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4
 Pearl Jam Comes to Ravenwood's Aid
 Rock band awards local nonprofit \$5,000 grant
 By [Dillon Tabish](#), 03-20-12

The Ravenwood Outdoor Learning Center, a nonprofit organization in the Flathead Valley with almost 400 kids a year taking part in its nature programs, recently received welcome news from the band Pearl Jam.

Through its philanthropic association, called the Vitalogy Foundation, the Seattle-based rock group awarded Ravenwood a \$5,000 grant in February.

Brett Holmquist, Ravenwood's executive director and co-founder, has known Pearl Jam bassist Jeff Ament ever since the two were growing up in Big Sandy.

"He still often talks about the influence of growing up in open spaces," Holmquist said of Ament. "Definitely he's been real interested in Ravenwood all along. His note to me was, 'Hey I've been wanting to do this for a long time, go for it.'"

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The Vitalogy Foundation, started in 2004, aids the efforts of nonprofit organizations working for community health, the environment, arts and education and social change. On the majority of Pearl Jam tours, \$2 from every ticket goes into the group's foundation.

Holmquist said the grant money would help the organization meet the rising demand for the learning center's summer program. Ravenwood aims to connect people with nature through outdoor activities and workshops. The Montana Environmental Education Association named it the "Business of the Year" in 2009.

The organization had to pull back the reins during recent years even though there was plenty of interest, Holmquist said.

"This will be huge," he said of the grant. "All through the recession the demand for growth has been there, but we have to match every fee with some kind of fundraising support."

Holmquist predicts this summer's camps could be doubled in size behind the help of the grant. Another added boost came recently when Ravenwood signed a deal with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls to use roughly 200 acres of forested land for summer day camps, Holmquist said.

"Everything is going really, really well," he said. "There's lots of excitement right now."

The organization is holding its major annual fundraiser on April 14 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Kalispell.

For more information about Ravenwood, visit www.RavenwoodOLC.org

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