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Outdoors Alliance for Kids Established to Connect Children and Families with the Great Outdoors

First Lady's Let's Move campaign introduces outdoors component as organizations unite

Washington, DC—As First Lady Michelle Obama unveiled the Let's Move OUTSIDE initiative today in Las Vegas, expanding her campaign to solve childhood obesity, a broad coalition representing the business and non-profit communities announced a national strategic partnership called the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK). OAK brings together the [YMCA of the USA](#), [REI](#), [Sierra Club](#), [National Wildlife Federation](#), [Izaak Walton League of America](#), [The Outdoor Foundation](#), [National Recreation and Park Association](#) and the [Children & Nature Network](#), collectively representing over 30 million members, to address the growing divide between children and families and the natural world.

Today's children are spending less time outdoors in nature than any generation in history. At the same time, one in three American kids is overweight or obese; more than half of all children in the United States are deficient in Vitamin D; prescriptions for ADHD medications are on the rise; and stress, anxiety and depression rates among youth are increasing. Studies suggest that spending time outdoors in green spaces can improve the mental and physical health of children. OAK member organizations are united by the belief that the well-being of current and future generations, and the health of our planet and communities depend on humans having a personal, direct and life-long relationship with nature and the outdoors.

OAK issued the following statement:

The conditions are right for making lasting changes in the ways children, youth and families relate to nature. Already this spring, the Obama Administration and Congress have taken critical steps to reverse the trend towards indoor sedentary lifestyles with the announcement of the America's Great Outdoors initiative and the inclusion of the Moving Outdoors in Nature component of the Healthy CHOICES Act introduced by Congressman Ron Kind.

Today's launch of the Let's Move Outside initiative highlights the important role our public lands, and all green spaces large and small, play in the development of healthy kids, healthy families and healthy communities. It is time to band together to ensure these and additional initiatives achieve their purpose and get kids off the couch and into nature.

OAK (www.outdoorsallianceforkids.org) is calling for local, state and national legislative and administrative policies and initiatives to reconnect children, youth and families with the natural world outdoors. Specifically, OAK is working to:

- Strengthen the connections between health and wellbeing and time spent outdoors by encouraging a robust Let's Move Outside initiative (www.letsmove.gov) and the passage of the Moving Outdoors in Nature Act recently introduced by Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin as part of the Healthy CHOICES Act

- Strengthen the connections between land conservation and time spent outdoors by participating in the national dialogue around America's Great Outdoors (www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors)
- Empower youth leaders to advance the movement to connect children and families with the outdoors by supporting events and initiatives that prepare diverse youth for leadership roles, like Outdoor Nation (www.outdoornation.org) and the Natural Leaders Network (www.naturalleaders.org)
- Promote resources and events that help children, youth and families reconnect with the great outdoors. Resources can be found on the OAK website (www.outdoorsallianceforkids.org). Upcoming events include:
 - **National Trails Day®** – 6/5 – (www.americanhiking.org)
 - **National Parks Fee-Free Weekends** – 6/5, 6/6, 8/14, 8/15, 9/25 – (<http://www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm>)
 - **National Get Outdoors Day** – 6/12 – (www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org)
 - **Outdoor Nation** – 6/19, 6/20 – (www.outdoornation.org)
 - **Great American Backyard Campout** – 6/26 – (www.beoutthere.org)
 - **Park and Recreation Month** – July – (www.nrpa.org)
 - **World's Largest Campfire** – 7/14 – (www.ymca.net)

About Children & Nature Network

The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) was created to encourage and support the people and organizations working nationally and internationally to reconnect children with nature. The network provides a critical link between researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to children's health and well-being. For more information, visit www.childrenandnature.org.

About the Izaak Walton League of America

One of the earliest conservation organizations in the United States, the Izaak Walton League was formed in 1922 to save outdoor America for future generations. With a grassroots network of nearly 270 local chapters nationwide, the League takes a common-sense approach toward protecting our country's natural heritage and improving outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. For more information, visit www.iwla.org.

About National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of roughly 21,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation initiatives, and conservation of natural and cultural resources. For more information, visit www.nrpa.org.

About National Wildlife Federation

The National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization. We work with more than 4 million members, partners and supporters in communities across the country to protect and restore wildlife habitat, confront global warming and connect people with nature. For more information, visit www.nwf.org.

About The Outdoor Foundation

Outdoor Foundation's vision is to be a driving force behind a massive increase in active outdoor recreation in America. We are an inclusive organization made up of, and supported by, broad-based coalitions and partnerships that share the common interest of promoting healthy outdoor lifestyles. We provide an inspirational bridge to the outdoors for a diverse range of individuals and organizations. We are a transparent, fiscally responsible organization that is adequately funded to achieve our Core Purpose. We serve as a credible

source of information for our stakeholders, partners and policy-makers. For more information, visit www.outdoorfoundation.org.

About REI

REI is a national outdoor retailer dedicated to inspiring, educating and outfitting its members and the community for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship. Founded in 1938 by a group of Pacific Northwest mountaineers seeking quality equipment, REI is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and increasing access to outdoor recreation through volunteerism, gear donations and financial contributions. The company offers a wide range of in-store classes, presentations and events across the nation to serve as a resource to outdoor enthusiasts of all abilities and interests. REI's [Family Adventure Program](#), a free program highlighting fun activities and local hikes and bike rides, helps families explore the outdoors together. For more information, visit www.rei.com

About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization. Inspired by nature, we are 1.3 million of your friends and neighbors, working together to protect our communities and the planet. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.

About YMCA of the USA

The nation's 2,687 YMCAs serve 21 million people each year, including more than 9 million children under the age of 18. YMCAs respond to critical social needs by drawing on their collective strength as one of America's largest not-for-profit community service organizations. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well-being for all, YMCAs unite men, women and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Visit www.ymca.net to find your local YMCA.



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