

SIERRA-FOOTHILL



SFC's 25th Anniversary Series: Youth In Conservation

This month's 25th Anniversary article was contributed by one of SFC's Youth Ambassadors, Lily Waldrop

"Over the years, I have developed a love for hiking. If it weren't for the valley and its beauty, I don't know if I would've had the same passion that pushed me to start a hiking club at the beginning of my freshman year at Clovis North High School. I wanted to take advantage of the valley's proximity to some wonderful trails and share them with my classmates. The vision I had for my club aligned with that of Sierra Foothill Conservancy. Our first hike with SFC was on Earth Day in 2017 where we climbed to the top of Striped Rock in Mariposa County. While on the trail, we passed by a variety of bright wildflowers - along with some poison oak that we attempted to avoid. My peers and I learned about the geological history of the area along with some of the invasive species that wanted to take it over. We had the opportunity to engage directly with our surroundings while still gaining an understanding of its ecosystem - something a classroom could not give us. In 2018, SFC asked me to be their first youth ambassador for their Nature Force program. They wanted a way to educate students about the importance of land conservation by including them in outdoor activities. I was eager to become a part of this upcoming opportunity. With my platform in the hiking club, I was able to recruit other students into participating in activities with SFC. One of our first activities with Nature Force was a planting event at Merced Falls. We spent the day setting up a hydration system to supply water to the newly planted flora. Not only did I enjoy the event, but I got the chance to meet other students from different high schools who were also interested in conservation. Nature Force was able to build an educational foundation of our foothills for so many students and also serves as a way to connect like-minded individuals from different areas of Central California. It can be scary to watch the news and realize the disastrous outcomes that can occur if we do not protect our environment. Sierra Foothill Conservancy is not only fundamental to continuing the protection of these lands, but it is the key to educating our future generations on the importance of environmental conservation. The docents who have guided the trails, the staff who have shared their knowledge of the area, and the supporters who have made this possible are passionate about the foothills - and the passion is infectious to those around them."



