

## Outdoors important for healthy childhood development

By Shawn Morford  
Warm Springs 4-H  
Youth Development



Shawn Morford

The 4-H and other youth programs in this community have a long history of outdoor education that gives youth an opportunity to learn and explore the natural world.

The organizers of these programs already know what recent research is now saying: Being exposed to the natural world is critical for growing up healthy.

Having a lot of experience in the outdoors as a young person is no longer just a "nice to have." Research now agrees that it's an essential part of emotional and physical health.

Recently I received the book, *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv (published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill 2006) that describes the research that says that direct exposure to nature is essential for children to grow up physically and emotionally healthy.

It shows how the lack of time in the outdoors is linked with a rise in attention disorders, depression, and other negative factors for children in the United States.

The research has found that children who spend time in nature have lower stress levels, are healthier overall, and play more creatively.

Children who spend time outdoors also are shown to have a greater respect for themselves, for others, and for the natural

"By expressing interest or even awe at the march of ants across a street, we send a message to our children that will last for decades to come."

Discovering the awe of nature does not only happen in structured programs like 4-H. Informal, unstructured play time in the outdoors is also important. Kids watch adults who show their own awe and interest. Louv says:

"Take them down to the creek to skip rocks, and then show them what was hiding under those rocks. Take a walk after the rain and count the worms. Collect things- gather rocks, flowers, seeds. Take them home and make a collage or trace the leaves. Press the flowers. Make a nature scrapbook. Start an insect collection. Plant a small garden—you can even use a few big pots or old tires."

What does Louv's book mean for future 4-H Youth programs in Warm Springs?

It means that we will be looking for even more creative ways to bring together kids and nature, both in their backyards and in the more wild areas, in addition to the existing 4-H programs.

We will be looking for community volunteers who want to teach short term classes and field trips for youth on topics relating to nature, especially those relating linking to culture, or start new 4-H clubs.

We will be looking for funds to have an expanded summer

program that would involve more programs that get kids learning about and exploring the natural world.

Not only will these programs continue to help prevent "nature deficit disorder" in youth (As Louv calls it), but can help introduce youth to careers in the natural resources field.

Future land managers may come from the group of youth who participate in outdoor education programs and who spend a lot of time outdoors.

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Happy Birthday, Sis! You are so cool! I love you! Brady.



You are my great, best friend! Happy birthday on December 21st. From Ellise.



Happy 8th Birthday to my travelin' partner, Ellise Rose David! I love you, Baby Girl! Dad.

We would like to send a big birthday wish to Ellise Rose and Brady Paul David. With love grandma Sharon, aunt Paula and aunt Sam.

Happy Birthday, Ellise! I love you - you are the best big sister ever! From Harlee.



Happy Birthday to a wonderful daughter, Ellise Rose David, on December 10th!

We are so very proud of all you do.  
Love Mom and Dad.

### Need help with a legal problem?

Legal Aid Services of Oregon provides free assistance to low-income Oregonians in many civil cases. Speak with an attorney during drop-in hours 1 to 4 p.m.

on the first Monday of the month at the Family Resources Center in Warm Springs. Or call us at 385-6944 Monday through Wednesday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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## Warm Springs Market

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Kay Baker, superintendent of the Jefferson County School District 509-J, will be in Warm Springs twice each month to meet with parents or other community members regarding the school system. Baker

will be in the tribal administration building, conference room 2, on the first Tuesday of every month from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; and on the third Tuesday of each month from 8:30-11:30 a.m.

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