



For Immediate Release:
May 25, 2010

Contact:
Amber Taylor, 703-276-2772, x 17
amber@tricompr.com

Time Outdoors Linked to Prevention of Childhood Ailments

National Environmental Education Foundation's Programs and Resources Link Families with Nature

WASHINGTON, D.C. – One step to preventing childhood obesity, diabetes and depression is getting kids and families to spend more time outside, according to an article published in this month's *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*.

The May 2010 issue features the article, "Using Nature and Outdoor Activity to Improve Children's Health," which summarizes the latest research and shares information about the [Children and Nature Initiative](#) of the [National Environmental Education Foundation](#) (NEEF). As part of the initiative, pediatric health care providers will encourage parents and children to spend more time outdoors and connect their patients to parks and other natural environments that are easily accessible.

A [pilot program](#) launched last week in partnership with the National Audubon Society in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Health care professionals from around New York City received "nature champion" training. They will each train dozens of their peers to expand the program. More health care professionals from around the country will join in over the coming months.

Health problems resulting from children's increasingly sedentary lifestyles have been well documented. The article outlines research showing unstructured time outdoors can improve children's physical and mental well being. Some of the findings include:

- Physical activity reduces blood pressure in young children and helps treat type-2 diabetes in children.
- Simply spending time outside increases levels of physical activity and may help reduce the prevalence of obesity.
- Contact with nature helps lower levels of stress in children and can mitigate attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Exposure to natural environments (even just areas with many trees) may help improve childhood asthma symptoms.

"Advising outdoor play in nature is a practical method for pediatric health care providers to address chronic conditions such as childhood obesity, as well as mental health; and one that is cost-effective and easily sustainable," concluded the authors, including Leyla McCurdy, senior director of NEEF's Health and Environment program.

The Foundation offers the following opportunities and resources for getting kids outside:

National Public Lands Day, held this year on September 25, is the perfect time to get outdoors for health – from hikes in majestic national parks to identifying birds and trees in local green spaces around the corner.

National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance public lands. It gives more than 170,000 volunteers the opportunity to get outside, explore local and national parks and help improve the nation's public lands. Activities are planned at more than 2,300 sites across the country. To learn more, visit www.publiclandsday.org.

This summer, visit one of the 2,000 nature and environmental education centers nationwide: http://www.eeweek.org/nature_centers.htm.

Use www.NatureFind.com to find local parks, nature centers and outdoors events families can enjoy together.

The article and a fact sheet summarizing the research are available via the Initiative's website: http://www.neefusa.org/health/children_nature.htm.

#



Knowledge to Live By

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) provides knowledge to trusted professionals who, with their credibility, amplify messages to national audiences to solve everyday environmental problems. Together, we generate lasting positive change.

NEEF partners with professionals in health, education, media, business and public land management to promote daily actions for helping people protect and enjoy the environment. Through our primary programs -- Classroom Earth, National Public Lands Day, National Environmental Education Week, Business and Environment, Earth Gauge® and Health & Environment -- we offer Americans knowledge to live by. To learn more, call (202) 833-2933 or visit www.neefusa.org.