

*Leave No Child Inside*  
**Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and Chicago Wilderness Present:  
Tips for Parents**

Enjoying the outdoors with your children is a fun, healthy way to spend quality time with your family. Experts also believe giving children unstructured playtime outside fosters creativity and healthy childhood development, while helping prevent childhood obesity, attention deficit disorder and emotional stress. Don't know what to do? It's easy – here are some tips to get you started:

- **Give your children unstructured time outside.** Children benefit from casual playtime in nature, when they can interact freely with the natural world. These experiences build their curiosity and confidence.
- **Spend time with your children outside.** Research shows that videos, films, photos and other media cannot take the place of direct experience. Get your child out into the parks and preserves or to the shore of Lake Michigan. Take a class, or go on a guided nature walk at your local park district.
- **Enjoy nature in your neighborhood.** Planting a garden, watching birds and climbing trees with your kids can launch a life-long love of plants, insects and animals.
- **Let your children take the lead.** Instincts can be their most valuable guide when discovering nature. With their natural curiosity, your kids will quickly find something for the family to explore.
- **Hold a scavenger hunt** in the backyard. Ask kids to check off items on a list that could include flowers, bird tracks, squirrels, something that makes noise, colors in nature, worms and insects in the soil.
- **Play games to encourage looking**, such as “I see something you don't see and its color is...” Use yes-and-no questions to give your kids clues.
- **Direct your children's attention -- and join in their fun.** Research shows that children learn more when someone participates in an experience with them. It's as simple as pointing out trees or touching a leaf with your child; encouraging her or him listen for birds, smell the flowers, or feel the wind or soil.
- **Don't be afraid of not knowing the answers.** You don't have to know everything about plants and animals to help your children enjoy them; half the fun is asking questions and building a sense of curiosity and wonder.
- **Go online to [www.KidsOutside.info](http://www.KidsOutside.info)** to learn more about where, when and what to do to enjoy nature with your family. Through this Web site, you can sign up to receive monthly e-mail bulletins year-around that offer tips on where to go and what to do with kids. Also, subscribe to *Chicago Wilderness Magazine*.