

Children and Nature Connection

Monthly Update - November 2011

You will find event announcements, job opportunities, grant opportunities and research and resources pertaining to children and nature. If you are interested in a posted item, please contact the individual(s) or group(s) sponsoring the item(s).



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Program Will Honor Schools for Excellence in Environmental Education

The U.S. Department of Education invites states to take part in the inaugural year of the Green Ribbon Schools program, which recognizes schools for reducing their environmental impact on their communities, promoting healthy school environments for their own students and staff, and offering high-quality environmental education. For more information, go to: <http://www.seek.state.mn.us/article.cfm?id=5780>

River Revival DVD Free to Schools

Here's a great opportunity for your students to learn about the Minnesota River Basin and the people who are striving to protect and restore the state's namesake river. This 48-minute video documentary - *River Revival: Working Together to Save the Minnesota River* - is now available free of charge to schools and other institutions of learning. The program content is appropriate for upper elementary students and older. To order your copy, email scott.kudelka@mnsu.edu and enter "River Revival DVD" in the Subject line. Include your name and job title, and your organization's name and mailing address.

Home Depot Garden Club

The National Gardening Association is delighted to announce that The Home Depot Garden Club continues as the Youth Garden Grants (YGG) sponsor. In its 29-year history, the YGG program has helped more than 1.3 million youngsters by supporting youth gardening programs. Thanks to the generosity of The Home Depot Garden Club, 5 winners will receive gift cards valued at \$1,000, and 95 winners will receive \$500 gift cards, for the purchase of gardening materials and supplies specific to the needs of their program from their local Home Depot store. For more information, go to: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/grants/2012-youth-garden-grants-1>

Project Learning Tree Releases New High School Curriculum

Nine activities in PLT's *Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests* teach students about forest health, watersheds, climate change, who owns America's forests, and more. The 176-page guide integrates teaching about forests into a multitude of subject areas using hands-on classroom studies and outdoor field investigations. High school educators and junior college professors can obtain a copy of this curriculum by attending a PLT professional development workshop in their area. For more information go to: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/plt/index.html>

National Environmental Education Foundation's Children and Nature Initiative

The National Environmental Education Foundation's Children and Nature Initiative addresses two important issues— preventing serious health conditions like obesity and diabetes related to indoor sedentary lifestyles and reconnecting children to nature to promote good health, enjoyment and environmental stewardship. A growing body of research indicates that unstructured outdoor activities may improve children's health by increasing physical activity, reducing stress, and serving as a support mechanism for attention disorders. Children and Nature Initiative creates "Nature Champions" by building capacity among pediatric healthcare providers to be leaders in prescribing nature and referring families to a park or nature center. For more information and to download resources: http://www.neefusa.org/health/children_nature.htm



EVENTS

A Framework to Assess Environmental Literacy

North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is releasing "A Framework for Assessing Environmental Literacy" at the National Press Club in Washington DC and live via the Internet.

Date: Thursday, December 1

Time: 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. (Eastern)

Location: Washington DC in person
or via live webcast

For more information, go to: <http://www.naaee.net/framework>

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RESEARCH

More Time Outdoors May Reduce Kids' Risk for Nearsightedness

A new analysis of eye health studies shows that more time spent outdoors is related to reduced rates of nearsightedness, also known as myopia, in children and adolescents. Myopia is much more common today in the United States and many other countries than it was in the 1970s. In parts of Asia, more than 80 percent of the population is nearsighted. The analysis suggests that more exposure to natural light and/or time looking at distant objects may be factors. For more information go to: <http://www.aaopt.org/newsroom/release/20111024.cfm>



RECENTLY IN THE NEWS

NPS to Waive Admission Fees on 17 days in 2012

To encourage Americans to explore America's natural beauty, rich history and culture, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the National Park Service will waive admission fees on 17 days in 2012. For more information, go to: <http://www.nationalparksonline.org/fee-free-days/nps-to-waive-admission-fees-on-17-days-in-2012/>



Nature Focused Release Day Program in Onamia School District

The Onamia School District runs a four-day school week. For their non-school days, they run a program promoting physical activity and healthy eating. They have received a 5-year grant to run this program and this year they are focusing on nature. With trips to the Northland Arboretum to plant a butterfly garden, the Farm of St. Mathias and Father Hennepin State Park, they are encouraging children to spend time in and learning about nature. To read the entire article go to:

<http://brainerddispatch.com/news/2011-09-26/students-get-dirt-nature#.TrGSBc2Vj0k>

Outdoor Classroom at Hilltop Primary

Hilltop Primary school in Minnetrista, MN has received a grant from the Tree Trust to create an outdoor classroom and a mini-arboretum. Each class gets the opportunity to plant and maintain a tree and learn from measurements, reading and writing outside. Benches are also installed for outdoor classroom time. To watch the story, go to: <http://www.kare11.com/cool-in-school/article/944854/148/Students-plant-a-classroom-at-Hilltop-Primary>



Healthy Kids Outdoors Act Introduced in Congress

Congressman Ron Kind (WI) and Senator Mark Udall (CO) introduced the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act in Congress. The policies proposed by the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act will advance the collective efforts to reconnect children, youth and families with the natural world, while improving our children's health, supporting economic growth and strengthening the future of conservation in America. To read more and see Congressman Kind's blog on the bill, go to:

<http://www.outdoornation.org/page/healthy-kids-outdoors-act-supports-strategies-to-connect-kids-wit>

Submittals: If you would like to submit an item for listserv posting, email details no later than the last Monday of the month to: cyfc@umn.edu
Please note that we need all event/update details as email text. Due to potential formatting difficulties, MN CNC does not distribute word document attachments or PDF documents. We are happy to accept web pages and links for distribution.

Thank you!