, and YES knows how to support people, building safe connections and stronger mental health through the outdoors. They have the program partners, dedicated staff, and always a well-thought out program plan. The pivot YES has made during COVID-19 has been nearly seamless because they've been operating in a strategic way for years.

In light of the vital work YES is doing to support Richmond youth and families, I'm asking you to join me in supporting YES during our 2020 year-end campaign. We seek to raise \$60,000 by December 31st to continue our Nature Day Outings, to offer additional Resilience Fund grants, and to build out a new outdoor space adjacent to the YES office for program use.

Your contribution will enable YES to continue providing essential programming under these extraordinary circumstances. We invite you to join us by making a donation, a monthly gift, or multi-year pledge. To donate online, or for more details on how you can make a major impact as a member of our Sustainers Club, please visit www.yesfamilies.org/donate-now.

Thanks again for your generous support. We're deeply grateful for all you do and have done for YES!

Sincerely,



Tana Monteiro



Eric Aaholm

PS - Donate online on Giving Tuesday, 12/1, and your gift will be matched by our Board of Directors!