

# 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

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.

## NORTHWEST REGION: BACK ON TRACK

Event planning for Alysa has come to a welcomed lull this month. The many events in June and July left little time for other projects. Now that the push for events has quieted, Alysa has time to focus on her other projects and development of new Project GO sites.

Alysa and Gina are in the final stages of mapping development! This has been a long-time coming, with the busy schedules of those involved, as well as the many little details that are involved with creating such a large project. The GIS expert in Crookston, Matt Johnson, was key in editing the final map to make it useful and readable for families. Thank you Matt for all you do!

Alysa will also return working on a reading program for Project GO and a cultural handbook. These tools will help Project GO sites develop their outings even more. It will assist in offering more inclusive and welcoming programs, as well as offering more activities and "rainy day" options for outings.

Alysa also traveled to St. Paul to work with Amy and help out at the Eco Experience Nature Adventure Play area at the State Fair! The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), does a great job every year in putting together a very informative and interactive building where people can come to learn about how to lead greener lives. This year they added a nature-play area for kids to explore new territory, get dirty, and reconnect with nature. It was a huge hit and a lot of fun to work at! Great job MPCA!!



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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Adventure Play Space
- Meet Alysa Zimmerle
- Tree fort Tours



## BUILDING FORTS & FUN OF ALL SORTS

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is hosting the Eco Experience Building for the eighth year this year at the Minnesota State Fair. Their focus is on education of environmental issues that affect the public as well as easy ways to be more environmentally conscious of people's actions. They have the building divided into separate sections such as wind, solar, air pollution, and food systems. All of this while offering the information in an interactive and entertaining way—with things like a live cooking show, a photo-shoot booth for gutter guardians, and many interactive kiosks for learning!

This year was the first year they tried an outside area for kids—the Nature Adventure Play Yard! It was designed by the very talented landscape designer Camille Calderaro with Fireflies Play. She designed the area with children's development in mind and had a social space, a constructive/building space, and a sand and water space.

Children of all ages had a wonderful time at the play space, and even adults joined in! Camille wanted to ensure that each fun space could be created at home. This type of play is intergenerational and a great opportunity for families to do for very cheap, or even free!

## *Boredom + Time = Creativity!*

### STAFF HIGHLIGHT: ALYSA ZIMMERLE

Alysa has been with Project GO since January of this year as a Conservation Corps Member. She is working closely with the University of Minnesota Extension in Northwest Minnesota to bring Project GO up there!

Alysa is in love with the outdoors! As a child she was encouraged to explore the wonders of the natural world and became an advocate for wildlife and the environment!

Her most favorite activity, besides eating ice cream, is just sitting watching nature. It's amazing how many things that go by unnoticed when you just walk by! She also loves storms, hiking, rock hunting, kayaking, and rolling down hills.

## ST. PAUL AREA: GROWING TOGETHER

Our Twin Cities sites have been very active these last few months and have kept Amy very busy! Skyline programs have been going to nearby parks and exploring, catching insects, looking at trees, growing plants, and having fun with chalk. Kids living in Seward Towers went camping for the first time in tents at Fort Snelling State Park and have done other nature activities with their Program Coordinator. As for youth living in Yorkdale townhomes in Edina, they have played yard games on National Night out, explored nearby parks and went fishing. We look forward to continuing to grow these programs at each site and provide new opportunities all year long. Dedicated volunteers are needed!

In addition to summer programming, we have been busy working on creating a better nature connection for even younger kids while they are at childcare or HeadStart facilities. The younger we can capture kids and introduce them to nature, the more skills they will develop. Creativity, problem solving skills, self-confidence, and stronger attention skills are just to name a few. Stay tuned as we are in the process of pursuing this initiative in Southeastern Minnesota.



*Ben Moburg leading a teen geocaching program at Sprocket's Day at Lake Phalen event, Saint Paul.*

## MONTHLY EVENTS

Check out the great events happening in the upcoming months! Many amazing organizations are working to better our communities and environment. If you have interest in any event—either to volunteer or get your kids busy with an activity—contact the Project GO coordinator assigned to that event!

### KID'S ACTIVITY:

What's a better way to look at the lush tree foliage above you? To play in it of course!

When was the last time you climbed a tree or hung out in a fort among the branches? While leaves are still on trees, scamper up to get a bird's-eye view of nature and safely challenge your climbing skills.

Try building a simple platform among the branches for kids to have a place to retreat to or plant a tree with low branches to encourage kids to grab hold. Plant trees great for climbing that have horizontal branches, grow fast, and are hardwoods like ones recommended in the book *A Child's Garden* by Molly Dannenmaier. Some suggested trees include silver maple, pin oak, weeping willow, apple, and catalpa.

Monthly Events	When	Where	Need Volunteers	Activity for kids	Project GO Contact
<b>Skyline Summer GO Programs</b>	Mondays June-August	Skyline Tower, St. Paul		✓	Amy
<b>Children's Gardening Program</b>	Every Friday through August 8th	Crookston Sports Center		✓	Alysa
<b>National Night Out</b>	August 6	Yorkdale Townhomes, Edina		✓	Amy
<b>I Can Camp</b>	August 7-8	Fort Snelling State Park, St. Paul		✓	Amy
<b>Kids At Castle</b>	August 8	Crookston, MN		✓	Alysa
<b>Yorkdale GO Programs</b>	August 13 and 18	Edina, MN		✓	Amy
<b>Natural Play Space Exhibit</b>	August 21- September 1	State Fair Grounds, St. Paul		✓	Alysa and Amy
<b>Kids At Castle</b>	September 8	Crookston, MN	✓	✓	Alysa

## PROJECT GET OUTDOORS

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".

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!



### Project Get Outdoors

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