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Contact: Kristi Masterson 513/965-4247
kmasterson@cincynature.org

Cincinnati Nature Center to unveil nation's largest Nature PlayScape

MILFORD, Ohio – Cincinnati Nature Center will celebrate the opening of the nation's largest playscape with a symbolic vine-cutting ceremony Tuesday, August 16 at 11 a.m.

The 1.6-acre Marge and Charles Schott Nature PlayScape will allow children to experience nature in a safe setting by providing a more resilient and contained version of local natural habitats. The Nature PlayScape will feature native plants, fallen logs, boulders, rocks, water and soil and include very few man-made structures. It will mimic the native habitats found in Greater Cincinnati – forest, field, stream and wetland.

"We hope the Nature PlayScape inspires the creation of more playscapes and serves as a model for future projects. CNC is proud to be leading this natural play movement and we look forward to sharing its opening with everyone," CNC Executive Director Bill Hopple said.

The PlayScape is a model of the Nature PlayScape Initiative (NPI), which is an organizational effort lead by CNC and partnered with UC Arlitt Center that aims to increase the number of nature play environments to ensure more children have safe access to nature. NPI strives to educate adults about the importance of frequent unstructured play in nature and offers instruction on how to transform yards, parks and school grounds into Nature PlayScapes. NPI also provides training and on-site presentations.

"Unfortunately, children today are spending substantially less time in nature than previous generations – the Nature PlayScape Initiative looks to reverse the trend by providing a safe, engaging area that invites children to play in nature," Hopple said.

Studies show that unstructured play in nature is critical for healthy childhood development, actually increasing self-esteem, creativity, motor skills, fitness and academic performance.

"These children are the future – and their experiences outdoors are essential for the development of a conservative ethic," Hopple added.

The Nature PlayScape's grand opening will feature a speech, informational session and details about upcoming programs available at the Nature PlayScape. After the ceremony, children and adults are invited to tour and play by digging, splashing and building in the Nature PlayScape. Light refreshments will also be available. Admission to CNC is free the day of the event.

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