

Wonder

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

Breathe the Fresh Air of Hope

Coordinated by Tina Reeble on behalf of NACC

I had an opportunity to consider “fresh air” during a recent stop at the shoreline of Lake Erie. My tour guides for the evening shared that they grew up near the water and the distinct scent in the air, which seemed unusual to me, was very necessary to their state of well-being. To them, the air that we were breathing that evening meant “home.” We discussed how precious that awareness is to each of us — to be aware that the clean air we so often take for granted is not only vital to our physical health but our emotional capacities as well.

My own “fresh air” moment that takes me “home” happens in springtime when tulip trees and lilac bushes are overflowing with blossoms, the warmth from the sun coaxing them to perfume the air with a heady

fragrance that drifts along with the breeze. I am anticipating that time again, when I will breathe deep as if to soak that amazing aroma right down into my spirit, for I know how briefly this moment will last. Within a few weeks, most of the blossoms will have dropped to the ground and this fleeting experience will be but a memory that will have to last me for a whole year.

Experiences like these are taking place in nature-filled play settings every day. Children are enveloped in fresh air; smelling the scent of flowers blooming, seeing their breath on a crisp winter day, or connecting their breath to their hands and to the earth as they plant trees and harvest garden vegetables. These experiences become an integral part of who they are and what they intuitively know and feel about the world. Let’s see what we can accomplish when we all commit to ensure that a place for children to breathe fresh air and know the sensation of “home” is available to them, now and forever.

Until next time, be bold—choose to be extraordinary.

Tina



The mission of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NACC) is to re-connect children with the natural world by making developmentally appropriate nature education a sustaining and enriching part of the daily lives of the world’s children.

WorldForumFoundation.org/nature

Let’s Plant 1,000,000 Trees Before the 2021 World Forum on Early Care and Education!

The World Forum Nature Action Collaborative for Children (worldforumfoundation.org/nature), in conjunction with the International Association of Nature Pedagogy (naturepedagogy.com), invites you to join our tree planting challenge. Together, we will plant 1,000,000+ trees before the 2021 World Forum on Early Care and Education, growing life and hope around the world!

Visit worldforumfoundation.org/nature to learn more and to record your tree planting efforts!

Planting a Tree as an Act of Hope

Roslyn Ann Duffy, United States

Planting a tree as a family—or a school community—is an act of hope, as well as one of compassion, for our shared planet. Children of all ages, even the very young, sense their emotional environment. Our changing climate and resultant weather extremes create anxiety for us all. The best antidote for anxiety is feeling that our actions are meaningful and helpful. This is empowerment. Tree planting is such an action.

Young children are wired to care. Empathy develops through learning about their own feelings and grows as they realize that others have similar feelings. When they act upon their understanding of and connection to others, they show compassion. Feeling capable means believing my actions matter.

In the same way that you teach and offer opportunities to practice different skills—learning to share; treating animals with gentleness or tossing a ball and developing skill at catching it—you can provide ways to practice compassion through meaningful contribution, which in turn fosters feeling of hope.

And it can all happen with a tree!

Trees are the lungs of our planet. They take carbon out of the air and send oxygen back into the air. They breathe in the molecules responsible for overheating our planet and breathe out the pure air that all life needs. Here is a simple plan to heal the planet and offer encouragement to the hearts of your children and yourselves.

Decide. Describe. Details. Diligence. Delight.

Decide on a plan. Where or how will your tree(s) be planted? For some, trees can be planted in a school's outdoor classroom, and some families may be able to plant in a backyard. There are many ways to plant trees, though, even without a family yard or school yard to do so. Find an organization that plants trees in your community or elsewhere (a list of resources follows at the end of this article). Work with them or raise funds for them. There are also organizations that plant trees when you donate to them. Trees can be purchased from local nurseries, started from sprouts of established trees, or relocated when uprooted for construction. Some cities give away trees for planting. Decide on what will work for your family or organization.

Describe the process needed. If you want to donate or pay to have a tree planted, how much will it cost? Set a fundraising goal. If you will plant a tree locally, decide where and research ways to obtain trees in your area. Be sure to consider local factors and plant a tree suited to your environment and space.

Details. If money needs to be raised, decide on how to accomplish this. In families, children could do special tasks and earn specified amounts per task. For instance, children could help rake leaves or wash out lunchboxes, tasks not normally expected of them. Or, parents and children could bake treats to sell to neighbors and friends. (The bonus here is to tell others what you are doing and encourage them to do the same.) If children receive gifts or allowances, they can designate a percentage to go toward the tree planting budget. An adult could forego coffee or tea one day a week, then contribute the savings to the cause. These actions allow everyone to demonstrate meaningful involvement. The important thing is that children feel that their contribution is valued and has a meaningful impact. For school communities, perhaps a fundraiser (such as a bake sale) could help the entire school raise funds together.

Diligence equals follow-through. Have a beginning and an endpoint, with check-ins at regular intervals. If you want to be ready to plant or send a donation by a certain date, check in regularly to see how close you are to the goal. Do more chores need to be added or accomplished? Should another day of baked goods be planned? Have allowances been added to the pot? Set additional goals to step up the process if needed.



Delight. When the day comes to send in your donation, be sure children are involved. Whether by placing a stamp on an envelope with an enclosed check; handing over the saved money to purchase a tree; or helping push computer keys for an online donation, children need a hands-on experience to mark this accomplishment. When planting, be sure everyone plays a part in the process. If the amount being earned was tracked on a piece of paper on the refrigerator, or on a bulletin board at an early childhood program or school, frame it and place it someplace it can be seen, remembered and admired. A WE DID IT heading can make it even better. Added celebrations could include a special dinner, a trip to a local park to enjoy trees, or a family art day creating images of trees.

Now take a deep breath and delight in the pure air that you and your tree have helped preserve.

Roslyn Duffy is the author of “Top Ten Preschool Parenting Problems.” Her other work includes “Positive Discipline: The First Three Years” (Harmony Books) and she was the long-time author of Exchange’s ‘From a Parent’s Perspective’ column. For more on how to connect children with nature and develop compassion, see the newly revised 4th edition of “Positive Discipline for Preschoolers,” by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin, and Roslyn Ann Duffy.

Suggested Resources:

Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org

The Jonsteen company: www.jonsteen.com

King County: kingcounty.gov/services/environment/stewardship/one-million-trees.aspx

Tree People: www.treepeople.org/tree-benefits

World Forum Foundation: worldforumfoundation.org/workinggroups/nature/environmental-action-kit/925-2/



Do you have a photo and story about a special tree? Share it with us on social media, using the hashtag #wftreestories.



Future issues of Wonder

Do you have an idea or story to share?

We invite you to email your ideas, stories and photos that relate to *Connecting Children with Nature* to Tina Reeble: tinar@natureexplore.org