

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Children's  
Environmental  
Literacy  
Foundation



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# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Looking back, 2021 tested our individual and collective resilience in perhaps more nuanced ways than 2020. The year began with a widespread sense of optimism as vaccines became available and many schools returned to hybrid or in-person instruction. Many institutions were reimagining ways of working to be more supportive of our full humanity - with flexible work arrangements and health protections. However as COVID-19 continued to spread and transmute, so too our communities splintered as many dug deeper into their ideological silos. Where 2020 was a year of collective action - both to stem the spread of COVID-19 and to advocate for systemic solutions to racial injustice - 2021 saw significant backlash to these movements.

CELF's core audience - teachers - were caught in the crosshairs of these ideological battles. As schools reopened, teachers were expected to make up for learning loss, adhere to strict new health and safety protocols, and serve as counselors to students who had spent a year in isolation and faced the loss and illness of loved ones. All this on top of managing their own grief and risking their health in order to help families get back to work and the economy back up and running. With these challenges, 2021 saw greater teacher frustration and burnout, as the burden of getting society back to some sense of normal was placed largely on their shoulders.

For CELF, our pivot to virtual programming helped strengthen our ability to reach new educators beyond our core geographies. From our little virtual boxes, we engaged teachers in collaboration and communion to process and build from shared experiences of these past two years. COVID-19 has served as the ultimate case study in our work to cultivate systems thinking - showing us how environmental degradation has put human civilization at greater risk to zoonotic disease, and how racial and economic disparities lead to vast inequities in access to protective public health measures and quality healthcare. We've seen how our economic norms are often at stark odds with cultivation of our individual and collective well-being.

These lessons have guided CELF's evolution of our core professional learning programs to foster a sense of agency among teachers and students. Through our virtual offerings - including our Summer Institutes, Civic Science, Teachers' Environmental Literacy Series, and Green Careers programs - we engaged teachers in applying a sustainability lens to empower students to envision a better future through inquiry and data-driven solutions. We hope our approach helped teachers not only feel a greater sense of agency, but also experience healing through the community-building and exploration that our programs offer.

During this period of uncertainty, we are honored that teachers came to CELF to help channel frustration into hope. We're proud of all that teachers have achieved in creating space for children to learn and thrive amidst such difficult circumstances. This Annual Report offers a glimpse of how, through our work in 2021, our CELF team and the incredible educators we work with have continued to chart a course toward a healthier, more inclusive, and more sustainable future.



Tara Stafford Ocansey  
Executive Director



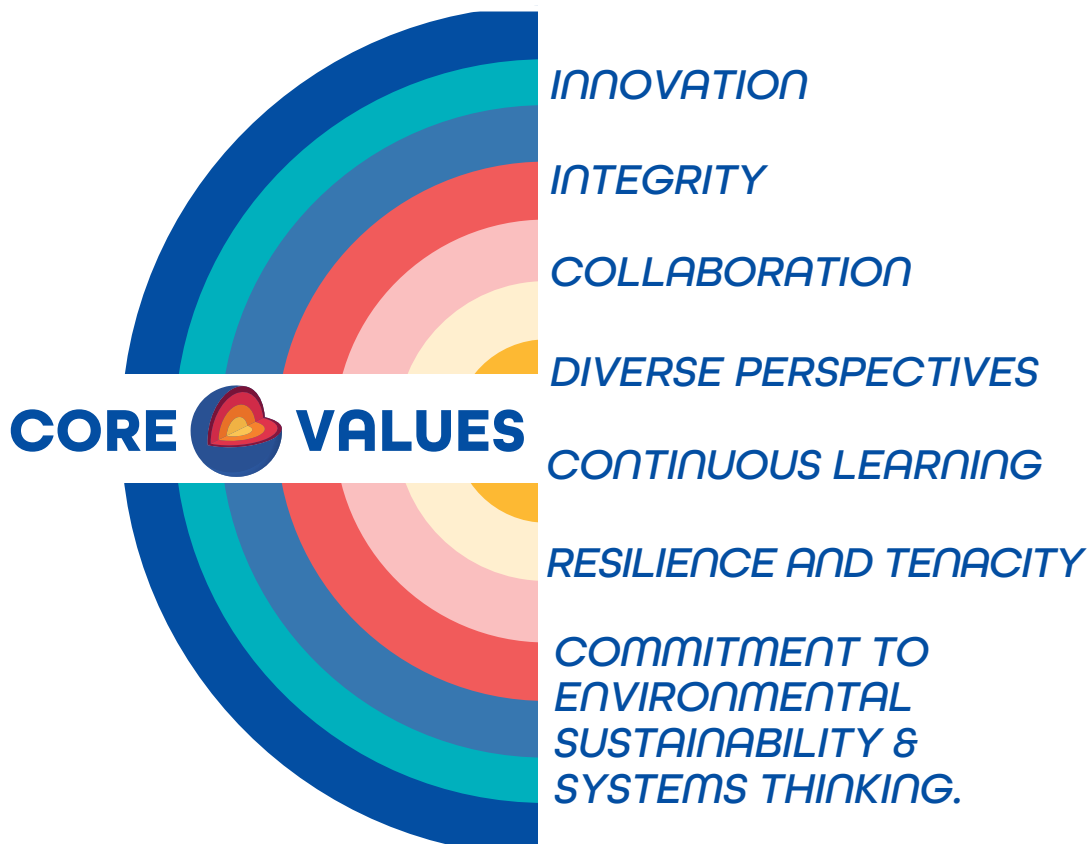
## Mission

The mission of the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation - CELF - is to establish sustainability as an integral part of every child's K-12 learning experience.

## Core Values

CELF's Core Values serve as a guidepost during our continued expansion and growth.

Education for environmental sustainability and environmental justice are the core of CELF's work. Taking a systems thinking approach, CELF engages educators and students in understanding how environmental issues impact different communities in different, often inequitable ways along lines of race, class, and gender.

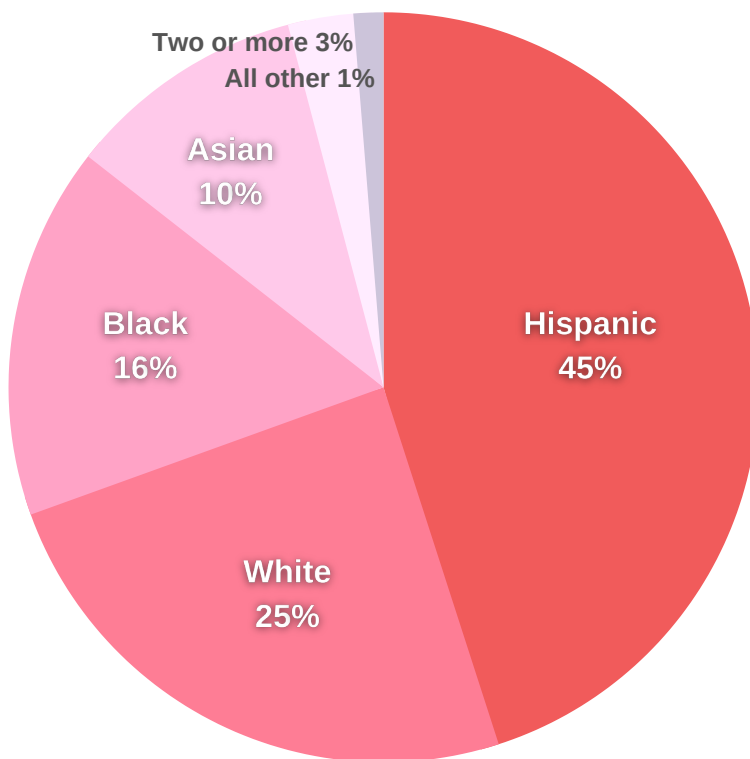


# Core Values in Action: Reaching More Communities

## DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The virtual programs of 2021 brought home ideas of inclusivity and diversity - demographic, geographical, areas of focus, and more - as CELF reached schools in new localities representing broader demographics and higher Title 1 representation.

In 2021, CELF conducted its first demographic analysis of the student populations at the schools served by the educators who participate in our programs. Such analysis is key to helping us improve equity in access to our programs, and ensure that our programming is informed by and responsive to the voices and needs of the communities we serve.



2021 CELF Student Demographics

## INNOVATION & GROWTH IN HOUSTON

In 2019, CELF launched its Houston program. Through the end of 2021, the Houston team has reached 606 educators and 13,049 students in Texas, and those numbers keep growing!

In 2021, Houston students investigated the air quality impact of school bus idling and of volatile organic compounds in cleaning supplies.

Houston has become an important laboratory for educational innovation. Both the CELF Family Nature Challenge and the Green Careers Speaker Series got their starts in Houston.

# 2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: BY THE NUMBERS

# 440

## TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Engaged via professional learning workshops, Summer Institute programs and classroom support services, a 56% increase from 2020.

# 20,000+

## STUDENTS

Impacted by CELF programs indirectly and directly—via Green Careers workshops, the Student Symposium and in-class support.

# 72%

Participating teachers from Title I schools in 2021 CELF programs

# 94%

Summer Institute attendees reported improvement in teaching practices in Education for Sustainability and Project-based Learning as result of completing the program

# 53%

Civic Science student participants showed increased knowledge of the interconnections between humans and the environment

# 13

CELF welcomed 13 new program partners, collaborating with **36 total partners in 2021**

# VIRTUAL SUMMER INSTITUTES: BRIDGING DISTANCES

CELF hosts annual Summer Institutes to provide an opportunity for educators and administrators to immerse themselves in a multi-day learning experience centered on sustainability, environmental literacy and best practices in place, project and problem-based learning methods. This year, the institutes took the form of three virtual professional development programs focused on education for sustainability and civic science.

Teachers were able to walk away from the Institute with a project to implement in the academic year. Projects included simulation of a landfill to see how materials degrade, comparison of the environmental impact of alternative energy sources, and exploration healthy food availability and tower gardens.

## GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDED:



**Bridgette Murray**  
Founder, Achieving Community  
Tasks Successfully (ACTS)



**Chris DeMattia**,  
Director of STEM (pre K-12)  
Ossining Public Schools, NY



**Kris Tucker**  
Adjunct Faculty  
Institute for Humane Education



**Janice Brown**  
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**Carrie Darst**  
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Flour Bluff Intermediate School

**Katie Doyle**  
Science Teacher  
Flour Bluff Intermediate School

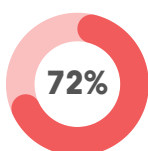
## CELF IN THE FIELD

Alongside the virtual Summer Institutes, CELF piloted a new in-person program: **CELF in the Field**. On July 12th, summer institute participants from all around the Houston area joined CELF Educators at Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center for an in-person event, where educators were able to safely meet in person and outdoors. CELF educators led participants through a field training day in data collection and observation.

## SUMMER INSTITUTE: QUICK STATS

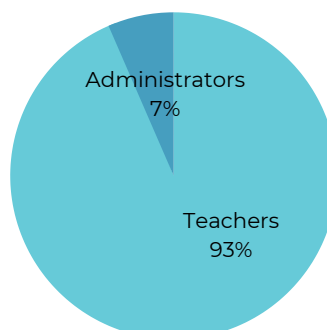
**4,700+**

K-12 Students engaged by  
teacher participants

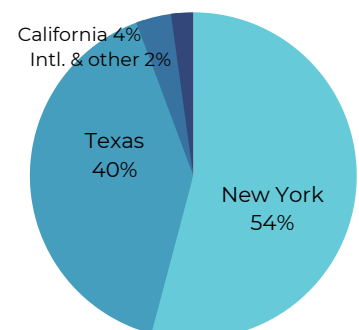


Participating  
teachers at  
Title I  
Schools

### ROLE IN EDUCATION



### PARTICIPANT LOCATION





"My CELF Summer Institute cohorts were a diverse group from different regions and teaching areas. I learned about their different approaches to sustainability and enjoyed seeing them grow with me."

**Carlton Colmenares**

AP Environmental Science Teacher  
Seven Lakes High School, Katy ISD, TX

"Other science education programs that I have been a part of are more rigid, which can turn students away from STEM. CELF really promotes creativity and students/teachers engaging in a variety of ways. I think this makes the program inherently culturally responsive. For this reason, my students had a very positive experience."

**Emily Hollyday**

High School Science Teacher  
West End Secondary School, NY

# CIVIC SCIENCE: FORGING NEW PATHWAYS FOR ACTION ON AIR QUALITY

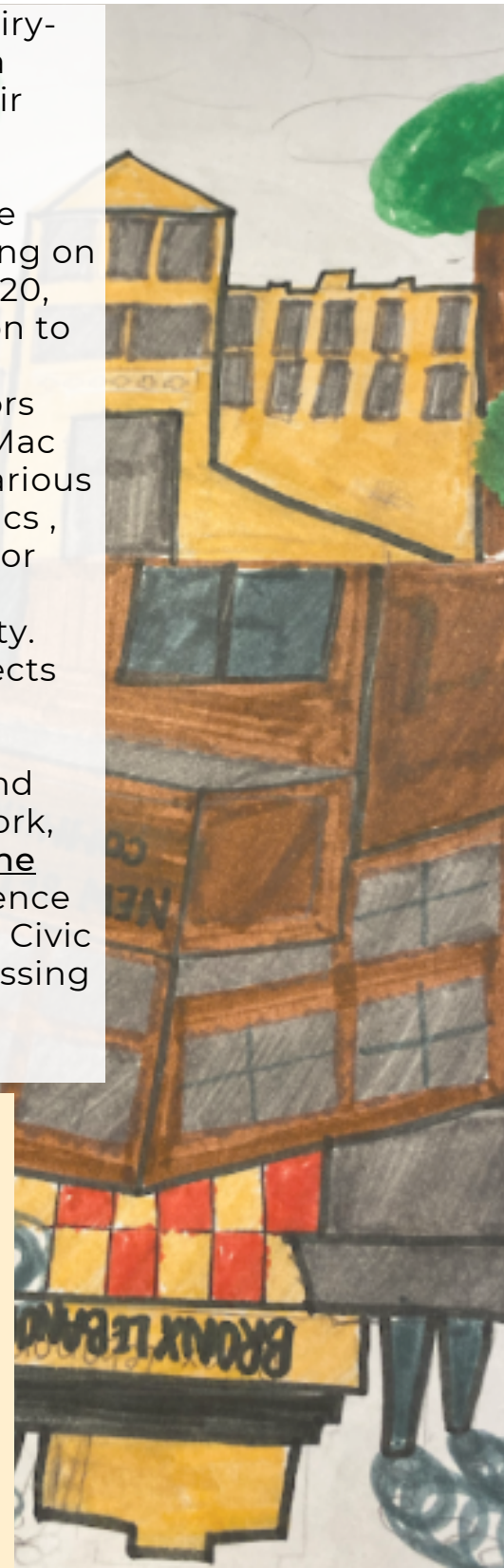
A year into the pandemic, CELF's Civic Science: Inquiry-to-Action program offered educators and students a framework for exploring the connections between air quality and public health.

Often, communities of color are most affected by the negative health outcomes of poor air quality. Building on our Civic Science air quality pathway launched in 2020, 30 teachers engaged their students in data collection to explore the root causes and impacts of inequitable access to clean air. Equipped with air quality monitors provided in-kind as part of our partnership with McMac CX Air Champions, students explored the issue in various ways - looking at the connections between economics, poverty and environmental justice; using of pollinator gardens to improve air quality; and researching the Impact of local policy and infrastructure on air quality. Over 50 students presented their Civic Science projects during the virtual Student Symposium.

Four teachers – from West End Secondary School and The Comprehensive Model School Project in New York, and Lewis Middle School and Harmony School of Fine Arts and Technology in Texas – developed Civic Science case studies to model how teachers leverage CELF's Civic Science approach to engage their students in addressing environmental issues through inquiry and action.

## INNOVATING FOR INCLUSIVITY

With support from **National Geographic Society**, the CELF 2021 Student Symposium was hosted on the **Gather** virtual community platform. This technology enabled students to explore in ways that might have been impossible for some in the physical world. One middle schooler who uses a wheelchair shared his excitement and feeling of empowerment at his freedom to mingle and strike up conversations at the virtual conference.



"From my studies,  
I concluded that poorer areas  
have been at a disadvantage fighting COVID  
due to unregulated levels of pollution. Due to  
historic and present racial stigmas, these  
communities have been exposed to years of  
pollution and currently today, still suffer."

-Jose S., 9th Grade Student  
West End Secondary School  
NYC



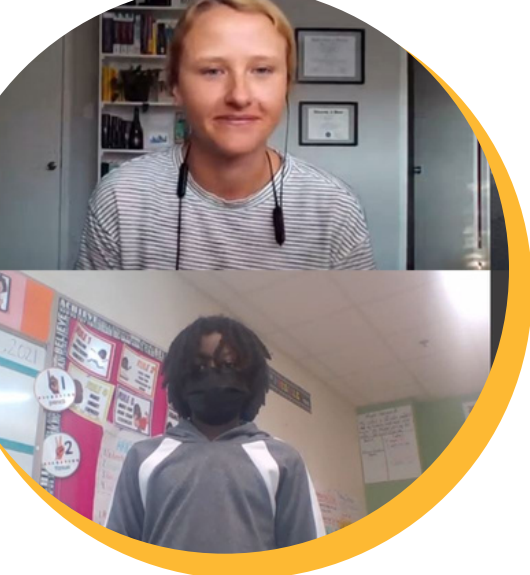
## AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST'S VIEW

"...the program offered teachers a pedagogical strategy that is affordable, simple to carry out, is supplemented with a support system provided by CELF staff and project partners, engages students in real environmental justice issues impacting their location, has well-defined diversity, equity, and inclusion components, and provides relevancy to STEM curriculum.

**Dr. Brian Shmaefsky**

Professor of Environmental Science, Lone Star College - Kingwood

From an external evaluation of CELF's Civic Science program



# GREEN CAREERS: INSPIRING TOMORROW'S INNOVATORS

CELf organized its first Green Careers event in November 2019 on the request of one of our partner schools, who identified a need for students to have engage directly with professionals who could share their journeys, and provide guidance to students interested in sustainability-oriented careers.

After an initial proof of concept phase, 2021 saw tremendous growth in our Green Careers program, yielding a fee-for-service contract with Lantrip Elementary School, and corporate support from Blue Bear Capital to scale the program to additional schools across Greater Houston. Over the course of the year, CELf facilitated 11 Green Careers speaker engagements, reaching 63 teachers and administrators, and 980 students.

Students from organizations including Texas Parks and Wildlife, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, American Bird Conservancy, and Ontility covered topics including careers in ocean conservation, using energy to track weather, and learning more about science beyond the microscope: taking your career outside.

At Lantrip Elementary School in Houston ISD, students connected with speaker Kelly Martin from the American Bird Conservancy focusing on how all of us can support a cleaner environment for people, birds, and other wildlife in the greater Houston-Galveston region through community science, education, and thorough pursuit of Green Careers.



**HARC**



## Statement of Activities

### January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021

## Revenue & Support

Contributions & grants	\$555,727
Program Income	\$18,070
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b>\$573,797</b>

## Expenses

Program Services	
Summer Institute	\$99,807
Civic Science	\$223,343
Professional development & training	\$139,934
<b>Total program services</b>	<b>\$463,084</b>

Support Services	
General & administrative	\$78,782
Fundraising	\$77,128
<b>Total support services</b>	<b>\$155,910</b>

<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$618,994</b>
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Change in net assets	(\$45,197)
Net assets, beginning of year	\$232,979
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$187,782</b>

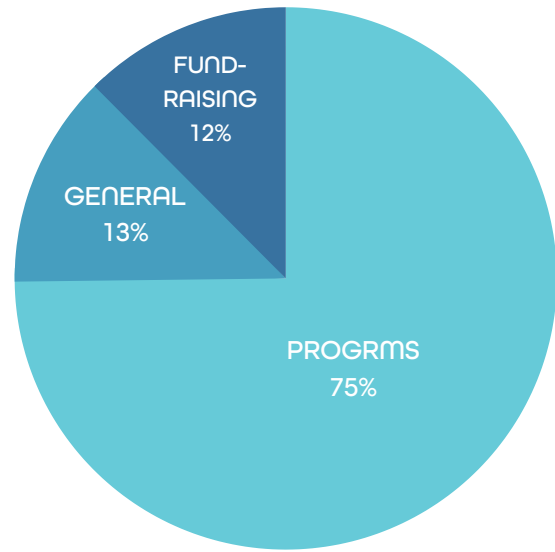


## Expenses by Department

Programs: \$463,084

General & Administrative: \$78,782

Fundraising: \$77,128

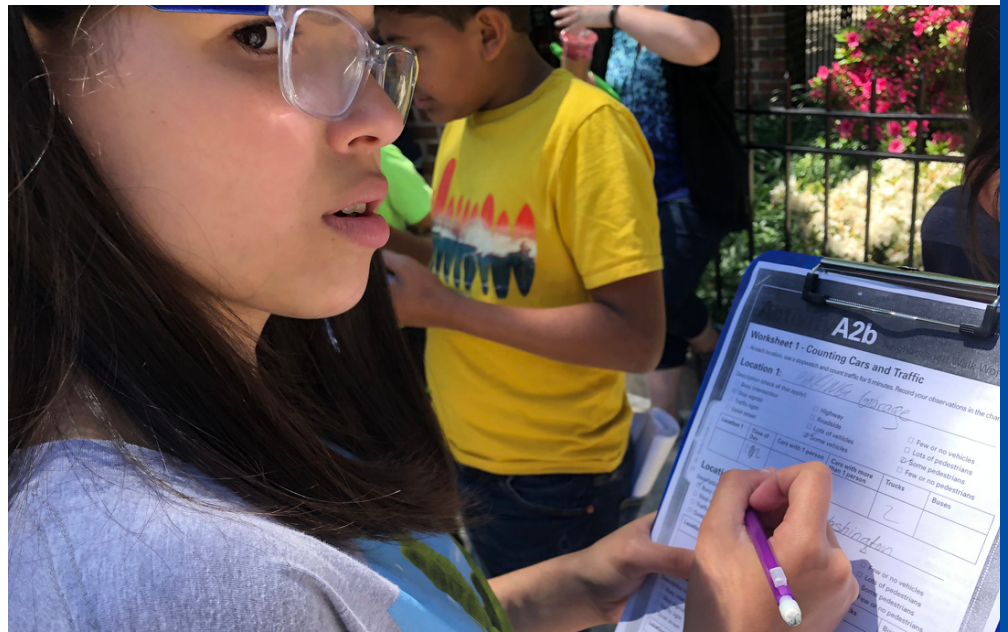
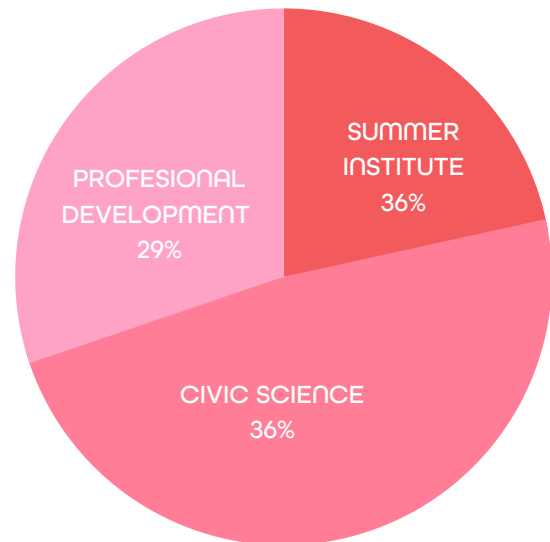


## Investments by Program

Professional Development: \$139,934

Summer Institute: \$99,807

Civic Science: \$223,343



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of our supporters that help to sustain CELF's programs and operations!

## Sustainability Champions

Alex & Lee Krueger  
Baker Hughes  
Mary Duncan & Nick Gutfreund  
Linde PLC  
Neuberger Berman  
Mark Gallogly & Elizabeth Strickler  
San Diego Foundation, Diane Fletcher Hoppe  
Westchester Community Foundation

## \$5,000-\$10,000

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Sustainable Westchester

## \$2,500-\$4,999

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Samantha O'Neil	Melissa & Jeff Traum
William Perry	Craig Urciuoli
Patricia Podwysocki	Emily Weiss
Dennis Power	Renee Whitcombe
Madhavi Raje	Michael Williams
Parnia Razinobakht	James Yap
Thomas Ruffing	

**SPOTLIGHT ON...****FLUOR®**

In 2021, Fluor began its multi-year support for CELF. This global construction and engineering company dedicated to environmental responsibility is working to fulfill a Net Zero commitment to eliminate Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2023.

In CELF, Fluor found a partner whose programs aligned with a systems thinking mindset that can empower future generations of engineers and creative thinkers across a broad array of green careers.

Sustainability Group Chair Nancy Kralik represents Fluor on the CELF Leadership Circle, and has presented to dozens of students in the Green Careers speaker series.

# LOOKING FORWARD

Early 2022 marked the beginning of a new chapter for CELF. In February, after nearly 20 years of growing and leading the organization, CELF's Founder and Executive Director, Katie Isaak Ginsberg, retired. With Katie's blessing, CELF's Board of Directors hired Tara Stafford Ocansey to take the helm. Tara joined CELF in January after ten years at Columbia University's Center for Sustainable Development, where she led global education programs across the lifelong learning spectrum, collaborating with diverse stakeholders from government, non-profit, corporate, academic, and grassroots sectors.

Leveraging CELF's new virtual modalities, CELF is going global in 2022! As part of our virtual Civic Science program, educators in Ghana will join educators across the US to pursue a new waste pathway, using CELF's Inquiry-to-Action framework to design and implement zero-waste strategies in schools and communities through cross-cultural collaboration.

We are piloting a "CELF Scholar" initiative for high school students to gain exposure to green career opportunities, by working with CELF, and engaging with CELF's community of partners and donors as part of a larger effort to cultivate more inclusive pathways to green careers.

CELF is focused on improving equitable access to EfS learning opportunities, and has seen a 9% YoY increase in the portion of Title I schools being served in 2022 to date. To better serve Houston's population of learners, CELF is growing our collection of online learning resources and activities to include Spanish-language materials.

Finally, we are thrilled to be in the midst of growing the membership of our CELF Leadership Circle - a special group of donors making multi-year commitments, aligned with their corporate ESG goals, to help CELF achieve our mission to ensure education for sustainability is an integral part of EVERY child's learning experience.

This next chapter is filled with hope and optimism, and immense gratitude for the support of our donors and program partners, the resilience of our staff, and the unwavering commitment of our community of teachers who are doing the critical work of motivating the next generation of engaged citizens and solution-makers.



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