

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Emilian Geczi, 847-835-6834
emilian.geczi@chicagowilderness.org

CHICAGO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE CELEBRATES “LEAVE NO CHILD INSIDE” MONTH

CHICAGO, IL –Silently, the young explorer inches through the shoulder-high prairie grass. Any fast movements and she knows her target will escape. But she’s careful. And as a result, she is there when the giant grasshopper jumps away. She *sees* the long legs bend and the explosive force as he flees into the tall grass. The young explorer cheers, “Dad! Did you see that?”

Throughout the month of June, Chicago Wilderness encourages parents and caregivers to Leave No Child Inside. This is a time to unplug from computer screens, TVs and cell phones and go out in nature to run, jump, play and explore.

“One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is a love of nature,” says Melinda Pruett-Jones, Executive Director, Chicago Wilderness. “Through the Leave No Child Inside initiative, Chicago Wilderness members offer amazing outdoor, child-friendly spaces and family events to encourage outdoor exploration.” Chicago Wilderness is an alliance of conservation organizations, cultural and education institutions, corporations, government agencies, and other groups.

Dozens of organizations across the greater Chicago region are collaborating on a series of family events featuring lively activities – like catching-and-releasing insects, playing with mud, and building a fort – designed to nurture children’s sense of wonder and appreciation for nature and to help parents and caregivers feel more comfortable guiding outdoor play and recreation during future trips to local parks, preserves, and nature areas. Most of the events are free of charge.

“I grew up in Wilmette, my husband in Iowa, but it was not until we were parents that we realized the surprising number of diverse, cost free, year-round family resources in and around our community,” said Liza Sullivan, a mother of twins, an educator and an active participant in Leave No Child Inside Month. “In a typical outing with my kids, we slow down and lose ourselves in the essential experiences of childhood – climbing trees, scampering over rocks and lying under trees.”

There are plenty of great ways to spend time outside this month, for example:

Conservation Community Day, June 15, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Woods Creek Bike Path, Algonquin, IL

Leave No Child Inside at the Douglas Center, June 16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Paul Douglas Center, Gary, IN

Father's Day Canoe Adventure, June 16 and June 17, 9 a.m., 11 a.m., or 1 p.m.
Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, IL

Prairie Exploration & Open House Celebration, June 16, 9 a.m. – Noon
Dorothy and Sam Dean Nature Sanctuary, Oak Brook, IL.

Bilingual Nature Hike, June 16, 9 - 10 a.m.
Lakewood Forest Preserve, near Wauconda, IL

Midwin Day to R.E.A.C.T., June 23, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie, Wilmington, IL

Great American Backyard Campout, June 23, 5 p.m. – 9 a.m. (overnight)
Pringle Nature Center, Bristol, WI

"Wild in the City" Week at the Millennium Park Family Fun Festival, July 2-8
10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Millennium Park, Chicago, IL

"Participating in the various events offered throughout Leave No Child Inside month has become a cherished tradition for our family. I am continually amazed by the rich variety of activities available at each program. Facilitators are friendly, caring, knowledgeable ambassadors, helping to foster a love of nature for children and adults alike. I encourage families to take advantage of these free, meaningful, and fun programs throughout the month," said Sullivan.

For a complete listing of events, visit www.chicagowilderness.org. Note: Please call or visit the host organization's web site before heading out to an event, particularly in case of inclement weather.

[Photos available upon request.]

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About Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. More than 260 public, private and corporate organizations work together to restore local nature and improve the quality of life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness—to restore the health of local nature, protect green infrastructure, mitigate climate change, and leave no child inside—reflect our commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region's residents. For more information, visit www.chicagowilderness.org.

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