

## gO! Play Adventure



### The importance of play for healthy families

Junior League of Omaha

## gO! Play Adventure A Natural Solution for families

### Why is Unstructured Play Important?

Play is the work of children. It is essential to the physical, social, cognitive and emotional well being of a child. Unstructured play helps develop a child's unique talents and interests, teaches social norms and life skills and provides an outlet for stress through imagination and physical activity. For school-age children, unstructured play encourages a sense of discipline, helps lengthen a child's attention span and provides opportunities for children to release pent-up energy from the stress of the school day.

One of the most overlooked opportunities for unstructured play is play in the outdoor environment. Within a generation, children have gone from spending most of their days outside on playgrounds and ball fields to being engrossed in indoor activities and excessive amounts of "screen time" in front of televisions, computer screens, and video games.. This loss of nature play has an especially significant effect on the health of children in our community.

Parents can ensure their children have unstructured playtime by encouraging family activities that incorporate physical activity. Simple activities like playing tag in the yard after dinner or taking a bike ride incorporate healthy unstructured activity over the course of a day.

Busy family life, organized sports and extra curricular activities, greater access to technology and concern for child safety have reduced the amount of time children spend in unstructured play.

gO! Play Adventure is designed to encourage families to participate in unstructured play and increase their opportunities for physical activity by visiting destinations across the Omaha metropolitan area.

The benefits of outdoor unstructured play are overwhelmingly positive for young people. Children who spend time involved in natural play are less likely to get sick and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout their lives. The outdoor world stimulates a child's innate desire to explore and experiment with the diversity of nature. Nature

play is socially inclusive, providing open-ended play opportunities for children of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and encouraging imaginative play.

gO! Play Adventure is estimated to involve as many as 20,000 people in the Omaha Metropolitan area and attract visitors to some of Omaha's most treasured venues. The effects of such a significant campaign to expose today's children to the natural world will be an asset for coming generations as children who participate in outdoor experiences appreciate them when they become adults and perpetuate the cycle with their own children.

As we embark on a landmark initiative to return our children of the outdoors, your partnership and support will be vital to its success and to the appreciation of nature for coming generations.

### gO! Play Adventure *The details*

The gO! Play Adventure is estimated to involve 5,000 families in the Omaha metro area. Families will obtain their gO! Play Adventure playbook at various Omaha Public Libraries by completing the registration form online at [www.hipkidsomaha.org](http://www.hipkidsomaha.org) prior to participating.

The gO! Play adventure playbook will include 35 play destinations that encourage unstructured and nature based play. There is no cost for families to register for the gO! Play Adventure playbook. Activities in the playbook include a mixture of free and low cost activities, some locations may

provide one time special discounts for families participating in the program. Once you have your playbook, the goal is to collect a gO! Play Adventure rubbing imprint at each location over a one year period.

Once the activities are completed, rubbings collected, and end of the playbook survey filled out, families may submit the playbook to the Omaha Children's Museum in order to be entered into a prize raffle. Prizes will be announced on [www.hipkidsomaha.org](http://www.hipkidsomaha.org). Winners will be announced May 2010.



### What is H.I.P. Kids?

H.I.P. Kids is the Junior League of Omaha's signature project to inspire kids to get active and develop a healthy lifestyle. This project was launched in 2003 after a community needs assessment revealed the youth in the Omaha metropolitan area were at risk for obesity and its health-related problems. Factors indicated a lack of opportunity for fitness and nutritional education and a greater need for unstructured play.



### What does the Junior League of Omaha Do?

The Junior League of Omaha, Inc. is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers.

Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.