



LEAVE NO CHILD INSIDE – Greater Cincinnati 2013 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2013 was our eighth year of steady progress in the movement to reconnect children with nature at both the local and national levels. Locally we saw the expansion of resources that will enable families and educators to more readily find the resources they need, including the introduction of Green Umbrella's new [Meet Me Outdoors](#) website and our own on-line [School Program Finder](#). We also saw increased efforts to connect directly with teens and young people. Leave No Child Inside and the Great Parks of Hamilton County each sponsored youth to receive leadership training at the Children & Nature Network's [Natural Leader's Legacy Camp](#), while Green Umbrella launched an Outdoor Adventure Club for area high school students. LNClgc continued our efforts to reach community organizations throughout Greater Cincinnati, encouraging them to incorporate reconnecting children with nature into their own work. We worked to connect those organizations with the support they need, as well as to both encourage and facilitate creative ideas that will help overcome the barriers which prevent children from accessing nature. Organizationally, LNClgc directors and key steering committee members met in 2013 to review a report assessing the current state of the organization and its relationship with Green Umbrella, agreeing upon a symbiotic relationship between the two and recommending a follow-up report relative to community engagement.



There was tremendous progress on the national front as well, with Disney funding the launch of the [Children & Nature Network Worldwide](#). The release of a policy statement from the [American Public Health Association](#) urging health professionals to promote the health benefits of spending time in nature was a strong indication of how deeply our message has penetrated and how it is influencing policy.

DETAILS OF LOCAL WORK

Expansion of Local Resources

2013 was an evolutionary year for Leave No Child Inside as the structures to support our efforts to reconnect Greater Cincinnati's children grew stronger. Our mission is to "educate the community that time spent in nature is essential to the physical, mental and emotional health of all children". Happily, this is a message that resonates almost universally throughout the community, and it often results in a request for help in connecting children with nature. Several breakthroughs were made in 2013 that will allow Greater Cincinnatians and the organizations that serve them greater access to coordinated, nature-based services:

Growth of Green Umbrella

Green Umbrella continues to grow as a regional sustainability initiative. Perhaps the most exciting development in 2013 was the launch of the [Meet Me Outdoors](#) website, which is a portal to the information people need to get outdoors – area destinations, a searchable calendar of events, outdoor retailers and even volunteer opportunities.



Green Umbrella also hired a former teacher to launch an [Outdoor Adventure Club](#) for youth. Outdoor Adventure Clubs are proving successful in engaging teens and providing the support they need to build an outdoor, active lifestyle.

LNCIgc's School Program Finder

Since 2009, we have provided Cincinnati Public Schools with information about outdoor summer programming. However, we recognized that nature-based and environmental education program information is important all year around and that it would be helpful to all of the schools in our region. So, in September of 2013, we launched our [School Program Finder](#) with a listing of over 100 regional school outreach programs, field trips and camps. We are especially grateful to the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators for listing their programs with us, and to our volunteers who are helping to promote the School Program Finder to area schools.

Expansion of Resources for Parents and Schools on LNCI Website

The launch of the [School Program Finder](#) inspired us to expand the resources for school and after-school providers with a new [School and After-School](#) page on our website. Likewise, we added new items to the [Parents](#) page, incorporating a video and links to valuable local and national resources.

Local Youth Receive Leadership Training

Leave No Child Inside and the Great Parks of Hamilton County sponsored two local young people for participation in the Children & Nature Network's [Natural Leaders Legacy Camp](#). Daniel Lewis of the Great Parks of Hamilton County and Sean Goss, a recent graduate of UC's DAAP program, travelled to Bainbridge Island, Washington where sixty young people from across the country gathered for leadership training. In the words of Natural Leader Sean Goss, "we built a reliable network of young adults dedicated to reconnecting people everywhere with nature. We left the camp secure in the knowledge that we had made the trustworthy connections we need to face the social challenges of our generation."

Community Outreach

We continue to follow our Distribution Plan wherein we work to identify champions of our message within organizations representing eight sectors (Health, School, After-School, Children's Services, Parents and Mentors, Government, Built Environment and Faith-Based Organizations). In 2013, we



focused on deepening relationships with the community champions with whom we have worked in the past, and engaged many of them in discussion about their expectations of Leave No Child Inside.

As we have done every year since inception, our Speakers Bureau presented to a variety of organizations including churches, professional organizations, Mothers of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS) and University of Cincinnati students.

We also continue to exhibit at area conferences, including the Cincinnati Montessori Society, the Cincinnati Public Schools' Local Decision-Making Committee and the Educator's Expo at the Cincinnati Zoo.

Breaking Down Barriers

One of the hallmarks of the movement to reconnect children with nature has been "outside the box" thinking on how to bridge the barriers that prevent children from experiencing nature. In developing his capstone project, University of Cincinnati Industrial Design student Sean Goss identified a need to help families who are not comfortable in many natural settings make the transition from the traditional playground to "wilder" outdoor spaces, including nature playscapes. The solution he presented in his capstone is a Nature PlayPath with a series of stations melding the visual components of the traditional playground with those of nature playscapes. The intent of the PlayPath is to connect families to nature in their own neighborhoods. The concept captured the attention of Safe Routes to School and we expect to see a pilot of the concept in 2014.

Organizational Assessment

The Board of Directors and key steering committee members met in the Spring of 2013 to discuss the recommendations in our Summary of Progress from 2006 – 2012. Those recommendations were:

1. Green Umbrella should be the “one stop shop” for public programs and events in our community. With its new Meet Me Outdoors website, it well positioned to serve that role;
2. LNCIgc should continue to educate the community as outlined in the Distribution Plan. LNCIgc’s message is research-based and objective, and has a track record of success;
3. Both organizations should support each other:
 - a. Leave No Child Inside should promote Green Umbrella as a community-wide resource;
 - b. Green Umbrella should incorporate the Leave No Child Inside message in its work and materials;
4. Community Champions should be officially recognized as part of LNCIgc, including representation on our Board of Directors;
5. LNCIgc, with the involvement of its community partners, needs to develop a strategic plan to work more effectively, identify measurables and address leadership/sustainability issues;
6. The missing link in these suggestions is a “one stop shop” for school outreach and other environmental education programs, which is outside of Green Umbrella’s current mission. Although LNCI can continue to fill that role in the short-term, a long-term solution should be developed.

The group concurred with items 1-3. With regard to items 4 and 5, the Board suggested meeting with Community Champions to seek their input on these recommendations. Those meetings were conducted throughout the remainder of 2013 and a report will be presented to the Board in 2014. With regard to recommendation #6, LNCIgc worked with the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators to build the School Program Finder launched on our website in the fall of 2013.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL WORK

Progress continued at a rapid pace as the Children & Nature Network expanded its website to incorporate a [C&NN Worldwide](#) section with funding from Disney. International interest in the movement was amplified by the 2012 [resolution](#) by the International Union for the Conservancy of Nature that it is the right of every child to connect with nature and a health environment. That resolution was unanimously approved by 10,000 people representing 150 countries. In 2013, 76 countries were represented on the [Children & Nature Network’s Connect](#) site and many of the C&NN Toolkits were translated into Spanish and French. The Toolkits will also be available in Chinese by the end of January, 2014. This is exciting not only from an international perspective, but also as a resource for non-English speaking immigrants here in the United States.



