



## Program Highlight: Nature Kids



Nature Kids/Jóvenes de La Naturaleza (NKJN) is a collective impact project, led by Thorne, that provides pre-k to high school, backyard to backcountry, and family integrated environmental education and outdoor recreation programming to low-income and Latino residents of our community. NKJN also builds parks and trails to ensure all youth live within a safe 10-minute walk to nature. Originally started in Lafayette, Thorne has recently helped to launch a second NKJN project based in Boulder! Read on to learn more about what this program has been!

### Thorne Helps to Launch Nature Kids Boulder

This month Thorne helped to launch a pilot program to bring the highly successful Nature Kids model developed in Lafayette to the city of Boulder. Over the course of the year, Thorne, along with Cal-Wood and the City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks and Parks and Recreation departments, will collaborate with other local government and community-based organizations to host a series of nature and outdoor programs for underrepresented youth and their families. In addition to being fun experiences and helping to improve the health and wellbeing of participants, these initial programs will help us to better understand what types of outdoor experiences families in Boulder want, as well as the particular barriers that exist for meaningful and relevant participation in outdoor activities in Boulder. Thorne recently hired a new community liaison, Ruben Lopez, to recruit youth, parents and caregivers to participate in this project. Thorne will also lead a conversation about how organizations can work together to expand this type of programming without duplicating services. The plan is to apply everything we learn in this pilot year to design a phenomenal comprehensive Nature Kids Boulder program model in 2022!



### Youth Advisory Board Teaches Their Family and Friends

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is a volunteer leadership opportunity for youth in the community to participate and give feedback regarding NKJN programming. Youth in 6th to 12th grade can participate. Typically, the YAB manages a budget and approves "mini-grants" in the community; however, due to COVID and remote schoolwork it has been particularly challenging this school year. Instead of approving proposed mini-grants, the youth are working on projects to take their family members and friends and teach them about Environmental Education. YAB youth are mentored themselves by Nature Kids Lafayette

Community Liaison, Veronica Sangabriel, in the Nature Mentor Program as Youth Nature Mentors. Through this opportunity, Veronica and a YAB member lead three, 2-hr outdoor experiences in local Lafayette natural areas with a family. During this



time, YAB members learn environmental education techniques that they are then asked to apply with their younger family members. In this way, YAB members are learning leadership skills, job-related skills, and getting outside more with their younger family members!

Photo: YAB member, Bryan Pineda, taking his little brother to the Sanchez Discovery Zone to teach him about science.

## Custom Outdoor Trips for Families During Covid

The Nature Kids Promotores have provided community-based leadership and served as the community voice for the program since 2016. The Nature Kids Promotores serve as ambassadors to the Lafayette community and support with outreach, recruitment, and event creation and leadership. Since COVID has made it challenging for the Promotores Board to reach the community in the ways that they normally would, Thorne worked with the Promotores and the project's funders to find other creative ways to get the community involved. The solution they landed on was customizable outdoor trips! For example, Monica Antolin, current Treasurer of the Promotores Board, led an outing to explore the Ice Castles and nearby wilderness areas in Dillon, CO. Other Promotores have organized trips to places like the Wildlife Sanctuary and Waneka Lake. There are currently 22 Promotores on the board and with their help we have reached 30 new families! These have been so successful, the



Board might just continue them even in a post-pandemic world!

Photos: Monica and her family on a Promotores outing to the Ice Castles and the surrounding wilderness!