

# ANNUAL REPORT



## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

There are many reasons why the Hitchcock Center is important to the health and well-being of our communities, but one resonates deeply with us-getting people outside!

We are in the midst of one of the most profound and rapid societal shifts in history. Today's generation of children is the first to grow up indoors. Their plugged-in lives are largely devoid of exploring the natural world and we are just beginning to understand the impact is not benign. There are costs to the health of our children: attention difficulties, hyperactivity, childhood obesity, diminished use of senses, disconnect from things that are real.

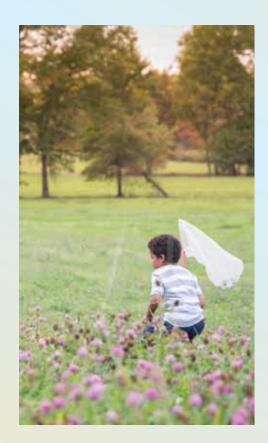
If children are detached from nature, how will they learn about, understand, and value nature? How will the next generation care about the land and be stewards of its resources?

The Hitchcock Center helps get thousands of preschool, elementary, middle, high school and college students, along with their teachers, parents, caregivers, neighbors and friends, outside exploring and discovering the wonders and mysteries of our natural world.

Through our programs, people gain greater understanding and connection to their local environment and learn how to transfer their knowledge into positive environmental action in their own schools and communities.

If you are reading this report, thank you for being one of those people. We are here to help you in your search for greater meaning in the natural world.

Sincerely Julie Johnson, Executive Director



"Thank you for bringing us to the vernal pool. The tadpoles [were] my favorite." —Haley, R.K. Finn Ryan Road School, Florence

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#### **Hitchcock Center for the Environment** at Larch Hill Conservation Area 525 South Pleasant Street Amherst, MA 01002 413-256-6006 Hours: Tuesday-Friday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM hitchcockcenter.org

"Going outside and hiking in nature was an adventure. Seeing the fox habitat, birds, weasel hole, a squirrel and a bunny was wonderful. I hope I can go to the Hitchcock Center again." -Morgan, Westhampton Elementary School

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## Hitchcock at a Glance

Founded in 1962, the Hitchcock Center's mission is to foster greater awareness and understanding of the environment and to develop environmentally literate citizens.

#### **FY15 HIGHLIGHTS**

7,141 total children, youth and adults participated in our environmental education programs.

Of those:

two

- **4,384** K-12 students gained greater scientific understanding through inquiry-based learning experiences steeped in our local environment.
- **1,783** Children, youth and family members found greater connection and commitment to the natural world through hands-on nature discovery programs.
- **690** Adult participants strengthened their environmental skills and advocacy through our naturalist history, citizen science, and sustainability programs.
- **284** Professional development participants developed the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to promote environmental literacy in their classrooms.
- **60** Rural and urban communities throughout western Massachusetts and beyond were represented.
- **364** Volunteers dedicated 3,740 hours to support Hitchcock programs and operations.
- **755** Donor households made generous contributions to keep our environmental education programs strong.

# FY15 % Program Participants by County



Franklin County: 18% Hampden County: 12% Hampshire County: 66% Other: 4%

Numbers on the map reflect the K-12 schools served within each community. A total of 46 K-12 schools were served.



Other Massachusetts Counties Served: Berkshire Middlesex Norfolk Suffolk Worcester

#### Other States: Connecticut

Georgia New York North Carolina Pennsylvania Rhode Island Vermont Virginia

#### Other Countries or Regions: Caribbean Central America England Italy

three

Japan

"Our fifth graders had a wonderful time doing hands-on, inquiry-based science and are all excited about learning more! The Hitchcock Center's Energy Literacy unit is fantastic and led to some really meaningful conversations about energy and the environment. I am so glad that I was able to attend the workshop for teachers last fall. ... I look forward to working with you again in the future."

-Kristin Pisano, fifth grade teacher, Selser School, Chicopee



## **Program Highlights**

Our values are centered on six fundamental aspects of environmental education: teaching principles of ecology; place-based learning; knowing the whole story; promoting resilient communities; demonstrating sustainability in the built environment; and educating for active citizenship. FY15 highlights include:

#### Hitchcock Gains National Recognition Through *Science & Children* Magazine.

Hitchcock Center educator Ted Watt co-authored a feature article published in *Science & Children*, a peer-reviewed journal for elementary teachers. "Our Garden Plot Thickens" by Ted Watt, Judith Herbert and Gini Traub provides a step-by-step guide for teachers to engage their students in learning experiences about soil properties that formed the basis for students' choices of soil types that they predicted would achieve maximum crop harvest in the garden. In the process, students learn about the engineering design process and develop a deeper understanding of the scientific process by investigating a question connected to local food production. Last year, Ted published an article in *Green Teacher*, another nationally recognized peer-reviewed journal for K-12 educators, and has authored an important chapter in a soon to be published book on the best practices of environmental education. Thank you, Ted, for not only being such a highly skilled Hitchcock educator and naturalist, but also for your dedication to promoting the field!!

#### **Commonwealth Award**

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The Hitchcock Center, in partnership with Enchanted Circle Theater (ECT), received a prestigious 2015 Commonwealth Award. Presented every two years by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), the Commonwealth Awards shine a spotlight on the extraordinary contributions made by the arts, sciences, and humanities to education, economic vitality, and quality of life in communities across the state. The Hitchcock Center and ECT won the award for an individual, school, or cultural organization that has successfully fused learning in the arts with science, technology, engineering, and math—STEM to STEAM (the addition of the "A" stands for arts). The award honors a unique collaboration between Hitchcock and ECT to deepen students' understanding of science and the arts in the Holyoke Public Schools. (see next paragraph)

#### Storm Drain Art and Advocacy in Holyoke

In fall 2014, the Hitchcock Center, ECT, and the Holyoke Public Schools, with funding by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) developed and facilitated an 11-day science and arts integrated program in all fifth grade classrooms in Holyoke. Over 300 students from 16 classrooms in six schools throughout the city of Holyoke participated in hands-on science lessons to explore the water cycle, groundwater, and the Connecticut River watershed with HCE educator Patty O'Donnell. The culminating project—the design of Storm Drain Art creations—flowed beyond the classroom, into an ongoing community-wide citizen science project. The eight most visually effective Storm Drain designs were chosen through a juried art contest, and have been in the process of being rendered and installed by a professional artist on storm drains at various locations in the city of Holyoke.



#### Girls into the Wild Afterschool Launched

The Hitchcock Center launched Girls into the Wild, an afterschool program designed to bring girls ages 8–11 together in a supportive environment fostering creativity, nature skills, and inquiry. Designed by Children and Family Programs Coordinator Katie Koerten, the afterschool program was piloted on a monthly basis beginning in fall 2014. Each afternoon consisted of hands-on projects—natural dying, herbal lip balm making, animal tracking, and two overnights including a campout—and free outdoor exploration at the Larch Hill Conservation Area. Through playing games, exploring nearby habitats, and connecting with nature, the program works to develop confidence, build friendships and have a lot of fun learning. In it's first year, the program served 16 girls.



#### STEM Early Childhood Programs Engage Children and Parents

Hitchcock Center designed and implemented STEM curriculum in 20 local libraries and three early childhood centers reaching 475 parents, teachers and children. The curriculum engages parents with their children in learning science, technology, engineering and math. It is a valuable model for integrating these fields at the early childhood age level to provide children with a structure that builds upon their natural inclination to explore, to build, and to question. Families loved learning about dinosaurs when they passed around models of different types of dinosaurs (science observations), compared dinosaur sizes (math), made dinosaur track measuring tools (engineering) and then used their measuring tool to find objects the same size as certain dinosaurs (technology).

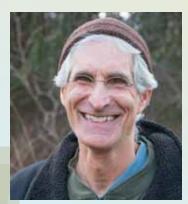
#### Hitchcock Honors Recycling Program Initiated by UMass Students

The Hitchcock Center honored UMass students; Steven Amorin, Eco-Rep Facilitator; Jordan Chan, Secretary of Sustainability for Student Government Association; and Kevin Hollerbach, Eco-Rep Program Manager, for their work to mobilize students on the EPA's GameDay Recycling Challenge to demonstrate active recycling and reducing university clean-up cost among tailgaters at a UMass football game at McGuirk Stadium. The project, implemented at the UMass game on November 12, 2014, succeeded in collecting 2,170 pounds of recyclables through direct student engagement and clean-up effort. Among other participating colleges, UMass ranked second in both reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Recycling in the Mid-Atlantic Conference. Eighty UMass students participated in the Challenge, in 10 teams. Student leaders were honored at a luncheon sponsored by Hot Table Panini on April 8, 2015.

#### New Youth Leadership Camp Launched

New to Nature Summer Camp this year, the Leadership Training session for youth ages 11–16, held June 30–July 3, attracted a group of 10 young people desiring to gain an understanding of leadership and through direct empowerment, reflective conversations, and skills practice. Peter Lamdin, one of Hitchcock Center's first counselors in the 1970s and recently retired sixth grade teacher from Fort River

School, returned to Hitchcock to provide focused curriculum and activity planning direction. Joining him during the session was returning camp counselor Courtney Dyson. Participants engaged in group challenges, a guided rock climbing field trip, learning opportunities to increase knowledge of the environment, discussions and reflections.



"At this age, the children were ready for activities and challenges that were both fun and helped give them skills for being leaders at a camp and in their lives."

-Peter Lamdin, environmental educator and Leadership Training Camp co-counselor

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## **Our Volunteers**

Volunteers are a foundation of support for our staff and programs. In FY15, 364 volunteers contributed 3,740 hours of service to the Center. Our volunteers greet our visitors, weed and maintain gardens, prepare crafts and materials for programs, field questions and register program participants, care for our teaching animals, and complete maintenance tasks in our building.

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"Thank you for helping us get into nature more and helping us learn which plants are poisonous and which plants are fine to eat. ... it's amazing how many plants use different kinds of strategies to disperse their seeds so the seeds can grow. So thank you for helping us learn how many plants disperse their seeds like how some pop their seed shell and the seed goes flying away to grow."

-Logan & Ben, E2 Class, The Common School

## **Our Supporters**

The Hitchcock Center is grateful for the following generous in-kind and contributed support received during our fiscal year FY15 (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015). Gifts from 755 households and 47 foundations, organizations and businesses helped to ensure the ongoing success of our educational mission and vision for our whole community. Thank you! Donors to our ongoing *Building for the Future Capital Campaign* are not listed by name in this annual report.

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SCHOLARSHIP GIFTS Amherst South **Congregational Church** Sandra & Peter Beak Cvnthia & Jerry Brubaker Amy & Ed Gray Susan Heitker & Mathew Jacobson Janice Jorgensen Katie Koerten & Matt Valliere The Pew Charitable Trust Jennifer & Steve Unkles . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ORGANIZATION **& PROGRAM GRANTS** Massachusetts Cultural Council-Cultural Investment Portfolio Northampton Education Foundation United Way of Hampshire County . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . FOUNDATIONS. NONPROFITS, & PUBLIC AGENCIES 2 Anonymous Foundations 1 Anonymous Fund Alpha Phi Omega at UMass Amherst South **Congregational Church Community Foundation** of Western Mass. Edwin S. Webster Foundation **Five Colleges Learning** in Retirement Garden Club of Amherst Hampshire Bird Club Institute for Training & Development The Kendeda Fund The Susan A. & Donald P. Babson Charitable Foundation Thursday Club of South Amherst Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst

#### **BUSINESS GIFTS**

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#### **Other Business Gifts**

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Judith Souweine	Jules Wiener	Alicia Jones
Kim Wolfson	Karen Wolfson	Paul Lipke
		Michael Zide & Jane Winthers Zide

#### BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Of the total revenue for FY15, \$1,818,282 was secured as new gifts, pledges and grants. This combined with gifts from prior years (FY12-14), represents a total of \$4,463,452 secured, or 77% of our initial campaign goal of \$5.8 million as of the end of FY15 (June 30, 2015). We appreciate all of the donors who have already given to our initial campaign goal of \$5.8 million. Fundraising for this campaign continues as of the time of this publication. More about our Building for the Future project is available on our website.

#### VALLEY GIVES



The third Valley Gives was held on December 11, 2014 and 153 donors gave generously to support year-round education for a healthy planet: \$11,164 for the Hitchcock Center in just 24 hours. Thank you! The next Valley Gives is scheduled for May 3, 2016.

Irene Starr Rachel Peterson & Roger Bird Jean Beard Doris Atkinson Janet Bissell, Ginny Brewer, Gary & Linda Donnelly, Bill & Vickie Hart, Betsey Howlet, Constance Parks, Laura Wenk & Judy Stern, Dyan Wiley & Tor Smith Barbara Deskey, Janice Wiley Larry Winship & Ellen Donkin Larry Winship & Ellen Donkin Alice Briggs & Josh Lombard Bruce Hart & Ilene Goldstein, Benjamin James & Oona Coy, Gail Platz, Juliana Vanderwielen

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Ted Watt Donna Wiley Grace Winship Molly Winship Lucy Wolff

Dan Ziomek

"Our students described the wonders of your facility, meeting friends, engaging in activities and for some, a new found interest in exploring elements of nature. With your support, [they] were able to participate with their peers and engage in exciting, structured and safe learning experiences. One current fifth grader said it was THE highlight of her summer! ... "

-Vicki Palmer, school psychologist & counselor, Sunderland Elementary School



## FY15 Living Building Project in Review

The Hitchcock Center completed design development and broke ground on our new 9,000 square foot "living" building on May 1, 2015! One hundred fifty guests came together to celebrate this momentous occasion. Special guest speakers included Senator Stan Rosenberg, Representative Ellen Story, Hampshire College President Jonathan Lash, and Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Commissioner Judy Judson along with Julie Johnson, Hitchcock executive director, Jaana Cutson, Hitchcock board president, Annie Leonard, Hitchcock board member, and Hannah French, Hitchcock intern.

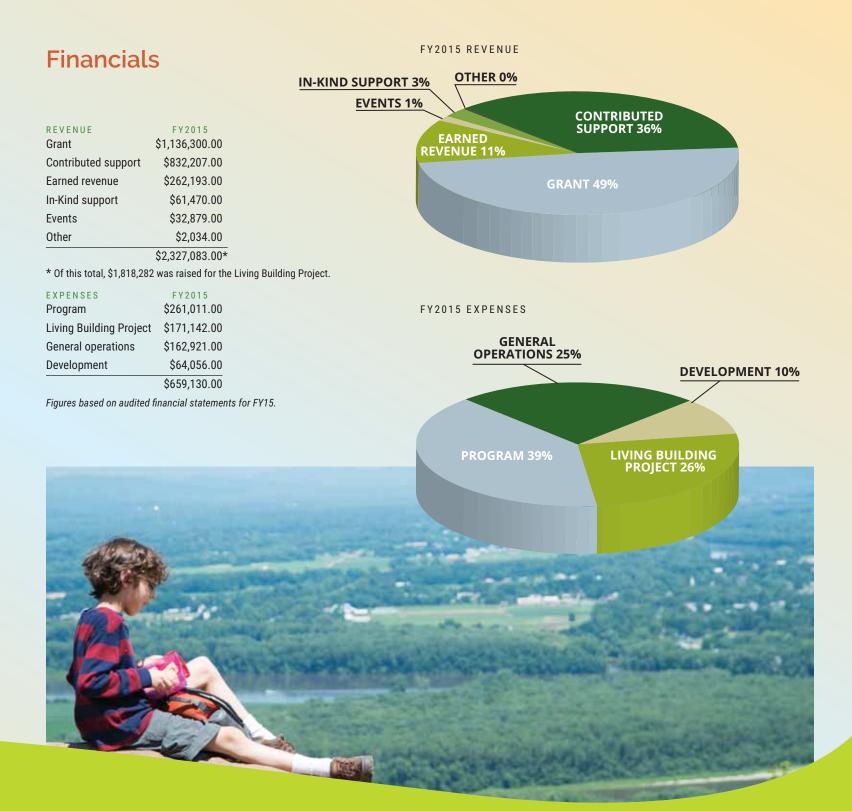
"This is a great year to be part of Hitchcock as we begin construction of our new home—a home that represents the forefront of green construction and use, allowing Hitchcock to expand its reach to a wider audience with increased programming."

-Jaana Cutson, board president, Hitchcock Center

Our new living environmental learning center will be built to the highest standard of green building in the world, through the Living Building Challenge (LBC). Less than 10 buildings have received full LBC certification. Ours will be the first LBCcertified environmental education center open to the public in New England. We look forward to welcoming the community to our new living Hitchcock Center in the Fall of 2016.



twelve





#### **Hitchcock Center for the Environment** at Larch Hill Conservation Area

525 South Pleasant Street Amherst, MA 01002

413-256-6006

Hours: Tuesday-Friday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

hitchcockcenter.org







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