MIAMI VALLEY LEAVE NO CHILD INSIDE SUMMIT CONNECTS CHILDREN TO NATURE

New this year: educators and health professionals can earn continuing education credits, Connect to Nature Site Certification program to be unveiled

DAYTON, OH (Feb. 6, 2017) — Teachers, industry professionals and families are invited to discover new ways to connect children to nature during the sixth annual Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Summit, held on Saturday, March 11, at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark, 1301 E. Siebenthaler Ave.

The summit will kick off at 8 a.m. with three morning workshops focused on creating green schoolyards and finding effective ways to engage early learners in nature exploration. Interactive learning opportunities provided by Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark and the University of Dayton Rivermobile also will be available. Starting at 11:30 a.m., educators, child advocates, healthcare professionals and families can participate in activities that promote best practices for connecting children to nature, including:

- CERTIFIED CONNECTION TO NATURE SITE APPLICATION WORKSHOP: Learn how your school, community organization, day care center or park can receive this distinction from Dayton Regional Green and the Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Collaborative.
- OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARD PRESENTATION: Three teachers will be recognized for their efforts to incorporate outdoor exploration into their curriculum.
- WHY IT’S COOL TO BE OUTDOORS: View video resources provided by Dayton Children’s Hospital and Greater Cincinnati Leave No Child Inside.
- “STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS AND FAMILIES:” Keynote speaker Shauna Adams will discuss the importance of outdoor experiences for early learners and what parents and preschool teachers can do to help engage children with nature. Adams is a professor at the University of Dayton and executive director of the Center for Early Learning.
- “WHY WE CONNECT:” A local take on a youth panel format used at the international Children and Nature Network conference.
- MVLNCI PARTNERS NETWORKING SESSION: Mix and mingle with industry professionals and share ideas for connecting kids with nature.
- EDUCATIONAL DISPLAYS: County parks, local organizations, retailers and supporting vendors invite guests to explore resources for connecting children with nature during this expo-style learning opportunity.
- CONSERVATION KIDS: Children and their families discover the wonders of nature and the excitement of playing outside.

Five Rivers MetroParks and the Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Collaborative (MVLNCI), a chapter of the statewide Leave No Child Inside initiative, are presenting the summit.

— more —
Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Summit, pg. 2

New this year, Step Up to Quality and Certified Health Education Specialist credits will be available to educators and health professionals attending the morning session. Additionally, MVLNCI will unveil its new collaborative community initiative, the Connect to Nature Site Certification program. A partnership with Dayton Regional Green, the certification inspires schools and organizations in five area counties to create plans to implement the Ohio Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights, an outline of nature-based opportunities all children should experience on a regular basis.

According to the National Wildlife Federation, children who spend time in nature have increased fitness levels, score higher on standardized tests and have lower stress levels than children who spend their time indoors. However, the average American child spends as little as 30 minutes of unstructured time playing outside each day and more than seven hours in front of a screen. The result is an effect dubbed “nature deficit disorder” by Richard Louv, co-founder of the Children & Nature Network.

“This year’s summit reflects the efforts of MVLNCI to connect with like-minded organizations, including the University of Dayton Family Engagement Collaborative and River Stewards, and the Ohio Public Health Association,” said MetroParks outdoor education coordinator Doug Horvath. “Morning workshop options give participants tools to help them get children outdoors, while the afternoon offers community resources that help facilitate outdoor experiences.”

Events are free, but guests can opt to purchase a lunch when registering. Registration is required and available online by visiting metroparks.org.

ABOUT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Celebrating more than 50 years of preserving green space and natural areas, Five Rivers MetroParks is a nationally renowned park system composed of natural area parks, gardens, high-quality river corridors, urban parks and a network of recreation trails. Five Rivers MetroParks protects the region’s natural heritage and provides outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature. Educational programs and recreational opportunities are offered year-round for all ages. Five Rivers MetroParks is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. To learn more about Five Rivers MetroParks, log onto www.metroparks.org or call 937-275-PARK (7275).

###