

Project Get Outdoors

OCTOBER 2024



Above photo: Participants in the Winona Master Naturalist class pose for a photo while sampling invertebrates at Lake Winona.

Program Coordinator Updates

2024 has been a wonderful, crazy, blessed year! After leaving the stability and benefits of my full-time naturalist job with Minnesota State Parks and Trails last November, I began working 20 hours/week as the Program Coordinator for Project Get Outdoors. It has been very rewarding to dedicate each day to this important work. We have been making lots of headway on projects and new outreach initiatives including:

- Hosting a 4-day immersion for our Healing Forest cohort members to complete their Nature & Forest Therapy Guide certification and begin piloting nature therapy experiences through the work they do with youth. Learn more at sites.google.com/view/thehealingforest/home.

- Piloting a Nature Guides program to train college students and high school youth to lead nature-based activities for younger children and students. We trained two St. Mary's University interns to lead activities for preschool children at the Jeremiah Program in Rochester. We also trained older students at Riverway Learning Community in Winona to lead activities for elementary students at their school.
- Partnering with the Frontenac State Park Association to pilot a Nature Explorers program for preschool age children in Red Wing and Lake City.
- Sponsoring Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteer trainings in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Winona and Lake City public libraries. Master Naturalist volunteers have been instrumental to the success of Project GO.
- Expanding access to Nature & Forest Therapy for older adults, veterans and health care providers in southeast Minnesota through funding provided by the Wabasha Kellogg Area Community Foundation and the Mayo Chapter of the DAV.
- Developing teacher training and consultation services to empower schools to incorporate nature exploration and outdoor learning.

We look forward to growing these efforts in the coming year and are thankful for all of our volunteers, partners, donors and funders who have supported this work!

Sara Holger, Program Coordinator



Above photo: Students at Riverway Learning Community in Winona participate in a Nature Guides training through Project Get Outdoors and practice ways to use the materials in the Project GO backpacks to lead nature activities for younger students at their school.



Partner Highlight

Riverside Central Elementary School

This year Project GO worked with Riverside Elementary School to provide monthly nature programming on-site at the community school located in downtown Rochester. We utilized the “school forest” on site to provide nature exploration activities for 200 Kindergarten and 5th grade students at the school. In addition, we led an in-service training for teachers to explore ways to use the outdoor learning area for classroom teaching. A highlight for students was tapping four maple trees on the school grounds and making maple syrup from the two gallons of sap collected.



Above photo: Teachers at Riverside Central Elementary School in Rochester participate in an in-service training led by Project GO. The training centered on ways to use the outdoors as a classroom.

Volunteer Spotlight

Frontenac State Park Association and Nature Explorers

This summer, with funding from the MN DNR - No Child Left Inside program, Project GO teamed up with the Frontenac State Park Association (FSPA) to offer Nature Explorers, a monthly program series for young children ages 3 - 6 years old at Frontenac State Park. Each month, Project GO Program Coordinator, Sara Holger, visited the park with activities for little ones to learn about nature. Volunteers from the FSPA assisted with each program, helping direct traffic, issue free vehicle permits the association purchased for program participants, and helping families who needed an extra hand; from holding a baby while parents helped their preschoolers with nature activities, to pointing out nature along the trail.

Several of the FSPA volunteers are Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers and are very active in leading programs and events at Frontenac State Park. Pam Miller, a retired journalist for the Minneapolis Star Tribune and resident of nearby Frontenac Village, is a member of the FSPA and a Master Naturalist volunteer. Pam helped with several Nature Explorers sessions where her passion for plants and mushrooms was eagerly shared by the little ones who gathered around her on more than one occasion to see what interesting things she had gathered from the forest. In 2023, Pam participated in a Project GO Leader Training at the Lake City Public Library where she gained skills and confidence to lead nature programs for children.

To learn more about the Project Get Outdoors training watch Episode 1510 of the Prairie Sportsman PBS show, titled, "Arrowhead 135 and Bringing Youth Outdoors" (skip to 17:52) at www.pioneer.org/prairiesportsman/.



Above photo: Frontenac State Park Association volunteer, Pam Miller, shows a group of Nature Explorers some mushrooms she found along the trail at Frontenac State Park.

Get involved!

As we work to expand our capacity to serve more communities in Minnesota, our biggest challenge is fundraising. You can support our fundraising efforts by hosting a forest bathing walk in your community!

Project GO has collaborated with several community organizations including the Austin Spirituality Center, Friends of the Bluffs, NAMI, Olmsted County, the Mayo Chapter of the DAV, Rochester Community and Technical College, and the Wabasha Kellogg Area Community Foundation to offer forest bathing walks in Austin, Red Wing, Dakota County, Rochester and several other communities across southeast Minnesota. We charge a flat rate of \$250 and can accommodate up to 25 people per walk. These walks bring people together for social connectedness and nature immersion while generating a revenue stream for Project Get Outdoors.

To find out more about hosting a forest bathing walk in your community, contact Sara at sara.grover@yahoo.com.



Above photo: Olmsted County Public Health staff gather for a tea ceremony during a forest bathing walk at Oxbow Park in July. Olmsted County staff have scheduled several forest bathing walks as part of their Employee Wellbeing efforts.

THANK YOU
SO MUCH

Carol Jefferson

Mayo Chapter DAV

Bluff Country Coop

Eagle Bluff ELC	MiEnergy Cooperative	Minnesota Department of Health
Bluff Country Coop	Winona Community Foundation	Minnesota Historical Society
Rochester Area Foundation	Joel & Sandra Dunnette	Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation
Winona Bird Club	Mayo Clinic	Winona Public Library
Lake City Public Library	Red Wing Public Library	Frontenac State Park Association
Janet Hilliker	Winona Parks and Recreation	MN DNR - No Child Left Inside
Joey Bussey	Wabasha Kellogg Area Community Foundation	

Contact Information

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