



General Assembly, Governor Pat Quinn signed a proclamation designating June as “Leave No Child Inside Month.”

It’s a simple act, getting children outside and increasing the amount and quality of time they spend there, but the importance of time outdoors must not be downplayed.

In 2007, Chicago Wilderness—an alliance of more than 240 organizations—launched its Leave No Child Inside initiative with a very specific goal: Get more children outside and to increase the amount of quality time spent there. By 2009, a checklist of outdoor opportunities every child should have the right to experience was created. Dubbed the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights, the campaign vowed to enable children everywhere the opportunity to experience everything from getting mud on their boots to collecting insects.

Because of the efforts of Chicago Wilderness organizations and the Illinois

Outdoor play is important for the wholesome, balanced development of the cognitive, emotional, social and physical skills of children. Hiking and walking lower high blood pressure, decrease anxiety and combat obesity.

Outdoor play helps children manage stress, stimulates limitless imagination and creativity and forms better problem-solvers. Participation in outdoor activities, such as fishing, is correlated with reduced Attention-Deficit Disorder symptoms.

Participation in summer camp increases the self-esteem scores of children from low-income areas. The presence of natural amenities near the homes of low-income urban children is associated with higher levels of cognitive functioning.

Children who grow up spending time in nature are more likely to be strong advocates for the environment when they reach adulthood.

Our nation’s leaders have heard the collective voices from Illinois and the need for a national program to Leave No Child Inside.

Our work is far from done. We each need to make time to mentor a child in the wonders of the outdoors. Our immediate rewards may appear small—witnessing the spark of discovery or receiving a request to “do this again.” Yet these moments of outdoor discovery build the foundation for a lifetime outdoors.

Although we can’t be there to share in all of their outdoor experiences, we’ll all be duly compensated as those children mature into healthy, environmentally conscious adults. As they grow to become the next generation of advocates for our natural resources, the opportunities they receive today will build the future we all share.

Yours in conservation,
Marc Miller, Director

For a list of events taking place in celebration of “Leave No Child Inside” month, visit dnr.state.il.us/youthprograms.

Whether time is spent on informal family outings or attending organized events, such as an Urban Fishing Clinic at the Illinois State Fair or an International Migratory Bird Day festival, children who spend time in nature grow to be strong advocates for the environment.

