

SAN DIEGO CHILDREN AND NATURE COLLABORATIVE

First-year Accomplishments, January 28, 2009 to January 28, 2010

The San Diego Children and Nature Collaborative (SDCaN) was launched on January 28, 2009, inspired by the national Children & Nature Network and local columnist Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods*. The **mission** of the SDCaN is to "inspire communities to nurture, empower, and engage youth in cultivating their relationship with nature."

Initial efforts focused on marketing Louv's February 24, 2009 presentation at Point Loma Nazarene University, which drew an **audience of 1200!** On March 19 at the Girl Scout office, 70 educators, environmental professionals, community leaders, and nature advocates shared their vision for working together to enhance experiences for children and nature. In April, the City and the County of San Diego declared "**Children and Nature Awareness**" month.

The Collaborative has held **bi-monthly meetings**, with participants from more than 50 organizations. **Interest groups** for Families, Schools, Gardens, Health, and Communications were set up on May 19. They met again at the July 16 meeting, which was held at Mission Trails Regional Park and was followed by a sunset hike. The September 16 meeting included confirmation of the mission and strategic goals, and reflections of the national Children & Nature Network annual conference that four San Diegans attended. At the November 12 meeting, partners shared displays and materials for 20 local nature-based programs.

A **Steering Group** meets monthly, and provides direction for strategic planning, organizational structure, and ongoing projects. The **Families Interest Group** focuses on providing more resources for "families and nature," including support to organizers and hike leaders of "family nature clubs." The **Schools Interest Group** is consolidating existing curriculum for chaparral and coastal sage scrub, to produce common local nature lessons for fourth-grade classes. Five environmental groups are collaborating to design a **Nearby Nature School Field Trips Program** to encourage nature-centered, curriculum-based classroom field trips to nearby natural areas. A guidebook will be created and piloted to provide guidelines to schools, teachers, nature providers, and naturalists.

The **Communications Committee** is providing guidance for a Communications Strategy, and for "community asset maps" of organizations focused on early childhood, youth, health, and school-based programs for children. A **webpage** was established, www.sdchildrenandnature.org, and planning for an interactive webpage has begun. It will include an inventory of local nature places, outdoor nature programs and scheduled events, activities for children in nature, and resources for Collaborative partners. It will build on the **national Children & Nature** webpage, www.childrenandnature.org, which offers resources and connections to other local groups.

In October, the Collaborative was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the **Sempre Foundation** to support the establishment of Family Nature Clubs, Nearby Nature School Field Trip Program and guidebook, communications strategy and community asset mapping, website redesign, speakers' bureau, learning workshops, organizational development, and evaluation.

Six **strategic goals** are established for the next three years: (1) increase public awareness of the value of nature and outdoor experiences; (2) enhance schools' ability to connect children to nearby nature; (3) partner with community groups to value, promote and provide opportunities for outdoor experiences; (4) drive change in attitudes, skills and behaviors that lead to positive relationships with nature; (5) promote learning, sharing and networking; and (6) build sustainable organization to support mission. [And, let's get out in nature and let's have fun!]

Contacts: Anne S. Fege, fege@sandiegoaudubon.org, 858-472-1293