

LEAVE NO CHILD INSIDE

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While the Chicago Wilderness alliance works together to preserve and restore the rich ecological heritage of the region, we are also looking to the future.

The Leave No Child Inside initiative recognizes the need to connect children and nature based on a growing body of research indicating that time spent outdoors in nature is critical to healthy physical, social, and emotional development.

Research has demonstrated that outdoor play helps children manage stress and become resilient. Natural spaces stimulate children's limitless imaginations and nurture curiosity. In addition, young people who grow up spending time in nature are also more likely to be strong advocates for the environment when they reach adulthood.

Of particular emphasis in the Leave No Child Inside movement is a focus on unstructured play. Research indicates that, while time spent outside with parents, caregivers, and other adults is valuable, it is also important that children be encouraged to play on their own, to explore and simply be in nature. This unstructured time fosters creativity, emotional well-being, independent learning and problem solving.

Illinois was one of the first states to support efforts to get children and families outside: Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly proclaimed June as “Leave No Child Inside” month and announced support of the Chicago Wilderness Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights, which states that every child should have the opportunity to enjoy 10 simple activities:

- Discover wilderness—prairies, dunes, forests, savannas, and wetlands
- Camp under the stars
- Follow a trail
- Catch and release fish, frogs, and insects
- Climb a tree
- Explore nature in neighborhoods and cities
- Celebrate heritage
- Plant a flower
- Play in the mud or a stream
- Learn to swim

Chicago Wilderness Leave No Child Inside programs strive to nourish children’s curiosity, growth, and creativity through play and discovery in nature and outdoor recreation activities. The initiative also seeks to build a sense of connection to place and appreciation of the unique, globally rare nature in our region in children and adults alike.

A child who grows up with a strong connection to nature is likelier to be not only healthier, but a leader in the next generation of those who care about our natural world.

