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Instead of putting computers in our elementary school classrooms, we should take children into nature, away from those virtual worlds in which they spend unconscionable hours.... Let them know that nothing ... they will find in the virtual worlds of GameBoy or the Internet matters half so much as the step into the air of a great blue heron, rising into the morning mists on Gabriel wings, conferring on the marsh, the morning, the watcher, a dignity, a blessedness that confounds the dull humdrum of the commonplace an opens a window to infinity. -- Chet Raymo

In the tradition of John Muir (who "kidnapped" President Teddy Roosevelt to take him into the Yosemite backcountry) and David Brower (who led hundreds of city dwellers on Sierra Club wilderness trips in the 1940s), Bay Area Wilderness Training (BAWT) was created as a way to open doors to the natural world and spark the imaginations of hundreds of young adults who otherwise might never experience the wonder of wildness.

Since BAWT became an Earth Island Institute project in April 1999, it has taught wilderness leadership skills to 63 teachers and youth services workers who have gone on to lead more than 400 young people on wilderness trips.

These young adults -- ranging from inner-city residents and previously incarcerated teens to migrant farmworkers from California's Central Valley -- all shared the experience of walking through a forest, sleeping in a tent, and seeing the Milky Way -- some for the first time in their lives. The experience profoundly changed their perspective and their sense of themselves.

BAWT's core program is its five-day Wilderness Leadership Training, which takes place every spring and fall in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Participants learn how to ford rivers, "bear proof" camps, purify water, and handle wilderness medical emergencies.

They learned experientially and were given the opportunity to lead the group and test their individual strengths as leaders. Upon completion of the training, participants can enjoy free access to high-quality camping equipment -- including backpacks, tents, and sleeping bags -- which they can use for two years to lead camping trips for the young people with whom they work.

If you wish to become a volunteer, take a Wilderness Leadership course, donate money or contribute outdoor equipment, please contact BAWT Project Director Kyle Macdonald (kyle@bawt.org) [300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133, (415) 788-3666, ext.125, www.bawt.org] Memberships \$30.

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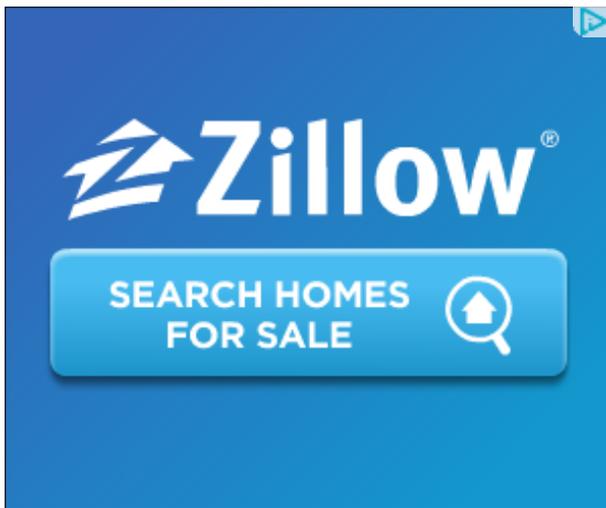
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