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Nature Lover

BAWT's New Guy Digs the Woods

By Susan E. Davis



PAT MAZZERA

Scott Wolland, the new executive director of Bay Area Wilderness Training—an Oakland-based group that helps get urban youth out into the woods—has 19 years of outdoor education experience and is passionate about connecting kids with the Bay Area's spectacular, and easily accessible, outdoors.

How did you get into environmental education?

When I was a teenager I lived in New York City but spent my summers in rural Maine, living in a log cabin. The woods felt like home to me. I came to California in 1990 to protect old-growth trees during Redwood Summer [an environmental activism movement]. One day I was hiking with a friend and her sixth-graders from a science camp in the Santa Cruz mountains. She asked me to talk to the kids about redwoods and everything clicked. From there, I went on to become a naturalist and teacher.

What does Bay Area Wilderness Training do?

We train teachers and professionals who work with kids to take urban youth out into the wilderness. We provide all the gear and transportation, but because these adults already have relationships with the children, we believe they're the best teachers. It's a train-the-trainer kind of model.

Why is it important for kids to get outside?

Getting connected to nature can be a transformative experience. I've seen kids change

from inside out, doing a 180-degree turn to become better students, develop higher esteem, acquire more skills, even become more likeable. When people are more connected to the natural world, they are more connected to their selves, and they become better human beings because of it.

What about people in the suburbs? How should they get their kids into the woods?

What's key is to incorporate the values you want your kids to have into your own life. If you make connecting with nature a priority, your kids will, too. Turn off the technology for 12 hours sometimes and just be with each other. Make plans to go hiking on the weekend. Find ways to go outside and have fun.

How can people get involved with BAWT?

We have Discovery Session meetings the third Wednesday of every month at which citizens can learn about our work and then help us repair and stage our gear. As fundraisers, we also take adults out on guided backpacking trips for three days. They raise the \$1,000 fee via sponsorships—and then they get a guided trip plus \$500 worth of brand-new equipment that was donated to us. We do a similar mountain climbing trip as a fundraiser. You can learn more about these and our other programs at www.bawt.org.

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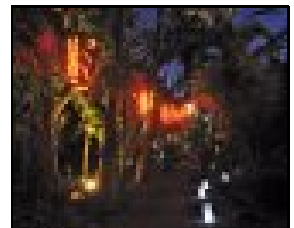


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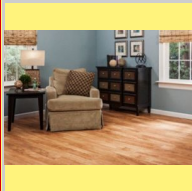

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