

Ready, Set, GO!

The newsletter that keeps you up-to-date on the Project GO happenings around Crookston and St. Paul!

A PROJECT GO INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of Ready, Set, GO!, a newsletter about the fresh initiatives of Project Get Outdoors (GO) in the St. Paul & Crookston areas! These initiatives have been assigned through Conservation Corps MN & IA to Amy Flatten, the St. Paul Community Mapping and Outreach Specialist, and Alysa Zimmerle, the Crookston Community Mapping and Outreach Specialist.

Project GO works to establish meaningful connections with nature and kids. The program was started in SW Minnesota back in 2005. Today, the program has spread throughout southern MN and is making it's way farther North! Weekly outings into the natural environment provide kids with unstructured play that helps with concentration, cooperative play, and cognitive thinking—all for free! The program is a community-supported program run by community volunteers with support from partnering organizations.

Amy and Alysa will be using these newsletters to update the communities involved and any others interested in the work happening to connect kids to nature!

CROOKSTON AREA: THINGS ARE HEATING UP

Alysa's position is partnered with the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), and so will be working in a few communities identified by this initiative. The Crookston area where Project GO will be working with are: Crookston, Mahnomen, Fossten, and Ada. These communities are already making big strides in healthy living—including connecting nature and children!

Project GO is already making headway in Crookston and Mahnomen! Project GO will be helping with a program at the Crookston Library in July—putting on an event with stations like mud-pie and tipi making, and games that make connections with how animals and plants work. There's a meeting scheduled with the Boys and Girls Club in Mahnomen to talk about partnership in creating a spot to host weekly outings for kids in Mahnomen. Crookston High Schoolers are also interested in working with Project GO, and are excited to help with locations and outings!

Even with the interest, these locations are still in need of community member support. Whether you're interested in working with kids—doing one outing or ten, helping with planning, or just offering support to the program, Alysa can use your assistance! The July 23rd program at the library also needs volunteers for the short event helping with the stations! Please contact Alysa (information listed on the last page) if you have any interest or resources to share!



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- SnowSnakes Galore!
- Meet Andy Wendt
- Opportunities to Get Involved!



SPRING AHEAD: FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE TRI-COUNTY AREA

Recently, Mahnommen county had a SnowSnake event, or traditionally called Gooniginebig! A few teams from the schools in the White Earth Reservation came together to make SnowSnakes, or sticks modified by the kids to look like snakes, and compete against each other for awards! It was a fantastic event that got the kids connected to a long-time tradition, and made a fun activity of being outside!

There has also been more development with the Natural Play Spaces in the area! Already with parks in Crookston, Fosston, and Fertile, a new nature-based play

space is becoming more defined in Mahnommen! Soon kids will be exploring a playground-bananza filled with logs, mudpies, rock stepping stones, and other nature-based fun!

Additionally, Crookston was recently crawling with environmentally-conscious High School students from the area! It was a celebration congratulating the achievements of the students involved in the River Watch Program and the insight gained from their data collection on the rivers!

Keep up the hard work and thank you for all you do Polk, Mahnommen, and Norman Counties!

“Man’s heart away from nature becomes hard; [the Lakota] knew that lack of respect for growing, living things led to lack of respect for humans too.” – Luther Standing Bear

STAFF HIGHLIGHT: ANDY WENDT

Andy is a native of Mankato, MN. He has a degree in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services from Minnesota State University, Mankato and has worked for the Boy Scouts of America, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In his free time he enjoys canoeing/kayaking, fishing, camping, geocaching, and exploring state parks.

As our Program Coordinator, Andy works behind the scenes supporting staff, training volunteers, and helping Project GO reach new heights!



Thanks Andy for all the hard work you do!

ST. PAUL AREA: GROWING AND EXPANDING

Tucked into downtown St. Paul, Amy has been warmly welcomed into the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota office. Here she has been focused on expanding to new sites in the Twin Cities Area. We partnered with Common Bond Communities last year to bring programs to Skyline Tower in St. Paul. This year, we aim to reach kids at Seward Towers (Minneapolis) and Yorkdale Townhomes (Edina) in addition to Skyline. If you are interested in helping at any of these sites, contact Amy directly. Many hands make light work...and lots of friends!

As a work in progress, we will also be exploring ways to engage an even younger crowd – pre-school aged children! If you work with young children, are a daycare provider, work in Early Childhood Education or have ideas about young kids in nature, we will have an initial brainstorming session in Rochester in April and would love to hear your ideas. Contact Amy if you are interested.

PROJECT GET OUT-DOORS

Project Get Outdoors, Inc. (Project GO) is a non-profit organization founded in 2006 to assist Minnesota communities in connecting children to nature exploration and outdoor learning during the out-of-school hours. Project GO was developed in response to Richard Louv's 2005 book, "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder". Click here to view a short video on the history and need for Project GO.

With the help of our project partners, Project GO has developed a free Toolkit to guide communities through the stages of designing, implementing, evaluating and sustaining their own unique Project GO after school programs.

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Say no more! Just like our kids, we want to get YOU outside and connected with your local community as well!

Do you have a knack for kids? Are you passionate about a particular environmental subject? Would you like to share your love of simply exploring nature with enthusiastic kids? Sign up to volunteer with us today!

Program leaders are needed to organize programs throughout the year. This commitment can be as small as 5 hours/week or can be a full 40 hour/week internship. This is a tremendous way to get involved, enhance your leadership skills and network with many organizations. Even if you are interested in a one-time commitment to test the waters, there's an opportunity for you.

With the support of adult leaders, kids will look deeper, think more creatively, grow more confidently, develop stronger relationships, connect with nature, and be more connected to their community! And it all starts with you!



Project Get Outdoors

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