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Free Family Nature Clubs Tool Kit available online to download

By School-Age NOTES Staff

After-school programs can be at the forefront of advocating that children get more nature in their lives by simply going outside with children in all seasons. After-school programs also can encourage parents and families to take part in exploring the outdoors and embracing and encouraging their children's curiosity.

As many studies have shown, children today are leading more sedentary lives. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and chairman of the Child & Nature Network, has been at the forefront of a movement to get children outdoors and experiencing nature in an effort to avoid what he has coined nature-deficit syndrome.

According to Afterschool Alert, playing and learning outdoors "can promote children's intellectual, emotional and physical health (Issue Brief 35, January 2009). In addition to making an effort to have the children in your program spend more time outdoors, also consider promoting the Family Nature Clubs Tool Kit at your site.

This free 20-page kit is available to download at <http://kidsandnature.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/familynatureclubskit.pdf>. A test project

of the Child & Nature Network (<http://www.childrenandnature.org/>), the kit explains the importance of nature clubs for families and outlines how to start one, providing templates for each step.

Consider downloading a copy and printing one out to share with parents during pickup time. Explain to parents and families that nature clubs can be created in any type of neighborhood — inner city, rural or suburban and can involve whomever they like — family, friends and neighbors.

Share with them some of the benefits of creating a nature club, detailed in the tool kit, such as:

- Nature is good for people's health.
- Frequent and varied outdoor play is good for children.
- Outdoor play helps children to be more self-disciplined, focused, self-confident, creative and cooperative.

Also consider taking the initiative to follow the tool kit to create a family nature club yourself that you can then model to the children in your program and their parents and families.

Having used the tool kit, you will be able to assure parents and families of the ease with which such a club can be started and how quickly everyone will be enjoying themselves.

