

WILLOWDALE SUPPORTER GUIDE

Explore how we can partner to inspire more
outdoor adventures for kids and families

WILLOWDALE
Explore. Connect. Grow.

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CONTACT



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willowdalenh.com



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A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER

WELCOME

Willowdale isn't a place — it's a feeling, a ritual, and an experience. It's those baby toes that somehow turn into muddy toddler boots if we don't slow down to notice; almost as quickly as the morning dew gives way to early fall frost.

It's the offering of calm that comes from noticing, like really noticing, the smallest changes in, not only our little explorers, but in nature, too. Our community reminds us of the magic that happens when families slow down, step outside, and connect with nature, each other, and themselves.



At Willowdale, we believe every child deserves the freedom to explore, learn, and thrive outdoors. We are committed to creating safe, inclusive spaces where children can connect with nature, build resilience, and nurture their innate curiosity.

Through community initiatives and school partnerships, we are working to expand access to outdoor learning—bringing nature-based play, and hands-on experiences to more children and families.

Rooted in respect for the land and one another, we are growing a future where every child has the opportunity to discover the wonder of the wild.

I invite you to learn more by visiting willowdalenh.com

WITH GRATITUDE,

Steph (she/her)
Founder



CONTACT INFORMATION



Organization Name	Willowdale
Mailing Address	33 Sunnyside Street, Manchester, NH 03103
EIN	99-4470332
Primary Contact	Stephanie Watson Yaeger
Primary Contact Title	Founding Director
Primary contact phone + Email	508-414-3264 + willowdalenh@gmail.com
Secondary Contact	



BOARD MEMBERS



Our board is made up of community members, caregivers, educators, creators, nature enthusiasts and advocates for outdoor play all values that align with those of Willowdale. They generously give their time, energy and resources....



MARISSA CHIVERS
Founding Board Member



KATHLEEN JABLONSKI
Founding Board Member



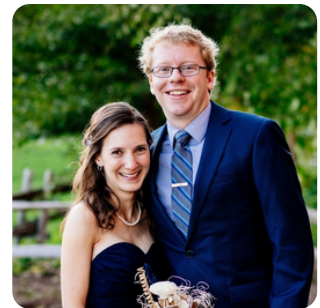
MARISSA WYMAN
Founding Board Member



BRANDY PATTERSON
Board Volunteer



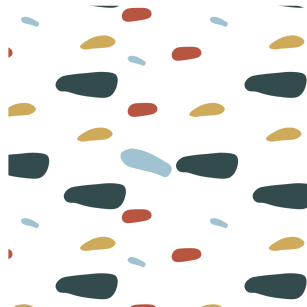
LESLIE ST. PIERRE
Board Volunteer



JACLYN WEIER
Board Volunteer



STEPHANIE WATSON YAEGER
Founding Director



YOU!
Board Volunteer

Interested in joining the board?
We are currently looking for
members. Please contact us.

ABOUT US



MISSION

We are committed to creating safe, inclusive spaces where children can connect with nature, build resilience, and nurture their innate curiosity through nature-based play

VISION

We believe every child deserves the freedom to explore, learn, and thrive outdoors and we are committed to expanding access to outdoor learning—bringing nature-based play, and hands-on experiences to more children and families in New Hampshire.



AREAS SERVED

GEOGRAPHIC

Willowdale serves families in Manchester, New Hampshire and the surrounding urban, suburban, and semi-rural communities. All of our experiences are hosted on the land at Stark Park in Manchester.

DEMOGRAPHIC

We serve families with children ages 1.5–8, progressive caregivers, homeschoolers, and those seeking nature-based, play-focused alternatives to formal preschool or indoor playgroups; with a focus on environmental stewardship, social-emotional growth, and outdoor connection. We prioritize inclusivity and are expanding low-cost and donation-based options to reduce financial barriers.



PROGRAM PURPOSE

Willowdale's programs exist to restore children's access to outdoor play, foster community connection, and support whole-family wellness through time in nature. We want families to know they don't have to travel far to immerse themselves in the great outdoors; it can be a small corner of your yard in the city, a favorite neighborhood park, or a quiet path you walk each day. A greenspace is simply a place where you can touch the earth beneath your feet and see the sky above you.

In 2022, we noticed a growing need for nature-based connection here in Manchester, NH, and our outdoor playgroup was born. Since then, we've seen firsthand how time outdoors supports the well-being of both children and grown-ups. Since the 1970s, outdoor play has dropped by nearly 50%. Today's kids get 12 fewer hours of unstructured play each week, and 75% don't meet the daily physical activity recommendations. Research shows that spending just 120 minutes outside each week supports whole-body wellness; physical, mental, and social-emotional.

Nature naturally encourages movement, sparks curiosity, and offers a space that is both stimulating and grounding. It gives kids the freedom to activate all their senses at once, explore at their own pace, and reconnect with the rhythms their bodies crave.

And beyond the health benefits, time in nature nurtures respect for the land, for its inhabitants, and for the interconnected world around us. By giving children meaningful outdoor experiences from a young age, we are raising the next generation of thoughtful stewards and changemakers who will protect and advocate for the greenspaces we all depend on.



PROGRAMMING



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Willowdale offers experiences for families to get outside year-round! Whether through our weekly playgroups, workshops, homeschool enrichment programs, or simply inspiration from our social media, blog, or monthly newsletter, we've connected with over 100 families in person since our founding and countless others virtually.

WILLOWDALE EXPLORERS

Originally inspired by the Tinkergarten curriculum, our weekly playgroup invites families to explore nature through every season and in all safe weather (yes, we play in the rain and snow!). Each class is rooted in simple rituals, repetition, and child-led play. We sing songs, meet a featured creature who guides our play, and wander and explore together.

Our classes nurture eight essential skills kids need to thrive in an ever-changing world: persistence, problem solving, creativity, communication, empathy, wellness, focus, and sensory development.



MUD MAKERS

Our mud play classes are designed to celebrate open-ended, messy play using simple tools like buckets, water, and dirt with each session offering invitations to connect with and explore nature.

Themes keep each class fresh and fun, and familiar toys, like cars, may help our mud-averse explorers feel more curious. In our Mud Cooking class, little "mud chefs" explore pretend recipes while learning about eating the rainbow and how food connects to nature.

CHILD-LED WOODWORKING

Willowdale Workshop offers a fun, low-pressure way for young explorers to discover woodworking through open-ended, play-based experiences. This philosophy aligns seamlessly with our child-led approach and sets us apart from typical workshops offered at big box stores. Kids are invited to create intuitively, exploring materials and ideas at their own pace.

We recently hosted our first multi-week series, where children designed their own holiday houses, and we look forward to offering more multi-week sessions beginning in spring 2026.



HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT

In Fall 2025, we launched our first Enrichment Programs for Homeschoolers, including our Holiday Woodworking Workshop. We also offered Nature Art, where children created their own pigments from nature treasures like stones, shells, and charcoal; they even made their own paper. In Nature Made Gifts, the focus was on crafting handmade gifts that honor both community and nature.

COMMUNITY



SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS

We celebrate seasonal changes by bringing our community together at the park through Lantern Walks, Solstice and Equinox events, and community potlucks. These gatherings have become treasured traditions, and we look forward to them each year. We're grateful to offer these events at no cost, and we work to ensure they always remain accessible to everyone.

GROWING OUR EXPERIENCES

In addition to the programs described here, we offer nature-based play consulting services, a monthly newsletter filled with ideas for connecting with nature, weather and gear guides, book guides, and a blog.

We are actively developing projects that align with our mission to create safe, inclusive spaces where families can connect with each other and nature.

Here are a few initiatives we are working on:

- Creating an outdoor classroom at Stark Park.
- A Story Walk at Stark Park.
- Collaborations with local schools and kid-centered organizations to engage all learners

By continuing to foster partnerships with local creators and organizations, we will be able to expand our offerings and provide unique experiences in a variety of settings including summer camp and after school programs.



WHY NATURE PLAY



Outdoor play and learning aren't new concepts—but in today's world, they often feel like a lost art. Quite frankly, what we offer at Willowdale isn't a ground-breaking philosophy. We are simply reminding others how far we've moved away from nature immersion and the endless benefits it offers. At Willowdale we offer the opportunities and resources for reconnecting with nature and community.

Did you know...

Since 1970

- Kids have lost **12 hours** of play per week
- Kids spend **half** as much time outdoors
- **75%** of kids do not get the minimum daily required activity they need

BARRIERS TO NATURE PLAY

- Nature-based programs are expensive.
- Traditional school settings don't prioritize it.
- Reliance on technology.
- Overscheduling of caregivers + young learners.
- Kids lack safe, inclusive outdoor spaces to explore.
- Test scores are prioritized over social-emotional experiences.

THE BENEFITS OF NATURE PLAY

One of the biggest benefits of nature play is overall wellness. What many of us have come to understand, especially since 2020, is that wellness isn't just about physical health; it encompasses mental health, and social-emotional health, as well.

Studies have shown that spending just 120 minutes in nature each week can provide stress-reducing and body-healing benefits, and it doesn't have to be all at once.

Social emotional wellness

Empathy

Curiosity

Resilience

Problem solving

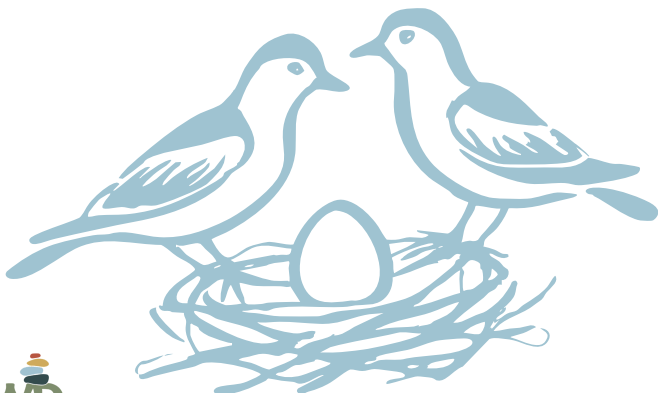
Mental Wellness

Creativity

Persistence

Supports behavioral schema

THE GOAL:



With your support, Willowdale can offer even more experiences, resources and tools to kids in traditional and non-traditional learning settings helping them build curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong connection to the natural world.

2025 BY THE NUMBERS



225 hours of outdoor play were shared with children through our programs and free events.

75 opportunities to join us outside

In 2025, we intentionally reduced our class sizes to improve the quality of our experiences and deepen our connections with attendees.

10 free experiences

3 homeschool enrichment classes

Weekly playgroup

A variety of offered field trips

81 explorers

2 new board members

1 new forest play guide

70 families got outside with us in-person while inspiring countless others to get outside



With a 90% family return rate, Willowdale continues to be a trusted place for consistent, nature-based play in all 4-seasons.

MINIMUM OPPERATION EXPENSES



Income			
Class Registration	9,011	12,000	(2,500)
Grants	0	0	0
Merchandise			
Donations	500	0	-500
Total income	9,511	12,000	(3,000)
Expenses			
Website (domain)	19.35	19.35	0
Marketing	604	604	0
Registration Software	2,388	2,388	0
Insurance	799	800	(1)
Class Materials	1,200	2,000	0
Community Events	500	1,000	0
Independent Contractors	2700	3000	-300
Total expenses	8,110	9,711	(301)
Excess		0	(70)



NURTURE NATURE CONNECTIONS



One of the simplest ways to support Willowdale is to stay engaged—attend classes, come to events, share feedback, and be a part of our growing community. Willowdale thrives because of partners who believe in the power of play, time outdoors, and raising confident explorers. Here are other meaningful ways supporters can help sustain our programs:



VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Your time makes a big impact.

- Help with set-up or clean-up at community events
- Join a build day to help create or maintain our outdoor classroom
- Offer your talents (storytelling, music, nature skills, crafting)



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We love collaborating with local organizations, professionals, small businesses and other non-profits.

- Sponsor a class, event, or scholarship
- Provide materials or services
- Co-host community offerings



MONETARY DONATIONS

Your contribution helps us keep programs accessible, maintain supplies, and expand offerings.

- One-time or monthly giving
- Sponsor a child or a full program
- Employer matching gifts (if applicable)



DONATE MATERIALS

We gratefully accept items that support hands-on learning and outdoor exploration. We love pre-loved, too! View our wish list, [here](#), for ideas.



SHARE WILLOWDALE

Your voice helps Willowdale grow.

- Share our posts or events on social media
- Leave a review on Google or social platforms
- Invite others to join a class or celebration

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Partner with Willowdale to support nature-based experiences for children and families in our community. Your sponsorship helps us provide immersive programs, foster curiosity, and build a strong, connected community of little explorers.

ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

Trailblazer Sponsor – \$750+

A high-visibility sponsorship featuring logo placement on seasonal materials, website, and newsletters for 12 months, ongoing social media recognition, verbal recognition during the Lantern Walk, and the opportunity to host a table at the event.

Nature Ally Sponsor – \$300+

Support Willowdale while gaining year-round recognition on our website, quarterly newsletter mentions, and regular social media recognition throughout the year.

Friend of Willowdale Sponsor – \$100+

An affordable way to support our mission with recognition on our website, periodic social media shout-outs, and acknowledgment in a newsletter or end-of-session recap.

Custom / In-Kind Sponsorship

- Businesses can contribute materials, snacks, gear, or gift cards
- Recognition according to sponsorship value (custom packages available)
- Opportunity to connect with families through demos or classroom activities

To discuss partnership opportunities, connect with us! willowdalenh@gmail.com

LANTERN WALK SPONSORS



Partner with Willowdale to support our annual Lantern Walk, a community event that brings children and families together in nature. Your sponsorship helps us create meaningful outdoor experiences that foster curiosity, connection, and a lifelong love of the natural world, while also supporting our year-round nature-based programs.

Each year we partner with a local organization to bring this event to life and support our programs. It is our most well-attended event of the year, welcoming children and families from across the community for an afternoon of nature, light, and connection.

EXCLUSIVE SPONSORSHIP - 1 AVAILABLE

Exclusive Lantern Walk Luminary Sponsor – \$1,500+ (1 Available)

Our premier event sponsorship with exclusive naming rights to the Lantern Walk. Includes year-round marketing recognition, prominent logo placement across event materials, website, newsletters, and social media, verbal recognition during the event, a complimentary 10x10 booth with tent, and the opportunity to distribute promotional materials or host an activity.

Activity Sponsor – \$275

Sponsor a featured Lantern Walk activity, such as the Snack Table, Creative Corner, Farmers Market, Photo Booth, Kids' Activities, or another interactive station. Includes recognition with signage at the sponsored activity, listing on event materials, and a social media thank-you following the event.

To discuss this partnership opportunity, connect with us! willowdalenh@gmail.com

ADDITIONAL LANTERN WALK SPONSORSHIPS



Partner with Willowdale to support our annual Lantern Walk, a community event that brings children and families together in nature. Your sponsorship helps us create meaningful outdoor experiences that foster curiosity, connection, and a lifelong love of the natural world, while also supporting our year-round nature-based programs.

Each year we partner with a local organization to bring this event to life and support our programs. It is our most well-attended event of the year, welcoming children and families from across the community for an afternoon of nature, light, and connection.

SNACK TABLE SPONSOR

CREATIVE CORNER SPONSOR

FARMERS MARKET SPONSOR

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