



A regional alliance dedicated to
protecting nature and enriching life

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 2012

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Villages Encourage Families to Spend More Time Outside

Government officials and elected decision-makers must dedicate much of their time to crunching budget numbers and handling urgent crises. But every once in a while, they have an opportunity to step out of their normal schedule and work on issues that allow a more playful attitude.

June was Leave No Child Inside Month in the state of Illinois, and this year two villages – **South Barrington** and **Lake Zurich** – joined the campaign to get children away from the TV and videogames by passing proclamations that encouraged residents to camp under the stars, follow a trail, and explore nature in their neighborhoods.

In other words, these villages officially endorsed outdoor play and adventure. And for good reason.

“The Chicago Wilderness Leave No Child Inside Initiative is dedicated to providing the places and programs for generations of families to connect with nature,” said Melinda Pruett-Jones, Executive Director of Chicago Wilderness. “Engaged communities like South Barrington and Lake Zurich are helping make that a reality by raising awareness of how important outdoor play and exploration are for our children’s health.”

The proclamations refer to research that demonstrates that outdoor play helps children manage stress and become more resilient. It also stimulates children’s imaginations and fosters creativity. “Our society today is full of demands for the attention of young people, from sports and school to music lessons and spending too much time texting,” said Mayor Frank Munao of the Village of South Barrington. “But a whole new world unfolds before the eyes of boys and girls enrolled in our nature programs.”

Both villages are longtime supporters of the Barrington and Lake Zurich Area Leave No Child Inside initiative, a community-wide effort to foster awareness of the importance of nature-based activities for healthy childhood development. Members of the initiative include organizations as diverse as the Barrington School District 220 Parent Teacher Organization, the Ela and Barrington Area Libraries, the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois, and Citizens for Conservation.

“Fostering the goal of reacquainting children with nature begins at home with unstructured nature-based play and through community awareness initiatives,” said Pat Winkelman, the volunteer coordinator for the Barrington and Lake Zurich Area Leave No Child Inside initiative. “Our villages provide wonderful

opportunities to explore nature in open spaces, forests, prairies, conservation areas, and parks, adding value to our property in addition to making our local villages sought after locations to raise families."

Although the Leave No Child Inside Month campaign has ended for 2012, the message is still applicable. Parents and other caregivers can take their children to explore and discover nature anytime at nearby sites and programs aligned with Leave No Child Inside. For a Barrington and Lake Zurich area listing of such programs, visit www.funoutside.org. For a listing of programs across the greater Chicago region, visit www.chicagowilderness.org.

"I hope that every child will have a mentor who allows them the gift of nature, who teaches respect for the wild things, and pursues that adventure of seeing what is around the next bend of the trail or the curve of the stream. It is us adults who owe this to our children," said Mayor Munao.

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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, promote 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.