



2014 Progress Report

2014 was a great year for Leave No Child Inside! With the improvements in the economic outlook, the seeds we planted during the recession-restricted years are sprouting! Everywhere we turn, there are signs of progress in the effort to keep children connected with nature. This report contains some of the highlights of the past year. In addition to our own local work, we have included information about some of the national work that supports our efforts in Greater Cincinnati.



Evanston Pathways to Health

In 2013, UC Industrial Design student Sean Goss approached us saying that he wanted to do his Capstone Project around something that would connect urban children with nature, which was an important part of his own childhood. After thoughtful investigation, he identified Safe Routes to School as a key partner in allowing urban children to safely discover nature in their own neighborhoods. He designed a series of stations to place along the route, connecting schools, parks, recreation centers and other neighborhood destinations. The stations combine elements of nature and traditional play equipment, and are designed to increase both physical activity and observation skills.

The Evanston Community Council, a recipient of an Interact for Health Thriving Communities grant, will engage residents in developing a Pathways to Health plan, using Sean's path as a focal point for active living and safety improvements in the neighborhood. With its long list of community partners, including the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, Evanston Academy, the Academy of World Languages, Xavier University's Community Building Institute, PlayCore,

Evanston Pathways to Health (Cont'd)

the Cincinnati Police Department and the Cincinnati Health Department, we are excited to see this project grow from a good idea to an innovative neighborhood project. To our knowledge, it is the first project of its kind in the country.



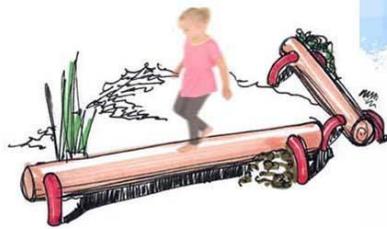
Log Balance

- > Children who play on irregular play surfaces develop better balance and coordination than those who don't.
- > Elevation of logs provides healthy risk assessment development.
- > The use of real logs encourage the use of natural materials for play.

elevation view



perspective view



- > Different types of logs could be used in situations with various space requirements.



© www.evansharon.com : 2009@evansharon.com

Reaching Early Childhood Professionals

One of our most valued community partners is 4C for Children, which provides training and technical assistance for early childhood care providers and teachers in forty counties. Since 2008, we have worked with them to educate childcare professionals about the benefits of unstructured play in nature and in 2009, partnered with them on a full day *Bringing the Outdoors Back In* conference. To assure that the message is regularly reinforced and that they are kept informed of the latest research and innovative ideas, we are now providing 4C with a series of articles for their eNews for child care professionals. We thank 4C for its support in sharing this information with one of our most important audiences.



What is a Media Diet?

A "media diet" is what the American Academy of Pediatrics has suggested for today's wired generation. In spite of the fact that the AAP has suggested limiting recreational screen time for almost thirty years, the number of hours that children spend plugged into electronic media continues to grow. With the release of its policy statement "Children, Adolescents, and the Media", the AAP calls upon us to take action in curbing the tide of media use by our young. How can child care providers help? Two ways come to mind:

1. Avoid exacerbating the problem;
2. Help educate parents so they can make informed decisions about setting guidelines for family recreational time.



Avoid Exacerbating the Problem

Shockingly, many children spend eight hours a day or more plugged into electronic media*. The AAP recommends no more than two hours a day of recreational screen time for children age two and over and no screen time at all for children under the age of two.

* Rideout, V. *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010.
 This article provided by Leave No Child Inside - Greater Cincinnati (2014) Page 1 of 3

Ohio Occupational Therapy Association Conference

Health professionals see first-hand the plethora of childhood maladies that are the result of today's indoor sedentary lifestyle. One pediatric occupational therapist told us that they are seeing so many problems in children today that there are not enough OTs to address them all. There is growing interest in nature as not only a therapy, but also as a prevention for many of these problems as research continues to support the extensive physical, mental and emotional benefits of spending time in nature. We are proud to have co-sponsored Richard Louv as the keynote speaker for the 2014 Ohio Occupational Therapy Association conference. The conference included a community non-profit session, where we had the opportunity to make attendees aware of the services and resources available through the five Leave No Child Inside initiatives in Ohio, as well as those of the Children & Nature Network. LNCIgc collaborative members Great Parks of Hamilton County and Granny's Garden School also presented at that session. Great Parks showcased their Special Riders and Special Olympics programs and Granny's Garden School highlighted the therapeutic value of gardening and the training services they provide.



Coalition for Community Schools Conference

In the spring of 2014, Cincinnati was host to the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum, attended by more than 1,500 educators from across the country. Prominent visitors like Christopher Edley, Co-Chair of the U.S. Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission and Christopher Coleman, President of the National League of Cities were able to see first-hand Cincinnati's nationally recognized

Community Learning Center model. We presented a workshop, *Leave No Child Inside! Connecting Community Schools to the Great Outdoors*, with co-presenters from Greenacres and the Civic Garden Center. Both of those organizations, along with the Cincinnati Nature Center, created pop-up displays for attendees to enjoy as they moved between sessions. The pop-ups showcased the learning opportunities provided by nature playscapes and gave attendees creative examples of how any school can have a teaching garden, regardless of space and budgetary constraints.

Coalition for Community Schools Conference (Cont'd)

We are proud to have participated in this national conference as part of our on-going work on the Cross Boundary Leadership Team for the Cincinnati Public Schools Community Learning Centers.

Supporting Area Schools

We continued to add programs, field trips and camps to our School Outreach Program Finder. We also created an Asset Map for Cincinnati Public Schools to provide them with a list of the additional services that our collaborative members provide to specific schools.

In an effort to understand the barriers that prevent teachers from taking advantage of outdoor education opportunities, we conducted a listening session at the Educators Expo at the Cincinnati Zoo. Nearly every one of the barriers identified can be attributed to a culture that does not understand the value of outdoor education, which is reflected in attitudes, policy and resource allocation. In response, we formed an Outdoor Education Messaging Team which is will develop a series of targeted, research-based messages aimed at educators, administrators,



policymakers and funders. The team is made up of members of the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators (GCEE) and Victoria Carr, PhD of the U.C. Arlitt Child & Family Research and Education Center. The team receives support from the Children & Nature Network , which is currently updating and curating available research from around the globe.

Connecting Children with Nature - Neighborhood by Neighborhood

Leave No Child Inside has a long history of educating community organizations about the crucial role that nature plays in healthy childhood development, as well as connecting them with the facilities and services they need to improve children's health and well-being. Last year, we were especially excited to see the rise in neighborhood initiatives like Interact for Health's Thriving Communities and the Cincinnati Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities initiative. Much of our messaging work has been done "top down", but we have

Connecting Children with Nature – Neighborhood by Neighborhood (Cont'd)



always recognized that the real power of grassroots movements like ours lies in “bottom up” change. The barriers that prevent children from accessing nature vary widely by neighborhood. One neighborhood may lack greenspace altogether. Another may have plenty of greenspace but safety is an issue. In yet another, the barriers relate more to overly structured time and the lure of electronics. We are working with Interact for Health’s Thriving Communities through the Evanston Pathways to Health Project. We also serve on the Leadership Team for the Cincinnati Health Department’s Creating Healthy Communities Project, helping to create a strategic plan for that work. We believe that these neighborhood-based projects will be powerfully effective in addressing a wide range of issues including health and safety of neighborhoods and their residents.

National Work Impacting Local Efforts

The Children & Nature Network announced its 2014-16 strategic agenda, with several items of notable relevance to our local work:

National League of Cities Partnership

In November of 2014 a partnership between the Children & Nature Network and the National League of Cities was launched to help city leaders take action to create nature-rich cities that will increase access to nature for all residents in their everyday lives. The project aims to ensure that a connection to nature becomes an integral part of city priorities, planning and policy-making in a broad range of areas, including community health and wellness, education, out-of-school time programming, job creation, transportation and land use.

Launch the Center for Children, Nature and Communities

The Children & Nature Network houses and makes freely available to anyone the most extensive collection of research, news and thought leadership for connecting children and families to nature. The Center for Children, Nature and Communities will serve as a resource hub for the movement, providing research, training, promising practice resources and reporting. Already underway is the updating, curating and delivery of relevant research through a searchable online platform.

Improve Community Health

The Children & Nature Network is creating a resource hub to support the green schoolyard work that is burgeoning across the country. It will also provide health professionals with resources to connect families to nature.

Conclusion

These are some highlights of continued success in our mission to educate the community that time spent in nature is essential to the physical, mental and emotional health of all children. Throughout the year, we work to connect the Greater Cincinnati community with the programs and facilities offered by the nature-based organizations which are the core of the Leave No Child Inside collaborative. We also explore innovative strategies to overcome the barriers presented by life in the 21st century, such as the Pathways to Health pilot project in Evanston.

We appreciate the support of all of the community partners who have embraced our message and are actively working to connect children with nature through their own organizations. That is the embodiment of our original vision for creating social change in our city and it is gratifying to see it in action through organizations like Safe Routes to School, 4C for Children, Cincinnati Public Schools, Evanston Community Council and others.

We are grateful for the support of the Children & Nature Network. The new National League of Cities partnership will inspire cities across the country to take action to ensure that future generations will benefit nature in their everyday lives. And, improved access to the latest research, tools and resources will be invaluable as we continue to expand our outreach.

In summary, 2014 was a year marked by many successes in the movement to connect children with nature, both here and nationally. We look forward to more good things to come in 2015!

