



An enthusiastic group from Takeda Pharmaceuticals joined COSF board members for a "get to know your backyard" hike in the Conejo Canyons Open Space June 1. COSF volunteers also hosted Amgen staffers for a hike in May.

## A Few Words from Our President

Welcome to Summer! Lots of good news to share this quarter:

- We are thrilled to be in our **second year of COSF scholarship awards** for high-school seniors who plan on pursuing an environmental-studies-related major in college. We hope to gradually build an endowment fund so we can continue to offer and expand this program in the future. In the meantime, meet our highly deserving 2022 winners, Alessandra Lucchesi and Molly McNulty, below.
- We were also happy to welcome back **Trails Education Days** in April! Please read the report below on this delightful week for CVUSD 4th graders and remember that we're

always looking for volunteers to help out as hike leaders and coordinators. If you're interested in helping out with Trails Education Days the week of April 24-28, 2023, please email us at [ted@cosf.org](mailto:ted@cosf.org).

- The **COSCA Spring Trail Work Day at Wildwood Regional Park**, which also went on a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, was a huge success! About **130 volunteers** restored the Santa Rosa Trail above Wildwood Mesa on March 19. Thank you to all who turned out. There will be a Fall Work Day scheduled soon; watch our website for details.
- And, last, **fire risk is growing** as summer progresses, so please take the time to visit the COSCA/Thousand Oaks [fire safety website](#) for info on home hardening and fire resiliency. The [Ventura Regional Firesafe Council website](#) is also helpful.

Wishing you a blissful, safe Summer in the open space!



President, Conejo Open Space Foundation

## We Couldn't Do It Without You

**COSCA** relies on volunteers to help build and maintain trails, act as extra eyes and ears for the rangers, carry out educational programs and support the open space in many other ways. Please consider volunteering for a program that interests you.

**COSF** depends on open space supporters for donations that help fund COSCA volunteer programs and so much more. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

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Alessandra Lucchesi of Ojai



Molly McNulty of Newbury Park

## Newbury Park and Ojai High School Seniors Win 2022 COSF College Scholarships

Alessandra Lucchesi of Nordhoff High School in Ojai, and Molly McNulty of Newbury Park High School are the second set of recipients of Conejo Open Space Foundation scholarships. The two Ventura County high school seniors each were each awarded \$1,000 annual scholarships.

**Alessandra Lucchesi** has made a huge difference over the past three years at the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy native plant nursery, first as a volunteer and then as a paid restoration intern. Lucchesi plans a career in botany and wrote in her scholarship essay, “I believe my ecological perspective, experience in conserving ecosystems, practical tenacity, and absolute love for sustaining the environment will be vital for all my endeavors.”

**Molly McNulty** has already distinguished herself with a Girl Scout Gold Award Project that educated her community on the harmful effects of rodenticide on wildlife. Her hands-on efforts included installing an owl box at her local elementary school, which housed a nesting pair of the raptors. She also developed and taught a class for 5th graders on the effects of rodenticides. “Benefitting my community and putting my idea into action made me even more passionate about our environment and committed to making a change,” McNulty wrote.

The scholarships support students pursuing environmental-studies-related majors at two- or four-year colleges or universities for an award of as much as \$4,000 in total. The scholarships



are awarded by a five-person panel that includes two COSF board members, two environmentalists, and an educator.

Last year's recipients, Naomi Lin and Daniel Conway, both graduates of Oak Park High School, are working toward degrees at UCLA and UC Berkeley respectively.



**We can help Western monarchs thrive by planting milkweed that hosts their larval stage and other flowering plants (as seen here) for adult butterflies to nectar on.**

# Speaker Series Report: Betina Loudermilk Talks Butterfly Gardening and Monarch Recovery

For the second COSF 2022 Speaker Series virtual presentation on June 8, butterfly educator Betina Loudermilk of [Betina's Little Farm & Butterfly Garden](#) gave a fact-filled presentation about the East and West Coast monarch migrations and life cycles. She discussed the mysterious resurgence of the Western monarch population and the grave threats they still face.

She talked about her own successes and failures in creating a butterfly garden over the course of 7 years and shared some firsthand knowledge of butterfly rearing. She also noted a change in California wildlife law that now prohibits captive monarch raising—an important fact to be aware of.

Some highlights of her presentation:

- **Avoid non-native milkweeds**, particularly tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) because it can foster disease. As of June 1, it will no longer be sold in Ventura County nurseries. To learn more about why, [please see our blog](#).
- Be aware of sourcing and **watch for plants treated with pesticides or Bt** (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a biological pest control that targets nuisance caterpillars, but also kills monarch larvae.
- **Feel free to include some non-native plants** in your butterfly garden if you want to provide support for other species of butterflies, such as the gulf fritillary, which is naturalized in our area and depends on passionflower vines.

If you would like to view [Betina Loudermilk's talk, "The Monarch Miracle 2022,"](#) it's available in the COSF website video library, along with a list of monarch resources.

Mountain biker volunteer Matt Morse demonstrated some deliberately bad trail etiquette so student participating in Trails Education Days could correct him.





## Nearly 1,000 Students Enjoyed the Return of Trails Education Days in April

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Trails Education Days (TED) returned to Wildwood Park April 25 to 28 to celebrate its 29th year. **The program brought 950 Conejo Valley Unified School District 4th grade students, 40 teachers, and more than 100 parents together** for a beautiful day of hiking and fun workshops aimed at teaching good public-lands stewardship. “This year was especially meaningful after two dark years,” said COSF board member and TED coordinator Elayne Haggan.

The children experienced nature hikes through Wildwood Canyon followed by three workshops about park ranger careers, trail safety and courtesy, and indigenous birds and animals. Animal Actors of Hollywood displayed and described their tortoise, great horned owl, opossum, squirrels, and porcupine to the students.

A band of mountain bikers, equestrians, and hikers with dogs enacted a skit to teach trail etiquette. The volunteers demonstrated what bad trail manners look like and the students enjoyed telling them what they did wrong in the discussion that followed.

TED is sponsored by [COSCA](#), with support from [COSTAC](#) and COSF. For the first time, COSF received \$4,000 to support the event from the Lennox Foundation. Nearly 60 volunteers, along with COSCA, National Park Service, and Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority rangers, contribute 800 hours to the planning, execution and follow-up for TED each year: The program could not exist without an army of [dedicated volunteers](#).—*Joanie Reuben*

### Spotlight on...

COSF board member **Giancarlo Hamner** majored in business at California State University Channel Islands and now works as a financial advisor for Edward Jones, where he heads the Westlake Village office. A Conejo Valley native, he has always appreciated the open space. As a child, he spent numerous weekends camping, fishing, boating, hiking, and backpacking throughout California with the Boy Scouts, eventually earning Eagle Scout rank. Some of his Scout projects included rebuilding the staircase that leads to



Paradise Falls in Wildwood Park as well as building a retaining wall. He holds a PADI Instructor License for Scuba and is part of the Global Underwater Explorers in addition to being a trail runner, hiker, and skier.

**When did you join the COSF board and why?** I joined the board in 2019 after an invitation from [former board member] Craig Percy. He and I had crossed paths a few times through community events and he thought I would be a good fit.

**Why is open space important to you?** Where else can you live where a short drive or a brief walk can lead you on a scenic adventure? Selfishly, I love to get out and hike with my dog so I can unplug and escape everyday stress. Beyond that, the open space is a large part of why we have the community we have—people come from all over to live in the Conejo Valley. The Open Space connects our community, keeps property values high, gives us an outlet for our favorite hobbies, and provides a much more scenic environment to live in.

**What advice do you have for open space visitors to get the most out of their time there?** I would encourage people to explore. For the longest time I always ran the same trail because I knew it. But there are so many miles of trails: Don't cheat yourself by sticking to only one.

**What do you like to do in the open space?** I used to be a trail runner but now I'm more of a hiker, either with friends or my energetic French bulldog Hendricks. Not everyone likes a run, but I've yet to find someone who doesn't enjoy a hike.

**What's your favorite Conejo open space?** My favorite area is the Hillcrest Open Space Preserve. It's a short walk from my house to the nearest trailhead and I rarely see other people on it. There's a big elevation gain right off the bat, making it a more challenging trail. The elevation makes me feel like I got a bit of a work out and tires out Hendricks.

**What are your hopes for the future of COSF and/or the Conejo Open Space?** My hopes are that more people find out about COSF and contribute. We have an opportunity to make a much larger impact than we currently do. COSF has grown consistently over the past 27 years but I think we are just starting to find our stride. I would ask that since the trails and open space give so much to us that we all find a way to give back, whether that's financial or by volunteering



Board members (l. to r.) Tania Garcia, Elayne Haggan, Jerry Westby, and Jerry Fehlman represented COSF at the April groundbreaking for the Agoura Hills wildlife crossing. COSF provided \$20,000 toward the crossing's construction, thanks to your donations to the Julia Osborn Gourley memorial fund.

## News In Brief

- **Congratulations to the Conejo Open Space Challenge competitors!** There were 190 participants, of whom 148 completed the Challenge. Running from March 1 to May 31, the 11th annual Challenge featured 10 designated trails. Participants, who biked, ran, or rode, [documented their adventures](#) with photos or GPS tracking. The wrap-up event was held June 3, with gift cards and other prizes for participants courtesy of COSF, COSCA, COSTAC, and local business sponsors.
- **Join past Speaker Series guest Laura Pasetta on July 13** for a Zoom seminar on drought-tolerant gardening through the UC Master Gardener Program. Held at 6:30 p.m., the free class will cover how to remove and replace lawns and other water-consumptive landscaping with xeric alternatives. [Preregistration required](#).
- **Four Wildwood Regional Park sites changed names** in May after a vote by the COSCA board to eliminate the word "Indian" from park names. Locations affected include: Indian Cave (now Little Cave); Indian Cave Trail (now Little Cave Trail); Indian Creek Trail (now Two Springs Trail); and Indian Maiden Falls (now Tuhuy Falls). Another trail in the North Ranch Open Space that connects the Wishbone Loop and Saddle Pass trails was named for the first time: Aqiwo, which means "star" in Chumash.
- **The Hill Canyon Bridge is progressing!** COSCA expects construction on the Hill Canyon Bridge, which will provide greater access to Wildwood Regional Park via the Conejo Canyons Open Space, to begin around October 1, with completion anticipated



next spring. COSF provided \$30,000 toward the bridge's scoping and construction costs.

- Congratulations to the winners of our most recent “Where in the Conejo” contests! Our knowledgeable entrants correctly identified a native fern's spore capsules, a local amphitheater, and an owl's lair in the April, May, and June competitions. This season's winners of a \$25 gift card are: **Jef Kurfess, Edward Haverly, and Bill Brenden**. If you would like to be added to the “Where” contest email list, go [visit our website](#) and sign up.

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## Want to Volunteer? Here's How!

The COSCA Volunteer Corps has many ways for residents to help maintain and preserve the open space that surrounds our beautiful Conejo Valley. By joining with others, we can make sure that the trails, canyons, and ridgelines will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come. You can read about [the specific volunteer opportunities](#), and you can submit a request to volunteer, noting your specific interests, [on this form](#).



The Conejo Open Space Foundation was formed in 1995 to promote and maintain the open space and trail system of the Conejo Valley and to educate residents as to their roles as custodians and protectors of the open space and the environment. [Our web site](#) illustrates

ongoing Conejo Open Space programs supported by the Foundation that help preserve and protect our precious open space.

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