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REGISTRATION OPENS APRIL 1 FOR KIDS2PARKS FREE SCHOOL FIELD TRIP PROGRAM IN LOCAL STATE PARKS

In-person field trips return for students at select Title 1 elementary schools in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

MARCH 28, 2022—SANTA CRUZ, CA—Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) announced today that online registration for Kids2Parks, an innovative park-equity program to bring students from Title 1 schools to State Parks, will open Friday, April 1, at www.thatsmypark.org/k2p. Registration for Kids2Parks will run from April 1 to May 2 for field trips planned for the 2022-23 academic year.

Kids2Parks, a partnership between nonprofit Friends and California State Parks, offers free educational field trips in local state parks to eligible Title 1 elementary schools in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Title 1 is a designation by the U.S. Department of Education that primarily indicates a high percentage of students from low-income families. Teachers apply online for free and will be notified by early June if their application was selected.

The program increases the number of students who can visit a state park or beach by reducing barriers to access. Kids2Parks funds the field trip transportation costs, including bus rental, driver time and fuel, and also pays State Parks' staff time to support the field trips. Thousands of students have participated in field trips since the program's inception in 2016.

Kids2Parks shifted to a virtual model two years ago to accommodate safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Kids2Parks plans to offer in-person field trips for the 2022-23 school year. If COVID-19 safety restrictions prohibit in-person participation, State Parks' staff will work with teachers to schedule virtual class visits.

"We are excited to welcome kids and teachers back to in-person field trips in our local state parks and beaches," Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks Executive Director Bonny Hawley said. "We are dedicated to increasing access to state parks and beaches, which has long-term positive impacts for students, their families and the community."

The program currently includes Castle Rock State Park, Castro Adobe State Historic Park, Half Moon Bay State Beach, Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, Natural Bridges State Beach, The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, the Rancho Del Oso Unit of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, Seacliff State Beach and Wilder Ranch State Park. At this time schools are eligible for specific parks based on their school's geographic distance to the park.

"We are passionate about connecting students to state parks," California State Parks' Santa Cruz

District Interpretation and Education Program Manager Elizabeth Hammack said. "It's exciting to see the joy on the students' faces when they visit, and we hope these field trips inspire a lifelong appreciation of our natural world and California's unique history."

Kids2Parks is funded through grants and donations. Donations to the program are gratefully accepted at <https://bit.ly/donatek2p>.

About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) is a vital partner with California State Parks, creatively working to ensure our cherished local parks and beaches are thriving and available to all. Friends' innovative and collaborative community partnership provides support and investment for education, equity and inclusion, conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation and cultural events. Friends currently operates a robust online ParkStore offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. Friends also operates ParkStores at Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch. Learn more at www.ThatsMyPark.org or via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

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