



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Children and Nature Initiative Expands to New Orleans with ‘Nature Prescriptions’**

WASHINGTON, January 24, 2013 — Healthcare providers in New Orleans will have the opportunity to participate in a rapidly expanding national initiative to improve the health and well-being of children. The National Environmental Education Foundation’s *Children and Nature Initiative: Rx for Outdoor Activity* addresses two important issues – preventing serious health conditions like obesity and diabetes and connecting children to nature. NEEF will train New Orleans area physicians and other healthcare providers on prescribing nature and connecting kids with programs at local nature sites, in partnership with the National Park Service.

The train-the-trainer workshop will take place Saturday at the National Park Service’s French Quarter Visitor Center, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Nigel Fields, the park’s chief of interpretation and education, assisted NEEF by engaging partners in local outdoor organizations such as the Audubon Institute, the city’s recreation department, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. NEEF’s project in New Orleans is funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Trained healthcare providers will serve as nature champions in their own communities – training their peers to use the initiative’s educational materials on the health benefits of being active in nature and to prescribe nature using the initiative’s [Rx for Outdoor Activity](#). Presently, the initiative has 40 active nature champions who have trained more than 1,000 healthcare providers in more than 20 locations, from Washington, D.C. to Anchorage, Alaska.

“By giving healthcare providers this training and connecting their patients to local nature sites, we are working together to encourage children and their families to spend time outdoors enjoying nature – for better physical and mental health,” said Leyla McCurdy, Senior Director, [Health and Environment Program of NEEF](#). “We make a special effort to reach disadvantaged children, who are at higher risk for health problems and are often more cut off from nature.”

“A growing body of research points to how unstructured outdoor activities help increase physical activity among children, reduce stress and serve as a support mechanism for attention disorders,” said James Roberts, M.D., M.P.H. of the Medical University of South Carolina and a member of the initiative’s advisory committee. “A nature prescription reminds kids and their families to sometimes turn off their TV and electronic gadgets – and get outside to play.”

The initiative works nationwide with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Audubon Society, and local park agencies to connect healthcare providers and their patients with parks, forests, campgrounds and other green spaces.

Dr. Joel Forman, Vice Chair for Education at the Department of Pediatrics, Mount Sinai School of Medicine and faculty for the training workshop in New Orleans, said, “There is rising interest among healthcare providers in prescribing nature for children and their families to help improve their physical

and mental health. The initiative is a thoughtful, meaningful and innovative approach that has the potential to improve the lives of children across our nation.”

To learn more about the Children and Nature Initiative: Rx for Outdoor Activity, visit:  
[www.neefusa.org/health/children\\_nature](http://www.neefusa.org/health/children_nature).

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### **About NEEF**

The National Environmental Education Foundation is the nation’s leading organization in lifelong environmental learning, connecting people to knowledge they use to improve the quality of their lives and the health of the planet.

To accomplish this, NEEF provides knowledge to trusted professionals and other leaders who, with their credibility, amplify messages to national audiences to solve everyday environmental problems. Learn more at [www.neefusa.org](http://www.neefusa.org), follow NEEF on Facebook at <http://goo.gl/FidAX> & Twitter [@neefusa](https://twitter.com/neefusa).

### **About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.

The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Mich., and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org).