



Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association

2022 YEAR-IN-REVIEW



Daddy Lost-a-Leg (credit: Gustavo Requena Santos)



The Art of Camouflage (credit: Nicole Freidenfelds)

Board of Directors Statement

2022 marked a transition point for COEEA in our journey to become a more inclusive and equitable leader in Environmental & Outdoor education in our state. As the result of many COEEA initiatives in the last few years (centered around our Strategic Plan of supporting equitable and inclusive access to high-quality environmental experiences for all Connecticut residents), the 2022 COEEA Board of Directors represented one of the most diverse boards in the recent history of our organization. Diversity in terms of race, identity, age, communities served, professional background, and lived experiences. We still have a long way to go, but this achievement should be celebrated!

The board's passion truly resonates with COEEA's mission of advancing environmental literacy to all, and our actions clearly reflected that. For many of us, however, it was the very first time joining a non-profit board, and learning to navigate the different steps of governance was a challenge that we took seriously. As a group, we decided that leadership training was a must, and we invested many volunteer-hours in building community among ourselves and navigating equitable ways to (i) govern, (ii) recruit, engage, and support a more diverse community of stakeholders, and (iii) make decisions to better serve our community.

We know that this process is incredibly valuable, but slow. We did not want to rush reviews and updates of COEEA initiatives for the sake of "checking a box", but instead wanted to be genuine and purposeful in our actions. At the same time, throughout the year, some of our Board members had to resign and re-focus their effort on personal commitments. Given our capacity and intention, we decided to postpone the COEEA Awards program until the Fall, combine the COEEA Annual Conference with our Annual Meeting event, and put a hold on the 2022 cycle for the COEEA Mini-Grants initiative.

We understand that these public actions might have been frustrating for some of our members and we truly appreciate your patience and trust. As the result of our ongoing leadership training and engagement with several stakeholders across the state (as well as regionally and nationally), the COEEA Board of Directors believes that our intentional reflections and the actions that we are putting forward in the next couple of years will better serve and support our ever-growing community of environmentally-focused individuals and organizations.

**COEEA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association

COEEA is a network of classroom educators, naturalists, environmental educators, youth leaders, environmentalists, administrators, professors, and students across Connecticut.

COEEA's mission is to engage, support and strengthen a collaborative network of environmentally-focused individuals and organizations to promote outdoor education and environmental literacy across Connecticut.

COEEA's vision is to sustain a growing network that:

- Increases awareness and value of environmental literacy and education for all ages, at the community and state levels
- Encourages collaboration in sharing best practices and resources to increase a more environmentally literate Connecticut
- Promotes equitable and inclusive access to environmental education

COEEA serves its members by supporting professional development, providing networking opportunities, and promoting environmental education in Connecticut.



Abundance (credit: Ann Courcy)



Fishing Fun!

(credit: Laura Cisneros)



Diversity - Nature. Accessible. Diverse. Inclusion.

(credit: Leticia Colon de Mejias)

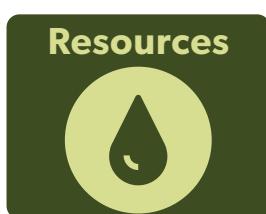
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A great effort of the COEEA Board in 2022 focused on leadership development to better serve our community. These activities were fully funded by NAAEE and included:

- [Fairfield County Community Foundation – Susan Ross Institute](#): Three-day training where Board members Gustavo, Kim and Bethany engaged in discussions and practices around alternative leadership models, community-centric fundraising, and inclusive talent management.



- NAAEE Leadership Clinic: Five-day workshop where Board members Gustavo and Kim worked alongside other NAAEE Affiliates to further develop strategies and best practices for recruitment and engagement with our members centered in building relationships and community with our stakeholders.
- [NAAEE Affiliates Network](#) Workshop: A full-day follow-up event where Board members Gustavo and Nicole worked alongside other NAAEE Affiliates to craft communication strategies to engage with members, sponsors and funders about messaging environmental education work.
- COEEA Board Retreats: The full volunteer Board has been meeting every six months for two-day events to build trust and community within our team. The board has used these retreats to (i) discuss power dynamics, decision-making process, and governance in our board, (ii) review opportunities for membership / board recruitment and engagement, (iii) update procedures for professional recognition initiatives such as our Mini-Grants and Awards program, and (iv) make strategic decisions on initiatives COEEA will undertake in 2023!



We strive to expand on initiatives identified in our strategic plan, providing impactful resources, programming, and communication for and with our members.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On October 5th and 6th, 2022, COEEA hosted its first in-person conference since the start of the pandemic, at beautiful Northwest Park in Windsor. We're grateful for the workshop presenters and attendees who came together on two lovely fall days to learn and (re-)connect.



The conference theme, "Promoting Culturally Sustaining and De-Colonized Environmental Education" attracted a wide audience to share best practices in environmental education. Attendees were captivated by the stories shared during the keynote address by Darlene Kascak and Susan Scherf from the [Institute for American Indian Studies](#).



Workshops included topics such as Bringing the Outside In, Project WET, Nature's Engineers, Harnessing the Wind, and adventurous nature story building.

The conference closed with a plenary panel discussion on "Authentic Community Engagement in Environmental Education" with BIPOC environmental professionals:

- Christina Smith, President of [Groundwork Bridgeport](#)
- Vania Galicia, Community Farmer at [GROW Windham](#)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Etuaptmumk: Two-Eyed Seeing



PLENARY PANEL

Authentic Community Engagement in EE



Conference Sponsors

Thank you [Greater New Haven GREEN Fund](#) and [Connecticut River Conservancy](#) for sponsoring our 2022 conference!



Greater
New Haven
**GREEN
FUND**



Connecticut River
Conservancy

Thanks, also, to the organizations shown below for sponsoring specific conference workshops.



2022 COEEA Award Winners

Educator of the Year



Gamaliel "Gammy" Moses
Elm City Montessori School

Gammy has worked all over New Haven and CT, bringing his rich experiences as a musician and non-violence educator to his students. Gammy works to center children from marginalized communities and he knows the importance of connecting these children with the healing power of nature. Weather, budget, and even COVID were no match for Gammy's dedication.

CONGRATULATIONS

Excellence in Environmental Stewardship



The FOKP has been a catalyst in providing environmental awareness programs (from collaborative projects on trail maintenance and expansion to urban gardening and farming) to its neighboring communities and residents statewide through partnerships and deep and lasting relationships with residents.

Outstanding Organization of the Year

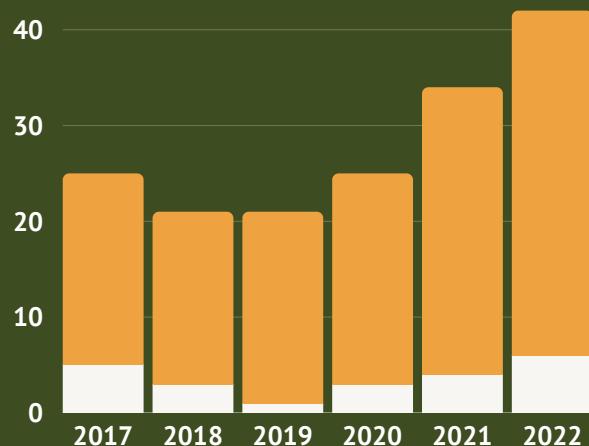


NHCM is an inter-generational grassroots coalition that mobilizes local organizations and community to learn about the climate emergency and fight for government policies and investments that will restore a safe climate and create a just future for all. Their mobilizing work recently resulted in pushing the New Haven Board of Education to pass a Climate Emergency Resolution to improve climate education throughout New Haven Public Schools.

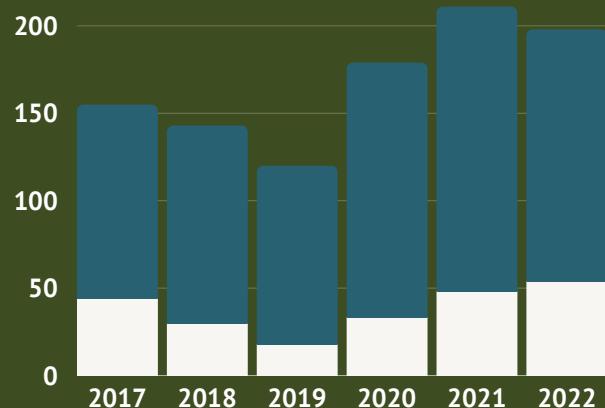
MEMBERSHIP

The power of our growing networking community comes from our COEEA members. COEEA membership has been steadily increasing over the past few years. In 2022 we were supported by 42 organizations and able to attract a total of 198 members.

Organizational Members

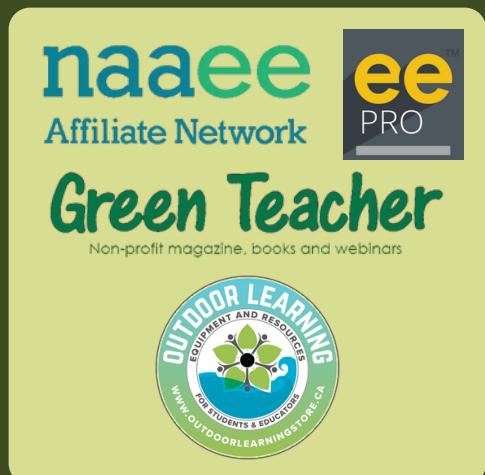


Total Members



40% of our members joined COEEA for the first time this year and 28% of our members are formal classroom teachers.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



- Priority access to COEEA-sponsored programs, workshops, and networking events
- Eligibility for our ever growing COEEA Mini-Grants and Awards
- Free access to all articles, activities, webinars, and podcasts from Green Teacher
- Listserv access to share out and receive news on events and networking, jobs, and volunteer opportunities
- ORGANIZATIONS: All of the above benefits for up to five individuals!

Aligned with our Strategic Plan of diversifying and expanding the reach of our network, in 2023 COEEA will create additional membership tiers with discounted fees for Title I and Alliance District public schools and for students, as well as scholarships for new members.

MINI-GRANTS

COEEA is proud to support local projects that increase environmental literacy among all Connecticut residents and across a broad and diverse audience of youth and adult learners. In 2020, COEEA created additional funding lines to support actions that advance diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice (DEIJ) in environmental initiatives across Connecticut.

Unfortunately, in 2022, the COEEA Board made the difficult decision to pause our Mini-Grants initiative due to lack of capacity. We sincerely apologize for this shortfall. In an attempt to mitigate any negative impacts on our members and communities, we plan to offer double the number of Mini-Grants available in 2023 and increase the value of each individual grant.

2021 RECIPIENTS (UPDATES)

Increasing Environmental Literacy

The Suffield Sustainability Council, a student-led group at Suffield High School, organized the [Walk to the Hart 2022](#), a "collaborative focused on empowering today's youth as future stewards of the planet by building connections, fostering dialogue, and furthering the role of students as community leaders." The 3-day event on Climate Action brought together community and students from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic status to learn from each other.

[Science Yourself](#) distributed 150 outdoor exploration kits to elementary students attending two Title I schools in New Haven - Truman public school and Lincoln-Bassett public school. They also provided training to 20 teachers from both schools on how to better use the resources & materials in the kits to spark the scientist mind of their students to explore nature and make new discoveries outside their classroom.

Mill Hill Green team (composed of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and custodians) created an [Outdoor Ecological Learning Environment](#) on the school ground, consisting of Outdoor classroom, Vegetable Garden, Native Plant Garden, and Bird Habitat. Students have been experiencing outdoor, hands-on learning that complement lessons in Science, Art and English, while supporting native plants & pollinators and the elevating community environment and water literacy .



Advancing DEIJ in EE

[Everyone Outside](#) worked in 2022 with [Kamora's Cultural Corner](#), which provided DEIJ training to all their camp staff, as well as weekly, age-appropriate DEIJ workshops for 90 individual campers (ages 4-15) throughout the summer. Kamora also helped camp staff navigate cultural issues on a case-by-case basis as situations arose throughout the summer.

COEEA & NAAEE

COEEA Goes to Tucson!

Board members Gustavo Requena Santos, Nicole Freidenfelds, Laura Cisneros, and Justin Kaput attended the 2022 NAAEE National Conference in Tucson and received valuable training on the powerful role education can play in creating healthier communities and tackling today's complex environmental and social issues.

Justin and Laura attended the conference to present their work as part of the [NAAEE-CEE Change Fellowship](#).

Justin's project, [Walk to the Hart](#), was a teacher-student collaborative focused on empowering today's youth as future stewards of the planet by building connections, fostering dialogue, and furthering the role of students as community leaders. Laura's project explored facilitating teen and adult community environmental action projects via near-peer mentors within UConn's [Natural Resources Conservation Academy](#).



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Affiliate Network

CT GREEN LEAF SCHOOLS



CT Green LEAF Schools (GLS), a program designed for K-12 schools to improve environmental and sustainability literacy, lists nearly 150 schools in its membership. In addition to the Assessment Tool, which helps schools evaluate their strengths and identify potential areas of focus, GLS offers schools a network for staying connected, access to helpful information like grant opportunities and even a Professional Development Workshop!

North Stratfield Elementary School in Fairfield is the latest to complete their Assessment and [receive their CT Green LEAF banner](#). Any school that has completed their Assessment and continues to demonstrate progress in environmental literacy and take action are eligible for national recognition as a Green Ribbon School. The Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy in North Windham was the [2022 Green Ribbon School award recipient](#).



Charles H. Barrows STEM Academy Green Ribbon Awardees

STAYING CONNECTED



Upper photo - Oystercatcher Island (credit: James Flynn)
Lower photo - East Haven Farm Meets Bradford Preserve (credit: Lorena Venegas)

Over the past year, COEEA continued to provide a way for members to connect and receive information about local, regional, and national resources, announcements, events, and opportunities through our active Listserv. Thanks to our members, we also increased our Social Media engagement in 2022:



GETTING INVOLVED

You don't have to be a board member to help advance COEEA's mission.

We're always looking for folks to join our different Action Teams throughout the year!



Email info@coeea.org to learn more.

Annual Conference

Annual Meeting

Awards

CT Green Leaf

DEIJ + Youth Leadership

Communications

Membership

Mini-Grants



Bee Bakery (credit: Breezy Grenier)

THANK YOU

We're grateful to all our members, volunteers, and grantors for your generous support. You make it possible for COFFA to fulfill our mission!

Board Members *outgoing member

Gustavo Requena Santos	(President)
Laura Cisneros	Doris Johnson
Victoria "Torey" Dake*	Justin Kaput
Nicole Freidenfelds	Evelyn Kubik
Chelsey Hobby*	Susan Robinson
Kimberly Hughes	Bethany Sheffer*



Summer Camp Satisfaction (credit: Carrie Szwed)



Branching Owlets (credit: Leslie Mathews)

We're looking forward to 2023...



and how we can better serve our members in the coming years!



Nature Through the Eyes of a Child (credit: Wendy Miller)

Special Thanks



Heather Kordula
Ayana Melvan
Nikki Saccoccia

CT Green LEAF Schools Advisory Board



Foundations & Grantors

Thank you to the Barnes Foundation and NAAEE for their financial support!

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North American Association for Environmental Education

2022 Organizational Members

