



Community Ecology Institute

2018 Accomplishments

CEI's vision is for a world in which human and natural communities thrive together. Our mission is to foster socially and ecologically healthy communities by enhancing the connections between all people and the natural world. Our flagship program is Columbia Families in Nature (CFIN), which has been running since 2014. This year we also added a new community supported education program, Roots & Wings Learning Community.

Columbia Families in Nature

The goals of CFIN are to enhance: people's connection with nature; environmental awareness and action; and family and community relationships. In 2018 we held 46 free events – six additional events were cancelled due to inclement weather. The cumulative impact of this program is:

Year	# Events	# Families	# People	# Hours
2014	30	457	1,558	3,116
2015	41	572	1,663	3,492
2016	48	576	1,680	3,528
2017	52	586	1,563	3,439
2018	46	491	1,456	3,203
Total	217	2,682	7,920	16,778

By the end of 2018, a total of 217 CFIN events were attended by more than 500 diverse and distinct families, which equates to ~8,000 participant experiences and more than 16,500 hours of family time spent in nature. Highlights from the 2018 CFIN events include:

- * **600+ pounds of trash removed from local streams**
- * **400+ native trees planted during 2 events**
- * **18 Seedlings events**
- * **6 Appalachian Trail hikes**
- * **5 Watershed Exploration and Education events**
- * **4 Teen Forest Forensics events**
- * **3 floating wetlands planted on Earth Day**
- * **2 weekend camping trips**
- * **1 monarch butterfly tagging event**



Watershed Exploration and Education Events -

In the summer of 2017 CEI started implementing a year-long series of monthly CFIN events funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust to help families to learn through direct experience about how to be active stewards of the watersheds of the Patuxent and Patapsco Rivers in Howard County. The final five events in the series were completed in 2018. The cumulative impact of this unique experiential environmental education series was to engage **80 families in 692 participant experiences** (many families attending multiple events).



Forest Forensics Series - The "Forest Forensics"

program was designed to engage pre-teens and teens in environmental education by having them take the role of detectives while exploring distinct parts of the Patapsco State Park system to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the social and ecological history and activity within the Patapsco Valley.

Roots & Wings Learning Community

This program emphasizes place-based experiential learning that prioritizes creativity and developing strong connections. It currently operates as a two day a week drop off program for elementary aged students and serves twenty families.



Finances

In 2018 CEI was awarded: \$2,500 from Patapsco Heritage to implement a "Trash to Treasure" watershed clean up event series in early 2019; a \$4,000 Baltimore Gas and Electric Green Grant; \$6,650 in grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Audubon Society to plant a native tree grove; and \$40,000 from CBT for a series of civic ecology projects (pollinator and rain gardens) in 2019.



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Columbia Families in Nature



500+ pounds of trash removed from local streams



400+ native trees planted during two events



18 seedlings events for kids +1



5 Appalachian Trail hikes



5 Watershed Exploration and Education events



4 Forest Forensics Events for teens



3 floating wetlands planted on Earth Day



2 weekend camping trips



1 monarch butterfly tagging event

"We had no idea there was a pond so close to the commercial area of Columbia. It's a hidden gem in an otherwise urban area. It was meaningful to contribute to sustaining this ecosystem."

"I received a great sense of community and pride while turning soil with complete strangers. I also really enjoyed that my kids easily was welcomed into the group because many of the kids knew each other already."

"There was a lot of trash when we started, but we cleaned up so much so quickly. It is true that many hands make light work!"

"Seeing a vacant lot transformed into a place of beauty thanks to the trees planted was really meaningful."

"I loved watching my kids "be kids." Exploring the forest, picking up acorns and hickory nuts, but mostly, watching them run around getting each other wet and doing the races."

"My children and I had a wonderful time identifying trees and playing outdoor games with other families. Living in a society that is always in a rush, we feel so grateful that we are able to participate in structured activities where we focus on reuniting with nature in a social and fun way."



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Roots & Wings

“Since day one of our six-year homeschooling journey, we've been looking for something like Roots and Wings. A thoughtful and committed group of families, working together to bring a hands-on, creative, nature and play-based experiential learning experience to kids. Even more than the learning experience for my daughter, however, I was struck by the friendly nature of the parents and kids.”



“The teachers are great. Every kid gets the attention they need, yet also given the freedom to explore and problem solve. Everyone is so welcoming. We love every single person there, they have become family and great friends!”



“Joining Roots and Wings has been such a wonderful part of my daughter’s learning adventure! It is a perfect extension of our home with exciting, challenging and excellent educational classes in many areas. I am so thankful for the family that we have in R&W!”



“We have been so happy to find Roots and Wings. As homeschoolers, there are many values and practices we look for in a program and R&W meets them all! My active children don't always do well in a formal classroom environment and the mix of active, creative learning with guidance is perfect for them.”

