

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 20, 2010**

**For more information:** Dan Seligson, communications director, 202.261.6481

**Children and Nature Initiative Trains Health Care Professionals to Get Kids Outside**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** —Pediatric health care providers from around the country will converge in West Virginia this month to become “nature champions” for children in a unique program aimed at confronting health problems associated with increasingly sedentary lifestyles.

The National Environmental Education Foundation’s (NEEF) [Children and Nature Initiative](#) is holding a series of workshops to prepare pediatric health care providers to serve as nature champions in their communities. Using NEEF’s highly successful “train-the-trainer” approach, each new champion will train 30 of their peers about prescribing outdoor activities for health. Overall, the program will educate more than 1,200 health care providers within two years. They, in turn, will reach hundreds of thousands of children and their families.

This program actively supports [Let’s Move Outside](#), the outdoor recreation component to First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move campaign to end childhood obesity. By providing families with the tools they need to get moving outside, Let’s Move Outside fosters healthy habits and an appreciation for America’s great outdoors.

NEEF’s train-the-trainer workshop will be held at the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, W.V., in partnership with [USFWS](#), [National Audubon Society](#), [US Department of Agriculture Forest Service](#), and [US Department of the Interior’s Office of Youth in the Great Outdoors](#). Health care providers from California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and the District of Columbia will take part. They will be paired with USFWS representatives who will connect them to National Wildlife Refuges, National Fish Hatcheries and Audubon Centers in their communities. Representatives from the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service and National Park Service will connect health care providers to National Forests and National Parks.

“This program addresses two important issues – preventing serious health conditions like obesity and diabetes and reconnecting children to nature. Unstructured outdoor activity may improve children’s health by increasing physical activity, reducing stress and serving as a support mechanism for attention disorders,” said Leyla Erk McCurdy, senior director of NEEF’s Health & Environment program. “By giving health care providers this training, and by working with our partners to refer families to safe and accessible outdoor areas, we have created a powerful partnership that has the potential to improve the lives of our nation’s children.”

The Children and Nature Initiative provides health care providers with the technical support, tools and resources they need to be effective in prescribing nature to patients. The Initiative and its tools and resources are all grounded in science. NEEF’s study, “Using Nature and Outdoor Activity to Improve Children’s Health” was published in *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care* in May 2010. Online resources include prescription pads, patient brochures and pediatric environmental history forms in both English and Spanish, as

well as a training presentation and a fact sheet highlighting key scientific studies.

The Children and Nature Initiative was recently featured in the listening session on President Obama's [America's Great Outdoors](#) Initiative as an innovative way to increase physical activity to improve health and connect children with the outdoors.

The health care providers who will be participating in the training include:

Lunden Abelson, MA, BC-DMT- **Philadelphia, Pa.**  
Barry Keefe, LSW- **Ocean View, N.J.**  
Nikki Atkinson, RN- **Alexandria, Va.**  
Tiffany Sauls, MD- **Corvallis, Ore.**  
Maria Brown, MD- **Baltimore, Md.**  
Diane Root-Racine, FNP, GNP, ARN- **Sequim, Wash.**  
Larri Ann Bond, DO- **Sequim, Wash.**  
Jean Sheerin Coffey, PhD, APRN- **Essex Junction, Vt.**  
Paul Espinas, MD- **Hayward, Calif.**  
Vanhanh Pham, MD- **Hayward, Calif.**  
Avril Swan, MD- **San Francisco, Calif.**  
Charles Owyang, MD- **Santa Clara, Calif.**  
Nancy Yu, MD- **Las Vegas, Nev.**  
Noah Kohn, MD- **Las Vegas, Nev.**  
Stacy Bosch, RN- **Las Vegas, Nev.**  
Emily Bonabian- **Las Vegas, Nev.**  
Angelique Marquez, RD- **Las Vegas, Nev.**  
Flor Doylet RD, LD/N- **West Palm Beach, Fla.**  
Cindy Bartosek, MPH, RD, LD/N- **West Palm Beach, Fla.**  
David Jones, MD- **Tallahassee, Fla.**

To learn more about the Children and Nature Initiative, visit: [http://neefusa.org/health/children\\_nature.htm](http://neefusa.org/health/children_nature.htm). To arrange an interview with one of NEEF's Nature Champions, please contact Dan Seligson, [dseligson@neefusa.org](mailto:dseligson@neefusa.org).

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**The Health and Environment program** advances environmental knowledge among health care professionals to improve the public's health with a special emphasis on children and underserved populations.