Next Generation of Family Nature Clubs

Leveraging Success through Partnerships and Collaboration
Action Lab Goals

In today’s Action Lab, participants will

- gain a deeper understanding of various Family Nature Club models and partnerships;
- take action-oriented steps in planning for their own Family Nature Clubs; and,
- ask questions and engage in lively discussions regarding Family Nature Clubs.
Action Lab Agenda

- Background of Family Nature Clubs
- Panel discussion and overview
- Smaller group breakout sessions
- Report out
- Q & A discussion
- Raffle
Setting the Context

Donahue Family
Setting the Context
Setting the Context

KIVA
Kids In the Valley
Adventuring!

C&NN’s
NATURAL
FAMILIES
NETWORK

Inland Empire Kids Outdoors
Setting the Context
Setting the Context

Inland Empire Kids Outdoors

C&NN’s NATURAL FAMILIES NETWORK

HAPPY TRAILS
Family Nature Club
Connecting kids with nature
www.HappyTrailsClub.net

Kids In the Valley
Adventuring!

Austin Families in Nature
Setting the Context
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Setting the Context
Building the Context
- Started 2008 - small group of friends & neighbors
- Saw need for activity involving the whole family in overscheduled lives
- Families need time together and time in nature
- Original group - 10 families, kids 1-12 years old
- Became a Campfire USA group initially
- Met 2x per month during school year + 1-2 summer trips
It is amazing what a group of kids (and parents) will come up with when they have unstructured time outside together.
By 2013, AFiN had grown quickly, independent from Campfire
Started website to help other families find ideas for how to get outside together or start a family nature club (suggested in C&NN tool kit)
Won 3 awards in Austin - increasing visibility and demand for the program
Gathered volunteers, made website more functional for multiple groups
Got liability insurance
Created many partnerships to get families outside - including C&NN’s Natural Leaders, nature preserves, other non-profits, outfitters
2013  AFiN started offering bigger trips for families to see wildlife and experience nature immersion in biodiversity hot-spots (Osa Peninsula Costa Rica, Marinelab, Cozumel, Aransas)
● 2014 Community Outreach Program started to engage underserved families and help increase diversity in outdoor education

● 2015 AFiN receives 501c3 Non-Profit status and is now seeking grant funding for community outreach
Partnerships allow small and large family nature clubs to get families outside
Allow access to nature in preserves and protected land
Offer guided hikes and naturalists
Offer equipment such as kayaks, fishing poles and other supplies
Provide experiences that families might not otherwise have (TPWD’s Bird in Hand)
Many partners need higher attendance, so the benefit is mutual
Collaboration is important to this movement
ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS
Nature Play Begins at Your Zoo and Aquarium
Supporting innovative ways to establish or enhance family-centered nature play experiences through AZA accredited zoos and aquariums.

- Financial
- Logistical
- Creative
Nature Play Begins: Mini-grants

30 AZA accredited zoos and aquariums

- family nature play experience
- mentorship
- community partnerships
- outdoor component
- addressing barriers
- sustainability
Nature Play Begins: Resources

aza.org/nature-play
Nature Play Begins: Resources

[Image of parents with children]

**Developmental and Behavioral Characteristics of Children**

Note that these tips indicate average development and give a general idea of what to expect. Children develop at various rates and may not reach these milestones at the same time. These milestones are only guides for unique individuals. For information on child development, please visit [aza.org/nature-play](http://aza.org/nature-play).

**Toddler and Preschooler (Age 2-4 Years)**

- **Emotional Development:** Oral-motor skills, body awareness
- **Physical Development:** Walking, running, jumping, climbing
- **Language Development:** Vocabulary growth, verbal expression
- **Social Development:** Sharing, taking turns, understanding emotions

**What to Consider**

- Social-emotional development
- Cognitive development
- Physical development
- Home, school, and community

**What to Do**

- **Read:** Books about nature, animals, and the environment
- **Play:** Outdoor play, imaginative play
- **Explore:** Nature walks, bird watching, and wildlife observation

**Family Nature Clubs**

- **Zoo and aquariums:** Connecting families to nature

[Image of family at the zoo]

[aza.org/nature-play](http://aza.org/nature-play)
Nature Play Begins: Resources

DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

Note that these lists indicate average development and give a general idea of what to expect. Children develop at various rates and their competencies differ. Also, remember that each child is unique. For information on child development, please visit: azasafezoo.org/developmental-characteristics-of-children.pdf

PATHWAYS TO PLAY: OVERCOMING NATURE PLAY BARRIERS

What to Consider
- Create opportunities for outdoor play
- Include different levels of challenge
- Include both structured and unstructured activities
- Include both indoor and outdoor environments

What to Provide
- Safe spaces for children to play
- Safe equipment and materials
- Safe supervision and guidance

- Include a variety of play experiences
- Include a variety of play settings
- Include a variety of play materials

- Include a variety of play times
- Include a variety of play spaces
- Include a variety of play activities

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- Include a variety of play times
- Include a variety of play spaces
- Include a variety of play activities

What to Consider
- Safety is a priority
- Accessibility is important
- Inclusion is key
- Involvement is necessary

What to Provide
- Safety equipment and materials
- Safety training for staff
- Safety guidelines for visitors

- Accessible facilities and equipment
- Accessible pathways and amenities
- Accessible restrooms and facilities

- Inclusive play spaces
- Inclusive play materials
- Inclusive play activities

- Inclusive play programs
- Inclusive play opportunities
- Inclusive play events

- Inclusive play partnerships
- Inclusive play collaborations
- Inclusive play initiatives

toolkit
resources
infographic
aza.org/nature-play
Nature Play Begins: Resources

aza.org/nature-play

Toolkit
Resources
Infographic
E-Guides
Nature Play Begins: Workshops

2014 AZA Annual Conference

- Defined the role that zoos/aquariums contribute to the Nature Play Movement.
- Articulated different ways that nature play can occur in zoos/aquariums, across a spectrum of very unstructured to more directed.
- Practiced strategies for building family engagement in a nature play scenario.
- Identified best practices for working with community partners to support nature play.

2015 AZA Annual Conference - UNworkshop?
Nature Play Begins...and Continues!

Partner with your local AZA accredited zoo/aquarium to be eligible!

May 1st - applications available
June 15th - applications due
aza.org/nature-play
San Antonio Zoo has been heavily invested in nature play since 2002.

- 2004 - opened Kronkosky’s Tiny Tot Nature Spot, 1.5 acre exhibit targeting families with kids 5 and younger to get out in nature
- 2005 opened nature preschool
- 2006 Significant Achievement Award from Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- 2010 partnered with Texas Children in Nature Alliance
● Received AZA grant in July 2014
● Facebook to promote and organize
● Networking through families, members and previous participants
● Planned two activities a month most months.
● Our activities have been mainly unstructured.
● Camp outs have included animal experiences at the zoo, as well as time for a “flashlight tour”.
● Camp fires have been an exciting part for our families.
● Hikes have uncovered animal tracks, sticks, rocks, and animal sightings.

- Goals: families become familiar and comfortable with the different nature areas around San Antonio.
- SAZ Staff would go out first to discover the trails and make sure they were appropriate for young children to manage successfully.
- Partner staff offer tours, binoculars, and information about their area to the families.
- Partners get an opportunity to tell about their programs and activities.
the Growing Context
Knowing Your Context

Breakout “action” working groups:
Next steps for ACTION

- Heather: Grassroots FNCs
- Nette: Organizational FNCs (z/a)
- Mike: Wild Family Nature Clubs
- Karen and Stacy: Nature Play
Closing Q & A

Janice Swaisgood

Heather Kuhlken

Nette Pletcher

Stacy McReynolds and Karen Macias

Mike Bingley