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FRIENDS OF SANTA CRUZ STATE PARKS LAUNCHES KIDS2PARKS, A NEW FIELD TRIP PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Program aims to increase access to parks for elementary school students in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

MARCH 29, 2018—SANTA CRUZ, CA—Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) today announced the launch of Kids2Parks (K2P), a new innovative park-equity program to bring students from Title 1 schools to State Park field trips. The program, a partnership with California State Parks, increases the number of elementary school students from San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties who have visited a state park or beach by reducing barriers to access with funding for transportation to and from the parks.

The program offers field trips to 99 eligible Title 1 elementary schools in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Title 1 is a designation by the US Department of Education that primarily indicates a high percentage of students from low-income families. Teachers from schools included in the program are invited to apply at www.thatsmypark.org/k2p. The 2018/19 Kids2Parks application period will be April 2-May 8, 2018. Teachers will receive a response by May 18 from California State Parks about the status of their application.

“Overcoming barriers to access is a primary goal for us and we’re excited that the Kids2Parks program will help students make a connection with our local state parks and beaches,” Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks Executive Director Bonny Hawley said. “The lack of resources to simply travel to a state park keeps some school groups from enjoying, learning about and engaging with our unique natural environment. Thanks to our generous donors, Kids2Parks will truly make a difference for students by funding transportation to and from the parks. Friends members also finance the education and interpretive services provided by State Parks professionals.”

“State Parks is proud to partner with Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks to offer Title I schools more opportunities to participate in school field trips by providing funding for each trip,” said Elizabeth Hammack, Santa Cruz District State Park Interpreter III. “We are so excited to welcome schoolchildren into the parks and share our state’s precious natural and cultural resources.”

Following analysis by Friends and California State Parks, the cost of transportation was identified as the most-often noted barrier and the hardest to overcome. The Friends’ Board of Directors made a commitment to address this important equity issue and funded a pilot program that was launched in the fall of 2016 to provide transportation for school field trips.

Based on the success of the first year of the pilot, the Kids2Parks program funds transportation costs to the parks, which is approximately \$300-550 per trip. Donations to the program are gratefully accepted at www.thatsmypark.org/donate/support-a-project.

Applications are accepted online at www.thatsmypark.org/k2p once a year for transportation and funding is allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis. The application window opens at 10 a.m. Monday, April 2. State Parks staff will schedule field trips for the 2018/19 academic year based on availability. Schools not selected for Kids2Parks transportation-funded field trips are always welcome to schedule field trips to state parks and beaches by visiting www.thatsmypark.org/visit/field-trips.

About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is an entrepreneurial nonprofit sustaining the legacy of our state parks and beaches. Through an innovative partnership with California State Parks, and by leveraging local community support, Friends provides funding for educational programs, visitor services and capital projects. Friends is passionately dedicated to the preservation of our spectacular natural environment and rich cultural history. Friends also operates six ParkStores, offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. ParkStore locations include Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch and Online. Learn more at ThatsMyPark.org or via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

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