Wingspread Declaration on Health and Nature

November 15, 2014

**Nature and human well-being are connected:**
The connection between people and the natural world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit, and survival. Nature is a source of food, clean water, clean air, medicine, shelter, and economic opportunity. Moreover, in order to thrive, humans require direct access to nature. Whether a city park, a community garden, a tree-lined street, or wilderness — nature in people’s daily lives reduces stress, renews the spirit, connects people to each other and increases physical activity. In short, humans are part of nature, our connection with nature is a fundamental human need, and we believe access to nature is a basic right.

However, large numbers of people — many of them children — are now disconnected from nature. As a direct consequence, people around the world are suffering from substantial health challenges, many of them preventable. Likewise, the natural world faces increased pressures and vulnerability. The human, natural, and economic consequences of these challenges are already enormous.

This situation calls for placing consideration of the nature-health connection at the center of research, design, and decision-making across multiple fields. Concerted, cooperative action from health, environmental, educational, governmental, and corporate actors is needed to reconnect people with nature and to secure commitment to protecting nature.
Call for action to connect people with nature

We know enough to act now. A robust body of evidence demonstrates the benefits to human health and well-being of the natural world and of nature contact. Evidence also demonstrates substantial co-benefits, such as more vibrant communities, reduced health disparities, mitigation and adaptation to a changing climate, and business opportunities.

Therefore we commit our own efforts to the following goals. We also call on leaders in the public and private spheres to recognize these commitments as central to their own aims, and to commit their own organizational efforts to these goals:

1. Today's children will grow up with an understanding of their interdependence with nature. They will habitually incorporate outdoor activity into their everyday lives, and grow up with an appreciation for nature. Achieving this goal will require changes in school facilities and curricula, urban design, public spending priorities, pediatric healthcare, and more. In approaching this goal, we will focus on the most vulnerable and under-served populations of children first.

2. Employers and business leaders will recognize the powerful economic benefits of reconnecting people with nature and, in particular, of encouraging outdoor activity in order to lower healthcare costs, improve employee recruitment, retention, and performance. In so doing, employers will become leaders in preventing illness and disability, promoting health and well-being, and working to steward nature.

3. Nature, and access to nature, will be recognized as an important part of our health infrastructure and we will invest in places for healing and places to promote health.

4. We will help build organizations that have the competencies to factor the nature-health connection into their decisions on a regular basis. This will require training and hiring of knowledgeable employees. It will also rest on incorporation of research findings on this topic, thus:

5. New research will further reveal the interdependencies between nature and human health. We will undertake quantitative and qualitative research initiatives to measure and illustrate the health, well-being, and economic benefits of embedding the nature-health connection into decision-making at all levels.

6. To support these measures, we will create a clearinghouse of research, information, case studies of success, and partnerships to support good decision-making and to help connect new networks of health and environmental organizations.

To learn about the Declaration and commit to the call to action, contact Kristin Wheeler with the Institute at the Golden Gate at health@instituteatgoldengate.org.
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The signatures above represent the commitments of the individuals to the Declaration, and do not necessarily represent the views of the organization as a whole.