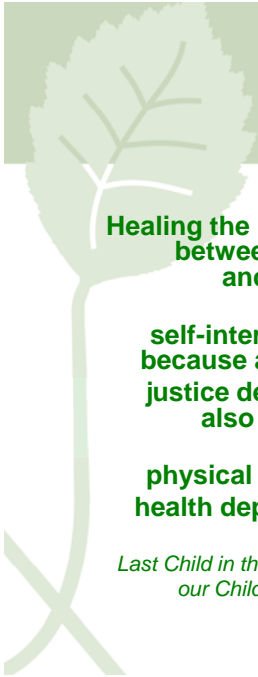




Building a Movement to Reconnect Children & Nature

Cheryl Charles, Ph.D., President and CEO  
Amy Pertschuk, Managing Director  
Report to the C&NN Grassroots Gathering  
September 18, 2008

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Healing the broken bond  
between our young  
and nature is in  
everyone's  
self-interest, not only  
because aesthetics or  
justice demand it, but  
also because our  
mental,  
physical and spiritual  
health depend upon it.

Richard Louv  
*Last Child in the Woods: Saving  
our Children from Nature-  
Deficit Disorder*



## Mission

- The mission of the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is to build a movement to reconnect children and nature.



## What We Do

- **Communicate**
- **Network**
- **Synthesize**
- **Engage**
- **Initiate and Innovate**



## What Research Says: The Deficit

- Children are spending 40 to 65 hours or more a week attached to electronic umbilica.
- Fewer than 1 in 5 children walk or ride a bike to school.
- Childhood obesity has increased from 4% in the 1960s to 20% today.
- Children have less time for unstructured, creative play in the outdoors than ever before in human history.

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## What Research Says: The Benefits

- Children are happier, healthier and smarter when they connect with nature.
  - **Happier:** Nature play increases self esteem, improves psychological health and reduces stress. Children learn self-discipline and are more cooperative.
  - **Healthier:** Nature play improves physical conditioning and reduces obesity.
  - **Smarter:** Nature play stimulates creativity and improves problem solving. Children do better in school.

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## Definition of Children and Nature-Centered Experiences

- Nature-centered experiences for children are those that instill wonder and engender curiosity; take place in outdoor settings ranging from backyards to neighborhoods to city parks to wilderness; and occur in the form of guided activities as well as unstructured nature play in children's everyday lives.



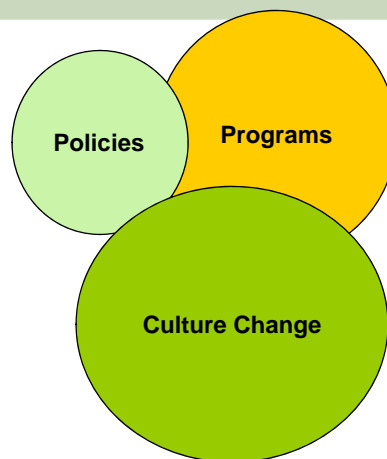
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## Tipping Points

Once a new idea is accepted by a group of “innovators” and “early adopters,” together typically representing 5 to 13% of the population, it becomes self-sustaining.

Based on the work of Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*



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## C&NN Five-Year Goals

- Reverse the societal trend of the past three decades in which children and youth have become disconnected from direct experience in the outdoors in their everyday lives.
- Build widespread, cross-sector community support throughout the US and all major regions of the world.
- Show demonstrable, measurable success.



## Examples of Measurable Objectives

- Reach more than half the parents in a public awareness campaign.
- Obtain the endorsement of influential physicians and medical associations to prescribe “nature play” for children.
- With allied organizations, reverse the trend of childhood obesity in five years.
- Engage major builders and developers to design and redesign communities that are children and nature-centered.
- Secure the commitment of one-third of the mayors and one-half the governors to support children and nature-centered places and programs.
- Establish children and nature initiatives in 100 urban regions, 50 states, five provinces and 50 nations.

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## C&NN 2008 Priorities

- Growing Public Awareness
- Providing Access to State of the Art Resources
- Disseminating Principles of Children and Nature-Centered Design
- Supporting Community Leadership and the Grassroots
- Engaging Leadership within and among Sectors
- Developing New Generations of Natural Leaders™
- Filling the Gaps by Identifying Trends and Areas for Additional Research

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## Growing Public Awareness

- Keynotes and workshops by C&NN Board and Senior Associates, coast to coast—more than 100 to date this year reaching audiences of tens of thousands
- Press articles and interviews, including television coverage, e.g., **The Today Show**, July 2008
- Launched first **annual Children & Nature Awareness Month** in 2008
- Launched **Nature Clubs for Families, with REI Support—Do It Yourself, Do It Now!**
- Developing a major **Leave No Child Inside** parents' campaign with ecoAmerica, The Nature Conservancy and others

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## Providing Access to State of the Art Resources

- Continuous upgrades to the C&NN Web site
- Weekly news updates to resources on the Web site
- Monthly e-newsletter
- Development of third annotated bibliography of premier research
- Developing **Nature Clubs for Families Toolkit**, with **REI** support
- Hosting **Notes from the Field**, blog by C&NN Chairman, Richard Louv
- Developing a robust, interactive Web site as part of the **Leave No Child Inside** parents' campaign

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## Disseminating Principles of Children and Nature-Centered Design

- Featured subject in Fall C&NN e-newsletter
- Incorporated into C&NN slide presentations
- Included in annotated bibliography of research and summer recommended reading
- Convening **2008 C&NN Grassroots Gathering** at the site of the **Nature Explore Classroom**
- Planning a conference in the future to synthesize best practices and further disseminate them
- Encouraging the **USGBC** to include children and nature friendly design principles in **LEED** certification

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## Supporting Community Leadership and the Grassroots

- Developed and published the *C&NN Community Action Guide*
- Formed **C&NN Grassroots Leadership Team** and working groups in priority areas
- Providing common messages, resources, and tools, including sample PowerPoint presentations
- With funding from the Kellogg Foundation, implementing the processes in the *C&NN Community Action Guide* as a model in three Michigan communities
- Convening **Second Annual C&NN Grassroots Gathering September 17 – 19**

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## Engaging Leadership within and among Sectors

- Providing a model process through the *C&NN Community Action Guide*
- Speaking to broad-based community groups
- Spreading the word through diverse public media
- Advising all local and regional initiatives to reach out to and include all segments of the community
- Seeking partnerships and fostering collaborative efforts with national and international organizations

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## Developing New Generations of Natural Leaders™

- With support from the **Sierra Club**, and additional support from **The North Face**, launching the **C&NN Natural Leaders Network** at the **C&NN 2008 Grassroots Gathering**
- With the leadership of the **Natural Leaders™** who are participating in this **C&NN Grassroots Gathering**, developing a plan for action

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## Filling the Gaps by Identifying Trends and Areas for Additional Research

- Development and publication of three **C&NN Annotated Bibliographies of Premier Research**
- Convening a **National Children & Nature Research Summit** to be held November 5, co-sponsored by **C&NN, University of Minnesota and Yale University**
- Developing a research agenda, based on the results of the Summit
- Cooperating with and advising the **Conservation Fund's National Forum on Children and Nature**, including its research platform with the **Centers for Disease Control**

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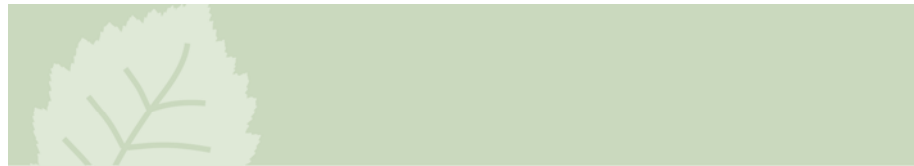


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**Resources, References and  
Leadership**

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## Sample of C&NN Deliverables

- C&NN Web Site (launched in 2006)
- Launch of National Campaign to LNCI (National Press Club April 2006)
- National Gathering of Regional Leaders (August 2007)
- *C&NN Annotated Bibliographies of Research, Volumes 1 and 2* (2007)
- *C&NN Community Action Guide: Building the Children & Nature Movement from the Ground Up* (January 2008)
- *Children and Nature 2008: A Report on the Movement to Reconnect Children to the Natural World* (January, 2008)

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- *Learning with Nature Idea Book: Creating Nurturing Outdoor Spaces for Children* by The National Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, 2007.
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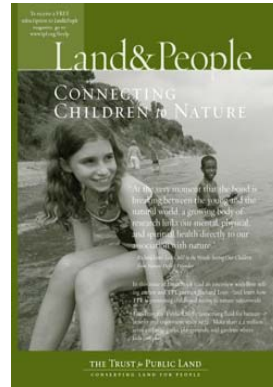
## In the News



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## In the News, cont.



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- **Martin LeBlanc**, Vice President, *National Youth Education Director, Sierra Club*
- **Martha Farrell Erickson**, Ph.D., Secretary, *Retired, Co-Chair, University of Minnesota's President's Academic Initiative on Children, Youth and Families*
- **Brother Yusuf Burgess**, *outdoor and youth educator*
- **Stephen R. Kellert**, Ph.D., *scholar, author and professor, Yale University; Partner, Environmental Capital Partners*
- **Amy Pertschuk**, Managing Director, *Co-Founder, enature.com*

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Antioch College

**Bill Vanderberg**  
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- **Nancy Herron**, Outdoor Learning Programs Coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- **Clifford Knapp**, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Northern Illinois University, author, scholar, outdoor and experiential educator
- **Page Lambert**, author and leader of creative outdoor writing adventures
- **Kathy Baughman McLeod**, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Chief Financial Officer, State of Florida
- **Bob Peart**, Director, Kesho Trust; Founder, Nature Child Reunion, [www.naturechildreunion.ca](http://www.naturechildreunion.ca)

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## C&NN Grassroots Leadership Team

- **Betsy Townsend**, Chair; Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Leave No Child Inside Greater Cincinnati, [www.lncigc.org](http://www.lncigc.org)
- **Janet Carrier Ady**, Chief, Division of Education Outreach, National Conservation Training Center, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Liz Baird**, Director of School Programs, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences
- **Brother Yusuf Burgess**, Environmental Educator, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; C&NN Board of Directors
- **Avery Cleary**, Executive Director, Hooked on Nature
- **Paul B. Hai**, Program Coordinator, Adirondack Ecological Center, State University of New York College of Science and Forestry

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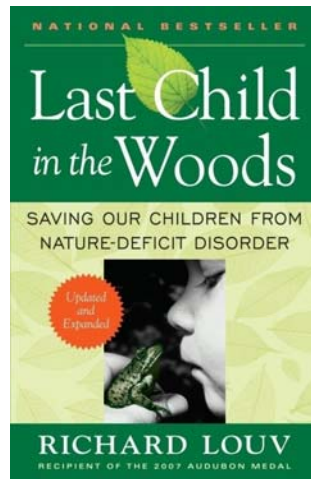
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- **Nancy Herron**, Outdoor Learning Programs Coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; C&NN Senior Associate
- **Brooke Levey**, Co-Founder “Healthy Families Play Outside” in Nebraska
- **John Thielbahr**, Director, Professional Education, Center for Distance and Professional Education, Washington State University
- **Jeff Williamson**, President, Arizona Zoological Society
- **Marilyn Wyzga**, Wildlife Educator, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Co-Founder, New Hampshire Children in Nature Coalition

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## A Book that Launched a Movement



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