The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative Strategic Plan is the result of the dedicated efforts of the members of the Children in Nature Collaborative; the Strategic Planning Team; and MIG, Inc., the strategic planning firm that provided partial pro bono services. We wish to give special thanks to Collaborative partner FIRST 5, Santa Clara County, for providing funding for this process.

The Strategic Planning Team includes:
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• Jolene Smith, Executive Director, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
• Avery Cleary, Executive Director, Hooked On Nature
• Hank Helbush, Partner, Design Focus
• Chris Overington, Executive Director, Hidden Villa
• Scott Vanderlip, Community Member, Children in Nature Collaborative
• Lucy Wurtz, Development Director, Waldorf School of the Peninsula; Board Member, Hooked On Nature
• Carolyn Verheyen, Principal, MIG, Inc.
• Sarah Davis, Project Associate, MIG, Inc.
• With assistance from Susan Goltsman, Consulting Principal; Ed Canalin, Art Director, Lisa Tyler, Associate Art Director, and Steve Cheadle, Assistant Production Manager, all from MIG, Inc.

In addition, seven organizations generously sponsored a strategic planning event with more than 80 community participants and partner organizations, Gathering our Collective Strength to Take Collective Action: FIRST 5 Santa Clara County; Hooked On Nature; Design Focus; the Waldorf School of the Peninsula; Hidden Villa; Morgan Family Foundation and MIG, Inc. Many thanks also are due to Ken Yeager, Supervisor, Santa Clara County, for his support of the Collaborative’s mission. The Collaborative thanks everyone who generously gave their time and ideas.

Finally, the Collaborative thanks the community participants (see Appendix B for a complete list) and partner organizations, whose invaluable work helped ensure that these strategies would leverage existing efforts and be grounded in real needs and opportunities; and who offered to partner with us to implement these actions and spread these messages to improve children’s health and wellbeing.

—RICHARD LOUV
# Table of Contents

**one: guiding a local movement**
- Introduction 7
- The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative Strategic Plan 8
- A Grassroots Strategic Plan 10
- The Collaborative Model 10
- Children in Nature Collaborative Key Messages 11

**two: framing our work**
- Vision, Mission and Goals 13
- Guiding Principles 14
- Strategic Plan Framework 15

**three: gathering our collective strength to take action**
- The Strategies 16
  - Forming Collaborations 17
  - Sharing Resources 20
  - Implementing Projects and Events 24
  - Creating and Adapting Environments 26
  - Growing the Collaborative 28
  - Spreading the Message 29

**four: moving forward**
- Implementing the Strategies 31
- Growing the Children in Nature Collaborative 32
- Adding Partners and Sponsors 33

**appendices**
- A. Children in Nature Collaborative Partners 34
- B. Children in Nature Collaborative Community Strategic Planning Event Participants 35
- C. Additional National Resources 37
- D. Guidelines for Implementing the Strategies 38
“THE MOVEMENT TO RECONNECT CHILDREN TO THE NATURAL WORLD HAS ARISEN QUICKLY, SPONTANEOUSLY, AND ACROSS THE USUAL SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVIDING LINES.”

—ORION MAGAZINE, MARCH/APRIL 2007
Introduction

The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative is part of a national movement dedicated to increasing children’s time in nature. Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder (2005), has inspired people across the country to work locally to spread the message and grow networks. The ultimate goal is to create a major cultural shift so that time in nature for children is once again a normal, expected and accepted part of children’s daily life.

The movement is a response to alarming statistics. Nearly all children today spend less than a half hour a week in outdoor, unstructured free play. In fact, kindergarten teachers are finding that some children don’t know how to play, while childhood obesity has skyrocketed in the last 40 years. As Last Child in the Woods demonstrates, time in nature is crucial for children’s health and wellness. Nature play stimulates curiosity, imagination, physical activity, healthy brain development, and social interactions. It also helps lessen the risk of childhood obesity, depression, learning and attention problems, and social and emotional problems. Time in nature is also essential for children if they are to become caring stewards of our natural environment; and it is an important factor in helping children create and value a diverse community.

The Bay Area “leave no child inside” movement kicked off in September 2006 with a talk by Louv to an audience of over 800 people. Eighteen organizations and six community members formed the Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative in November 2007 to organize a local grassroots movement in the Bay Area.
The Collaborative held seven community forums in 2007 and 2008. Leadership and self-organization began to emerge. Participants created more than 80 strategic ideas at the forums. The Collaborative created a mission, vision and guiding principles and decided to create a strategic plan. The goal was to create, with community and partner organization input, a short list of targeted strategies with multiple approaches for implementation and to engage partners across sectors of the community.

The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative Strategic Plan

In May 2008, the Collaborative initiated a strategic planning process with funding from First 5 Santa Clara County. Working with Carolyn Verheyen of MIG, Inc., a strategic planning consultant, the strategic planning group developed draft strategies and implementing guidelines based on the ideas from previous community forums and their own expertise.

On October 30, 2008, the Collaborative and Founding Partners hosted a strategic planning event, Gathering our Collective Strength to Take Action, designed to test the strategies, generate new ideas, and provide an opportunity for groups to share their own work. More than 80 participants, representing about 35 organizations, suggested new ideas and provided feedback and suggestions for revising and refining the strategies and implementing guidelines. Many participants also volunteered to become implementing partners for the strategies or suggested ways of leveraging strategies with existing organizations and programs through collaborative action and communication to spread key messages. The participants made new connections, shared ideas, and sparked interest in working with each other to strengthen their organization’s programs.
Three speakers opened the meeting: Ken Yeager, Supervisor, Santa Clara County; Cathy Andrade, Program Director, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County; and Amy Pertschuk, Managing Director, Children & Nature Network. Mary Roscoe, Coordinator, Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative, provided a context and history of the Strategic Plan and invited the group to participate in a walk-around session to actively review and respond to the Draft Strategies. Participants from public and private education, environmental education, health, government agencies and elected offices, children and family services, land conservation, art, farming, urban gardens, and many more responded to the draft strategies, offered feedback, and volunteered to become partners to help leverage their efforts and messages with those of the Children in Nature Collaborative. The event culminated in a discussion of the strategies, and participants volunteered to take on roles to implement all of the strategies.
The goal of the Bay Area Children in Nature Strategic Plan is to catalyze a cultural shift, so that spending time in the natural world becomes the cultural norm in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties and the Bay Area. This will be accomplished over time by many coordinated partners working across sectors such as health, education and the environment, as well as through civic engagement.

This Strategic Plan seeks to engage a diverse network of people and organizations to leverage efforts towards common goals. Rather than a top-down organization, the Collaborative acts as a convener and facilitator to fuel and help organize a local grassroots movement: to spread key messages, collaborate with other organizations, and develop partnerships.

The Collaborative Model
This Strategic Plan is based on a collaborative model. Its goal is to engage a diverse array of groups, leaders and partners across many sectors. In this model, many disparate groups—from educators to land conservation agencies—can find a place to explore their common ground, form partnerships, and implement the ideas and strategies in this plan in their own organizations. For instance, a school could create a community garden or outdoor classrooms and city recreation staff could lead urban or wilderness nature experiences and hikes for young teens. A key goal of the collaborative model is to catalyze a cultural shift, where many organizations and individuals, including parents, create opportunities over time for children to connect with nature, regularly and deeply.

The Strategic Plan comes at a critical time. Awareness about the movement is increasing. There is a growing understanding of intertwined issues: alarm about the obesity epidemic, enthusiasm for urban gardens and pedestrian-friendly urban design, concern that overscheduled schoolchildren are losing recess time and experiencing stress. Partners in the community are ready to take action.
Children in Nature Collaborative
Key Messages
The Children in Nature Collaborative developed these key messages to test with participants at a community event. Participants liked all of the key messages, but noted the importance of choosing messages for specific audiences.

• Experiences in nature bring physical, psychological and cognitive health benefits—they make children healthier, happier and brighter.

• Unstructured play in nature is essential for children’s healthy development.

• The risk of a sedentary life inside is greater than the risk of unstructured play and going outside.

• Children can freely play and explore nature with awareness and consideration for the natural environment.

• Play is so important to child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations as the right of every child.

• Positive direct experience in nature with a caring adult leads to environmental stewardship later in life. Children’s relationship with nature is inextricably linked to their stewardship of the earth.

• Experiencing nature with others strengthens individuals and communities.

• We can adapt our local environments to ensure that children have access to nature near their homes and schools.

“Over 80 guests, all guided by their commitment to the healthy child, combined to create an atmosphere heralding change and meaning for the youngest earth stewards. A festive mood prevailed, the kind where one knows the right thing is about to happen.” —Anna Rainville, “Think globally, play locally,” The Alliance for Childhood
“AS OUR FIRST TEACHER, NATURE INFORMS OUR SENSES, EXPANDS OUR CAPACITIES AND OPENS US TO MYSTERY.”

—ANNA RAINVILLE, “THINK GLOBALLY, PLAY LOCALLY,” THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD
Vision
The vision of the Children in Nature Collaborative is to give every child in every community a wide range of opportunities to experience nature directly, reconnecting our children with nature’s joys and lessons, its profound physical and mental bounty (adopted from the national Children & Nature Network).

Mission
The mission of the Children in Nature Collaborative is to work together to restore children’s relationship with nature.

Goals
• Raise awareness of the physical, emotional, and spiritual health benefits of connecting children with nature.
• Promote unstructured play and time in nature for children and adults.
• Engage a diverse network of people and facilitate collaborations.
• Participate with other children and nature initiatives—regional, state, national and international.
Guiding Principles
As people from all walks of life, we believe in the restorative effects of nature—for children, families, and communities.

Connection: Nature provides an opportunity to deepen our relationship to our self, each other, and our environment.

Respect: Learning to respect nature and others is fundamental for our wellbeing, the wellness of others and the Earth as a whole.

Access: To engage and connect to nature, all children and families need access to information, resources, and developmentally appropriate activities.

Nature as Teacher and Nurturer: Children need the opportunity to explore nature through open-ended, unstructured and self-initiated play.

Role Models: Children need the guidance of a caring adult who can share with them a love of the natural world and inspire a sense of awe and wonder.

Community and Society: Preserving and creating natural places to come together allows us to experience one another and to grow as neighbors and as communities.

The elements of the framework fit together as shown in the diagram on the facing page to create a complete and powerful plan for the future.
the children in nature collaborative strategic plan framework

key messages
Nature play is essential to child development.
Every child has a right to play.
Experience in nature brings many health benefits.
The risks of unstructured play are less than the risks of a sedentary lifestyle.
Experiences in nature are restorative.
Direct experience in nature leads to environmental stewardship later in life.

strategies
• Forming Collaborations
• Sharing Resources
• Implementing Projects and Events
• Creating and Adapting Environments
• Growing the Collaborative
• Spreading the Message

goals
• Raise awareness of benefits of connecting children with nature.
• Promote unstructured play and time in nature.
• Engage a diverse network of people.
• Participate with other regional, national, and international initiatives.

vision
All children have an opportunity to experience nature directly.

CHILDREN IN NATURE COLLABORATIVE’S MISSION AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS’ MISSIONS
gathering our collective strength to take action

The Strategies
The selected strategies meet the Collaborative’s goals and guiding principles, and enjoy broad support by partners. They are realistic and financially feasible and represent a clear means to an end. Finally, these strategies leverage other efforts and build on existing resources to respond to community needs, use best practices and produce results. Implementing ideas and guidelines for these strategies are available in Appendix D to assist those creating an action plan for a strategy.

The following strategies should be considered a menu to choose from, as additional partners join the Collaborative, or as individuals take initiative independently. The Collaborative grouped the 13 strategies into 6 strategy areas. On the following pages, you’ll find each strategy with a list of implementing partners, as well as an example about how an individual or organization is already taking action to implement the strategy.

Forming Collaborations
1. Collaborate with organizations that focus on children’s health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
2. Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
3. Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection with nature.

Sharing Resources
4. Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (pre-schools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.
5. Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups, and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.
6. Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

Implementing Projects and Events
7. Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children, and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks, and neighborhoods.
8. Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary, and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g., organic farms, school gardens, and restoration projects).
9. Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

Creating and Adapting Environments
10. Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.
11. Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

Growing the Collaborative
12. Grow the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

Spreading the Message
13. Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.
forming collaborations | strategy one

Collaborate with organizations that focus on children’s health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.

Interested Implementing Partners
  • Castro School: Garden Program
  • Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
  • Collective Roots
  • Full Circle Farm
  • Healthy Silicon Valley
  • Hidden Villa: Environmental Education Program
  • Hooked On Nature
  • Kaiser Permanente
  • Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
  • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  • Waldorf School of the Peninsula

Working Together

The Children in Nature Collaborative organized a meeting of community and national partners in 2008, “Children—Nature, Play, and Wellness,” that included leaders from regional and national organizations and initiatives. Follow-up meetings with local health initiatives are taking place to share resources and create joint strategies.
Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.

Interested Implementing Partners
• Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
• Castro School: Garden Program
• Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
• Choices for Children
• Collective Roots
• Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
• Fatherhood Collaborative
• FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
• Full Circle Farm
• Hidden Villa
• Kaiser Permanente
• Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
• Riekes Center for Human Enhancement: Nature Awareness
• Wild Zones
• Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

Film Night
Through a partnership with the Alliance for Childhood, the Children in Nature Collaborative sponsored local presentations of the PBS film “Where Do the Children Play?” The film examines the trends that take away children’s birthright: time and opportunity for unstructured, spontaneous play, especially outdoors in nature. Cross-connections, shared resources, and key messages have developed through this partnership.
Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection with nature.

**Interested Implementing Partners**
- Acterra: Young Earth Stewards
- African Community Health Institute
- Bay Area Wilderness Training
- Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
- Castro School: Garden Program
- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County: Afterschool Program
- Collective Roots
- Eastfield Ming Quong Children & Family Services
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Environmental Volunteers: Digging Deeper Project
- Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens
- Full Circle Farm
- Healthy Silicon Valley: Nutrition/Physical Activity
- Hidden Villa
- Hooked On Nature
- Kaiser Permanente
- Leaping Lizards Nature Awareness Preschool
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Palo Alto Community Child Care
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

**A Nature Lending Library is Born**

Yusuf Burgess, a national leader and community activist, helped his local public library in Albany, New York create its own lending library of fishing poles and outdoor equipment. Library programs in other areas of the country encourage children to read about nature, and then go outside.
sharing resources | strategy four

Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (preschools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.

Interested Implementing Partners

- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County: Education Services
- Environmental Volunteers
- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County: Training Department
- FIRST5 of Santa Clara County: Power of Pre-school
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Hidden Villa
- Kaiser Permanente
- Kindergarten Forum
- Leaping Lizards Nature Awareness Preschool
- Palo Alto Community Child Care
- Waldorf School of the Peninsula
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

Sharing Nature Stories and Games

Hooked on Nature: Children, Nature, and You—a Children in Nature Collaborative partner—offers workshops with stories, songs and nature games to parents, caregivers and educators. The workshops explore how simple nature experiences enhance a child’s developmental skills and are essential for children’s health. The experiences also help adults explore and expand their own connection to nature.
sharing resources | strategy five

Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.

Interested Implementing Partners

- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County: Afterschool Program
- Collective Roots
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Environmental Volunteers
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Hidden Villa
- Movimiento
- Riekes Center for Human Enhancement: Nature Awareness
- Santa Clara County Office of Education: Fit for Learning
- Waldorf School of the Peninsula
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

Helping Teachers

Bay Area Wilderness Training, a partner in the Children in Nature Collaborative, provides wilderness training to youth workers and teachers. They also provide an outdoor equipment library and vans for youth organizations and schools to take trips of their own so that all youth have accesses to these life-changing experiences.
Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

**Interested Implementing Partners**
- Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
- Collective Roots
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- MIG, Inc.

**Mapping a City’s Play Areas**

The City of Denver Play Area Master Plan maps play areas and child population data in Denver—and shows where children have access to a play area, and which areas are underserved. The Plan also surveyed households to find out how many hours per day the children engage in free, unstructured play and used this information to create new policies.
Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks and neighborhoods.

Interested Implementing Partners

- Alliance for Childhood
- Castro School: Garden Program
- Collective Roots
- Design Focus
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Hidden Villa
- Hooked On Nature: Nature Circles
- Kindergarten Forum
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Elizabeth Murray
- Playborhood
- Riekes Center for Human Enhancement: Nature Awareness
- Santa Clara County Obesity Prevention Collaborative
- Scott Vanderlip
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

Play Day for Families

Scott Vanderlip, a Children in Nature Collaborative partner, organized a Play Day. He invited several families to a county park for a day of unstructured exploration together. The Play Day gave the children time in nature, connected like-minded families and inspired families to spend more time in nature.
Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary, and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g. organic farms, school gardens, and restoration projects).

**Interested Implementing Partners**

- Castro School: Garden Program
- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County: Education Services
- Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
- Collective Roots
- Common Ground Garden Supply & Education Center
- Eastfield Ming Quong Children & Family Services
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Environmental Volunteers
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Full Circle Farm
- Getting Going Growing
- Hidden Villa
- Kindergarten Forum
- Leaping Lizards Nature Awareness Preschool
- Midpeninsula Open Space District
- Movimiento
- Elizabeth Murray
- Palo Alto Community Child Care
- Riekes Center for Human Enhancement: Nature Awareness
- Santa Clara Office of Education: Fit for Learning
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

**Young Gardeners**

CHEER (Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration) embarked on a pilot project with partners to implement a native plant restoration project at preschool sites in Gilroy. Children from preschools and their families planted 300 native plants started from seeds in a riparian zone in Gilroy and learned about native plant restoration and other nature activities.
implementing projects and events | strategy nine

Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

A Garden for All

In Palo Alto, California, Karen Harwell turned her front and back yards into a community garden, with ducks, fruit trees and vegetables. Children are free to wander in and out, helping feed the ducks, water the vegetable garden or just pick a piece of fruit to eat.

Interested Implementing Partners
- Common Ground Garden Supply & Education Center
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Exploring a Sense of Place
- Kaiser Permanente
- Playborhood
- Scott Vanderlip
creating and adapting environments | strategy ten

Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.

Interested Implementing Partners

- Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
- Castro School: Garden Program
- Collective Roots
- Design Focus
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- MIG, Inc.
- Scott Vanderlip
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture

Discovering a Creek

Zach Pine, an environmental artist and partner in the Children in Nature Collaborative worked with an organization in Berkeley that provides housing and a comprehensive program for homeless families. He facilitated three art-with-nature outings along Cordonices Creek, which runs nearby, to connect the children with the nearby natural environment.
Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

**Sculptures by the River**

Escuela Popular, a charter school in downtown San Jose, invited the co-founders of Wild Zones to engage their students in creative activities in nature. The first event with an environmental artist brought high school students and staff of Escuela Popular to nearby Guadalupe River Park to make wonderful sculptures using natural materials.

**Interested Implementing Partners**

- Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose
- Collective Roots
- Design Focus
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Exploring a Sense of Place
- Full Circle Farm
- Wild Zones
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
gathering our collective strength to take action

Growing the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

Interested Implementing Partners
- Collective Roots
- Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University
- Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Hooked On Nature
- Kaiser Permanente
- Wild Zones

Leave No Child Inside Consortium

The Chicago Wilderness consortium includes 220 public and private organizations that launched Leave No Child Inside, a multi-year plan with the ultimate goal of fostering generations of children that care enough for nature to protect it. The coalition started 12 years ago to protect the Chicago region’s natural spaces, help conserve the diversity of plants and animals, and enrich local residents’ quality of life.
spreading the message | strategy thirteen

Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.

Interested Implementing Partners
• Collective Roots
• Getting Going Growing
• FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
• Full Circle Farm
• Hooked On Nature
• Leaping Lizards Nature Awareness Preschool

Speaking to Parents

The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is developing two national initiatives to reach parents that will be launched in Spring 2009. A Nature Clubs for Families Toolkit, funded by REI, will encourage and inspire families to form local clubs for outdoor adventures. C&NN is also partnering with ecoAmerica and The Nature Conservancy to create a marketing campaign to reach parents with young children. The grassroots tools and marketing campaign initiatives will be useful to regional movements.
“WE NEED TO GET PEOPLE TO USE THEIR CARS LESS AND SPEND MORE TIME AWAY FROM THEIR COMPUTERS AND TELEVISIONS, SO THAT THEY CAN GET OUTSIDE AND ENJOY ALL THE NATURAL BEAUTY THE BAY AREA HAS TO OFFER. BY DOING THIS, WE CAN IMPROVE OUR INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.” —KEN YEAGER, SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUPERVISOR
Implementing the Strategies
The strategies in this Plan will be implemented through an “ecosystem of organization” with clusters of organizations working across sectors to take action. Some of these actions will be coordinated and formal, involving multiple partners; some will be loosely organized and grassroots in nature; some may be undertaken by individuals (such as parents creating an opportunity for children in their neighborhood); and other actions will be ongoing, essentially leveraging already successful programs or events that connect children with nature. The Collaborative will support many of these efforts, catalyzing and facilitating the growth of this region’s movement and the cultural change it represents.

More specifically, the Children in Nature Collaborative will gather together those individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in implementing one or more of the strategies, to launch the implementation phase. At an event in early 2009 we will celebrate the completion of the Strategic Plan, outline the role of the Collaborative and its Coordinating Group, and introduce strategy implementation groups (coalescing around one or more strategy) that have formed to create action plans for the coming year. Additional groups will form as part of this celebration event based on interest in strategies expressed in earlier phases of the strategic planning process. The initial Implementation Guidelines, in Appendix D, will be provided to these groups as a resource of ideas from prior discussions.

The Coordinating Group of the Collaborative will serve to track these action plans, and keep others in the Collaborative informed of progress, successes, lessons learned, opportunities, new ideas, and other news and information useful to the local movement.

Strategy implementation groups will continue to meet, act, implement and report progress. Progress reports will be provided at quarterly meetings and on the website, with an annual evaluation of Strategic Plan progress at the last meeting.

“The difference between the old and new ways of thinking about strategy and leadership is that the old revolves around the boundaries of single organizations while the new revolves around the boundaries of ecosystems, clusters of organizations that co-evolve in a larger space of collective value creation....In ecosystems, coordination functions through a constellation of diverse players that collectively form a vehicle for seeing current possibilities and sensing emerging opportunities.”
—Theory U, Leading from the Future as It Emerges by Otto Scharmer
of each year. Other evaluation may be required by future grants.

Growing the Children in Nature Collaborative

The Collaborative seeks to balance the benefits of a strong grassroots movement that can move quickly and effectively in a variety of settings and at varying levels of effort with the support of a partnership that can leverage individual efforts and attract higher visibility and resources. The Collaborative supports partnerships that leverage individual efforts and attract higher visibility and resources. Many of the strategies in this Plan are already being implemented by different organizations in the area. The Collaborative seeks to create an environment where productive relationships form, where participants learn, are inspired to take action, and inspire others to take action—alone or in partnership. The Collaborative aspires to act with mutual support, openness, flexibility, and with a clear focus on affecting a shift in society and culture where children’s experiences and connections with nature become an everyday occurrence—strongly valued for its own sake and the many associated benefits.

The Children in Nature Collaborative will serve the following functions:

• Convene partners
• Coordinate strategies and actions
• Communicate locally, regionally and nationally
• Serve as a resource clearinghouse
• Educate and conduct social marketing
• Advocate
• Track progress

It is helpful to state what functions the Collaborative does not intend to perform:

• Not a closed group; membership is open to all who adhere to the guiding principles and share the vision and mission
• Not the sole implementers of strategies, actions, programs or projects
Not a direct service provider
Not a funding or grant-making body
Not an oversight body: we will not approve or evaluate projects

Depending on available funding, the Collaborative will support strategy implementation specifically through a Coordinator, two annual conferences, quarterly meetings, a website, and meetings of the Coordinating Group. The Collaborative will grow over time as strategies are implemented to make a difference in the lives of children and families.

**Adding Partners and Sponsors**
The lists of implementing partners for each strategy in this Plan are expected to grow and change over time, with more individuals and organizations joining to take action on specific strategies and to work collectively. Joining the Children in Nature Collaborative provides access to a community of peers that shares the values, resources and experience around environmental, social and health issues. Any individual or organization sharing the values and vision of the Collaborative is invited to join. Partners and Sponsors are defined as follows.

*Partnering* organizations and individuals:
- Support the guiding principles of the Children in Nature Collaborative
- Participate in events and forums
- Initiate dialogue about the physical, psychological and cognitive benefits of nature and unstructured play

*Sponsoring* organizations and individuals do the above, and provide critical support and resources.

Together, working across sectors with a common mission and commitment, we can create meaningful social change, moving toward a society that values children and nature and the deep connection that can happen when they meet.
appendix a: children in nature collaborative partners

Organizations
Alliance for Childhood*
allianceforchildhood.org
Bay Area Wilderness Training
bawt.org
Collective Roots
collectiveroots.org
Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration
cheercentral.org
De Anza College Child Development Center*
deanza.edu/child
Design Focus Landscape Architects*
designfocus.com
Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University*
scu.edu
Environmental Volunteers*
evols.org
Exploring a Sense of Place*
exploringsenseofplace.org
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County*
first5kids.org
Full Circle Farm/ Sustainable Community Gardens*
fullcirclesunnyvale.org
Getting Going Growing*
conexions.org
Hidden Villa*
hiddenvilla.org
Hooked On Nature*
hookedonnature.org
Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara
kp.org/santaclara
Leaping Lizards Nature Awareness Preschool
leapinglizardspreschool.com
Natural Teaching Curriculum, Inc.*
naturalteachingcurriculum.org
One Wilderness School
onewilderness.com
Playborhood
playborhood.com
REI*
rei.com
Riekes Center for Human Enhancement*
riekes.org
Tender Tracks*
tendertracks.com
Waldorf School of the Peninsula
waldorfpeninsula.org
Wild Zones*
wild-zone.net
Youth Science Institute*
ysi-ca.org
Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
naturesculpture.com

Individuals
Natalie Bitton*
Maylyn Co
Toni De Marco*
Renee Fitzsimmons
Nancy Freihofer
Matt Harding*
Janet Rae Jorgensen*
Amy Pertschuk*
Tina Simmons
Scott Vanderlip*
Brian Williams
Ken Yeager
Ollia Yenikomshian

*Founding partners actively engaged in promoting the mission, goals and guiding principles of the Collaborative.
Appendix B: Children in Nature Collaborative Community Strategic Planning Event Participants

Biret Adden  
Children’s Discovery Museum

Amy Aken  
Healthy Silicon Valley

Cathy Andrade  
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County

Mary Ruth Bafrali  
Castro School: Garden Program

Kathryn Besser  
Cherry-Chase School

Bonnie Broderick  
Public Health—County of Santa Clara

Agnes Chan  
Palo Alto Community Child Care

Julia Chen  
The Playstore

Karen Chmielewski  
Hidden Villa

Ken Clarkson  
Riekes Center for Human Awareness: Nature Awareness

Avery Cleary  
Hooked on Nature

Mary Ann Cook  
Saratoga News

Maylyn Corwin  
The Health Trust, Healthy Silicon Valley

Sarah Davis  
MIG, Inc.

Sandra Derby  
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Beth DeVincenzi  
Hooked on Nature

Jennifer Dunbar  
Design Focus

Rebecca Dye  
Design Focus

Claire Elliot  
Acterra: Stewardship Project

Renee Fitzsimons  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Justine Forbes  
Community Member

Mary Garcia  
FIRST5 Santa Clara County

Susan Goltsman  
MIG, Inc.

Diane Gordon  
Hooked on Nature: Children, Nature, and You

Roy Gordon  
Hooked on Nature: Children, Nature, and You

Chelsea Griffie  
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Kerri Hamilton  
Healthy Silicon Valley

Robert Hamilton  
Healthy Silicon Valley

Karen Harwell  
Exploring a Sense of Place

Garth Harwood  
Hidden Villa

Hank Helbush  
Design Focus

Alison Hicks  
Castro School: Garden Program

Linda Hjelm  
Community Member

Kendra Hoffmaster  
Eastfield Ming Quong Children & Family Services

Marie Imai  
Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School

Dana Jain  
Educator

Tony Johnson  
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Lynn Kawaratan  
Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose

Sherry Keith  
San Francisco State University

Kelly Krotcova  
Design Focus

Mike Lanza  
Playborhood

Renee Lee  
Choices for Children

Carmen Leong-Mench  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Elizabeth MacAskill
Community Member

Kyle MacDonald
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Avo Makdessian
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County

Jenni Martin
Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose

Nancy Martin
Photographer

Kathryn Mathewson
Secret Gardens, Advocate for Open Space

Leigh Ann Maze
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Linda McCabe
Friends of Guadalupe River Parkway & Gardens

Debbie Miguel
Kaiser Permanente

Elissa Miller
Project Cornerstone

Genie Moore
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Terry Nail
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Ashlee Oh
Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara

Chris Overington
Hidden Villa

Betty Peck
Kindergarten Forum

Amy Pertschuk
Children & Nature Network

Zach Pine
Nature Sculpture

Anna Rainville
Kindergarten Forum

National Kindergarten Alliance

John Rible
Nature-Based Outdoor Group

Brittany Sabol
Environmental Volunteers

Amor Santiago
Healthy Silicon Valley

Lilia Schwartz
Full Circle Farm

Joanne Seavey-Hultquist
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County

Pat Senteno
One Wilderness School

Stephanie Sicore
Marshall Lane Elementary

Laurel Smith
Exploring a Sense of Place

Travis Smith
Healthy Silicon Valley

Susan Stansbury
Getting Going Growing

Manna Teclemariam
African Community Health Institute

Steve Tomallyay
Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose

Scott Vanderlip
Children in Nature Collaborative

Carolyn Verheyen
MIG, Inc.

Scott Vu
Healthy Silicon Valley

Michelle Wexler
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Lucy Wurz
Waldorf School of the Peninsula

Miko Yamaguchi
Waldorf School of the Peninsula

Ken Yeager
Supervisor Santa Clara County
appendix c: additional national resources

_Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv_

_Last Child in the Woods_ has created a national conversation about the disconnection between children and nature. The book’s message has galvanized a national movement with grassroots initiatives in over forty regions across the country. The Children and Nature Network was created by Richard Louv and other leaders and experts to support the people and organizations working to reconnect children and nature. The Network provides a critical link between researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to children’s health and wellbeing.

The following links provide access to national and international resources:

**News and Research**
- Children & Nature Network | www.childrenandnature.org
- Mapping the Movement
- Research Volumes I, II, and III
- A Report on the Movement to Reconnect Children to the Natural World
- Field Notes from the Future, a blog by Richard Louv

**Advocacy and Legislation**
- Alliance for Childhood | www.allianceforchildhood.org
- No Child Left Inside Coalition | www.nclicoalition.org

**Getting Parents and Teachers Involved**
- 52 Ways to Fall in Love with the Earth | www.52waystolovetheearth.org
- The Green Hour | www.greenhour.org
- Nature Circles | www.naturecircles.org
- Family Nature Clubs | www.childrenandnature.org
- Take a Child Outside Week | www.takeachildoutside.org
- PBS film _Where Do the Children Play?_ | www.allianceforchildhood.org
Forming Collaborations

1. Collaborate with organizations that focus on children’s health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
   - Collaborate with like-minded organizations who may be able to incorporate our message into their projects; Partner with and link to current issues such as childhood obesity; Share ideas and focus on health benefits of nature to attract support from health-related organizations; Provide materials and resources for doctors and health related organizations; Encourage doctors to ask about outside time as part of well-child visits and to give prescriptions for nature; Create pilot projects demonstrating the benefits of nature to children and youth’s physical and mental health and the health of communities.

2. Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
   - Outreach across sectors and increase members; Open the dialogue; Develop vision and values across organizations; Collaborate on ideas, funds, support and publicity; Share resources and rely on each other as resources; Develop a learning collaborative with best practices and evaluation; Foster work with other collaboratives; Build collaborative cross-communications; Cross link websites.

3. Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection with nature.
   - Target 10-20 sites without access to safe parks; Collaborate with existing programs and organizations working with underserved communities; Work with community centers and pre-school sites; Develop mentoring programs for inner city/urban kids.

Sharing Resources

4. Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (preschools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.
   - Create workshops and events that bring the message to childcare providers, parents and play groups; Develop “train the trainer” courses and provide workshops at existing conferences for teachers and early childhood caregivers; Create pilot “green” early childhood program for 0-5 families; Create a toolbox for home visitors and other providers with materials and activities to engage parents in providing more opportunities for unstructured play and connection with nature including resources for immigrant stay-at-home parents.

5. Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups, and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.
   - Create a new generation of leaders by engaging young people through conferences and college-level courses; Work with environmental organizations and park staff to create an environment that encourages an interest and relationship with nature.
   - Provide information and resources to schools and organizations; Encourage parents to spend time in nature with their children; Empower parents to give their children space and time
to play in nature; Address parents’ fears about children’s safety in nature; Provide non-commercial advice on children’s activities; Create resources to help parents who may have less access to nature.

- Create outdoor classrooms, school gardens, and wild areas; Encourage more field trips in nature; Create nature clubs or an afterschool collaborative of nature programs; Develop nature programs that involve high school students working with elementary students.

6. Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

- Conduct an inventory of organizations involved in connecting children with nature; Survey to answer this question: where do children play and where do they need to play; Develop map with what organizations and individuals are doing—mission and goals; Develop a toolkit for cities making decisions about land use or updating general plans.

Implementing Projects and Events

7. Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks and neighborhoods.

- Develop Play Days in diverse settings ranging from neighborhoods to parks to natural areas; Promote Nature Circles as relationship-building group experiences creating time and space to reconnect with the natural world; Create forums that open dialogue; Show films or videos (including films in other languages) to demonstrate the importance of play; Create events that involve the media and include well-known artists, authors or political leaders who have a passion for or interest in our vision.

8. Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g. organic farms, school gardens and restoration projects).

- Create program for native plant restoration with preschools and daycare programs to help children and parents connect with nature and associate nature with restorative qualities; Encourage welcoming children in nature and creating wonder, awe and play in programs to promote being in nature.

9. Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

- Promote and encourage front yard community gardens with vegetables, natural water spaces, play spaces (tree forts, rocks, etc.) designed primarily for children; Create yards as a community gathering place for kids and adults to share in developing a common garden space.

Creating and Adapting Environments

10. Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.

- Advocate for reconnecting communities to their natural environment by working with local agencies who are public landowners to open or increase access to their properties;
Develop more nearby parks where kids can walk on their own.

11. Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

- Create Wild Zones in school yards, parks, and natural areas; Train play rangers to help create open-ended possibilities for self-designed play, learning and socializing.

Growing the Collaborative

12. Grow the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

- Expand the number of partnerships in the Collaborative; Sponsor two conferences annually to develop resources, innovative projects, and replicable models; Host quarterly meetings to promote collaboration and implementation of strategies through growing partnerships and to update partners on national news; Create schedule of coordinating group meetings open to all partners.

Spreading the Message

13. Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.

- Establish a regional media campaign with a campaign name, i.e. the “Green Hour;” Join a national social marketing campaigns to support grassroots focus; Create broad media coverage, i.e. advertising connected to public transportation; Leverage working across sectors by creating cross or joint messaging, building public awareness about the importance of play and nature; Create films, podcasts, public service announcements; Write articles and materials for schools and organizations to promote unstructured play and nature; Develop toolkits or resources for policy-makers.