Connecting Children and Nature

NORTHWEST

PRESENTED AT SCC MEETING NOV. 6, 2013
OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

March 2010 submit Challenge Grant

September 2010 – conference

November 2010 mini-grants

February 2011 mini-grants

Summer 2011 Crookston and Warren

Spring 2012 – Fertile

Fall 2012 Design Workshop

Spring 2013 – Fosston

Fall 2013 – Ada and Mahnoman

January 2014 – Project GO member in Crookston area
Save the Date... September 29th, 2010
University of Minnesota, Crookston Campus
Connecting Children & Nature Conference
"Educate children in nature & make a new discovery under every overturned leaf"
Featuring keynote by Cheryl Charles, co-founder of Children and Nature Network

For more information or to register please visit: www.umcrookston.edu/childrenandnature
Cheryl Charles from Children and Nature Network delivers keynote
Getting in Touch with Nature

Joe Courneya, Extension 4-H American Indian Youth Programs and Steve Maanum, Digital Photography Bridge Project

Master Naturalist

John Loegering, UM Crookston and Extension Environmental Science Education
Seasons Of Nature And Family Traditions

Nate Meyer, Extension Environmental Science Education
David Wilsey, Extension Forestry
Sherry Boyce, Extension Youth Development
Sampler Of Nature-based Learning Materials

Project Learning Tree
Project Wet
Project Wild

Laura Bell, UM Crookston Natural Resources
Walkable Communities: Explore Your Community And Nature

Sarah Reese, Guy Griebe, SHIP
MINI-GRANTS

CONNECTING CHILDREN AND NATURE IN NORTHWEST MINNESOTA

Month of a Young Child - Crookston

Project Description

The Month of the Young Child Collaborative in Crookston has celebrated children and families for ten years by organizing family events that bring families together to grow and learn and also to have fun together. This year, the goal of the celebration was to encourage and inspire families to connect with nature. We planned three family events which provided numerous activities that appealed to multiple age groups. The three events were:

The Wild About Nature Family Festival was hosted by the University of Minnesota-Crookston and held in the Beede Ballroom and the Student Center. Students from the Park and Recreation and Early Childhood programs set up over 20 nature stations with developmentally appropriate children’s nature activities. Outdoor health and safety activities and information booths as well as a light meal were also provided. Approximately 200 people attended the festival.

Wild About Critters was sponsored by Crookston Alliance for Literacy and Learning and was held at the

At the Wild About Nature Family Festival, students from the University of Minnesota Crookston oversaw children’s nature activities.
MINI-GRANTS
Designing Natural Play Spaces: Best Practices & Examples
Natural Play Spaces: Best Practices & Examples
How do children experience nature?
For adults, the environment is often a backdrop for their activities... For children, the environment isn’t in the background, but is a catalyst for or key ingredient of their activities: **something to interact with directly.** (White & Soecklin)

*The world of nature is not a scene or even a landscape. Nature for the child is sheer sensory experience. Children judge the natural setting not by its aesthetics, but rather by how they can interact with the environment.*
(White & Stoecklin, 1998, referencing Elizabeth Prescott)
Natural spaces are **timeless & wild.**
They are **not created by adults.**
They are **diverse**—in terms of things to explore, their materials, their change through the seasons.
(White & Soecklin, 1998)

What appeals to children about natural spaces as places to play?
Connecting Children to Nature: Moving Towards Health Equity in Three Rural Northwestern Minnesota Communities

Vijaya Singh, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Sustainable Building Research, University of MN; Eileen Henwood, Associate Professor, Division of Epidemiology & Community Health, University of MN; Eric Castle, Assistant Professor, Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, University of MN; Daniel Handeen, Research Fellow, Center for Sustainable Building Research, University of MN; Sarah Reese, Director, Polk County Public Health; Kristen Fagerlund, SHP Coordinator, Polk County Public Health; Linda Klege, Executive Director, University of MN Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships; Anna Patnowicz, Evaluation Assistant, School of Public Health, University of MN; Bethany Jenkins, Research Assistant, Agriculture & Natural Resources Department, University of MN; Crockett, Anne Lawrence Bartos, CURA Graduate Research Assistant, Masters of Landscape Architecture, University of MN

Research Background
Northwestern Minnesota communities experience increased rates of adult and childhood obesity as compared to other communities in the state.
- 31.1% of the Polk County adult population was found to be obese in 2008.
- 11.4% of Polk County, low-income kindergartners were obese in 2008.

A community’s built environment must support nature-based play spaces that are accessible and designed to respond to a community’s specific needs. A safe, accessible, and enjoyable community setting can provide opportunities for adults and children to engage in nature-based play.

- Nature experiences are an important aspect of a child's physical and psychological development.
- Adult mentoring and attitudes surrounding children’s nature experiences is a contributing factor to whether children are encouraged to spend time outdoors.

Purpose
The Connecting Children to Nature pilot project offers a community participatory design and implementation process to create nature-based play spaces in the short-term goal of promoting an increased sense of community ownership over these spaces and the long-term goal of promoting healthy, active lifestyles to curb the disparate obesity rates in these communities.

We are working with 3 communities in Northwestern Minnesota: Crookston, Wrenshall, and Willwood.
- Wrenshall: Our project focuses on 3 years.
1. Survey Design: We worked with community members, University of Minnesota Crookston and Wrenshall students and faculty from the School of Public Health, will conduct surveys to gather data.
2. Design and Implementation Phase: We will work with community members to implement an innovative design for nature-based play.
3. Evaluation: We will conduct an evaluation to continually improve community engagement in design and implementation.

Research Question
Can a community participatory design and implementation of nature-based play spaces for children promote increased use by the community, with the ultimate goal of reducing the obesity rates in this community?

Methods
Community Design Meeting in Fennville, MI
- Community Design Meeting in Fennville, MI
- Meeting Objectives and Outcomes

Objectives:
1. Test and evaluate a new community-participatory approach in the design and implementation process to increase positive outcomes for community health.
2. Understand community needs and collaborate with the community to bring cross-sector expertise from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
3. Document, track and measure progress and outline goals throughout the design and implementation process.
4. Utilize the best practices, and use the outcomes of the community-participatory approach to designing nature-based play spaces.
5. Provide information to the research community about the interdisciplinarian, community-participatory process being used to address disparate health issues in Northwestern Minnesota communities.
6. Provide the community with a community ownership over nature-based play spaces and design.
7. Document community attitudes and behaviors around physical activity and connecting children with nature.

Results
Pre-Survey in Wrenshall and Crookston, MN
- Survey Design: The Connecting Children to Nature survey was adapted from the Encouraging Children's Nature Experience Scale (EC-NES) national survey. It assesses the attitudes about encouraging children to engage in nature-based play.
- Sample: A total of 14 respondents completed the pre-survey, with the majority of respondents reporting they live in Crookston. More females were examined while a few males were examined. About 50% reported that they had a child under 17 years old living in their home.
- Respondent's attitudes toward children playing in nature: Highest from highest to lowest agreement, N=14

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- Document community attitudes and behaviors around physical activity and connecting children with nature.
- Determine the community’s vision for their community.

Key Findings and Conclusions
- Pre-Survey in Wrenshall and Crookston, MN
- Findings:
- Majority of respondents are comfortable in nature, and believe that development and physically for children to engage in nature-based play is important.
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Moving Forward
- Efforts were made to accommodate the survey before the planning process.
- This will allow for a true representation of the community’s vision for their community. The project has the potential to expand to other communities.

We are working on an upcoming qualitative evaluation for the project. For the project to be successful, we need more input from the communities.
Nature-Based Play Space in your Community: An Interactive Workshop

Save the Date: Wednesday, October 17, 2012
University of Minnesota - Crookston

Please join us for a day of discussion and presentations on creating nature-based playspaces. Wherever you and your community are at in the process, this workshop will have something for you!

In the morning, we will offer plenary presentations by U of M staff and local partners that will cover the planning, installation, and programming aspects of nature-based playspaces with examples of what has been done in the region. The afternoon will consist of break-out discussions that will address exactly what is needed to move your project forward.

For more info contact the Extension Regional Center in Crookston at 218-281-8696 or mleblanc@umn.edu.
Also check out the Children and Nature in Northwest Minnesota Facebook page!
Castle Park Grand Opening
Thank you!

Linda Kingery
kinge002@umn.edu
218-281-8697