

Project Get Outdoors

FALL 2023

www.mnprojectgo.org

A Message from Our Founder

"Time in nature can be a powerful antidote to the negative impacts of trauma and stress in children's lives. When family service providers incorporate nature into their therapeutic work, children and families experience a wide range of benefits, including improved mental and physical health, stronger relationships, better communication, reduced stress, and healing from trauma."

-Children and Nature Network

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/nature-helps-children-recover-from-adverse-childhood-experiences/>



My sister and I sharing outdoor time as kids.

My sister and I grew up in a family of divorce and mental health and alcohol issues. We moved almost annually to different rental properties. In every neighborhood, we found small pockets of nature. Exploring outdoors and building forts allowed us to make new friends and provided safe spaces where we could be ourselves and forget the grown-up problems surrounding us.

As I've grown, I've been able to find nature everywhere; during the uncomfortable teenage years, throughout the stressful college days, as I faced my own divorce, and as I struggled with my own bouts of depression. I recognize I have been privileged in many ways and I am lucky to have had adult role models who introduced me to the outdoors as a child.

A startling number of youth and young adults today struggle with anxiety, isolation and depression and feel they have no caring adults in their lives. Many young people have never known the calming beauty of the natural world. We have the opportunity to create meaningful change! Project GO is supporting community partners who can connect youth to nature by getting training and skills to incorporate nature-based therapy practices into education, childcare, healthcare and other realms. Will you join us? Learn more on page two!

Sara Hldger

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2023 Highlights

- Project GO continued to provide [on-line training resources](#) for organizations and individuals interested in connecting youth to nature. We held in-person trainings in Lake City and Byron and provided backpacks and resources to new partners including [Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue County](#).



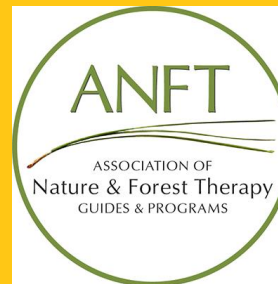
- Summer school students at [Riverway Learning Community](#) created animated video segments to make the [Legend Hunters documentary film](#) more engaging for our youth target audience. [Winona State University film studies](#) major, Daniel Vue, is working on the final editing of the film.



Animated LEGO action video about the Root River State Trail

- Early Childhood outreach:
 - We teamed up with the [University of Minnesota Extension](#) to support their new Nature-based Training for Child Care Providers. They used the Project GO child-care training as a model for their course. We look forward to continued collaborations!
 - Our Founder completed the Course Writer Certification through [MN DEVELOP](#) and is now able to write childcare training courses. In addition to our current training, we are looking to develop a nature-based mindfulness course to introduce providers to forest bathing and ways to incorporate forest bathing activities at early childhood sites.

Partner Highlight: Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides



Living in relationship with nature is critical to healthy human development. But there is a lack of services and programming to connect youth to nature for healing. So we've teamed up with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides to support a cohort of 15 area practitioners who will participate in the Nature and Forest Therapy Guide certification and bring nature-based healing to BIPOC youth and young adults experiencing trauma. This unique, customized cohort project is gaining national attention and we look forward to documenting the project and sharing the results with the world. You can help by making a [DONATION](#) in support of this \$70,000 project!

Cohort members represent a diverse variety of organizations including Fernbrook Family Services, Rochester and Winona Public Schools, Olmsted Medical Center, Winona Outdoor Collaborative, Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, Huellas Latinas, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, Aqui para Ti/Hennepin Health Care, and Minnesota Agape Movement.

Testimonial: Megan Perera, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

Megan is one of our 15 cohort members participating in the Healing Forest Project. When asked why they wanted to participate and how they thought this experience might impact the work they do, Megan responded:

"I've been learning so much about our plant and animal relatives in the past 7 months since I began working at Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, and I've really started to learn how important nature is to every aspect of our well-being, with physical and spiritual and emotional and mental health benefits. I didn't have a lot of opportunities to get outside and do things outdoors previously because it just felt so overwhelming to go out into this unknown world by myself, and there weren't guides or mentors or peers that looked like me or experienced things like I did. I wasn't even exposed to the idea that everything in this world is connected so deeply until I started working at my current job, and I've connected so much more to my non-human relatives recently because I've had that support from my coworkers and community members of color.

I don't want young Black and brown folks to grow up believing that there's no room for them outdoors or that they don't have a community like I did. The more we spread this love and community and kinship, the more it will grow, and I would be so honored to be a part of that growth. I'd absolutely love to share my knowledge with my coworkers and the folks we work with, and I also have a lot of personal connections and friendships with folks of color in the Twin Cities that I met through doing outdoor activities and nature-related activities. I think those groups would be a wonderful place to start sharing this knowledge!"



Photo credit:

<https://www.wakantipi.org/>

THANK YOU to our Healing Forest Project donors!



Don't Forget Project GO on Give to the Max Day!



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