



Connecting Families with Nature

5 Reasons Why it is Important for Your Family to Connect with Nature

1. Happier Families

Playing outdoors as a family is important for everyone and lots of fun, too! We all know that spending time together creates and builds positive bonds.

2. Smarter Families

Spending quality time outside invites all of us to use our senses, observe, ask questions and use our creativity. We learn as we play! The inquisitive questions of our children spur all of us to become lifelong learners.

3. Affordable Adventures

Outdoor adventures are extremely affordable as most are free or low cost!

4. Healthier Families

A growing body of research indicates getting outdoors and enjoying nature as a family can have a positive impact on the physical, emotional and mental health of children and their parents. Simply taking a walk through your local park can lower the whole family's stress level. Walking, running, hiking, climbing, kayaking and snowshoeing are activities all members of the family can do together.

5. Healthier Environment for All

Ultimately, families who play outside are families that care for the environment in small and big ways. They are more informed about important local and global environmental issues and simple ways they can help. They participate in stewardship and pollution prevention projects such as litter clean up and planting trees and native flowers. Make a choice today that you and your family will find ways to make this a healthier planet for us all.

For ways to connect with nature in Kent County visit the Connecting Families with Nature website www.kentconservation.org/families

Simple Tips for Exploring Nature with Children

Keep it simple.

Explore nature nearby.

Do not be afraid that you do not know all the answers.

Learn together.

Relax and have fun together.

Invite friends. The more the merrier.

Be spontaneous and flexible.

Go Outside Today...

Jump in a puddle...plant a native garden...go fishing...gaze at the stars... smell a wildflower... catch a falling snowflake with your tongue... make mud pies and sand castles...sketch a leaf...catch lightning bugs, climb a tree... pull invasive species... swim in a pond...jump in a pile of leaves...take a winter walk through the wood... pick up litter along the beach.. catch a frog... play hide and seek...listen to the birds sing...

National Resources for Learning More

Children & Nature Network www.childrenandnature.org

The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) encourages and supports parents, youth, civic leaders, educators, health-care providers and organizations working nationally and internationally to reconnect children with nature by sharing resources. You have access via the website to the latest news and research in this field as well as practical advice. The website also contains the Nature Clubs for Families Tool Kit Guide which provides all the information you need to start a successful nature club with other families in your community or connect with a local nature club in your area.

Green Hour www.greenhour.org

Green Hour is a program of the National Wildlife Federation that encourages you the parent/mentor to give your children a "Green Hour" a day, a time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world. Each week, fresh ideas, activities and information to help guide the exploration is published on the website. You also have access to a supportive virtual community where you can share ideas and experiences with other parents and mentors.

Michigan No Child Left Inside Coalition www.mi-ncli.org

This coalition is a collection of organizations working to rekindle the connection between Michigan's children and nature. The coalition is committed to promoting activities and policies that will help our children reconnect with nature through outdoor play and exploration, recreational opportunities and hands on environmental education in Michigan.

Nature Rocks www.naturerocks.org

Nature Rocks is a national program to inspire and empower families to play and explore the outdoors. Their website was designed to give you the tools you need to have successful adventures outside with your children. A search engine to find local parks and nature centers and lists of suggested outdoor activities for all age ranges of children are some of the tools. Also check out ways you and your friends can start a Nature Rocks Flock in your area to get children outside.

No Child Left Inside Coalition www.nclicoalition.org

The No Child Left Inside Coalition is composed of environmental, educational and public health organizations and millions of Americans who believe that young people should receive a strong education about their natural world. The coalition's focus is passage of the federal No Child Left Inside Act which would authorize major new funding for states to provide high-quality, environmental instruction. Funds would support outdoor learning activities both at school and in non-formal environmental education centers, teacher training and the creation of state environmental literacy plans. The website provides you with the opportunity to join the coalition and resources on how to talk with representatives about supporting the legislation.

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

~ Rachel Carson, Environmentalist

The International Movement to Connect Children with Nature

With the publication of Richard Louv's book, [Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder](#) in 2005 an international movement was launched. Louv, a child-advocacy expert, coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe what happens to youth who become disconnected from their natural world. Louv links this lack of nature to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rise in obesity, attention disorders and depression. Supported by a wealth of research, personal stories and observations, professionals and parents have connected with Louv's message about the importance of reconnecting today's youth with nature and outdoor play. In a short period of time, the movement has gained incredible momentum with local grassroots initiatives forming all over the country and world to reconnect our youth with nature.