I made a new friend named Shay a few weeks ago at River Camp.

It was Wednesday during the morning snack break. I noticed Shay and another camper chatting about the morning’s activities. I joined them and asked how they liked camp so far.

While telling me about their week, a bee buzzed right in front of Shay’s face. She screamed in the same way many children do when they see a bee.

“That’s why I don’t really like being outside,” she exclaimed.

The River Parkway Trust works with children every day whose outdoor experience is limited to the time between their door and the car. Kids who say they’d rather be inside.

What will happen if these children don’t have a place to build a connection to the outdoors?

That’s what makes the effort to create and protect the Parkway so important. It’s what makes programs like River Camp critical. Places and programs that connect children to the outdoors open up the world for discovery.

You make the San Joaquin River Parkway happen through your generosity to the River Parkway Trust. And that’s why I’m writing to you today – to ask you to make a donation right now.

Because supporting something that helps kids learn to love being outside is worth it.

And that’s exactly what I witnessed at River Camp with Shay. Actually, I need to stop and tell you that Shay is not her real name. But her story is real. And you helped make it happen.
I asked her to tell me about her favorite activities at camp. She described how much she loved arts and crafts time. Shay was especially proud of the turtle she had crafted out of clay.

I kept waiting for her to say swimming. But she didn’t. So I asked her about how she liked swimming in the river.

“I love to swim in the pool,” she explained. “But I was nervous about swimming in the river. The river is new to me.”

She told me that this was her first time at River Camp. It took a couple of days, but she built up the courage to venture out from the river bank to the center of the swim zone. Her friend, a veteran River Camper, by her side the entire time.

It made my heart sing. Through her courage to explore a new part of the world, Shay was building a connection to the outdoors.

Your gift of $100, $250 or more – sent right away – will help protect open space throughout the Parkway where kids like Shay can learn to love the outdoors.

It is an amazing thing to witness a child making a deep connection to an element of the natural world. I hope you’ve enjoyed such an experience with a child in your life.

Our conversation ended when the whistle blew to signal that snack time was over.

We made our way out towards the river to an area at Scout Island known as Rock World. Large cobble stones blanket the ground. A variety of trees including sycamores and cottonwoods provide shade and respite from the heat. During high water years Rock World is completely submerged. Campers are fascinated by searching for high water marks on the trees.

The group gathered together for instructions. Campers were told to use their imaginations and work together to construct a shelter using sticks, rocks, and leaves found in the area.

Shay’s group set out. Their shelter took form as they leaned sticks and fallen branches against the trunk of a eucalyptus. They discussed what types of things might be helpful to put inside and finally agreed on a fire ring. A small circle of rocks was formed with small sticks to simulate a fire.
To close out the activity, each group of campers toured the shelters created by their peers. They were amazed at how unique each of their creations was.

As we walked back to our trees for lunch, Shay came up to me.

“I am really proud of our shelter,” she said. “Rock World is so much fun!”

I was elated.

In a matter of hours, Shay had gone from wishing she were inside to enjoying being outside. She had experienced the benefits of team work, risk taking, and finding her place in the community of River Camp.

And I think that is what creating and protecting the San Joaquin River Parkway is all about.

People like you and me, working together and taking risks to establish something we can all be proud of. The Parkway effort relies on a community of people who are committed to leaving a legacy of land conservation for future generations of children like Shay.

I cannot stress enough how critical it is to keep the momentum going. Today, I am asking you to make a donation. Your gift of $100, $250, or more will make a difference. You can be part of the legacy we leave to the future.

The River Parkway Trust is an organization dedicated to protecting the river and the natural resources it supports. And to making protected places along the river available for discovery and exploration.

The Parkway vision includes trails, recreation facilities, ecological reserves, and open space along 22 miles of the San Joaquin River. The vision was conceived by people just like you 30 years ago. And over the last three decades, you and others like you, have helped protect thousands of acres of land forever.

Places where children like Shay can meet and come to know the wonders of the San Joaquin River.
Please make a gift to the River Parkway Trust. Please write a check or donate online today.

The future of the San Joaquin River Parkway depends on the decisions and actions we make right now. Children like Shay and her friends are relying on you and me to protect the Parkway for their future.

They will be ready to lead the way when it’s their turn to be stewards of the San Joaquin. But what will we leave them?

Please be part of that answer; please be part of that tomorrow.

You can help by making a gift to the River Parkway Trust right now. Please consider a gift of $100, or $250. Please be as generous as you can.

Your gift today will support protecting places where more children – like Shay – can first meet and then come to know the river.

If you have any questions about the River Parkway Trust or any of our projects or programs, please contact me at 559-248-8480 ext. 105.

Thank you,

Sharon Weaver
Executive Director

P.S. Please send your contribution right away in the enclosed envelope. Or you can donate securely online at www.riverparkway.org. Future generations are counting on you now.