

Variety's Peaceable Kingdom Retreat

TEEA 2015 Winner: Education



Central Texas retreat empowers children through outdoor learning.

Nestled on the outskirts of Killeen on 120 acres bordering the Lampasas River, Variety's Peaceable Kingdom Retreat for Children offers a haven for kids in particular need. Founded in 1984 by the nonprofit organization Variety of Texas, Peaceable Kingdom provides educational and recreational opportunities for more than 5,000 children and their families each year.

The environmental education program supports both the individualized education plans of special-needs students and is TEKS-aligned for mainstream students. Students from 16 surrounding school districts get a chance to experience the Hill Country during a day of outdoor education. More and more schools are increasing outdoor education as teachers and administrators recognize its benefits to student health and learning success. What makes Peaceable Kingdom unique is its focus on these same benefits in an environment tailored for children with chronic illnesses and special needs. Even youths with specific physical challenges will find an escape where they have a space designed for them to learn and be physically active.

In addition to its environmental education program, Peaceable Kingdom designs day programs specifically for students that will learn to be peer mentors each summer. During these week-long and specifically designed camps, the retreat offers yet another chance for hundreds of children to learn from and cherish the outdoors in a fun and interactive space.

The reprieve that Peaceable Kingdom Retreat for Children provides to these children is an incredible example of an organization making a permanent impact on the lives of Texas youth.