



READY, SET, GO!

The newsletter that keeps you up-to-date on the Project GO happenings around Crookston and St. Paul!

A PROJECT GO INTRODUCTION

Project GO works to establish meaningful connections with nature and kids. The program was started in SW Minnesota back in 2005. Today, the program has spread throughout southern MN and is making it's way farther North! Weekly outings into the natural environment provide kids with unstructured play that helps with concentration, cooperative play, and cognitive thinking—all for free! The program is a community-supported program run by community volunteers with support from partnering organizations.

NORTHWEST REGION: 2014 REFLECTION

1700 hours of AmeriCorps service passes quickly! Alysa has finished her term of service with us and has left a marvelous legacy behind. A peek at the Crookston Community map that she put together with Gina Gunderson can be found on page 3. If you would like a copy for yourself or to view the finished product, pick one up at Crookston's City Hall or call the Regional Sustainable Development Partnership through the U of M's Extension to get a virtual copy.

Along with this map that will encourage residents and visitors to explore different parts of the city, some which may be new to them, Alysa has also finalized a reading program connecting reading with nature activities and crafts. If you have kids or are interested in using this, please contact us!

Some of the most memorable experiences that Alysa took away from this year were teaching kids how to build a boat out of sticks and leaves, giving muddy high fives (stand back!), grandparents playing capture the flag, and breaking down kids' fear of petting a chicken. These memories will not only stick with her, but also with the children she interacted with. This, too, is a lasting legacy that she leaves behind. She laid a lot of initial groundwork in the northwest and we look forward to continuing to connect residents with local nature-based organizations and build stronger communities year after year!



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Rochester Expansion
- Passing on the Torch
- Starry Nights



PASSING ON THE TORCH TO 2015

Just as another year comes to pass, we look forward to all that the new year has to offer. Please give a warm welcome to our new AmeriCorps members serving with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa once they start in January!

All members have slightly different focuses on Project Get Outdoors but will continue to grow stronger community support for kids getting outside. University of Minnesota Extension will continue to provide site supervision to our Crookston member and support nature play spaces that are popping up around the city, like Eric Castle's Castle Park. Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington will host the Twin Cities corps member and help broaden our reach into the community. In southeastern Minnesota, the Public Health Department centered out of Rochester will work with our third

AmeriCorps member. (Check out the partner highlight below.) All positions exist to aid in spreading our mission to facilitate outdoor experiences that develop healthy kids and increase environmental stewardship behaviors. We encourage community partners to get involved and help us reach new audiences - let us work together and build stronger local communities!

****Partners:** If you would like to submit a column to our newsletter about current programs, trends, or events themed around connecting kids with nature, please contact us!

Stay tuned for 2015 newsletters and updates!
~Amy

Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair. ~Khlalil Gibran

AMERICORPS & PROJECT GO IN SE MN

Southeast Minnesota is excited to be chosen as a host site for an AmeriCorps member in the coming year! A partnership plan is being developed between Project GO, Olmsted County Public Health SHIP, Olmsted County Parks and the Audubon Society. The AmeriCorps member, working from the Public Health Department in Rochester, will have a variety of opportunities in Southeast Minnesota. Projects will include outreach to school aged youth at established Project GO partner sites, advancing a community mapping project that is in its infancy, and helping to launch a new initiative to engage childcare providers in nature exploration with the children in their care. We are looking forward to all the possibilities!

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ST. PAUL AREA: DECEMBER SEND-OFF

It may be confusing to understand the relationship between AmeriCorps, Conservation Corps and Project Get Outdoors at times, but I have had a great year in service to America! The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa places young adults as well as high school aged youth in positions supporting natural resources conservation. Whether it is in the field, working with people, or serving a non-profit dedicated to the same cause, the Conservation Corps is able to achieve their mission. When I found out I would be serving Project Get Outdoors, I was ecstatic! As a pursuing naturalist, my goal is to inspire people, make them more comfortable outdoors, and introduce them to new experiences. I am passionate about so many nature and recreation topics that I simply want to share this with others. Instead of waiting for the public to come to sites, Project GO is unique in our flexibility of working with communities in locations convenient to them. We measure our success not merely by numbers but also by the memories and experiences that we are giving participants and their increased comfort in the outdoors. I will never forget the parent who sincerely delighted in learning how to rig a fishing line, the child who hesitated after getting mud on her shirt until she realized no one really cared and then dug right in, children eager to explore a park, kids working together to set up tents, and a police officer playing a game of soccer with us. May the next AmeriCorps member in my position enjoy their experience as much as I have! Thanks everyone!
~Amy

Get to know Crookston's Parks & their Fun Amenities!

Key

- Trails
- Sidewalks
- All Ages
- Ages 5-12
- Schools
- Roads
- River

Community map Alysa Zimmerle and Gina Gunderson put together

KID'S ACTIVITY:

Have you ever looked up and wondered how many stars there are? The clear, cold nights of winter often bring some of the best stargazing. Fewer hours of daylight mean more hours to stargaze in the evenings. Bundle up for an after-dinner stroll to look at the stars. How many stars can you see?



Constellations — Keep your eye out for winter constellations such as Orion, the hunter. Can you make out the shape of a person with 2 shoulder stars, 2 leg stars and 3 in the middle to form a belt? What about the star cluster called Pleiades? Made up of 7 stars close together, this is also called the Seven Sisters.

Moonlit Hikes — Take a walk outside and check out how bright the moon can be! Some parks offer candlelit hikes that may interest you as well!

MONTHLY EVENTS

Check out the great events happening in the upcoming months! Many amazing organizations are working to better our communities and environment. If you have interest in any event—either to volunteer or get your kids busy with an activity—contact the Project GO coordinator assigned to that event!

Monthly Events	When	Where	Need Volunteers	Activity for kids	Project GO Contact
MN Valley Refuge Winter Fun Day	December 30 9-4pm	Bloomington, MN		✓	Amy
Library Storytime Program	Every Friday	Fosston, MN	✓	✓	Alysa
MN Zoo Program	January 5 and May 18	Minneapolis, MN		✓	Amy
MN Zoo Program	April 1 and June 8	Apple Valley, MN		✓	Amy

PROJECT GET OUTDOORS

Project GO is a non-profit organization founded in 2006 to assist Minnesota communities in connecting children to nature exploration and outdoor learning during the out-of-school hours.

Project GO was developed in response to Richard Louv's 2005 book, "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature -Deficit Disorder".

With the help of our project partners, Project GO has developed a free Toolkit to guide communities through the stages of designing, implementing, evaluating and sustaining their own unique Project GO after school programs.

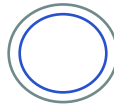
INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Say no more! Just like our kids, we want to get YOU outside and connected with your local community as well!

Do you have a knack for kids? Are you passionate about a particular environmental subject? Would you like to share your love of simply exploring nature with enthusiastic kids? Sign up to volunteer with us today!

Program leaders are needed to organize programs throughout the year. This commitment can be as small as 5 hours/week or can be a full 40 hour/week internship. This is a tremendous way to get involved, enhance your leadership skills and network with many organizations. Even if you are interested in a one-time commitment to test the waters, there's an opportunity for you.

With the support of adult leaders, kids will look deeper, think more creatively, grow more confidently, develop stronger relationships, connect with nature, and be more connected to their community!



Project Get Outdoors

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Sponsors and Partners

