February 3, 2022

Kerry Kirk Pflugh
President
Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation
PO Box 358
Brick, NJ 08723

Dear Kerry,

In 1887, John Ames Mitchell fundraised to send 266 children to his Life's Fresh Air Farm to foster social-emotional and physical well-being through nature, starting what would eventually become Trail Blazers, a youth services organization providing 2000+ youth with diverse, exciting, outdoor, play based programs.

Our programming approach in use today was developed by Columbia Educator L.B. Sharpe during his tenure as Life Camps (Trail Blazers') Director. L.B. Sharpe moved on to become one of the founding members of the NJ School of Conservation, located a stone's throw from Trail Blazers' Stokes Forest location.

Rooted in our shared history and our current-day shared passion for and belief in the necessity for nature-based, climate centered programs for young people, we are excited at the prospect of collaborating to combine Trail Blazers' child development expertise with NJSOC's deep ties to Environmental and Climate education.

Trail Blazers and Friends will be partners in bringing overnight summer camp and school year (overnight and day-long) programming to NJSOC. The programming will be directed towards the student populations Trail Blazers currently serves (ages 5 - 25), as well as additional similarly aged populations in New Jersey and surrounding states.

We plan to develop a one-of-a-kind, week-long Climate Summit camp program for youth ages 14-16, with a keen interest in environmental leadership and climate awareness. This will focus on the intersecting issues of diversity and equity and climate, and how this affects the lived experience of teenagers.

Additional programs for schools and families will be offered to wrap around the summer season (June and September) in order to maximize use of staff and facilities. These will include curriculum aligned opportunities for elementary and middle schools; SEL Adventure/Nature-based programs for public and private schools and colleges; Transition Retreats for students moving on to the next level of schooling (middle school to high school, etc.), beginning and end of school year, foster transitional programs, and LGBTQ retreats; and Climate Summits focusing on climate as a social and social justice issue for

elementary schools and families. Each of these programs could be offered as a single day, or two-night event.

As is customary with all Trail Blazers' offerings, programs are centered in DEI considerations, removing financial barriers where needed, and applying a social justice climate lens to program design. Students will be recruited through our current network of families and school, as well as through the FONJSOC network, including from underserved areas in New Jersey, like Newark, Paterson or Trenton.

Finally, Trail Blazers is offering operational support and expertise to the FONJSOC as it transitions into an operating entity. This will include bookkeeping and HR support, as well as facility operations. We have an administrative arm that onboards and processes over 300 employees and considers multiples of that every year. Our bookkeeping department can provide initial support services in the early stages of the program. Since our facility is nearby Trail Blazers is able to offer plant operations support, during both the planning and the execution phases. Our property manager is an expert at managing the type of facilities that require unique considerations, such as the NJSOC site. Trail Blazers' site is also located in Stokes Forest, so we have a network of vendors and contractors to leverage.

We are excited about joining forces with our neighbors at NJSOC and entering into a partnership that will ultimately enrich not just our own organizations, but the lives of young people in New Jersey and the surrounding area.

Very truly yours,

Riel Peerbooms, Executive Director

Trail Blazer Camps, Inc.

212-529-5113
347-852-2131
rpeerbooms@trailblazers.org