

SHERWOOD CARES FOUNDATION'S FUNDING

Transforms the lives of underserved children in The Conejo Valley's most marginalized micro-communities.

BY CHIEF TIM HAGEL FOUNDER/DIRECTOR

What is the name of your nonprofit and what do you all do? Safe Passage Youth Foundation is a 100% volunteer-led nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of underserved children in The Conejo Valley's most marginalized micro-communities.

We serve over 200 children daily and 600 monthly, providing free education, STEM programs, mentorship, child drug intervention, youth vocational training, health clinics, and food distributions to break the cycle of poverty and prevent gang involvement.

Our mission is to shift the narrative from “at-risk” to “at-promise,” empowering kids to become tomorrow’s community leaders. Thanks to Sherwood Cares’ unwavering support, we bring these vital services directly to where families live, ensuring no child is left behind.

How did you get involved with Sherwood Cares? As the founding director, I connected with Sherwood Cares through their commitment to uplifting vulnerable communities near Sherwood. Their mission to harness collective volunteer power and build communities aligned perfectly with our volunteer-led model.

Over the years, their financial support and shared vision have deepened our partnership, enabling us to expand programs like our Fresh Outdoor Market and STEM labs, Drug and Gang Intervention directly impacting hundreds of families. It's a relationship built on trust and a mutual passion for empowering youth.

How has the funding from Sherwood Cares directly impacted your nonprofit? Sherwood Cares’ multi-year financial support has been transformative, allowing us our growth from 14 kids in 2014 to serve over 600 children monthly with free programs. Their funding has directly supported our Fresh Outdoor Market, distributing 150,000 pounds of free food annually to 180 families, and our STEM programs, providing Coding classes and 3D printing for kids in poverty. This support has also enabled us to expand free WiFi access and medical clinics, removing barriers to education and health. Without Sherwood Cares, our volunteer-led team couldn't achieve this scale of impact.

What problem is your nonprofit trying to solve? We address educational inequity, poverty, drugs and gang influence in Conejo Valley, low-income neighborhoods. Gangs and drug dealers target children as young as elementary school, exploiting literacy gaps and economic hardship.



Our volunteer-led programs—daily STEM classes, nutrition, medical clinics, literacy support, and police mentorship—equip kids with skills and confidence to resist gang recruitment. Sherwood Cares’ funding has been critical in sustaining these efforts, reducing Conejo Valley gang activity by 47% and crime by 49% in our communities.

What are some unique facts about your nonprofit? Safe Passage Youth Foundation is packed with inspiring stories! Founded in 2014 by Tim Hagel, a Thousand Oaks Police Chief, we're 100% volunteer-led, with over 106 passionate volunteers—from teachers to high school students—serving 600 kids monthly. We provide the only youth employment program in Eastern Ventura County where teens get paid for real world jobs and training.

What's your most successful program and why? Our daily STEM and after school literacy program is our most successful, serving over 200 kids with weekly free classes in science, math, and reading. It's effective because our volunteer teachers, parents, and high school students—deliver hands-on learning like CAD design and field science trips, fostering skills and confidence.



Sherwood Cares’ funding ensures we can provide materials and technology, like free WiFi and laptops, making education accessible. This program's success is evident in our 80% improvement rate in K-5 students’ grades.

Give me the best example of the way you've seen your organization's work make a difference. One of our students, a 12-year-old named we will call Javier, lived in local a gang-heavy neighborhood and struggled academically. He witnessed his first Drive By Shooting at 5 years old. Through our volunteer-led after school mentorship, influence by local police officer volunteers and STEM programs, funded by Sherwood Cares, he discovered a passion for education. He was the first in his family to go to college, graduate and now leads and mentors younger kids.

What are areas of opportunity for your organization? As a volunteer-led nonprofit, we see opportunities to expand our reach by partnering with more local businesses and colleges for mentorship and internship programs. Our operational overhead is the lowest in Ventura County and with Sherwood Cares’ support, we can scale our mobile free medical clinics to serve more families, addressing health disparities that hinder education. These expansions would amplify our impact in Thousand Oaks’ micro-communities.

What could you do better? We could enhance our volunteer training to ensure consistency across our programs. While our 106+ volunteers are dedicated, a structured onboarding program would equip them to better support our diverse youth. Sherwood Cares’ funding could help us develop this training, ensuring every volunteer maximizes their impact in our literacy and mentorship initiatives.

Is there anything you wish more people knew about your organization or the issues you are trying to solve? I wish more people understood that we have gangs in Ventura County, right under the fabric of society and how early gang recruitment starts and how education can prevent it. Gangs target kids by third grade in elementary school, but our volunteer-led daily

programs offer alternatives through police mentorship and wrap around STEM. We've reduced gang influence by 47%, but broader awareness could bring more partners to our cause.

Where does most of your funding come from? Most of our funding comes from generous partners like Sherwood Cares, alongside individual family donors and local grants. Sherwood Cares’ multi-year support has been a cornerstone, funding 23% of our Fresh Outdoor Market and STEM programs. As a volunteer-led nonprofit, every dollar goes directly to programs, we have no paid leadership to ensure maximum impact.

What are your most urgent needs? With over 600 kids served monthly, we need more support for our PUMA anti-gang initiatives (16 year old boys attracted to gangs) and resources to maintain our food distributions and medical clinics.

What would make the biggest difference in helping your organization get better at what it does? By analyzing program outcomes, we can refine our STEM, Medical and Food Support, Mentorships and Drug Prevention efforts to better serve kids and ensuring our volunteer-led team maximizes impact.

If I wanted to get to know the organization better, what are the best ways to learn more? Visit safepassageyouth.org to explore our programs and 2024 Community Action Report. Follow us on X and Instagram (@safepassageyouth) for real-time updates on our kids’ achievements. Better yet, join us at our Fresh Outdoor Market or STEM events to see our volunteers and Sherwood Cares’ impact firsthand.

How do you keep supporters up to date about your work? We keep supporters like Sherwood Cares informed through newsletters, our annual Community Action Report, and regular X and Instagram posts showcasing student success and program updates. We also host community events, like our University Day, where residents can see their impact. Our volunteers ensure every update reflects the difference Sherwood Cares makes.

To learn more go to safepassageyouth.org/

Sherwood Cares