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# Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Education Foundation teaches youth about nature

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Thousands of years ago Luiseño Indians ground the acorns from the Engelmann Oaks atop what is now known as the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve. The Catholic missionaries gave the plateau its namesake, most likely in honor of Saint Rose of Lima in 1846.

Fortunately, from that point on, it has remained much as it was when the first Indians settled on the land. The centuries old oak trees, recurring vernal pools, rare flora and fauna, grasslands, streams and abundant wildlife are still there in the 10,000 acre preserve and protected by the California Fish and Wildlife Service, Riverside County and Metropolitan Water District.

Keeping the preserve open to the public and thousands of children from local schools are the dedicated volunteers from the Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Education Foundation, the Nature Conservancy and a naturalist from the [Riverside County Parks and Recreation Department](#).

The Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Education Foundation in partnership with the city of Wildomar will present the first ever Rooted in Nature Craft Brew Festival May 18. Its proceeds will benefit more than 8,500 students from the surrounding school districts who participate yearly in the foundation's third grade nature education program, third grade outreach, fourth grade trout in the classroom, fifth grade seed bank studies, middle school grassland restoration, high school habitat studies and restoration, family wildlife day and scholarship fund.

SRPNEF members are determined to see that there is "No Child Left Inside." Their mission is "to educate and empower youth to appreciate, preserve and protect nature. SRPNEF passion is "to reconnect a generation of youth to nature, who have grown up indoors and alarmingly isolated from nature."

SRPNEF makes a promise to “provide a learning pathway leading toward a life of environmental stewardship. There is no better place for this mission than the Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Reserve.

SRPNEF is a nonprofit outdoor and nature education provider aligned with the Environmental Education Initiative, Next Generation Science Standards and science, technology, engineering and math curriculum components.

Best of all their programs are fun, full of adventure and provided at no cost to students.

A visit to the reserve during a school day finds hundreds of students hiking the reserve’s miles of trails, exploring the rare vernal pools which are home to endangered fairy shrimp, pulling to top off an Engelmann or California Oak pine nut, watching a squirrel play, seeing a hawk sailing in the breeze, observing a coyote track and even helping to rake debris off a trail.

Led by a docent or naturalist, the children learn about the oak trees, riparian wetlands, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, bunchgrass prairie and vernal pools and their importance to the ecosystems. The visitor’s center at 39400 Clinton Keith Road offers exhibits and nature displays, some interactive, for all to enjoy.

A little longer hike will take the students and visitors to two of the oldest standing structures in Riverside County, the Machado Adobes, which once served as bunkhouses for cowboys dating back to 1846.

The foundation continues to expand its educational programs with the help of donations and grants from residents and organizations interested in preserving the reserve. More recently the SRPNEF Nature Education Small Grant Program was started with the sponsorship of the Pechanga Development Corporation and Tate Law Group. The small grants, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, support programs or projects that help develop “Champions of the Environment.”

SRPNEF memberships are available, ranging from \$35 annually for one adult in a household to becoming a Plateau Patron for \$1,000 upward. The memberships provide year-round passes to the reserve for individuals and other benefits for higher level memberships.

Information about SRPNEF is now available at new email contacts. They include, membership at [membership@srpnef.org](mailto:membership@srpnef.org); volunteering at [volunteer@srpnef.org](mailto:volunteer@srpnef.org); general questions at [info@srpnef.org](mailto:info@srpnef.org); technical support at [support@srpnef.org](mailto:support@srpnef.org); grant questions at [grants@srpnef.org](mailto:grants@srpnef.org); administrative and volunteer coordinator Kay Boylen at [kay@srpnef.org](mailto:kay@srpnef.org) and Executive Director Ginger Greaves at [execdirector@srpnef.org](mailto:execdirector@srpnef.org).

SRPNEF is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. A portion of the membership fee may be tax deductible. Tax ID #71-0946697

Other information about the Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Reserve and SRPNEF can be found on Facebook and other social media sites.

Following the Rooted in Nature Craft Brew Festival, SRPNEF will offer its summer concerts and art exhibition at the visitor's center grounds. They include: June 28 is the Opening Night Art Exhibition; July 6 is the encore of Lights, the premier tribute to Journey; July 13 is The Heart of Rock 'n' Roll, a tribute to Huey Lewis and the News; July 20 is Garth Guy, the ultimate Garth Brooks tribute show; July 27 is December '63, the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons; Aug. 3 is ABBA Fab, a tribute to the Swedish supergroup and Aug. 10 is True Willie Band, the best Willie Nelson tribute.

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