



SD CHILDREN & NATURE

San Diego Youth Programs Community Asset Inventory

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Project Summary

A community asset map was generated to describe the organized youth program providers in San Diego County that offer programming beyond the traditional school day. Programs are categorized as extended school day, camp, scouting, youth clubs, classes, and alternative youth services. Through a web search, baseline information on county providers was gathered such as programs provided, communities served, and contact information. Key organizations were identified based on the population of youth served, their broad reach to the county, and the organizational structure. This report highlights six organizations that, when combined, reach 45% of the county's youth and displays the greatest potential for collaboration with San Diego Children and Nature (SDCaN). Further research is needed on the branches within each of these six organizations.

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Project Methods

The *Community Action Guide: Building the Children & Nature Movement from the Ground Up* (Children and Nature Network 2008) was used to guide the research approach. The community asset map approach is taken from the report, *Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place* (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2002). Baseline data on San Diego County youth programs was gathered from online sources such as the San Diego Communities Youth Connect database and organizational web pages. This information was compiled into an Excel spreadsheet and later reviewed for emerging categories. The organizations are listed in Table 1 at the end of this report. Once the baseline information was gathered, in person and phone interviews were conducted with experienced youth program providers from SDCaN, YMCA, and Boys & Girls Club for insight on condensing the data.

Overview of Youth Programs in San Diego

As of 2008, San Diego County is home to at least 740,000 youth under the age of 18 (US Census, undated). Approximately 518,000 of these children are school age between 5-17 years old. San Diego County offers a diversity of organized youth programs to serve its youth, and these can be categorized as extended school day, camp, scouting, youth clubs, classes, and alternative youth services. It is common for organizations to offer multiple types of youth programs to diversify their reach within the community.

Extended School Day

Extended School Day programs are offered before and after school for school aged elementary and middle school children during the prime working hours of their parents, 6am to 6pm. These programs are often provided at little or no cost to families in need with the support of state grants or other private donors. Extended School Day programs can take place on or off school grounds. Typical activities include tutoring, arts, crafts, recreation, and social development. Key organizations that offer these programs include Boys & Girls Club, SAY San Diego (Social Advocates for Youth), Harmonium, and the YMCA. Additional organizations include community centers such as the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center and the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Community Center.

Camps

Camps are day or weeklong programs offered during school breaks, with summer being the most popular time. Programs are incredibly diverse and fall under the general headings of day camp, residential camp, specialty camp, and travel camp. Ages served, prices, and content vary dramatically. Program providers include recreation facilities, non-profits, schools, retail companies like art studios or tour companies, and private individuals. While camp itself is varied, parents share a common interest in involving their children. According to the American Camp Association (2010), parents want their children to develop socially and emotionally through a safe and fun camp environment.

Scouting

Scouting programs historically have been gender specific, shaping the values and skills of youth. Youth are organized by age groups with specific activities to accomplish before advancing to the next level. As children demonstrate proficiency in a skill, they receive recognition in the form of a pin or badge. Regionally, age groups are organized within communities and led by parent volunteers. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America have dominated the scouting arena, reaching out to 11% of San Diego's youth. Other groups have emerged sharing some scouting elements such as Camp Fire USA and the YMCA Adventure Guides Program, but fit better in other categories.

Youth Clubs

This type of program is very loose in definition and structure. It can best be described as the participation of youth with common interest, over an extended period of time. It includes parent-child groups, like the YMCA Adventure Guides, 4-H, community sports leagues, faith based youth groups, academic leagues, and art groups such as theater or dance.

Classes

This category represents short-term programs in art, academics, and recreation. They focus on teaching specific skills to an individual. Examples of classes include SAT preparation, horse riding lessons, martial arts, glass blowing, and singing lessons. Classes can evolve into clubs when the group enrolled in the class commits to more than just lessons; for example, horse riding lessons could turn into a club when the children start joining competitions and shows.

Alternative Youth Services

Alternative Youth Services include residential youth facilities such as juvenile detention or shelters that provide support for at-risk youth. Programs are typically government funded or supported by private sponsors. Organizations include Shakti Rising, Toussaint Youth Village, Monarch School, and San Diego Youth Services.

San Diego Youth Programs in Nature

Extended School Day

SAY San Diego and Harmonium currently partner with the San Diego Audubon Society Outdoor Explore program to provide repeated nearby nature experiences for the children during shortened school days. OutdoorExplore! naturalist guide take children on field trips into natural areas within walking distance from the school site, to learn about the native habitats of San Diego County.

Camp

Nature providers offer specialty camps that teach children about all facets of the environment. Adventure tour companies, museums, aquaria, and parks all jump at the chance to share their resources with youth. Residential nature camps immerse children into the natural world with hiking, rock climbing, camping, water sports, and just enjoying the outdoor environment.

- Birch Aquarium at Scripps offers weeklong and single day camps that highlight ocean habitats and include visits to the beach.
- SEACAMP San Diego offers overnight programs for middle school and high school youth highlighting aquatic sports and marine science activities.
- YMCA offers overnight and day camp at three nature based sites Camp Surf in Coronado, Raintree Ranch in Julian, and Camp Marston in Julian (YMCA n.d.).

Beyond the myriad of specialty camps, extended school day programs like the YMCA branches, Boys & Girls Club, SAY San Diego, and Harmonium offer camp options that emphasize more playful activities and field trips (Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego 2010, Harmonium 2010). Nature activities are not central in these programs, but some campers visit the San Diego Natural History Museum, Mission Bay, the beach, and other nature-related places.

Scouting

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts both have activities that highlight nature (Boy Scouts of America 2010, Girl Scouts of the USA 2010). Boy Scouts has included several nature related activities into the core requirements to progress to the next level of scouting. Girl Scouts prides themselves on being “girl-driven,” meaning the youth decide which activities they want to pursue. They do not require the girls to complete any specific nature activities, but have many choices if they are interested. Many nature



providers offer scout specific programs to attract these groups to their sites and to provide an alternative for parent leaders who don't feel confident leading nature or science activities.

Youth Clubs

Several notable clubs for youth and families use nature as a central theme:

- YMCA Adventure Guides is a program designed for children and their parent/guardian. Activities are based on four elements: family, nature, fun, and community. In San Diego, the YMCA organizes activities for the Adventure Guides, including horseback riding, surfing, Catalina trips, and river rafting.
- The 4-H Club is rooted as a rural agriculture program, although its current mission to "empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults" does not identify working with the land as a key element. San Diego County has 36 4-H clubs that list nature-based activities such as horseback riding, horticulture, and caring for domestic animals.
- SDCaN and Sierra Club have developed family nature clubs where families can get together to enjoy nature-based activities.
- Organizations such as the Autism Society, Down Syndrome Society, and the American Diabetes Association coordinate social activities for families and youth in San Diego County. Many of the outings include outdoor elements or visits to nature facilities.

Classes

Parks, museums, aquariums, and various recreational organizations offer nature related classes for youth. If families and children are interested in pursuing nature classes, there are plenty of options for everyone's budget.

- Tijuana Estuary National Park offers free ecology programs, called the Junior Ranger program, for children 7-12 years old every Thursday. If children choose to attend multiple classes they can earn pins and badges to honor their commitment.
- Coronado Surfing Academy offers semi-private surf lessons for children age five and older.
- Mission Trails Regional Park offers a free Nature Club program for children ages 8 to 12 where they hike and do nature-based activities.
- The San Diego Natural History Museum offers nature-based classes and field trips for children and families.

Alternative Youth Services

San Diego Youth Services offers diverse programs for youth in need including residential facilities, but specific nature activities aren't listed. The specific details of recreational activities may be kept confidential due to the nature of their services. There are non-profit organizations that are dedicated to serving at-risk youth and getting them out into nature, such as Outdoor Outreach and the Ocean Discoveries Institute. Organizations like San Diego Youth Services may reach out to nature providers to organize nature based activities.

Opportunities

Opportunities for the greatest Children & Nature impact lie within the county wide youth organizations that provide youth programming in multiple categories and reach large numbers of youth. The most consistent youth programs include extended school day, scouting, and camp. Figure 1 displays some of the larger youth providers and the types of programs they offer. Six key organizations serve a wide cross section of San Diego County and could provide a diverse pool of youth year round for the Children & Nature efforts. These organizations include the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, SAY San Diego, Harmonium, Boys Scouts, and Girl Scouts. The YMCA clearly stands out as a leader in serving 25% of the San Diego's youth in 2009 and offering programs in all three key program categories. Combined, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts reach an additional 11% of the population with scouting and camp programs.

Boys & Girls Club, Harmonium, and SAY San Diego offer camp and extended school day programs for another 9% of youth (SAY San Diego n.d.).

Each organization utilizes a central communication system where information is funneled out to the various community divisions. Through this channel, SDCaN can feed large scale communications such as county-wide events and multimedia campaigns, or give recognition to youth providers engaging in nature activities. For smaller scale collaboration such as piloting nature programs, SDCaN is best served by targeting individual active branches that staff nature champions who are motivated to encourage nature experiences in their programs.

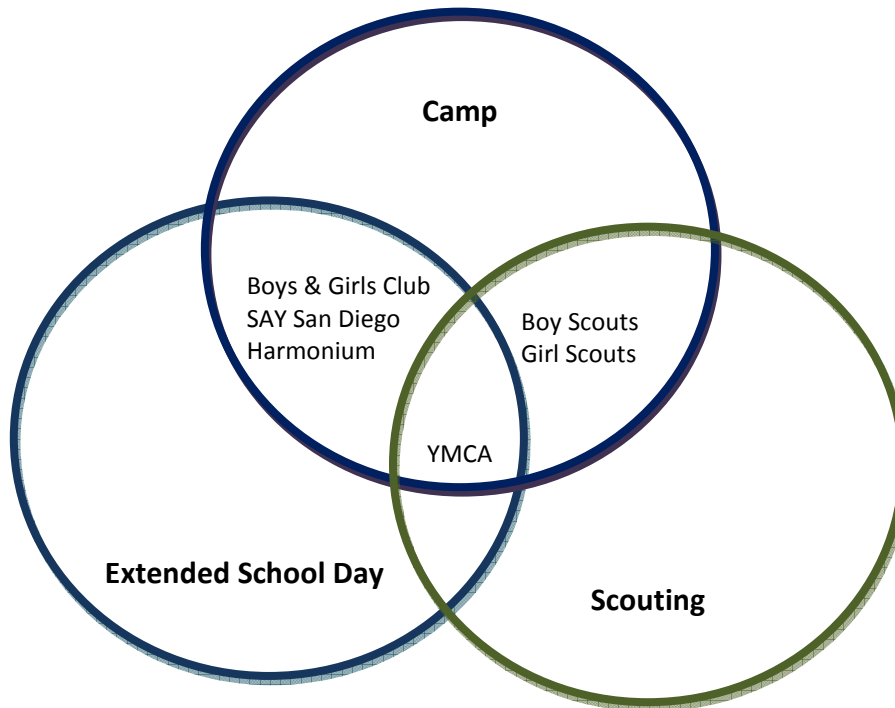


Figure 1: Key youth providers and programs offered.

YMCA

The YMCA served 129,904 youth in San Diego County in 2009 through various programs including extended school day, day and residential camps, family adventure guides, and various recreation classes. The mission of the San Diego County YMCA is “improving the quality of human life and to helping all people realize their fullest potential as children of God through development of the spirit, mind and body.” One of their six program goals is in alignment with SDCaN and is “to appreciate the beauty, diversity, and interdependencies of the environment and resources which God has provided in this world.” With such a large hold on San Diego’s youth and a commitment to nature appreciation, the YMCA is a natural choice for collaboration with SDCaN. Centralized communication for this organization takes place at the YMCA of San Diego County Corporate Office.

Several branches of the YMCA are utilizing nature sites and nature providers for activities. Mission Valley, La Jolla, and Rancho San Diego YMCAs currently partner with the San Diego Natural History Museum for summer camp programming and enrichment visits. San Diego Audubon is consulting with several other YMCAs to bring Outdoor Explore into the extended school day programs. Mission Valley

and La Jolla YMCA Adventure Guides book outdoor recreation activities at nature sites around the county. These particular branches could serve well for piloting nature programs.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts San Diego-Imperial Councils

The Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts offer gender-specific, character, and leadership building programs to approximately 59,000 youth in San Diego County. Parent-led groups are organized into districts/service units divided by regional areas of San Diego County. A range of scouting-related programs are offered by the council, district, and individual groups. Programs include day camp, residential camp, and skill workshops. Individual groups will seek out nature providers for nature related badge or pin work. Central communication takes place at the council headquarters and is distributed to each district. Each district passes on information to group leaders. Getting involved in council wide activities such as the Girl Scout Bridging Ceremony and the Boy Scout Jamboree is a good place for SDCaN to start reaching out. SDCaN could write articles and post events on the council website, recognize troops that are taking an active role in nature, and volunteer at nature related events such as backpacking trips. In addition to council wide involvement, individual groups could be useful for piloting nature activities and community service projects.

Boys and Girls Club, SAY San Diego, and Harmonium

The primary focus of these organizations is to help youth develop as individuals. Combined, they served 44,000 youth in 2009 with their extended school day and camp programs. Current programming has little emphasis on nature, with the exception of San Diego Audubon's Outdoor Explore program. Outdoor activities that are included in programs tend to focus on organized activities, like games or visits to amusement parks. These organizations actively seek out activities for their youth and could be open to collaborating with SDCaN to add low cost nature activities to their programs. Centralized communication is somewhat inconsistent with these organizations. It may be better to approach individual branches with specific opportunities rather than attempt a large scale organizational outreach.

Additional Marketing Opportunities

Most of the youth providers listed in this report are active members of Kids Included Together (KIT) and the American Camp Association (ACA). If SDCaN were to get involved with these professional organizations, they could increase their visibility with county youth providers.

Kids Included Together is a San Diego based non-profit organization that provides learning opportunities and support to youth program providers on inclusion techniques for children with and without disabilities. The Children and Nature movement complements the inclusion techniques by providing a medium for children to express themselves and to experience the natural world. This could provide a platform for Children and Nature workshops.

The American Camp Association is a nationwide non-profit organization that "works to preserve, promote, and improve the camp experience." Currently the Children & Nature Network is an educational affiliate of the American Camp Association with the shared goal of promoting the importance of nature for children and of developing nature-based education tools for families. ACA also offers an accreditation program for camps; currently there are 41 camps in San Diego who have participated in the program. As nationwide partners, it is only natural to pursue a local partnership with ACA. Both organizations share a common goal and could collaborate by offering nature based professional development for camp providers or outreach and media campaigns. Collaboration can also increase the visibility of both organizations.

Areas for Further Consideration

The scope of this project was a broad sweep of youth program providers in San Diego County. Now that six key organizations have been identified, it would be beneficial to gather more specifics on the



programs offered at each branch of the larger organizations to identify which have the greatest need and interest in nature opportunities with SDCaN. Nature centers and key nature providers could provide insight on the specific youth providers that consistently utilize their sites.

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Table I: San Diego County Youth Program Providers

After-School All-Stars Greater San Diego	Jacobs Center Youth Program
American Camp Association Southern California	Kids Included Together
Boy Scouts of America San Diego - Imperial Council	Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center
Boys and Girls Club of Carlsbad	National School Districts WINGS After School Program
Boys and Girls Club of South County	Project New Vision Neighbor Center
Boys and Girls Clubs of East County	Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center
Boys and Girls Club San Diego	Santee School District Project SAFE
Boys and Girls Clubs of San Marcos	Shakti Rising
Boys and Girls Clubs of Vista	Social Advocates for Youth (SAY San Diego)
Boys and Girls Club 4S Ranch Branch	St. Vincent de Paul Teen Center
Boys and Girls Club Baker Branch	The Children's Initiative
Boys and Girls Club Clairemont Branch	Xcite Steps
Boys and Girls Club Encanto Branch	YMCA Border View
Boys and Girls Club Linda Vista Teen Center	YMCA Camp Pendleton Armed Services
Boys and Girls Club Linda Vista/ Roberts Branch	YMCA Camping Services
Boys and Girls Club Logan Heights/ W.J. Oakes Branch	YMCA Childcare Resources Services Department
Boys and Girls Club Mitchell Branch	YMCA Copley Family
Boys and Girls Club National City	YMCA Downtown Family
Boys and Girls Club of Oceanside	YMCA East County
Boys and Girls Club of Borrego Springs	YMCA Jackie Robinson Family Branch
Boys and Girls Club of North County	YMCA La Jolla Family
Boys and Girls Club Ramona Branch	YMCA Magdalena Ecke Family
Boys and Girls Club Sulpizio Branch	YMCA Mission Valley Family
Boys and Girls Club Valley Center	YMCA Joe & Mary Mottino
Camp Fire San Diego & Imperial Country	YMCA San Diego County
Camp Pendleton Children Youth and Teens Program	YMCA Palomar Family
Club Xcite	YMCA Peninsula Family
Fred Finch Youth Center	YMCA Rancho Family
Girls Scouts of America San Diego - Imperial Council	YMCA San Diego Armed Services
Harmonium, Inc.	YMCA South Bay Family
	YMCA Youth & Family Services