

Once Upon a Watershed

“Once Upon a Watershed,” a project spearheaded by Sara Benjamin, received two major boosts recently, with grants from Rotary Club of Ojai and the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project.

This project targets 4th, 5th and 6th graders for a watershed education and restoration program. Students will learn about restoration and stewardship of local wetland and riparian habitat then participate in a variety of hands-on restoration activities such as native planting, invasive plant removal and creek, estuary and beach cleanups within the Ventura River watershed, primarily on Land Conservancy preserves.



Wherever you find Sara, there will be children nearby, eager to learn

Prior to heading into the field to try their hands at ecological management, the students will participate in an in-school program to tell the story of the watershed and set the stage for their field experience. There also will be a reflective, in-class follow-up activity after the field experience.

This program is modeled after Oak Grove School’s highly successful “Once Upon a Wetland” project, where Sara has taught hundreds of Ojai students about wetlands and ecology, while providing valuable restoration assistance to the Conservancy on the Ojai Meadows preserve.



After nearly a year of sending forth our wish to have an updated film or other media piece created for promotion of our mission to the community, one day in April, as if dropped from above, we received a message via our website from a lovely couple new to Ojai who said that they would be happy to help. Meet Leslie Graham and Vivek Kaliraman.

The perfect team for our project, Leslie works primarily with nonprofits consulting in the areas of marketing and development. She especially enjoys coaching organizations on how to make their case with a good presentation. Vivek, though his “day job” is working for Impact Communications, is an accomplished storyteller through digital media. He enjoys the challenge of weaving people’s individual stories together into a cohesive story of the landscape of our lives using digital technology.

During the OVLC’s early years many members will remember the great promotional film made by Jim Jackson, which

What’s Your Story?



Leslie Graham & Vivek Kaliraman

has served us well for years and provided Vivek and Leslie with inspiration for the story to be told a decade later.

“We are excited to learn about OVLC’s history and get to know the people here who have been responsible for safeguarding the Ojai Valley’s open spaces” said Leslie. Beginning in late August we will be introducing Leslie and Vivek to some of the OVLC family of friends for interviews to hear their stories. If you have a story that you would like to tell about how and why you became involved in supporting the work of the OVLC, we would love to hear from you. Maybe it’s about your connection to the land as a child, maybe it’s about leaving a legacy for your grandchildren. Maybe it’s just a feeling you get when you realize how special Ojai is. Whatever your story, it’s part of our story so we hope you’ll share it. If you would like to tell it, whether on camera, on paper, or in an email, we would love to hear it. Please give us a call at 805 649-6852 or email ovlc@ovlc.org.