

# PROJECT REPORT 2020-2023

PREPARED FOR PERRY COUNTY BOARD  
OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

PREPARED BY NORTIA CONSULTING



**LOL in Nature**



# Table of Contents

A Word from Kim	3
Director's Report	4
Program Implementation	6
FOCUS	7
FOCUS Memories	8
Nature-Based Statistics	9
GOALS	10
GOALS Stats	11
GOALS Memories	12
Why We Cook	13
Staff Trainings	15
Community Connections	16
Project Expansion	17

## A WORD FROM KIM

LOL in Nature embarked on its journey in the year of 2020 with Perry County Board of Developmental Disabilities (PCBDD). This project report encapsulates key milestones, core services, and initiatives from 2020 through 2023.

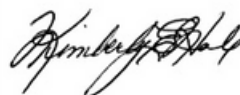
Initial phases of organization, planning, and nature-based awareness training utilized video conferencing in 2020. Site development in February of 2021 found our home in New Lexington at the Arethusa Spring Park. We continue to connect with the village of New Lexington administrative offices who have been so supportive of our programming.

Implementation phase of services began in the spring of 2021 with five families selected by PCBDD. Adult services began in July of 2021 which included individual services at the park then expanded to adult day programming sites in the county. In 2022, our services expanded exponentially, reaching groups of children at summer camp, respite days, and now our parent driven “Teen Social Group”

LOL in Nature provides more than “just doing things outside”. We utilize principles from the trauma informed care, so participants learn to feel safe, accept support, build trust; planning with a team and eventually develop mutual respect. Much of our programming is rooted in historic events that include a range of culturally diverse experiences. Our recent “Hobo Holidays” took participants back to the 1890’s to revisit the history of building American railways, the need to travel to find work and find support within a community to share meals as you build your future.

Participants gain knowledge through year-round nature activities by exploring the seasonal weather elements of snow, ice, rain, and wind. Preparing to be out in all types of weather promotes independence in health, safety, and self-care. Participants have been infused with the philosophy, “There is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate dress”.

LOL in Nature would like to thank the Perry County Board of DD for allowing individuals they serve to engage in nature to explore and grow, just as we did when we were growing up in a beautiful rural community. We hope to explore other partners in the northern part of the county to reduce the travel and utilize resources in their local community. As we move forward, our dedication remains resolute in fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment for individuals and families of Perry County to empower them to thrive and succeed to their fullest potential.



**KIM HALE**

OWNER





## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

When LOL In Nature joined forces with the Perry County Board of Developmental Disabilities, we knew that it was imperative to stay true to the culture and values of the local community.

Our goal has always been to bring our dedication of fostering an inclusive and impactful nature-based program and integrate that with the already existing strength and resilience that Perry County is known for.

After an extensive trek through the many wonderful places that could effectively house services, we identified Arethusa Springs Park for our first development site.

The rolling fields so delicately shelter the natural spring creek that snakes through in multiple directions and a dense wooded forest. This setting provides a safe and imaginative area for each participant to draw on their natural gifts to learn, play and explore new skills under LOL staff guidance.

With site identification and basic infrastructure secured, we worked closely with the PCBDD Team to hone the program structure to best support the most pertinent needs of those served by the board. We developed an intake and referral process with packets available on our website for parents or caregivers to fill out for participants.

We reached out to the families and coordinated HIPPA and FERPA information, consent, and release of information. We then scheduled services with a target of five families and soon saw the program blossom as brightly as the spring flowers in our site area.

Throughout all of these Planning Stages, we provided more in-depth staff training (proudly created and constructed by the participants themselves), as well as an ongoing assessment.

Jenna Ward and the Behavioral Support Team has been an integral part of the service delivery process. Through monthly meetings, the team reviews and strategically plans for the continued success of each participant.

Further, we offered many community collaborations pro bono and marketing opportunities for PCBDD and beyond. We knew each step was a building block to the success of Implementation and were determined to see it flourish past our involvement.

With each season that has passed, we have witnessed the powerful transformations happening between planning and implementation. We are humbled to have front row seats to the incredible growth of each person that has experienced nature-based enrichment and done so in the company of amazing staff so passionately dedicated to those they serve.

*Janessa L. Bartlett*

**JANESSA BARTLETT**  
DIRECTOR OF NATURE BASED AND  
EQUINE ASSISTED SERVICES



CANVA STORIES Z850

CANVA STORIES Z850

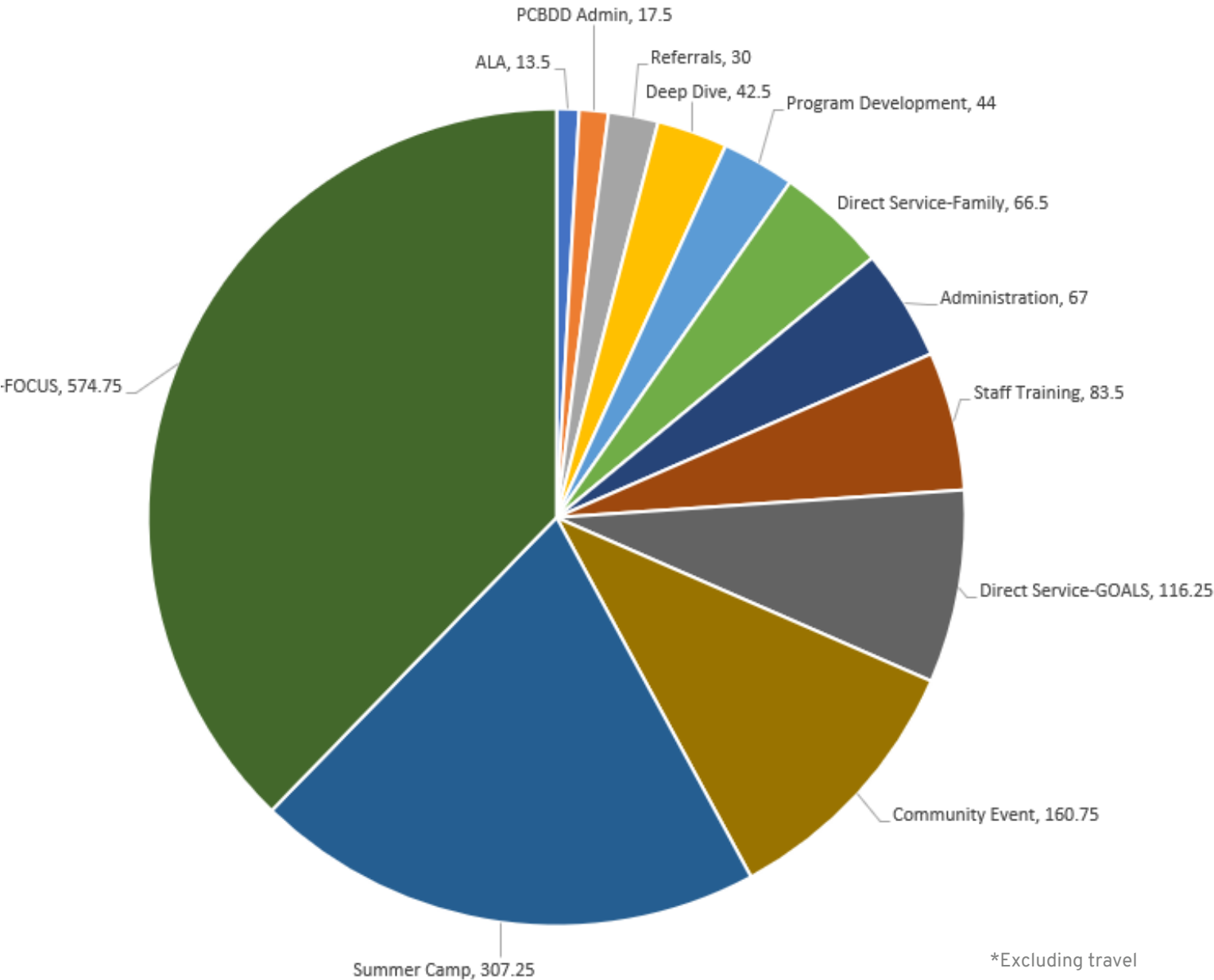
CANVA STORIES Z850

18

# PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

In the chart below you can see that our main focus was FOCUS, providing over 574 hours of direct service this project year to consumers. **Over 75% of our time was in direct contact services for individuals and families.\***

32 individuals have been referred to date, 21 have participated in nature services, and 11 participants are currently receiving weekly services. We anticipate increasing the number of sessions when school is out.



# FOCUS

## FAMILY ORIENTED CONSUMER UNIQUE SERVICE

This nature-based programming is driven by the individual unique needs of the consumer as identified by their family or in the case of adults, themselves. FOCUS underscores our dedication to providing individualized services coordinated with the participants, families, and SSA (Service and Support Administrators). FOCUS is highly requested program with a waiting list during the school year due to time restriction and travel.

Pictured below, “Miss Kim” supports a participant on the slackline. Slacklining has become an integral part of LOL in Nature’s program. The benefits have included self-regulation, core strengthening and accepting support. Participants may use the slackline upon arrival or on and off through sessions. The slackline is the cornerstone of our in nature-based programming.

Our trauma-based model also includes visual supports, communication displays, and other forms of assistive technology for participant accommodations. Visual symbols are essential to support the success of many of our participants.

LOL in Nature’s vast inventory of communication software applications include SymbolStix PRIME™ from n2y, which is frequently used for non-readers’ symbol directions, visual schedules, and prefabricated recipes.

The Big Foot Scavenger hunt was adapted with the “symbolize feature” in Boardmaker®.

LAMP Words for Life® communication displays are integrated into sessions along with other strategies for communication.



# FOCUS Memories



Exploring the Creek



Sledding on a Sunny Day



Nature Immersion



Playing Pulley Bucket



Posing for Portrait



Encountering Gnome Island



Hanging out on Pallet Boat



Excavating Nature



Floating Boats



Discovering a Gnome Habitat



Building a Dakota Fire Hole



Memory Tree



# 22%

On average studies cited in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* have indicated that nature-based interventions positively impact social interaction and communication skills in individuals with various neurodiverse conditions.

# 25%

*Frontiers in Psychology* found exposure to nature resulted in a 25% increase in positive emotions among individuals with neurodiversity, contributing to improved emotional well-being.

# GOALS

## GROUP ORIENTED ARRAY OF LEARNING SERVICES

GOALS nature-based programming is driven by a theme experience for the group. This includes academic skills for learners or life skills for older individual. We also target vocational skills, relationships, team building, and activities of daily living.

Group sizes range from a few individuals to large groups with over a hundred individuals with multiple activities. As we get to know many GOALS participants, individual recommendations are generated by our staff and shared with families and PCBDD staff.

GOALS are targeted by a domain area and age area versus the individual. Participants already receiving FOCUS programming integrated into these groups.

Themes over the past three years include: Bulb Planting; Fort Building, Big Foot Scavenger Hunt; Earth Work; Pulley Buckets; Pirate Week; Beach Week; Space Week and more.

Adult Day Programs participants include:

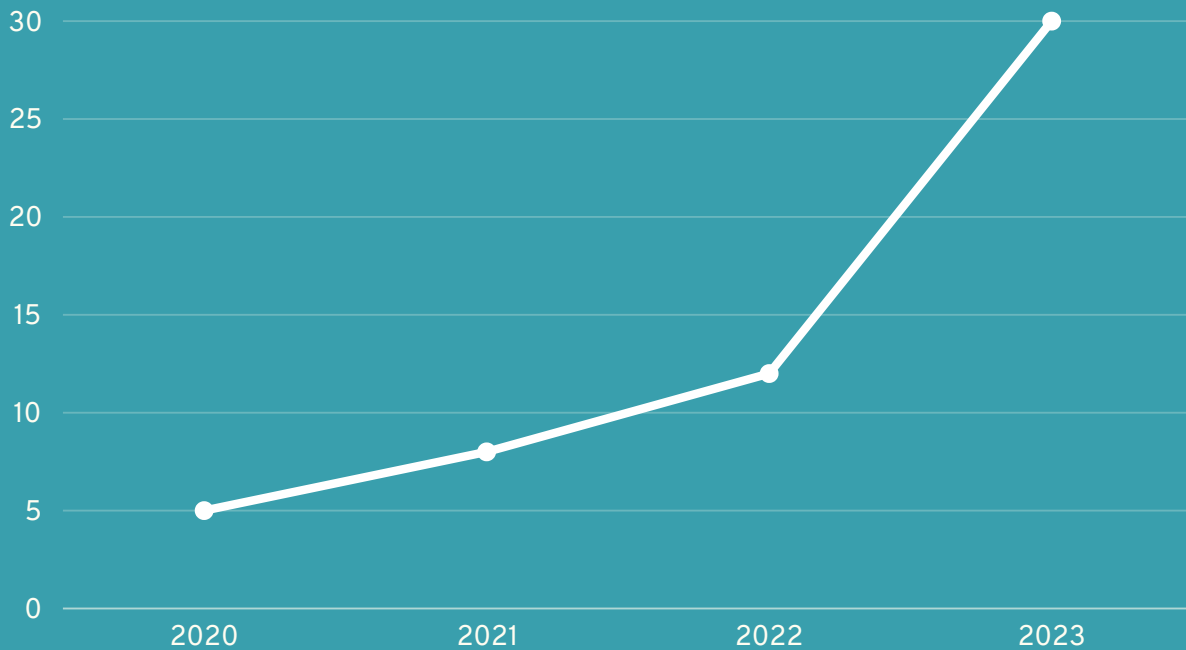
- On The Farm
- New Day
- Let's Center

Youth and Teen Programs participants include:

- Summer Camp
- Social Group
- Respite Day

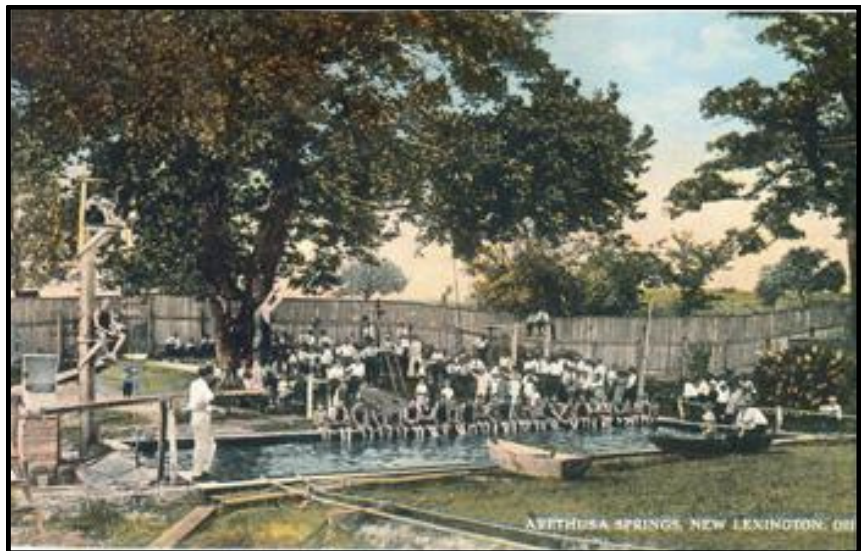
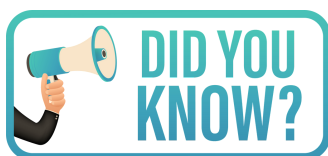
All programs are curated to foster growth, learning, and holistic development in a natural setting.





## GOALS STATS

- In 2020 we identified families that would benefit from nature-based programming
- Nature-based programming on site at Athelusa Park commenced in 2021 with eight individuals from On The Farm, Let's Program, and New Day
- In 2023 that grew to over thirty participants in Summer Camp along with the aforementioned
- This exponential growth is only the beginning and highlights the market potential for direct service with GOALS



Arethusa Springs Park's creek used to be known as the Fountain of Youth? According to *Perry County Tribune*, the photo shows the Park in its heyday when people came from all over to drink the water or bathe in its "therapeutic" waters.

# GOALS *Memories*



Surf's Up



Paradise Buddies



Safely Cutting Bamboo



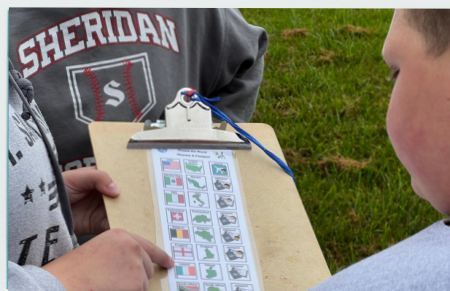
Falconry with Mick Brown



Bruce the Shark



Adapted Pumpkin Bowling



Visual Symbol Schedule



Miss Kim Making Lemonade



Grinchy Respite



Thank You David Couch for the Hay



Hobo Holiday



Off to Earth Work

# WHY WE COOK

## NUTRITION

Our clinical backgrounds bring two very important therapeutic concepts to LOL in Nature Cooking. Miss Kim is certified in a feeding technique called SOS® Approach to Feeding and has practiced feeding therapy for over 40 years. This approach has a trauma-informed care component at its foundation. It also recognizes that visual components of food are more powerful than taste. The goal is to introduce participants to different foods for a positive experience. This can result in the addition of more foods to their diet.

Nature provides a perfect venue to introduce foods. Participants experience the unique smells of teas that we bring. The highly visual artwork on the boxes of Tension Tamer (fire breathing dragon) and Bengal Spice (tiger) peaked their curiosity to begin the smell journey.

As we experience crisp cold days, smells of the foods are enhanced outdoors, with less competing smells. The warm smell of spices encourage participants to smell and touch foods that were otherwise offensive to them.

Cooking outdoors has evolved into almost a monthly theme activity and is quite enjoyed by participants. We exposed them to unique foods for new sensory experiences. This transformed into activities such as the Gnome and Fairy Feast and Cuban Pork “Plummer” Sandwiches.

Cooking was fully embraced in Summer Camp with the availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Participants enjoy picking stevia leaves to eat with strawberries, as well as making their own lemonade. When compared to premixed bottled lemonade, participants preferred their own homemade version.

This led to our investment in more cooking equipment, specifically things such as TWINNY CHEF’s knife with a rounded tip and a sheath used to stabilize the food. The mandolin slicer was the most sought after for participants to use. After careful observation, participants were enthralled with how the food changed as it fell from the slicer into the food bin.



# WHY WE COOK

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

The grinding of whole cumin seeds provides a wonderful smell as well as targets strength, grasping, and eye hand coordination in fine motor skills. All food preparation, cooking, and consumption is closely monitored for safety. Parents are consulted prior to activities, and in our enrollment packets regarding food allergies and other concerns.

Miss Janessa utilizes warm drinks to make connections to increase communication. Participants are not required to drink something that they prepare, but to hold it.

Research reveals that holding a warm drink increases an individual's chance to communicate with others and are more agreeable. From a neurological standpoint, the hand has a trigger point called the palmomental reflex. Pressure as well as warmth in the middle of the palm releases endorphins that calm and connect people.

Dopamine is needed to calm, soothe, and connect with others. It is released during eating and drinking. In general, FOOD = LOVE.

Positive interactions with any sensory component of food builds trust, self-esteem, and connections. We invest in targeted foods that lead to meaningful collaborative experiences.

In our view, the cost of fresh food is an investment to support participants in so many domains. Participants learn to stay focused, plan, think before acting, resist unsafe choices, problem solving and reasoning. Cooking allows for success and “failure” which increase increases resilience and overall growth.

Cooking with LOL is about the process of cooking with fresh foods to build better nutrition, social engagement, and executive function skills that lead to employment.



# STAFF TRAININGS

## NATURE-BASED



LOL in Nature provided nature-based experiential training to PCBDD and Summer Camp staff. PCBDD staff were presented with a competition between each department found in nature-based enrichment programming. FOCUS participants assisted in the development of staff training experience during their weekly programming. FOCUS participants designed each staff challenge, assisted in the fabrication of the “puzzle bridge,” and other physical elements they experience in nature.”

PCBDD Staff braved the chilly weather to experience the benefits of failure, collaboration and creative problem solving that the individuals they serve experience from in nature-based programming. In the end, it was shown that everyone is a winner when we work together and have fun!



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

## FALCONRY & EARTH DAY

In 2021, LOL In Nature was inspired to bring the unique experience of Falconry to program participants and seized the opportunity to offer it as one of the first fully community-integrated events.

LOL reached out to a multitude of schools, recovery supports, mental health resources, and many more to share the wisdom of Mick Brown and his majestic raptors.

Seniors from Fairview Assisted Living as well as local hunters with their children traveled to the fairgrounds for the Falconry Experience.

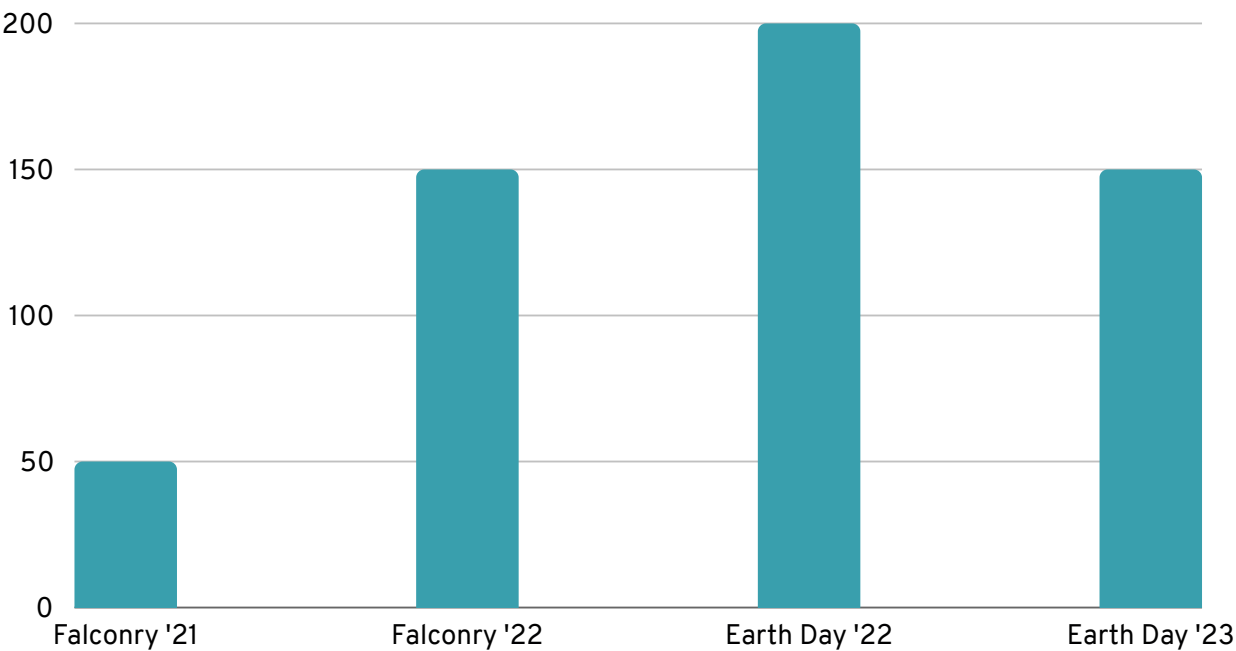
When repeated in 2022, attendance grew three-fold even with the cold wet weather. Regional partners came together in this event to promote nature as well as their agencies' mission. On The Farm Adult Day Program fabricated the fodder shock and assisted in the set up and then attended the event. Coordination from Pioneering Possibilities® provided adults to staff the information booth at the fairgrounds.

The foundational investment in 2022 by the PCBDD will allow this event to be replicated at half the cost as the activities as school and agency contacts and registration forms have been created.





LOL in Nature participation in Earth Day exposed local school age participants to “Hapazome” or flower pounding. Many of our FOCUS and GOALS participants were able to lead their class in this familiar activity.



The Falconry Experience was the #1 requested event in 2023 by multiple agencies in Perry County. Earth Day moved to a smaller site in the second year, it was again a highly integrated activity.

# PROJECT EXPANSION

## PARTNER EXPLORATION

LOL in Nature in coordination with [PCBDD](#) expanded partner agencies that meet the mission of both PCBDD and LOL in Nature. Here are some highlights to date.

[Perry County Recycling](#) invited LOL for two years to participate in their Earth Day Event. LOL in Nature participated in this community events pro bono with no charge to PCBDD.

The [Perry County District Library](#) provided a booth and activities to fit our nature-based themes. They are a perfect local group to support nature activities.

Madison Donahue, Director of [Appalachian Understories](#) has been instrumental in increasing accessibility and inclusivity to her programming supported by [Rural Action](#). Madison visited an adult day program to get to know the needs of individuals with developmental challenges, then adapted some local tours for their participation.

[Perry County Veteran Service Commission](#) requested LOL in Nature bring their Falconry Experience to the annual Veterans Extravaganza.

[R&D Hilltop Lumber](#) donated slab wood to finish the shelter in the park. They also hosted a visit for a participant at their shop

[White's Mill](#) in Athens is a local resource for our equipment and nature resource materials.

Mick Brown, President of the [Ohio Falconry Association](#) is available in any weather to connect all citizens to his beloved raptors. Mick has been available for small and large group gatherings. He is our “treasure”.

[Fetch Remedy](#) provided therapy dogs at Veterans Extravaganza and Falconry. Dogs offered a calming presence to help with stress reduction and engagement.



# PROJECT EXPANSION PARTNER EXPLORATION

Ugata drummer Lawrence Greene connected with Falconry attendees with group drumming activities.

Rural Action is a prime collaborative partner in LOL activities. Their environmental educators obtained a Department of Natural Resource Raptor Kit for 2022 Falconry Event. Collaboration with Rural Action continues to grow.

Perry County Neighborhood Coalition contacted LOL in Nature for site visit of the nature-based enrichment services provided by the PCBDD. Through this connection LOL in Nature made a site visit to a preserve entrusted to the Perry Soil and Water Conservation District. This site has unlimited potential to host a nature enrichment event.

Snyder-Flautt Hardware has been there for us since the beginning with donations of carpenter aprons that we use for gathering natures gifts as needed. We certainly appreciate their donations and discounts for PCBDD programming over the past three years.

Dave's Feed and Seed provided the straw for the Falconry Event as well as located needed item for our nature-based programming.

Special thank you to the Village of New Lexington's Administrator, Eric Emmert, who gave our program a home at Arethusa Springs Park.

Looking ahead in 2024, we hope to add Somerset Builders Club and Fern Hollow Farm to our list of partners. Expansion to more group activities is also a goal.

We greatly appreciate everyone's dedication and support!





# 3 YEARS IN

As we enter the final phase, Transition, we take time to look back at what we've accomplished. Hundreds of lives have been touched with the ripple effect that began with five families.

# 500+ PEOPLE

Over 500 people combined attended seven special events - Falconry, Earth Day, Veteran's Extravaganza, Summer Camp, Grinchy Holiday Respite, and Hobo Holiday from the past three years.



**LOL in Nature**  
(740) 591-9041  
[lolinnature.com](http://lolinnature.com)

# LEARN MORE



PERRY COUNTY BOARD OF  
**DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES**  
(740) 342-3542  
[pcbdd.org](http://pcbdd.org)