



WORLD FORUM FOUNDATION

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Raising Environmentally Passionate Future Generations

Objective

To promote future generations of environmental stewards by recruiting, motivating, and training 236 professionally diverse Community Teams from 93 nations to lead local campaigns to reconnect over 2 million young children with nature.

Summary

Solving the mounting environmental challenges facing our planet compels us to raise future generations of citizens who are committed to environmental stewardship. Through the “Raising Environmentally Passionate Future Generations” commitment over 700 adults committed to the environment will contribute 140,000 hours to re-connect children with nature. They will be organized into Community Teams with three members representing diverse disciplines: education, environmental science, community health, and landscape architecture. The project will involve a five-year process within which teams will receive training and interactive tools for leading a community campaign to re-connect children with nature. With support from the World Forum Foundation, teams will then implement projects such as national conferences, community forums, public policy initiatives, then come back together to report on their work, share their successes and failures, and provide recommendations for next steps. Through this commitment, the World Forum Foundation will nurture and educate future environmental stewards by reconnecting over 2 million young children worldwide with nature.

Background

Planet Earth is vulnerable to environmental threats of monumental proportions. Our current generation of leaders is only starting to acknowledge these challenges. Globally we are making scant progress in developing renewable energy sources, curbing encroachments on the natural environment, and fostering sustainable development. Finding solutions to environmental challenges will require the best minds and the best efforts of this and future generations.

However, young children today are much more intrigued by what they encounter on video screens than by what they experience in the natural world. This is not a uniquely American problem. In World Forum events around the world, international educators

shared concerns that children in Nepal, Belize, China, Egypt, Australia, United Kingdom, and Lebanon, for many reasons, spend less and less time outdoors exploring and enjoying the wonders of nature.

Champions of the environment from partnering organizations such as the Nature Conservancy and the International Federation of Landscape Architects are concerned with who will lead the charge in protecting Mother Earth, if future generations are not brought up to appreciate the natural world. The purpose of this project is to re-connect children around the world with nature, creating new generations of environmental stewards. This is a long-term objective, but there also will be significant immediate payoffs. Research has shown that when young children spend significant portions of their time engaged outdoors, they are less prone to obesity, less likely to experience attention deficit symptoms, and have increased cognitive gains as their sensory tools are more fully engaged.

The Plan

Over 700 adults committed to the environment will contribute 140,000 hours to re-connect children with nature. They will be organized into Community Teams with three members representing diverse disciplines: education, environmental science, community health, and landscape architecture. The project will advance through six stages:

Stage 1 – Nature Action Forum, 2010. Seventy-six (76) Community Teams from 6 continents will meet at the Arbor Day Farm in Nebraska to receive four days of intensive training and interactive tools for leading a community campaign to re-connect children with nature.

Stage 2 – Community Campaigns, 2011. Community Teams will implement projects – national conferences, community forums, public policy initiatives – to re-connect children with nature. Each team will be provided 20 hours of consultation for their projects.

Stage 3 – World Forum, 2011. Representatives of the Community Teams will attend the 2011 World Forum on Early Care and Education to report on their work to delegates from 80 nations and to plan Regional Action Forums.

Stage 4 – Regional Action Forums, 2012 and 2013. Forty (40) Community Teams from 4 regions will be invited to Regional Action Forums and be given training and resources to launch local campaigns.

Stage 5 – Community Campaigns, 2012 and 2013. The 160 new Community Teams will carry out their community campaigns.

Stage 6 – Global Summit, 2014. The World Forum Foundation will organize a Re-Connecting Children with Nature Global Summit where Community Teams will come together to share their successes and failures with each other, as well as provide recommendations for next steps.

World Forum Foundation Partners

American Society of Landscape Architects

Conservation Fund

Consultative Group on Early Care and Education

Dimensions Educational Research Foundation

Exchange Press, Inc.

Fundacion Cultural Yucatan

IBM Global Work/Life Fund

International Child Resource Institute

International Federation of Landscape Architects

International Paper

Lakeshore Learning Materials

National Arbor Day Foundation

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Environmental Educators Foundation

National Wildlife Federation

Nature Conservancy

North American Association of Environmental Educators

Pacific Preschool Council

USDA Forest Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Potential Roles for Additional Partners

- Organize Community Team(s)
- Fund participation of a Community Team
- Fund incentive grants for Community Team campaigns in 2011
- Host a Regional Action Forum in 2012 or 2013
- Post online Environmental Action Kits for children and families
- Contribute to funding of overall management of the project