

NEWS



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THPRD WINS METRO GRANT TO HELP CONNECT LATINO STUDENTS TO NATURE

The Metro Council has awarded nearly \$70,000 to the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District's Nature & Trails Department to expand afterschool nature programming and develop a workforce development program for Latino students over the next two years.

Starting this winter, the Nature Experiences and

Workforce Training (NEWT) program will include afterschool and weekend programming at four Beaverton School District schools and a summer youth development program to recruit, train and employ high school-age Latino students.

NEWT is a multiyear, relationship-based approach to reach and engage underserved communities. Community partners are Adelante Mujeres, a Forest Grove-based nonprofit; the Beaverton School District's Multilingual Department; the Friends of the Tualatin Hills Nature Park; Columbia Sportswear; and the Vose Neighborhood Association Committee.



Students from Adelante Mujeres' afterschool Chicas program learn about aquatic insects during a field trip to the Tualatin Hills Nature Park. The nonprofit is a key partner in THPRD's efforts to connect Latinos to nature.

“Each year, we reach more than 40,000 people with environmental education experiences,” said Kristin Smith, interpretive programs supervisor for THPRD’s Tualatin Hills Nature Center (15655 SW Millikan Way, Beaverton). “Unfortunately, Latino audiences do not participate in nature programs, nor are they represented on staff, in equal proportions to census data.

“With the help of our partners, we’re hoping to engage and connect more Latino audiences to nature and support Latino teens who are interested in pursuing a career in natural resources.”

The grant, one of 14 awarded to community organizations, is part of Metro’s strategy to support racial equity throughout the region.

“We want to make sure communities of color have access to safe parks, protected natural areas and the benefits of healthy land, air and water,” said Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu, Metro’s parks and nature business services manager, who oversees the community investments program.

The NEWT program plans to address all three of the program grant goals – promoting cultural, environmental and economic equity.

For more information about THPRD’s nature-based training programs, or to get involved in one of them, visit <http://www.thprd.org/activities/nature/volunteer/training-programs>.

About THPRD

Formed in 1955, THPRD is the largest special park district in Oregon, spanning 50 square miles and serving about 250,000 residents in the greater Beaverton area. The district provides year-round recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. Offerings include thousands of widely diverse classes, about 100 park sites with active recreational amenities, nearly 70 miles of trails, eight swim centers, six recreation centers, and about 1,500 acres of natural areas. For more information, visit www.thprd.org or call 503-645-6433.

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