

Nature Offers Relief for Holiday Stress

RESTON, Va. (December 15, 2009) - Holiday madness is in full swing; shopping, cooking, cleaning, parties, out-of-town relatives. Even the kids feel stressed out with all the anticipation and distracted parents, and “Why does Aunt Sara have to stay in my room?” However there is a great antidote when things get hectic and overwhelming, head outdoors. Even if there is a chill in the air, time outside connecting with nature can lower the stress level, revive the spirits, and add to the enchantment of the season. Here are some recommendations for Time Out from the National Wildlife Federation.

The National Wildlife Federation’s Be Out There campaign has a few ideas to make the outdoors a welcome escape from holiday overload:

Outdoor Tree-Trimming – Adopt a tree in your yard or neighborhood – find out what kind it is, and decide to visit it at least once every season. Decorate it with things birds like to eat; lots of ideas at www.greenhour.org/birdcafe

Scavenger Hunt – Give the kids a list of natural objects to find in the yard or neighborhood – pinecones, acorns, different shape leaves – and make it a contest to see who can find everything first.

Decorate with Mother Nature – Have the kids use some of the treasures they found on the scavenger hunt to create pretty centerpieces, wreaths or other holiday décor.

Christmas Bird Count – Get outside, learn about your feathered neighbors, and help scientists monitor the health and well-being of local bird populations. Find out how to do this at www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc.

Make An Elf House – Santa’s elves need a place to stay while compiling Santa’s Naughty and nice list. Create an elf house using the nature in your neighborhood.

What You Need:

One clean paper ½ gallon milk or juice carton
One brown grocery bag
Glue
Paint Brush
Paper plate or bowl for holding glue
Scissors
Natural objects like pinecones, acorns, pine needles, moss, leaves, bark

Directions:

Wash and dry carton, inside and out

Cut the brown bag and wrap the carton in it tightly. Use glue to hold the paper to the carton. Let it dry.

Make a door for the elves, windows, a chimney, singles or window boxes.

Now head outside for all your construction and decorating needs collecting things on the ground. Glue them onto the house.

Secure it in a nearby tree

Check your elf house for notes from Santa, and leave notes for him in return which the elves can deliver.

More ideas for outdoor holiday fun can be found at beoutthere.org. and check back often because the web site is full of fun things to do outside all year long. The National Wildlife Federation's Be Out There campaign is dedicated to getting kids outside for their mental and physical health.

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