



News Release

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California State Parks Offers Distance Learning Program for Shriners Hospital Patients

SACRAMENTO, CA.—The California State Parks award-winning [“Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students” \(PORTS\) program](#) will be offering a free videoconferencing presentation to patients and families on Tuesday, November 18 from 10:30 to 11 a.m. The online education program will virtually transport children attending the Shriners Hospital School to Año Nuevo State Reserve.

Located inside the Sacramento Shriners Hospital, the on-site school serves children who are hospitalized or in need of intensive, specialized therapeutic treatment. It provides bilingual, special education for students in grades K-12 and is a joint project of Shriners Hospitals for Children – Northern California and the Sacramento City Unified School District.

“This is a spectacular opportunity for our students,” says Margaret Kugler, coordinator of the hospital school program. “Thanks to the California State Parks Department, our patients have traveled online to see ocean tide pools and into the redwood forests to study these magnificent trees and the ecosystem around them. This is such a special opportunity because children who are undergoing medical treatment often do not have the time to travel to these distant places. Now, thanks to PORTS, Shriners patients can experience the wonders of nature.”

The PORTS program uses videoconferencing technology to connect students to park staff hundreds of miles away, providing real-time interactive audio and visual communication to bring State Parks to students across California.

“PORTS is a wonderful State Park program that is helping us connect with students across California using innovative technology. Technology affords State Parks the opportunity to enhance learning and bring the diversity and beauty of State Parks into any classroom.” said Lisa Mangat, Acting Director, California State Parks. “Having this opportunity to collaborate with Shriners Hospital is tremendous, and we really thank them for their support, and for allowing us to give these kids and their families the opportunity to journey through our parks. This is such a unique opportunity to bring our State Park resources to students that need it the most.”

For the November 18th program, Shriner students and families will learn about the elephant seals of the Año Nuevo State Reserve. The presentation takes place from a chroma-key studio at Seacliff State Beach, but uses live footage from Año Nuevo Island along with digital media captured from the Reserve. The unit of study addresses life science academic content standards.

“Each program is delivered to one classroom at a time to maximize the opportunity for students to engage with park staff, so that they can learn, ask questions, and really feel like they are out there in the parks with us,” said Brad Krey, PORTS Program Manager. “The program with Shriners Hospital will certainly assist these students in learning about marine mammals but it will also provide them with an enriching experience that takes them outside the walls of their classroom.”

PORTS is a free distance learning program that uses the power of interactive videoconferencing to help K-12 schools teach Common Core State Standards in the context of California State Parks. PORTS Programs include:

- Fully developed units of study to prepare and assess learning;
- Live, interactive videoconference presentations on science, history, language arts and other academic topics.

For the past ten years, PORTS has partnered with the education community across California to bring unique resources protected by California State Parks directly into K-12 classrooms, especially those in diverse, low-income communities. Currently, PORTS actively engages 40,000 students in over 100 school districts every year, providing them with quality, highly-interactive educational programs. Distance learning programs are delivered from a varied sampling of state parks environments across California, covering a diversity of natural and cultural history topics.

This is the third program the PORTS program has had with Shriners Hospital this school year. PORTS has already interacted with students at Shriners Hospital from the tide pools at Crystal Cove State Park in Orange County and from the redwood forest in Humboldt.

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California State Parks Mission

To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.

Shriners Hospitals for Children – Northern California

Shriners Hospitals for Children is devoted to transforming the lives of children through excellence in treatment, teaching and research. Located at 2425 Stockton Boulevard in Sacramento, Shriners Hospitals for Children – Northern California provides care to children with orthopaedic conditions, spinal cord injuries, burns, cleft lip, scars from any cause and other complex surgical needs. There are no barriers to care as admission is based on age and diagnosis. Care is provided regardless of the family's ability to pay. For further information call (916) 453-2000 or go online to www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org.