



Protecting Wildlife for our children's future



National Wildlife Federation Says Outdoor Time for Kids Can Help First Lady Achieve Her “Let’s Move” Goal

WASHINGTON (February 9)—First Lady Michelle Obama today launched a major campaign to address childhood obesity, a risk factor for a number of chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, and sleep apnea.

“Time unplugged and playing outside in nature should be an integral part of the First Lady’s initiative,” said Rebecca Garland, Executive Director of NWF’s Be Out There campaign

"Best of all, getting children outside for unstructured play time comes at no cost. Parents just need to open up the back door and let kids do what comes naturally," continued Garland. "Leave those unwanted pounds in the backyard, at a local park, or anywhere there is a patch of green."

The health cost of obesity in the United States could be as high as \$147 billion annually, according to a study from the Research Triangle Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Children who play outdoors are more active and burn more calories than kids who sit in front of a television or computer. Last week, National Wildlife Federation (NWF), more than 200 health, conservation, youth, and other organizations, and 16,300 Americans urged Surgeon General Regina Benjamin to make time outdoors a health priority for children. A copy of the letter and petition are available at www.BeOutThere.org.

The citizen’s petition and letter of support to Dr. Regina Benjamin recommend a “Call to Action” to promote the health benefits of children who engage in regular unstructured outdoor play in their backyards, at local parks, or any green space that offers the opportunity to connect with nature.

Last week’s release of the citizen’s petition and organizational sign-on letter to Surgeon General Benjamin demonstrates the diverse community that is rallying together around the common goal of getting America’s families healthy again and reconnected with nature.

The medical, education, and environmental communities ask the Surgeon General to recommend that all American children and their families take time everyday to *Be Out There* and interact with the natural world.

Today’s children have had less contact with nature than any generation in human history. A new [study](#) released by the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that daily media use among

young kids and teens is up dramatically from five years ago. The average American child (ages 8 to 18) now spends *seven hours 38 minutes* plugged in each day. That's 53 hours per week watching electronic entertainment media—more than the equivalent of a full-time work week.

While this is a troubling trend for the future of conservation, our economy, the health of our children, and the wellbeing of our communities are also at stake. Over the last 20 years childhood obesity has doubled, adolescent obesity has tripled, and instances of ADHD have increased. There is compelling research in the fields of public health, psychology, and elsewhere documenting that America's 'indoor childhood' has significant implications on a child's physical and mental health. Children reap significant benefits when encouraged to spend active time in an outdoor setting interacting with nature.

Visit www.letsmove.gov to learn more about First Lady Michelle Obama's childhood obesity taskforce.

NWF invites parents to make the **2010 Be Out There Resolution** to spend more time outside with their kids. Every parent and family that takes the pledge will receive the *Know, Go, and Grow Be Out There Toolkit* with important facts, fun tips, and interactive tools to help stick to the resolution. Visit www.beoutthere.org/resolution.

National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. NWF's [Be Out There](#) campaign encourages families across America to get outside on a daily basis to improve their physical and mental health. The benefits of outdoor play are real: healthier kids with a life-long appreciation of wildlife and nature.

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