



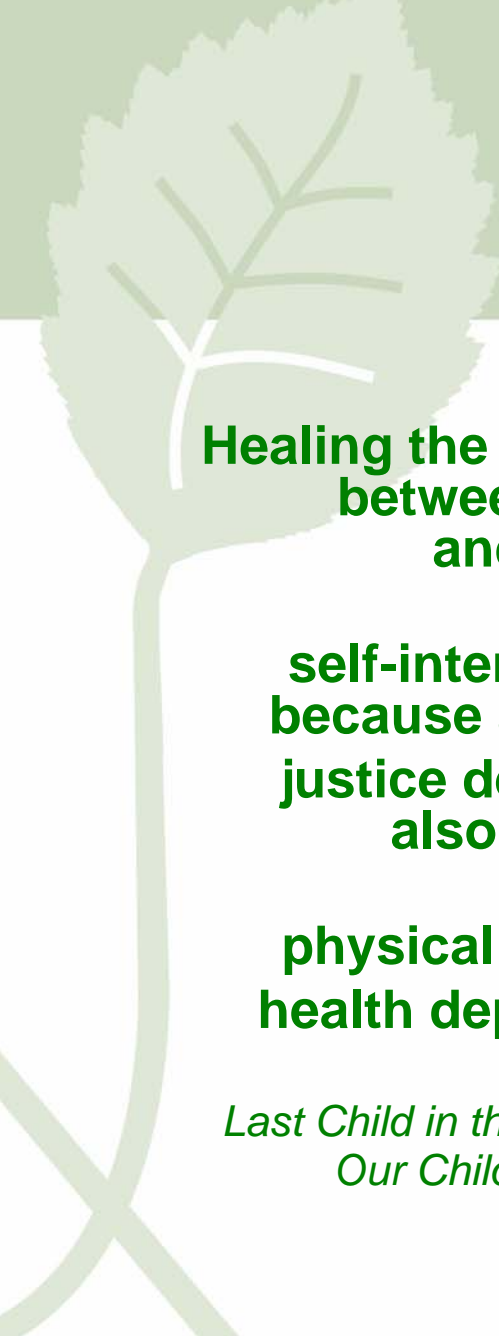
**Building a Movement to Reconnect Children & Nature**

**Cheryl Charles, Ph.D.**

**President and CEO**

**Presentation to the MAFWA July 1 2008**

**Estes Park, Colorado**



**Healing the broken bond  
between our young  
and nature is in  
everyone's  
self-interest, not only  
because aesthetics or  
justice demand it, but  
also because our  
mental,  
physical and spiritual  
health depend upon it.**

Richard Louv  
*Last Child in the Woods: Saving  
Our Children from Nature-  
Deficit Disorder*



# Mission

- The mission of the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is to build a movement to reconnect children and nature.



A large, stylized leaf graphic in a light green color, positioned on the left side of the slide. It has a prominent central vein and several smaller veins branching out. The leaf is attached to a long, thin stem that curves slightly at the bottom.

# What We Do

- **Communicate**
- **Synthesize**
- **Engage Grassroots Participation**

# Definition of Children and Nature-Centered Experiences

- Nature-centered experiences for children are those that instill wonder and engender curiosity; occur in outdoor settings ranging from backyards to neighborhoods to city parks to wilderness; and occur in the form of guided activities as well as unstructured nature play in children's everyday lives.





# C&NN Five-Year Goals

- Reverse the societal trend of the past three decades in which children and youth have become disconnected from direct experience in the outdoors in their everyday lives.
- Build widespread, cross-sector community support throughout the US and all major regions of the world.
- Show demonstrable, measurable success.

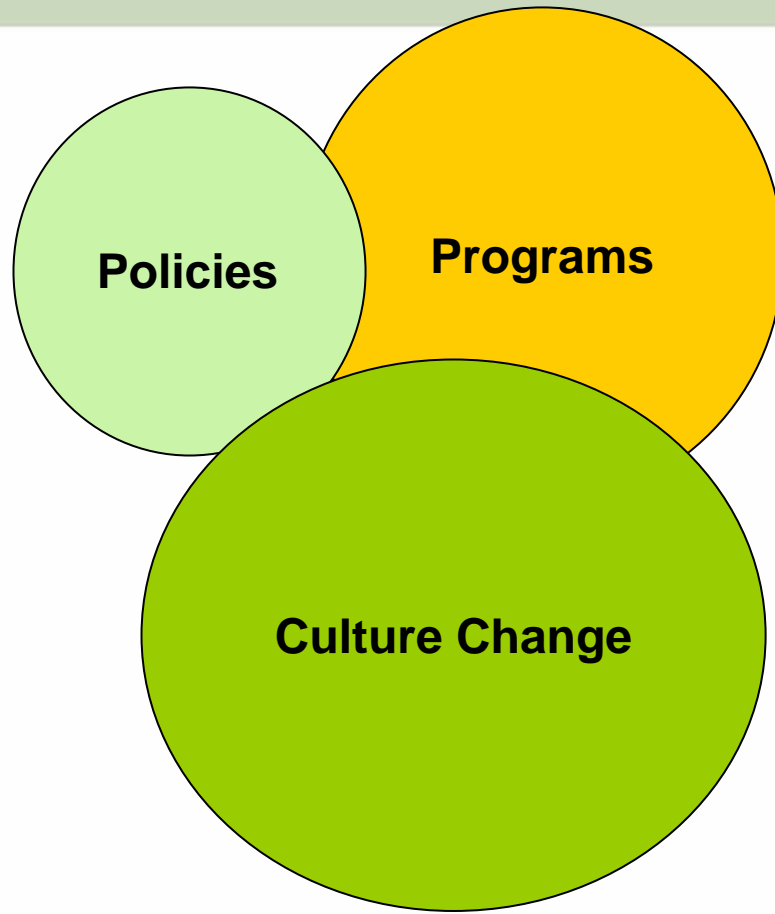
# Examples of Measurable Objectives

- Reach more than half the nation's parents in a public awareness campaign.
- Obtain the endorsement of influential physicians and medical associations to prescribe “nature play” for children.
- With allied organizations, reverse the trend of childhood obesity in five years.
- Engage major builders and developers to design and redesign communities that are children and nature-centered.
- Secure the commitment of one-third of the nation's mayors and one-half the nation's governors to support children and nature-centered places and programs.
- Establish children and nature initiatives in 50 states and 50 nations.

# Tipping Points

Once a new idea is accepted by a group of “innovators” and “early adopters,” together typically representing 5 to 13% of the population, it becomes self-sustaining.

Based on the work of Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*





# What Research Says: The Deficit

- Children are spending 40 to 65 hours a week attached to electronic umbilica.
- Fewer than 1 in 5 children walk or ride a bike to school.
- Childhood obesity has increased from 4% in the 1960s to 20% today.
- Children have less time for unstructured, creative play in the outdoors than ever before in human history.

# What Research Says: The Benefits

- Children are happier, healthier and smarter when they connect with nature.
  - **Happier:** Nature play increases self esteem, improves psychological health and reduces stress. Children learn self-discipline and are more cooperative.
  - **Healthier:** Nature play improves physical conditioning and reduces obesity.
  - **Smarter:** Nature play stimulates creativity and improves problem solving. Children do better in school.

# What Research Says About Future Conservation Leaders

- Nearly to a person, those who grow up to be committed to active outdoor lives and conservation of natural resources had meaningful experiences outdoors on a regular basis between the ages of birth and 11 or 12 years of age

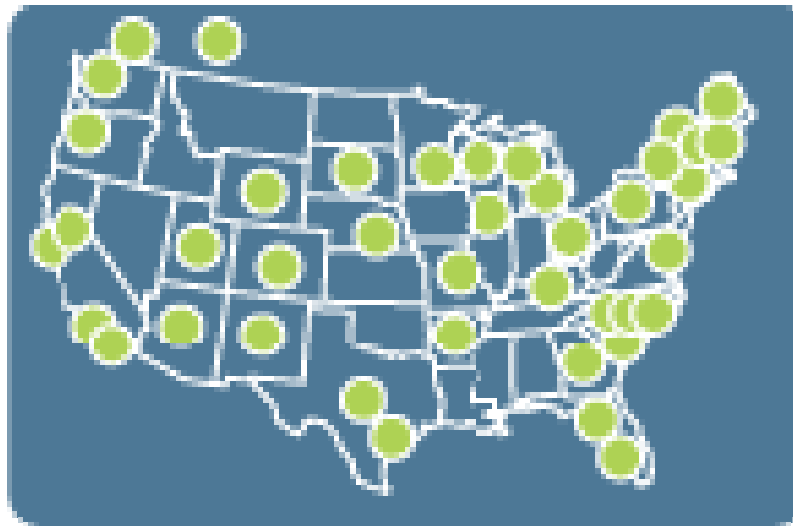


# C&NN 2008 Priorities

- **Growing Public Awareness**
- **Providing Access to State of the Art Resources**
- **Disseminating Principles of Children and Nature-Centered Design**
- **Supporting Community Leadership and the Grassroots**
- **Filling the Gaps by Identifying Trends and Areas for Additional Research**

# Mapping the Movement

- Since April of 2006, more than 50 communities nationwide and in Canada have launched children and nature initiatives and campaigns.



# Things Wildlife Agencies Can Do

- Make it an agency priority to connect children, youth and families with nature.
- Exercise your leadership and expertise to bring outdoor experiences within reach of children and youth in their everyday lives.
- Mentor and model through people, places and programs.
- Partner with other organizations and get involved in community, regional and national initiatives to reconnect children and nature.

# Things We All Can Do

- **Take a child outside!**
- **Make re-connecting children and nature a priority.**
- **Educate parents, grandparents and other caregivers about the cognitive, physiological, and emotional benefits to children who play in the out-of-doors on a regular basis.**
- **Urge day care centers and schools to integrate outdoor experiences throughout the school curricula—and to reinstate recess where it has been eliminated.**

# Things We All Can Do, cont.

- **Encourage nature-based, children-friendly spaces and places throughout our communities.**
- **Reinstate schoolyard habitat projects and outdoor classrooms where they have been eliminated.**
- **Support and encourage community gardens.**
- **Get a creative group of attorneys together to help solve liability issues and concerns.**
- **Engage physicians to encourage them to prescribe nature-play, because it is good for children.**



# Things We All Can Do, cont.

- **Educate architects, builders, community planners and civic leaders about the need for areas of native habitats in planned developments and existing neighborhoods so children have places to play that foster their imagination.**
- **Build new partnerships, and support existing efforts, to bring the resources of the private sector together with public agencies in bold, balanced and conserving ways to achieve a sustainable future.**



# Resources

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# Sample of C&NN Deliverables

- **C&NN Web Site (launched in 2006)**
- **Launch of National Campaign to LNCI (National Press Club April 2006)**
- **National Gathering of Regional Leaders (August 2007)**
- ***C&NN Annotated Bibliographies of Research, Volumes 1 and 2 (2007)***
- ***C&NN Community Action Guide: Building the Children & Nature Movement from the Ground Up (January 2008)***
- ***Children and Nature 2008: A Report on the Movement to Reconnect Children to the Natural World (January, 2008)***

# C&NN Community Action Guide

- Refer to the ***C&NN Community Action Guide: Building a Movement to Reconnect Children and Nature from the Ground Up\**** on the C&NN web site at [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org) as a model for launching a local or regional initiative.
  - \*The C&NN Community Action Guide was developed in part with support from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Programs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

# A Few References

- *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv. Algonquin, 2005.
- *Coming Home: Community, Creativity and Consciousness* by Cheryl Charles and Bob Samples. Personhood Press, 2004.
- *Children and Nature* by Peter H. Kahn, Jr. and Stephen R. Kellert. MIT Press, 2002.
- *Building for Life* by Stephen R. Kellert. Island Press, 2005.
- *Biophilic Design* by Stephen R. Kellert, Judith H. Heerwagen and Martin L. Mador. Wiley, 2008.

# A Few References, cont.

- *Natural Learning: Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching* by Robin C. Moore and Herb H. Wong. MIG Communications, 1997.
- *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators* by David Sobel. Stenhouse Publishers, 2008.
- *Learning with Nature Idea Book: Creating Nurturing Outdoor Spaces for Children* by The National Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, 2007.
- *A Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting Kids with Nature Through the Seasons* by Rick Van Noy. University of Georgia Press, 2008.

# In the News

live well

how to connect



## take a slow nature walk

A stroll with your child fosters a love of the outdoors. Try these tips from Cheryl Charles, PhD, president and CEO of the Children & Nature Network.

**START SMALL** Discover tiny habitats right at your feet. Peering together under rocks and damp leaves offers a wondrous look at the life forms living there.

**TUNE IN** Stop a few times along the way to really look and listen. Then share what you each saw and heard, such as a shiny black crow saying, *caw! caw!*

**ADD SOME MAGIC** Games of make-believe help kids bond with the outdoors. If your child sees a mushroom as a fairy's umbrella, play along. *Jennifer Matlack*

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### for girls only

**Wish you had time for a night out with your gal pals?** Stop wishing and start doing. Your family will thank you. "Female friendships are crucial for today's overscheduled moms," says clinical psychologist Dahlia Mann, PhD. Sharing with trusted confidantes validates your feelings and helps you deal with the stressors of family life, she explains. But don't try to morph a chance meeting at the store into a gabfest. Make time spent with girlfriends meaningful by planning ahead and giving yourself time to talk. *Karen Pallanto*

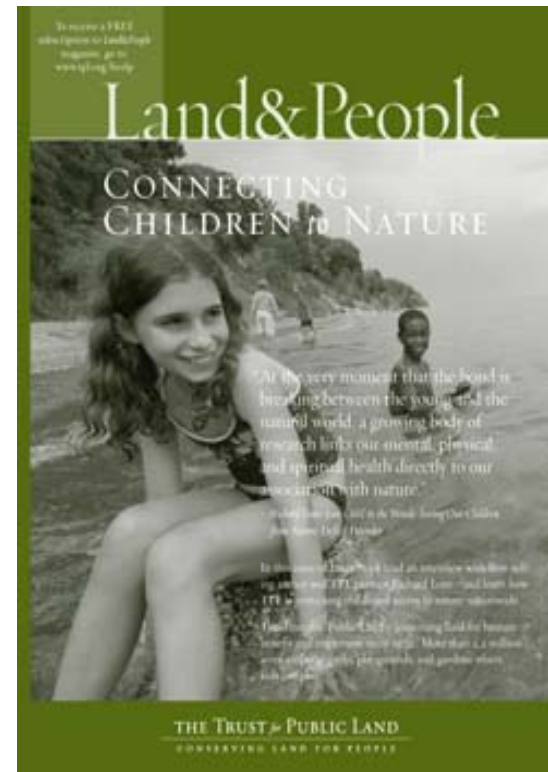
**TAKE A MINUTE TO:**

### hug your husband every day

It makes for a happy and healthy heart. Whenever you wrap your arms around him, you both release more oxytocin, a hormone that triggers a sense of caring and also protects against heart disease.

14 WOMANSDAY.COM • APRIL 15, 2008

# In the News, cont.





# In the News, cont.



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- **Page Lambert**, author and leader of creative outdoor writing adventures
- **Kathy Baughman McLeod**, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Chief Financial Officer, State of Florida
- **Bob Peart**, Director, Kesho Trust; Founder, Nature Child Reunion, [www.naturechildreunion.ca](http://www.naturechildreunion.ca)

# C&NN Grassroots Leadership Team

- **Betsy Townsend**, Chair; Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Leave No Child Inside Greater Cincinnati, [www.lncigc.org](http://www.lncigc.org)
- **Janet Carrier Ady**, Chief, Division of Education Outreach, National Conservation Training Center, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Liz Baird**, Director of School Programs, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences
- **Brother Yusef Burgess**, Environmental Educator, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; C&NN Board of Directors
- **Avery Cleary**, Executive Director, Hooked on Nature
- **Paul B. Hai**, Program Coordinator, Adirondack Ecological Center, State University of New York College of Science and Forestry



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- **Brooke Levey**, Extension Educator – 4 H, University of Nebraska Lincoln; Co-Founder “Healthy Families Play Outside” in Nebraska
- **John Thielbahr**, Director, Professional Education, Center for Distance and Professional Education, Washington State University
- **Jeff Williamson**, President, Arizona Zoological Society
- **Marilyn Wyzga**, Wildlife Educator, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Co-Founder, New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

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C&NN is a 501c3 non-profit educational organization.

# A Book that Launched a Movement

