



ANNUAL REPORT

CREATING KIND, CURIOUS, AND
CONFIDENT KIDS SINCE 1989



2025

MEET THE SCHOOLHOUSE TEAM



WENDY TONKER, CEO

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

For more than three decades, our vision of nurturing open-hearted children, who become open-minded adults, has inspired everything we do. It's been the core engine driving our outdoor day camps, field trips, and leadership training for children and teens across Durham, Wake, and Orange counties. While 2025 was not without its challenges, I continue to be inspired by our staff, our community, and the children and families we have the privilege to serve.

Spending time in nature is the best thing we can offer our kids - our future leaders. Unplugged time enjoying adventures in the forest increases physical health, resilience, confidence, social-emotional skills including empathy, and mental health.

Our kids need Schoolhouse of Wonder, and our vision for the coming year is providing every child in our service area with access to a Schoolhouse of Wonder experience. I hope you will join us in this important effort.

CURRENT SCHOOLHOUSE YEAR-ROUND STAFF MEMBERS

NICK ANDREWS: Wake-Loblolly Site Manager

TRINITY-GRACE BRENNAN: Wake-Loblolly Lead Counselor

ALEX CARPENTER: Year-Round Lead Camp Counselor

LINDA CATE COLLINS: Part-Time Staff

JACKIE FELDER: Orange Lead Counselor

HANNAH GREEN: Wake-Whispering Pines Site Manager

JIM KENNEDY: Executive Coordinator

PARKER KLINCK: Wake-Whispering Pines Lead Counselor

ZENOVIA MAY: Durham Lead Counselor

TRAVIS MCCALVIN: Orange Site Manager

MICHAEL MCDOWELL: Part-Time Staff

LUKE NEWTON: Director of Operations

MAYA REED: Operations Coordinator

CLAIRE RUSCONI-WARNER: Seasonal Lead Camp Counselor

JESSICA SHEFFIELD: Director of Advancement

WENDY TONKER: Chief Executive Officer

GARETH VIAVATTINE: Part-Time Staff

CALLIE WILLIAMSON: Wake-Schenck Site Manager

NEARLY 100 SEASONAL SUMMER STAFF

SCHOOLHOUSE BOARD MEMBERS

Robin Murchison: Chair

Amber Short: Vice Chair

Julie Abella*

Lillie Cooper

Joe Dillon

Wes Gillette

Molly Goldwasser*

Daniel Head*

Terri Phoenix

Tami Polge: Secretary

Heather Smith: Treasurer

Kim Sue-Ling*

Renee Strnad^

Richard Swain

Emily Wallace^

Sarah Weissberg^

Laurel Williams^

Justin Wood^

OUR MISSION

Schoolhouse of Wonder shapes kind, curious, and confident kids through nature-based outdoor adventures.



OUR VISION

We believe open-hearted children become open-minded adults. Schoolhouse of Wonder is a welcoming community where each person is inspired to learn, play, and grow into their best selves.

OUR VALUES

Belonging

Growth

Empathy

Accountability

Curiosity



WHERE WE OPERATE

In 2025, Schoolhouse of Wonder programs took place in 10 parks and nature preserves across Durham, Orange and Wake counties. We have immense gratitude for our partnerships with the following entities who allow us to use these sites:

NC STATE PARKS:

ENO RIVER STATE PARK AND UMSTEAD STATE PARK

DURHAM PARKS AND RECREATION, CITY OF DURHAM:

WEST POINT ON THE ENO CITY PARK

DUKE UNIVERSITY:

DUKE FOREST

TRIANGLE LAND CONSERVANCY:

BRUMLEY FOREST NATURE PRESERVE AND THREE BEARS

RALEIGH CITY PARKS AND RECREATION:

BROOKHAVEN NATURE PARK

WAKE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION:

CROWDER COUNTY PARK AND HARRIS LAKE PARK

NC STATE UNIVERSITY:

SCHENCK FOREST

OUR LAND PARTNERS



LOOKING AHEAD IN 2026

Schoolhouse of Wonder programs will expand to two new locations to better serve you:

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

SLOCUM CAMP, HILL FOREST

DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION

SANDY CREEK PARK



AWARDS

Multi-year winner of INDY's Best Summer Camp, Best Child Care, and Best Kids' Nonprofit.
Past winner of Durham Magazine's Best Summer Camp.



WHERE WONDERS NEVER CEASE:



**OUTDOOR DAY CAMPS,
OFFERED YEAR-ROUND**

5,000+

campers each year with programs across three
North Carolina counties

96%

of parents surveyed would recommend our camps

**KIDS UNPLUG.
THEY EXPLORE.
THEY BELONG.**

FIELD TRIPS FOR K-6 CLASSROOMS ACROSS THE TRIANGLE Outdoor Learning That Sticks

95%

of teachers see increased
engagement and curiosity

2,375

students served annually
across five counties

55%

of participating classes
come from Title I schools

Aligned with NC Standards, our field trip programs reinforce science, social studies, math, and literacy so field trips bring classroom learning to life. Students don't just learn. They connect.

// [THE INSTRUCTORS] DESERVE ALL THE PRAISE AND APPRECIATION FOR MAKING THIS ONE OF THE BEST FIELD TRIPS WE'VE EVER TAKEN. OUR CLASS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS FELT SO SUPPORTED, HEARD, APPRECIATED, AND SEEN FOR THEIR UNIQUE STRENGTHS. THEY DID SUCH A GREAT JOB CONNECTING WITH OUR STUDENTS AND WE CAN'T WAIT TO COME BACK."

-Special Education Teacher, Hope Creek Academy



2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

TEEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Our Counselor-in-Training Program Helps Shape Teens Ages 13-16 into Leaders

90%

of families report noticeable gains in communication and interpersonal skills

11,500+

hours of teen service supporting younger campers

160+

teens served each summer



// IT'S A SAFE AND IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S RESILIENCE, SOCIAL SKILLS, AND OVERALL CONFIDENCE"
- PARENT OF CIT, WAKE COUNTY

OUR PROMISE

+
**DIRTY, TIRED, HAPPY® -
OR YOUR MONEY BACK.**



// THE SCHOOLHOUSE WAY IS CENTERED ON ALL THE THINGS I CARE ABOUT FOR MY CHILD - SPACE TO PLAY OUTSIDE, BE WITH REAL KIDS (NO SCREENS), AND LEARN ABOUT THE EARTH AND ITS RESOURCES - IN A CONTEXT OF RADICAL RESPECT FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT."

- Durham County Parent

SCHOOLHOUSE IMPACT BEYOND NUMBERS:

DATA TELLS THE STORY ONE WAY, BUT PEOPLE TELL IT IN ANOTHER.

Here are some highlights about our impact from campers, families, and Schoolhouse alumni.

SCHOOLHOUSE MEETS KIDS WHERE THEY ARE.

- Builds empathy and leadership
- Grows confidence over time
- Creates real-world skills

ONE CAMPER → CIT → COUNSELOR → WORKING PROFESSIONAL.

THAT'S LONG-TERM IMPACT.



// Part of the beauty of Schoolhouse is that it meets kids where they are at. Both of our boys learned about nature from Schoolhouse, but also about how to live in the world with other people, similar to and different from themselves.

As a camper and then a CIT, our son developed strong skills of empathy and leadership, carefully modeled and taught by his counselors and CIT mentor. He then became a counselor himself, learning further skills and getting recommendations from his supervisors that helped him get meaningful work as he moved from high school to college. Seeing him take pride in helping younger campers gives me great hope for his future and reminds me of how much Schoolhouse has helped to build my two confident and kind young men."

- Kathleen Duval, Camp and CIT parent



NATURE-BASED, OUTDOOR ADVENTURES THAT SHAPE LIVES.

"SCHOOLHOUSE CHANGED WHO I AM."



Longtime Durham camper and counselor Eloise Wescott on how Schoolhouse helped her find her way in life:

- More confident
- More adaptable
- More patient



Working at Schoolhouse of Wonder changed who I am; it reawakened my desire for adventure and exploration. I have become more confident, more adaptable, and infinitely more patient by spending time outdoors with the campers. Schoolhouse has changed me in smaller ways, too. I have no fear of bugs or snakes, and I have developed a fantastic sense of direction! Schoolhouse also changed my path through college, and I am now focusing on natural resources."

- Eloise Wescott, Camper, CIT, and Camp Counselor

"IT GAVE ME A LIFELONG LOVE OF NATURE."



- Builds independence
- Teaches real skills
- Creates lasting connection

My experience as a camper at the Schoolhouse of Wonder on the banks of the beautiful Eno River gave me a lifelong appreciation of the natural world. Schoolhouse of Wonder provides campers with a much-needed break from screens and social media, and offers an immersive experience in nature. Campers can build self-confidence and independence while learning practical outdoor skills and all about the plants and animals that inhabit this special part of North Carolina."

- Camp Alumni Nick Roberts



After attending 10 years of programs with Schoolhouse, Nick now lives in Colorado and is the Director of Marketing & Communications at a Marine Conservation Organization.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT MAKES IT POSSIBLE

EVERY GIFT MATTERS

Nearly
\$110,000

Raised

200+

Donors

- Fund scholarships for 58 children
- Recover from Tropical Storm Chantal losses
- Expand access to new sites across the Triangle

JOHN REX ENDOWMENT GRANT

We are humbled to have received a three-year grant from John Rex Endowment (JRE) to support our efforts to increase racial diversity in our participants, strengthen representation and equity in our staff, and center racial justice in our programs.

OTHER LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORTERS INCLUDE:

CHT | CHAPEL HILL
TRAINING
TRAIN BETTER  LIVE BETTER

END RIVER
Brewing


John Rex
Endowment


Wegmans

jenis's
ICE CREAMS

york


Fidelity
INVESTMENTS


common
impact

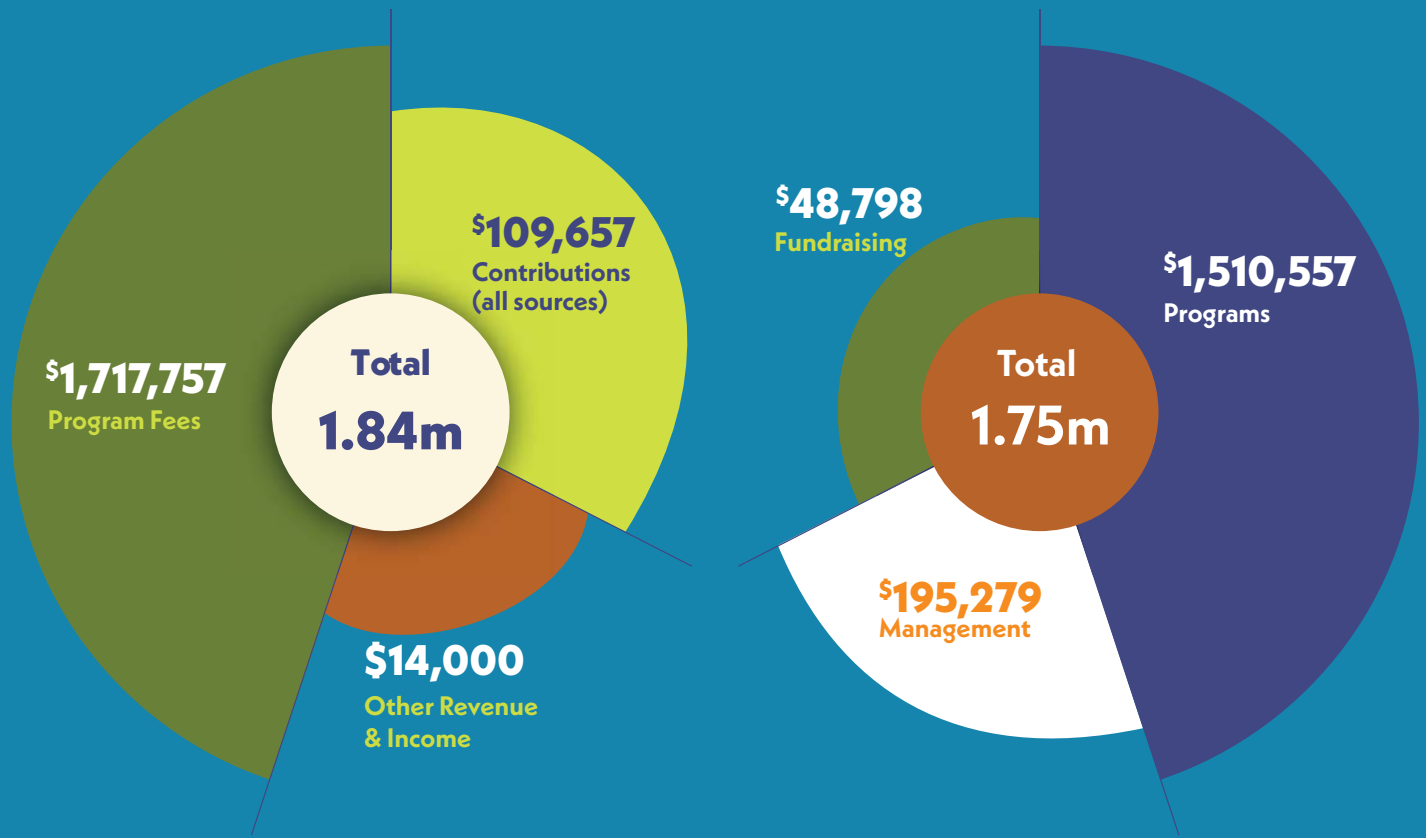
 **EXCHANGE**
THE EXCHANGE CLUB OF GREATER DURHAM

Thank you.

HIGHLIGHTS & FINANCIALS

REVENUE

EXPENSES



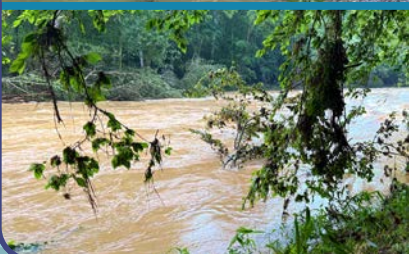
WHEN THE STORM HIT, COMMUNITY STEPPED UP

On Sunday, July 6, 2025 Tropical Storm Chantal brought massive flooding to our region. Our neighbors and friends lost their homes, businesses, and irreplaceable treasures. As we helped haul debris and deliver supplies we witnessed the heartbreak—and the resilience—of our community.

Schoolhouse programs were hit hard too. For the first time in our 37-year history, we were forced to cancel 10 weeks of summer camps where floodwaters had damaged the parks and nature preserves where we operate.

The Schoolhouse community rallied together, and we were able to open a new campsite at Duke Forest, thanks to a welcoming partnership with Duke University. We reassigned campers, provided staff with continuity of employment, and delivered the safe camp experience you deserve. And, more than half of our lost program revenue was recovered through your generous donations.

THANK YOU for your help sustaining Schoolhouse after the storm!



OUR ROOTS RUN DEEP

In December 2025, we hosted a joyful reunion for Schoolhouse staff, volunteers, campers and families who participated with us in the 1990s and early 2000s. Our co-founders Dave Cook and Wayne Poole, pictured below, were our featured guests!

The ideals on which Dave and Wayne founded our nonprofit organization hold true today, including: KIDS NEED NATURE. For 37 years our outdoor programs have helped children:

- Build healthy, confident identities
- Make thoughtful decisions
- Explore with curiosity
- Form strong relationships by leading with empathy and kindness.

As the 2026 season gets underway, we are proud to be carrying this special Schoolhouse legacy forward and we hope you will join us!



STAY CONNECTED WITH SCHOOLHOUSE:



DONATE TO OUR MISSION

OFFICE: 919-477-2116

WEBSITE: www.schoolhouseofwonder.org

EMAIL: info@schoolhouseofwonder.org

SOCIALS: Instagram; Facebook; LinkedIn

MAILING ADDRESS:

1821 Hillandale Rd, Ste 1B, #268 Durham, NC 27705-2671

Schoolhouse of Wonder is an IRS designated 501(c)3 nonprofit. Our Federal Tax ID number is 56-1670472.