

THE PATHFINDER



Summer 2025

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

The first time at camp can bring up so many emotions for campers and parents. Excitement, pride, worry, happiness, and joy are the first ones I think of. For many parents, it's the first time they've been away from their child for so many days. There can be many unknowns, especially for those parents who didn't have a childhood camp experience of their own. Yet each year, parents muster the courage to send their children off to camp knowing that the experience holds so much potential for growth.

While at camp, children detach from technology, experiment with independence, learn about new skills, explore the natural world, and discover how to build relationships on their own. New experiences are challenging. I'd like to take a moment to recognize the courage and commitment of each parent who sees the value of the summer camp experience and trusts us to help campers create exciting memories. Thank you.

Chris Fife
Executive Director

SUMMER CAMP HIGHLIGHTS 2025

As summer 2025 draws to a close, Pathfinder Ranch reflects with joy and gratitude on a season filled with connection, growth, and adventure. Campers forged bonds with their horses during morning rides through the meadows, giggled while feeding goats and alpacas, and found delight in collecting fresh eggs straight from the coop. Every day offered new discoveries—from crafting keepsakes in the art room to playing camp-wide games that filled the air with laughter and friendly competition. Adventure was everywhere. Campers paddled across Lied Lake, took aim on the archery range, and scrambled up the climbing wall, cheering each other on with determination and heart. Nature hikes through manzanita groves sparked curiosity, while afternoons in the shade brought opportunities for creativity and teamwork. As the sun set behind the San Jacinto Mountains, evenings at Fort Pathfinder came alive with songs, skits, and stories under the stars—moments of reflection and connection that many called the soul of their Pathfinder experience.

Thanks to the support of our generous community, many campers received scholarships, making it possible for children from all walks of life to be part of the magic. We witnessed incredible growth as campers stepped out of their comfort zones, discovered hidden strengths, and supported one another with compassion and courage. As we head into fall, we carry these memories with us grateful for a season well spent, and excited for the trails yet to come.



ECO DAY: VOLUNTEER EVENT

On August 23rd, Pathfinder Ranch will be hosting a volunteer event designed to beautify the camp and help maintain the grounds for visiting program participants. In addition to general clean-up like litter removal, volunteers will help maintain trails and remove invasive vegetation that affect the health of more desirable local plants.

Basic tools such as rakes and shovels will be available but volunteers are welcome to bring their own. Gloves will be available on a limited basis so event participants are encouraged to bring their own just in case.

Those interested can obtain more information and register online at <https://pathfinderranch.com/volunteer/>. The event runs from 9:00am to 3:00pm.



VOLUNTEER WITH US AND MEET CARL!

Carl Dugdale has spent over 30 years working with youth across three continents. Passionate about the transformative power of camp culture, he later brought his expertise to Asia, helping to establish academic camps in China. Now based in California with his three daughters—Autumn, Ivy, and Coraline—Carl is an enthusiastic supporter of Pathfinder Ranch, contributing to its development and volunteer programs with the same dedication he's shown throughout his lifelong commitment to youth engagement.



INTRODUCING OUR NEW OUTDOOR EDUCATION MANAGER

Dakotah Tanczuk (AKA Kestrel) flew into outdoor education with a flock of experience across aquariums, nature centers, and outdoor classrooms. From coordinating virtual programs for hospitalized children to teaching K-12 students and mentoring staff, she's built a career on meaningful, hands-on education. With a degree from Cornell and certifications in interpretation, Dakotah brings a thoughtful, learner-centered approach to everything she does. She's especially passionate about fostering collaborative team cultures where staff feel supported, inspired, and ready to grow. After a year at Pathfinder as a Coordinator, she's excited to step into the Manager role and continue strengthening Pathfinder's one-of-a-kind outdoor education program. Off-trail, she's a sea turtle enthusiast, amateur crocheter, and lyrical mastermind who's never afraid to wing it.



Now Booking Retreats and Conferences for the 2025–2026 Season

Looking for the perfect mountain getaway for your next group retreat, professional development weekend, or community gathering? Pathfinder Ranch invites schools, nonprofits, businesses, faith groups, and organizations of all kinds to host your next retreat or conference in the peaceful beauty of Garner Valley.

Our all-inclusive retreat center offers comfortable lodging, delicious meals, and access to scenic forest, meadows, and hiking trails of all skill levels, just a short drive from the Coachella Valley and Idyllwild. Whether you're planning a wellness retreat, team-building adventure, or a quiet weekend of reflection, Pathfinder Ranch offers customizable programs, outdoor activities, and indoor meeting spaces to suit your group's unique needs.

Optional programming includes guided hikes, ropes course and climbing wall challenges, horsemanship activities, archery, and naturalist-led workshops. Our experienced staff can work with you to design a schedule that fosters connection, growth, and fun for participants of all ages and experience levels.

Ready to plan your next retreat? Contact us at info@pathfinderranch.com or visit www.pathfinderranch.com/retreats to learn more and book your dates. Pathfinder Ranch is where people come together to grow, reconnect with nature, and return home inspired. We can't wait to welcome your group to the Ranch!



FIRE SAFETY AT THE RANCH

As fire season approaches in Southern California, the staff and community at Pathfinder Ranch are taking proactive steps to protect our land, animals, and guests. Nestled in the San Jacinto Mountains, our ranch thrives on the beauty of the wilderness that surrounds us—but we know that with great beauty comes great responsibility. Together, we can all play a part in keeping Pathfinder safe, resilient, and ready.

Our team is actively engaged in seasonal fire prevention measures. This includes clearing brush, maintaining defensible space around structures, checking and servicing our water systems, and ensuring all staff are trained in emergency response procedures. Our evacuation routes are clearly marked, our staff practice regular fire drills, and our communication systems are prepared to alert guests and families swiftly in the event of any emergency. We also partner with local fire authorities to stay updated on conditions and best practices throughout the region.

Campers, students, and visitors play a key role too. We teach fire safety as part of our programming—explaining how wildfire starts, why certain activities are restricted during high-risk periods, and what each person can do to reduce risk. Whether it's respecting fire bans, reporting smoke or unusual heat, or simply practicing care with flammable items, everyone who visits Pathfinder becomes part of our stewardship team. As we look ahead to a busy season of outdoor learning and adventure, we ask all guests to join us in staying alert, informed, and respectful of the land we all share. Together, we can keep the flames of curiosity burning bright—while keeping real flames safely at bay.

DEVELOPING WILDERNESS SKILLS

At Pathfinder Ranch, every camper, student, and visitor has the chance to become a confident explorer of the great outdoors. Through hands-on learning and guided adventure, we help young people build essential wilderness skills that not only prepare them for outdoor experiences but also foster independence, problem-solving, and a deeper respect for nature. From learning how to read a map and use a compass to building shelters, identifying edible and medicinal plants, and practicing Leave No Trace ethics, our wilderness programs are designed to be both practical and empowering. Campers develop fire safety awareness, basic first aid knowledge, and teamwork through real-life scenarios, games, and challenges in our beautiful mountain setting. These skills go far beyond the trail. They help kids build resilience, stay calm under pressure, and connect more fully with the world around them. Whether it's tying a secure knot, filtering water from a creek, or spotting signs of wildlife, every moment spent learning in the wild is a step toward becoming a lifelong steward of the land. At Pathfinder Ranch, wilderness isn't just a place—it's a classroom, a mentor, and a source of endless discovery.



MAKE A DONATION

Help us keep the magic of Pathfinder Ranch alive by making a donation today. Your support provides life-changing outdoor experiences for youth of all backgrounds, whether it's a first horseback ride, a night under the stars, or the confidence built on the climbing wall. With your gift, we can offer more scholarships, care for our animals, maintain our trails and facilities, and ensure that every child has the chance to explore, learn, and grow in nature. Every dollar makes a difference. Together, we can nurture the next generation of environmental stewards, leaders, and lifelong learners. Thank you for being part of the Pathfinder community!

EVENT CALANDAR

Eco Day - Volunteer event
August 23rd, 9:00am-3:00pm

USA Archery Instructor Practical Course (Level 1) -
Online course completion required prior to practical
September 27th, 8:00am-12:00pm

Giving Tuesday
December 2nd, all day



Winter Luminaries - Free family event
December 7th, 5:30-8:30pm

For information on any of the above events,
please visit us at
<https://pathfinderranch.com/events-news/events/>



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*Pathfinder Ranch is an 501(c)3
Summer Camp and Outdoor
Education School as well as*