

# EECONEWS

...a focus on Getting Outside

Spring 2011

Volume XXX

Issue 2



## Did Your Child Play Outside Today

*This original C&NN feature on Ohio has been adapted by Denise Natoli Brooks, The Wilds*

Since the first Leave No Child Inside (LNCI) group in the nation started in Cincinnati Ohio, the Children & Nature Movement has grown substantially and has active campaigns in over 40 states. Recently the Children and Nature Network, founded shortly after the release of Richard Louv's 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, featured Ohio and its leadership in the LNCI Movement. The LNCI Collaboratives of Ohio developed the "Did Your Child Play Outside Today" public awareness campaign. Have you seen evidence of the campaign's initial phase? Posters were distributed and made available for download, and the group created a PSA video featuring Jack Hanna (Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and frequent guest on national late night TV shows) which was designed to reach doctors, parents, children and others to encourage them to support the work of OH LNCI and get outdoors every day. Recognizing that outside play helps create healthier children, Ohio enlisted pediatricians in the "Play Outside" Campaign.

Building on Richard Louv's keynote at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in October, 2010, LNCI OH had a booth at the state meeting of the Ohio Chapter of the AAP. With the help of physician/advocate Wendy Anderson, MD, LNCI hopes to identify 500 pediatricians statewide who will advocate for outdoor play by displaying posters and wearing "Did Your Child Play Outside Today" buttons. Partnering with Nationwide Children's Hospital, planning is underway to kick off this initiative at a statewide "Come Outside and Play" event at Franklin Park Conservancy in Columbus on June 11, 2011.

OH LNCI Collaboratives collected information from state departments and non-profit organizations throughout the state to identify work already underway to reconnect children with nature. Expanding on strategies identified by the National Wildlife Federation, C&NN, and other states which have prepared similar reports, the Report on Reconnecting Children with Nature outlines strategies and highlights work in progress in Ohio. The report was co-produced with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Office of the Governor and was released in September, 2010. The OH LNCI Collaboratives are busily working to get our new administration up to speed and on board this movement.

In recognition for their commitment to healthier, happier, and smarter youth, the LNCI Collaboratives received Ohio Department of Natural Resource's Cardinal Award.

The Cardinal Award was presented by then- Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to "individuals and organizations demonstrating exceptional awareness and concern for ideals reflected in the department's mission statement: 'to ensure a balance between the wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all.'"

For more information or to get involved in a regional OH LNCI Collaborative, visit [www.ohiolnci.org](http://www.ohiolnci.org).

### Save the date

#### **EECO Annual Conference**

Maumee Bay  
April 14-17

#### **Life on a Sandy Delta**

Hocking Hills  
June 12-18

#### **OEEF Grant Letter of Intent**

July 8 Deadline

#### **OEEF Grant Submission**

July 15 Deadline

# Health Nuts

By Dan Remley, OSU Extension Butler County

You've probably heard some of the grim statistics about the health of our children and families:

- One out of five children are considered overweight.
- Obesity and chronic diseases costs our nation 117 billion annually in health care expenditures.
- Since 1980, the prevalence of childhood obesity has doubled and teenage obesity has tripled.
- Only 1 out of 3 children receives the recommended amount of physical activity.

Like many other epidemics throughout history, a "perfect storm" of detrimental factors has emerged in our society: sedentary culture, convenience of fast food, the "built" environment, disordered eating, lack of healthy alternatives in schools, and many others. The bottom line is that our children and families are consuming too many calories and are not physically active enough. As a result, more and more people develop chronic diseases such as diabetes which will affect their overall quality of life.



**Looking at animal footprints**



**Bug hunting on a nature hike**

Researches have identified that one of the strongest correlates with physical activity in children is spending time outdoors. Children who spend time outdoors are more physically active than those who don't. Given our extensive "built" environment, spending time outdoors has never been so important, yet so difficult for many of us to accomplish. People today are spending more time indoors than ever before with some people spending more than 80% of their lives indoors!

For children especially, spending time outdoors can provide benefits that go beyond physical activity. Outdoor activities promote cognitive and social development through unstructured play with other children and through the exploration of the natural environment. Some researchers suggest that exposure to light influences children's' moods, performance, sleeping patterns, and sensory development.

One way to motivate children and families to spend more time outdoors is to foster an interest in nature. In Butler County, the Ohio State University Extension, Butler Soil and Water Conservation District, and Butler County Metroparks have developed a unique learning experience called Health Nuts which combines health and environmental education. Health Nuts enables families to learn about nutrition and fitness, how to appreciate nature, be more physically active, eat healthier, and play in the mud! Specific programs have included:

"Reptiles and Muscles" – Compare your strength to various animals, meet a reptile and compare muscles!



**You can never be too young to start Wetland Yoga**

"Woolly Mammoths and Dinosaur Eggs" - Families learn about the importance of calcium and minerals in the diet, create a milk mustache, and hunt for fossils in the creek. The session ends with a hunt for dinosaur eggs, known to you and me as watermelons!

"Mud Mania" - Families learn about hydration then get some great exercise while tackling a mud obstacle course.

Each week, families set a nature or physical activity goal. By working with the families that show up week after week, and season after season, the evaluations indicate that families spend more time outdoors, eat healthier, and are more physically active following the program.

For more information about Health Nuts, you can contact Dan Remley at [remley.4@osu.edu](mailto:remley.4@osu.edu) or (513) 887-3722.



**Think you have a little mud on you!**



# Charting a Course for the Future.... In Environmental Education

44th EECO Annual Conference  
April 14-17, 2011

**Maumee Bay State Park**

Charting a Course for the Future in Environmental Education

During the conference, participants can:

- Explore new ways of thinking through workplace interactions and technology
- Discover new and rediscover little used resources at both the local and state level
- Map out ways to partner with other organizations to combine educational opportunities

Concurrent Sessions include:

- Art for Water's Sake, The Rain Barrel Project
- Transforming the School Grounds into an Outdoor Classroom
- Educational opportunities on Lake Erie for Teachers and Students
- Wetland Wanders: Getting Children INTO Nature
- Globe: It's Elementary!
- EXCITE ODYSSEYS: PBL Modules for Students in the Middle!

Day trips include:

- Magee Marsh, Black Swamp Bird Observatory and Ottawa Wildlife Refuge
- Gibraltar Island, Stone Lab, Heineman Winery and Crystal Cave
- Ken Green's Farm (green installations) and Agriculture Incubator
- University of Findlay Hazmat Program
- Wind Energy and Solar Energy

***For more information and to register, please visit***

**[www.eeco-online.org](http://www.eeco-online.org)**



## **Life on a Sandy Delta, 2011**

***June 12 - 18, 2011***

Sponsored by Ashland University, Crane Hollow, Inc., Camp Oty'Okwa, The Knoops

Enjoy life on a "Sandy Delta" in the beautiful Hocking Hills!! Learning, new friends, and fun!! An overnight retreat for environmental educators, naturalists, and teachers! Keynote Presenter and Performer Chris Rowlands will provide a final evening of song, laughter and learning!

Arrival and Registration: 4:00pm Sunday, June 12

Departure: 1:00pm Saturday, June 18

Cost: \$375.00. This includes 50 contact hours, lodging, meals, sessions, materials

Grad credit: Additional fee:(3 semester hrs): \$525.00 (2 semester hrs): \$350.00

For registration and information: Cathy Knoop: 740-385-6638 or  
[cpknoop@hocking.net](mailto:cpknoop@hocking.net)



# Sunship Earth Lands at Stratford Ecological Center

*By Joe Brehm, Environmental Education Programs Coordinator for Rural Action and EECO Board Member*

As 5th grade students from St. Mary's in Delaware, Ohio descend school bus steps and enter Stratford Ecological Center (SEC), they are unaware of the journey that awaits them. Led by Christa Hein, Education Coordinator, SEC has implemented an outdoor education program new to Ohio. It is called Sunship Earth, a 5-day curriculum that focuses on Earth systems and functions and covers 80% of Ohio Academic Content Standards for 5th grade. Though utilized in four countries (including the U.S in a handful of states), this fall marks the first landing of Sunship Earth at Stratford Ecological Center.

Students learn experientially during their five days at Stratford, interacting with scientific concepts through hands-on activities, role playing, and by creating replicas of the systems they seek to understand.

“For example, they learn about photosynthesis by going inside a giant leaf that we built and actually performing photosynthesis with molecule balls,” says Hein.

In this way, Sunship Earth is deliberately theatrical. Acting out concepts and interacting creatively with the material is its hallmark. This form of experiential education demands that students not only learn the material, but assimilate it by putting concepts into their own words or pictures. Finally, they apply this knowledge by explaining aloud to their crew leader the concept they have just studied and a real-life example of it.



*Welcome to Earth*

Upon arriving, students are escorted from the bus to a dark room in the education center at Stratford where they are welcomed to “Sunship Earth”. They board this vessel of learning as special passengers. Their mission: to understand the Earth and its place in the universe. After a video tour of the solar system is shown to give students a “sense of place in space,” says Hein, they are shown a slide show of scenes from planet Earth, voiced over by a reading of a Chief Seattle speech. They are to not only spread this knowledge to fellow Earthen residents, but students are also empowered to do their part to repair damage done to Earth’s natural resources.

After this introduction, students are given activities that “break down the barriers between themselves and the outdoors,” says Hein, such as turning the children into bugs with a magic wand and having them crawl around on the ground with a blindfold like an insect. Many students are from urban areas, and breaking down the barriers between students and the natural world becomes particularly important. It does not take long for many of the students from city schools to become comfortable in a previously foreign environment, however.



*A model that shows how photosynthesis works in leaves*

“The first time Mrs. Biswas introduced this program to us, none of us wanted to do it. It just sounded like this boring nature thing!” wrote Stephanie Presper from Columbus School for Girls. After a couple of days, however, Presper was comfortable with getting her shoes and clothes dirty and enjoyed the activities.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, Sunship Earth’s journey consists of two main parts. The “intellectual meat” of the program is the first, wherein students are divided into groups and go through various stations in Stratford’s nature preserve. These teach science standards in an innovative and apparently effective fashion. Cindy Baker, one of Stratford’s crew leaders for Sunship Earth, witnessed a student recall a question he encountered in the pre-test that Hein administers during one of the activities.

“The student said, ‘oh, that’s the answer’, remembering the pre-test question,” Baker recalls. “I thought, ‘it works!’” Judging from the positive feedback from schools that have participated so far, it looks as though Baker is right.

Why does it work? Hein thinks it is for several reasons, one of which surprised her.

“Actually, I think the use of props makes a big difference,” she says, referring to the giant photosynthesis leaf, Mr. Sun’s restaurant, sinks full of various geologic layers of Earth, and many other tangible items utilized throughout the week’s lessons. These objects, Hein asserts, “help students link scientific concepts to things they are already familiar with.” This is to say that students are familiar with washing their hands in a sink, for instance. They can relate, therefore, to a lesson in geology that encourages students to wash their hands in sinks full of different layers of soil in the forest.

Sunship Earth is not just about meeting science standards, however. It is also about giving students the tools, encouragement, and opportunities to become stewards of planet Earth. To allow for this type of growth, the second major component of Sunship Earth focuses on what Hein calls the “feeling component” of outdoor education. The students are given one half-hour each afternoon right after lunch to visit a “magic spot” where they sit quietly by themselves and write in journals, if they choose.

“They eat lunch as fast as they can,” said Hein, “so that they can have more time at their sit-spots. It’s really amazing.”

The concluding day of Sunship Earth’s voyage is also designed to build students’ appreciation for nature and their place in it. A storyteller dressed the part tells students the tale of Earth—from the indigenous inhabitants that live comfortably and simply with Earth’s bounty to the destruction of the land as the machine of modern civilization grew. The students, teachers, and crew leaders alike make commitments to change at least one behavior in their lives that is harmful to the land.

Finally, students watch the same video that their voyage commenced with, save for one difference. During the week, teachers took pictures of the students’ journey through the program, and these pictures are spliced into the video. They are then told, “welcome home,” as their voyage comes to an end.

“I don’t cry anymore,” said Baker, in her fifth week facilitating Sunship Earth at Stratford. She describes the finale as “an emotional experience,” wherein students come to a deep and meaningful understanding of themselves and their place in the world. This is not Baker’s first rodeo in environmental education, either. Having worked at other nature centers throughout Ohio, she brings a great deal of experience and skill to this program. But there is something different and special about Sunship Earth.

Hein agrees. When asked about her experience in initially going through the program at a training in Pennsylvania, she said that Sunship Earth “completely changed my outlook on environmental education. And I’ve been doing this for 15 years.”



*Enjoying the voyage on Sunship Earth*



*5th graders create their own soil with mallets and forest litter*

Perhaps it is the combination of intellectual challenge and emotional connection with the natural world, but Sunship Earth is clearly unique. Not only does it teach to academic standards, but it engenders ownership of place. As human beings seek to improve environmental literacy and stewardship across the globe, experiences like Sunship Earth are invaluable for young people. Students and facilitators alike will never see the natural world in the same way after their time on this vessel of learning, which brought them home in ways they did not imagine possible.

To find out more about Sunship Earth, please contact Christa at [treebeing@aol.com](mailto:treebeing@aol.com) or at (740) 363-2548.

## **2020 Vision: Newspaper Headline From the Future**

### ***Headlines dreamed up by participants at the 2010 Ohio Leave No Child Inside summit***

- “Free-Range Children Running Rampant: Ohio’s Children Lead Nation in Time Spent Outdoors”
- “Purple Loosestrife and Garlic Mustard declared Endangered Species in Ohio”
- “Ohio’s Water Named Cleanest in Nation”
- “Ohio Experiences 30-Day Blackout – Kids Realize Nature is Fun”
- “School Cafeterias Switch to Local, Plant-Based Fare”
- “High Street Closed to Cars to Accommodate Growing Numbers of Bicycle Commuters”
- “Geothermal overtakes Coal as Most Common Source of Residential Electricity”
- “Bald Eagles Outnumber Starlings in Latest Backyard Bird Count”
- “Thousands Gather to Swim in Lake Erie”
- “Squirrel Goes from Ohio River to Lake Erie without ever leaving the Trees”
- “Voters Approve Park Levies in Record Numbers”
- “State Superintendent of Education Reminds Ohio Teachers to Spend at Least Ten Hours per Week Inside the Classroom”
- “Childhood Obesity Rates Drop to Record Lows”
- “Weather Reports Ignored! Folks Dress Appropriately”
- “Ohio Unveils New State Slogan: America’s Natural Playground”
- “Ohio’s State Parks Institute Waiting List – More Facilities and Programs Planned”
- “Health Insurance Rates at All-Time Low Due to Outdoor Play”
- “Last Landfill in Ohio Closes”
- “Millionth Backyard Habitat Certified”
- “Increase in Student Test Scores linked to greater outdoor experiences”

### **Be In the Spotlight and Get Published...**

In EECOnews we are always looking for insightful articles and ideas that include, but are not limited to: Natural History, Current Events and Programs, Educational Activities, Areas of Concern, and Success Stories. If you are passionate about your ideas, concepts, lessons, etc, then contact Betsy Banks at [ewb@case.edu](mailto:ewb@case.edu) with your ideas.

When writing:

- Use a conversational style
- Focus your ideas
- Keep it less than 500 words
- Don’t forget to include pictures and / or images. Images should be at least 300 dpi to ensure the highest print quality. Remember the pictures will be converted to black and white.



# Winter Snow 2011 Reflection

**By Joe Brehm, Rural Action's Environmental Education Coordinator  
and EECO Board member**

In early February of 2011, I attended my first Winter Snow conference, held at Camp Nuhop near Mohican State Park. The setting, people, presenters, and stories made a very positive impact on me. Every discussion and event was enhanced by beautiful Camp Nuhop.



As Herb Broda preached about the importance of integrating the outdoors into the classroom, a motionless winter forest magnified his message. Folks from Nature's Classroom taught a lesson on winter adaptations wherein my partner and I succeeded in keeping our canister of Jello from freezing despite cold temperatures by giving it proper insulation. Terry Hermsen guided a group of conference participants through a powerful poetry exercise that not only explained the concept of metaphor, but also encouraged observation skills and creativity. I was amazed at the poems my colleagues created in a matter of minutes, which we read to each other next to a warm fire in one of the cabins.

***Its called Winter Snow for a reason!***

Merdra told their story of revitalizing Mansfield City Schools with pollinator gardens and raising Monarch butterflies. This project improved teacher morale, drastically raised attendance of schools' open houses, and captivated participating students. One third grader wrote that "butterflies are the ones that help us, so I love them."

The weekend conference was refreshing and inspiring. I left the rolling hills and ravines of Camp Nuhop, Mohican State Park, and Malabar Farm State Park with new ideas, new friendships, and inspirational stories to bring back to southeast Ohio. I was impressed beyond my expectations and already look forward to next year.

Last but not least,  
Janet Ellsworth and Joanne



***Winter Words***

## **SAVE THE DATE**

### **for our 36th annual 101 Educators' Conference**

**October 7, 8 and 9, 2011**



***You never know what you will see  
at the 101 conference***

- At YMCA Camp Kern (32 miles northeast of Cincinnati)
- This conference will inspire teachers, outdoor educators, and all adults with creative and fun ways to provide exciting learning experiences.
- Enjoy large and small group sessions, campfires, night hikes, good eating, and plenty more
- Cost: \$82 for all sessions, food, and lodging (\$42 for Saturday only) Discounts and scholarships are available.
- For more information contact Dave Moran at YMCA Camp Kern. 5291 SR 350 Oregonia, OH 45045 phone: (513)-932-3756 x1527, email: dmoran@daytonymca.org

This event is made possible by YMCA Camp Kern, The Environmental Education Council of Ohio, and The Ohio Environmental Education Fund

## EECO Officers, Advisors & Personnel

Executive Director  
Brenda Metcalf  
director@eeco-online.org

Treasurer 2010-2011  
Michael Parkes  
mparkes@heritage-wti.com

Advisor—ODNR  
Jen Dennison  
Jen.Dennison@dnr.state.oh.us

President 2010-2011  
Joyce Meredith  
meredithj@denison.edu

Secretary 2010-2011  
Diana Hunn  
Diana.hunn@notes.dayton.edu

Advisor—ODE  
Dick Dieffenderfer  
dick.dieffenderfer@ode.state.oh.us

Vice President 2010-2011  
Mary Sheridan  
marysheridan@mac.com

Advisor—OEE, OEPA  
Carolyn Watkins  
carolyn.watkins@epa.state.oh.us

Webmaster  
Charleen Race  
webmaster@eeco-online.org

Past President 2010-2011  
Erv Ball  
eball@ccbh.net

Advisor—ODE  
Kim Mullen  
kimberly.mullen@ode.state.oh.us

Newsletter Editors  
Lynn White, Betsy Banks, and  
Joe Brehm

## EECO Board Members

Betsy Banks  
ewb@case.edu

Trevor Dunlap  
Trevor@  
thenuhopcenter.com

Dave Moran  
dmoran@daytonymca.org

Denise Natoli Brooks  
dbrooks@thewilds.org

Ken Green  
Green4680@msn.com

Chris Stepp  
cstepp@athenscity12.oh.us

Gail Prunty  
gprunty@geaugaswcd.com

John Hollback  
jehollback@aep.com

Lynn White  
whitelr@butlercountyohio.org

Joe Brehm  
joe@ruralaction.org

John Kurtz  
johnk@kurtz-bros.com

## EECO Regional Directors

Region 1 Linda Pettit  
Franklin SWCD  
1328 Dublin Rd, Suite 101  
Columbus, OH 43215  
T:614-486-9613  
F:614-486-9614  
linda-pettit@  
franklinswcd.org

Region 5 Sue Magness  
Cincinnati Office of Environ-  
mental Quality  
805 Central Ave  
Two Centennial Plaza ,Ste 320  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
T:513/352-5332  
F:513/352-6995  
Sue.magness@  
cincinnati-oh.gov

Region 9 Patty Rickard  
Huston-Brumbaugh Nature  
Ctr  
1972 Clark Ave  
Alliance, OH 44601  
T: 330.823.7487  
F:330.823.8531  
rickarpa@muc.edu

Region 2 Bunny Rossnagel  
Metro Parks of the Toledo  
Area  
5100 W. Central Ave.  
Toledo, OH 43615-2106  
T:419-407-9772  
F: 419-407-9785  
bunny.rossnagel@  
metroparkstoledo.com

Region 6 Joanne Mudra  
3421 Schrack Rd.  
Lucas, OH 44843  
T: 419-892-3521  
F:419-774-6330  
jemudra@gmail.com

Region 10 Bonnie Dailey  
Muskingum Valley Park  
District  
PO Box 446  
Zanesville, OH 43702-0446  
T:740.455.8237  
F:740.455.7939  
mvpd@  
muskingumcounty.org

Region 3 Dawn Wingate  
OSU-Lima, 236 Galvin Hall  
4240 Campus Drive  
Lima, OH 45804  
T:419-995-8437  
F:419-995-8094  
wingate.2@osu.edu

Region 6 Janet Ellsworth  
Mansfield City Schools  
606 Highridge Rd.  
Lexington, OH 44904  
T: 419-884-0818  
F:419-525-6389  
wellsworth@neo.rr.com

Region 11 Vicki Kohli  
Fairfield SWCD  
831 College Ave. Ste B  
Lancaster, OH 43130-5320  
T: 740.653.8154  
F:740.653.4561  
vicki.kohli@oh.nacdn.net

Region 4 Donna Lewis  
Boonshoft Museum of  
Discovery  
2600 DeWeese Parkway  
Dayton, OH 45414  
T:937-275-7431 ext. 114  
F: 937-275-5811  
dlewis@  
boonshoftmuseum.org

Region 7 Jeff Montavon  
Scioto SWCD  
12167A State Route 104  
Lucasville, OH 45648  
T:740.259-9231  
F: 740.259-9168  
Jeff.montavon@  
sciotoswcd.org

Region 12 Cheryl Mattevi  
Kent State University: Salem  
831 Highland Ave.  
Salem, OH 44460  
Tel: 330.337.3956  
c.mattevi@att.net

Region 5 Errin Howard  
1157 Fashion Ave.  
Cincinnati, OH 45238  
T:513-451-5027  
hcrownie@current.net

Region 8 Dawn Wrench  
Earth Day Coalition  
3606 Bridge Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44113  
T:216/281-6468x225  
F:216/281-5112  
dwrench@  
earthdaycoalition.org



Environmental Education Council of Ohio

PO Box 1004  
Lancaster OH 43130

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For information about EECO's programs and services, please contact  
Brenda Metcalf, Executive Director.

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