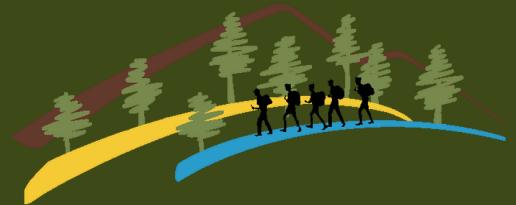


PROJECT GET OUTDOORS

Fall 2017 Newsletter



www.mnprojectGO.org

PGO Launches Certification Program

This spring, 36 youth workers from the Twin Cities received Project Get Outdoors Leader Certification. On April 7th and May 19th, Project GO led day-long training sessions at the Burnsville YMCA for people who work in youth programs. The course is a new service offered by Project GO, created to increase the organization's impact and get more children outdoors by training the City and non-profit staff who already work with youth in established youth programs, such as afterschool programs, camps, local parks and recreation centers, to lead outdoor, nature based activities.

Many existing programs where children spend a lot of time do not spend much time outdoors. Or, if they do, they play organized sports. Youth workers who did not spend much time in nature growing up, are less likely to feel comfortable bringing youth outdoors. This training aims to increase the comfort level and confidence of youth workers to lead nature-based activities. It also increases participants' knowledge of youth development, cultural awareness, and behavior management, and provides practice with nature based activity examples, and program planning ideas. One of Project GO's founding premises is that nature is found everywhere, and even in densely developed urban areas, where people may think that they have no place to find and explore nature.

Trainees each received a Leader Handbook and Project GO activity backpack, filled with program materials and hundreds of program ideas. This "pilot" training was made possible through an \$8000 grant from the National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share Program. Watch for the Project GO Certification training in your region in 2018!



Inside the New Training Program

On May 19th, I participated in the Project GO Leader Certification at the Burnsville YMCA. I want to share my personal experience as a participant at this training.

I found the all day workshop offered a lot of information and resources I could use when I went back to volunteer at the Rochester YMCA. Besides providing information on the benefits of getting children outside, time was spent on interactive teaching exercises and how to adapt to diversity. The workshop was extremely helpful in learning how to deal with situations where kids are reluctant to go outside for a variety of issues.

Another useful aspect about the training was just getting together with other people that have a lot of experience in working with youth. It helped me to hear how they handle different situations such as kids that were complaining about being outside or the kid who looked at everything new as something to be feared.

At the end of the day the activity trunks were displayed and we were able to go through the theme based trunks and practice how we could use them in a real situation. The day was filled with ideas and a resource binder that I can reference later. I felt prepared to go back to my local YMCA and help train their summer camp staff on things I had learned.

*Vicky Strommen,
Project GO and Rochester YMCA Volunteer*



Partner Highlight: Eastside Salvation Army

The Eastside Salvation Army in St. Paul offers a wide range of basic needs programs. The site operates a culturally-sensitive food shelf, and volunteers prepare a free hot lunch each weekday. An after-school program, weekly kids' clubs and summer day camps are offered. Nearly 100 youth are served annually. Several youth program staff at the site received Project GO Leader Certification and activity backpacks. Staff have access to Project GO outdoor equipment trunks and have used them to introduce fishing, camping and outdoor exploration in the neighborhood.



Educating Parents to Get Kids Outdoors

This past year, through a grant from the Rochester Area Foundation, Project GO reached out to school districts to partner with Early Childhood Family Education programs. Through these collaborations we have been able to lead parent education sessions at schools, introducing parents to the research behind why kids need to get outdoors.

Sessions begin with 30 minutes of parent-child hands-on activity stations focused on nature. Then parents gather in a separate room to learn about the children and nature movement and gain ideas and resources to help them connect to nature in their backyards and neighborhoods. Each family receives an Activity Calendar and a Family Media Plan worksheet to begin a conversation about how to limit screen time and increase outdoor activity.

Trainers are needed! To find out how you can become a Project GO Trainer contact sara.grover@yahoo.com.

Volunteer Spotlight: Bette Jean Bernier

Bette Jean is a retired Kindergarten teacher from Winona and shares a wealth of knowledge and experience. Like many of our volunteers, she is a MN Master Naturalist volunteer and currently serves on the fundraising and marketing committee and assists with the Project GO early childhood outreach effort.

As a child, Bette Jean grew up on a dairy farm and has fond memories of playing outdoors, hiking, picking wild black caps and camping. She lives on the same dairy farm today and enjoys playing outdoors with her 5 grandchildren. Thank you Bette Jean, for your service!



Don't Forget Project GO on Give to the Max Day 11/16!



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