



“LEAVE NO NEW MEXICO CHILD INSIDE” FACT SHEET

THE NATURE DEFICIT

- ❖ Children today spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation. Many parents today are bombarded with media reports of “stranger danger” even though childhood abduction rates are actually down by about 40% over previous generations. 82 percent of mothers with children between the ages of 3 and 12 cited crime and safety concerns as one of the primary reasons they do not allow their children to play outdoors (Clements, 2004).
- ❖ Children’s free play and discretionary time declined more than 7 hours a week from 1981 to 1997 and an additional 2 hours from 1997 to 2003, totaling 9 hours less a week of time over a 25-year period in which children participated in unstructured activities (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Hofferth & Curtin, 2006).
- ❖ More than 60% of children between the ages of 9 and 13 do not participate in any organized physical activity outside of school. Nearly one-fourth get no free-time physical activity at all (Centers for Disease Control, 2003).
- ❖ The American Environmental Values Survey found that 92 percent of respondents thought that most kids do not spend enough time outdoors and 91 percent that most kids these days care more about video games and portable music players than about wildlife and clean air (EcoAmerica, 2006).
- ❖ Studies reported upon in the medical journal, *Pediatrics* reports the average American child now spends more time watching television (1,023 hours per year) than in school (900 hours per year) (Sharif & Sargent, 2006).
- ❖ Children between the ages of six months and six years spend an average of 1.5 hours a day with electronic media, and youth between the ages of 8 and 18 spend an average of 6.5 hours a day with electronic media—that’s more than 45 hours a week! (Rideout & Hamel, 2006; Roberts, et al., 2005).
- ❖ 1960s television offered 27 hours of children’s programming a week, much of it shown on Saturday morning. Today, there are 14 television networks aimed at children (Cauchon, 2005).
- ❖ A child is 6 times more likely to play a video game on a typical day than to ride a bike, according to surveys by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control. In fact, the sales of children’s bikes fell 21% from 2000 to 2004 (Cauchon, 2005).
- ❖ Almost 50% of 4- to 6-year-olds have TVs in their bedrooms. And after age 8, “screen time”—TV plus computers and other electronic media—soared to 6.5 hours a day, on average (MSNBC, 2006).

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