



West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative's Engaging Children Outdoors (ECHO) Program

ENSURING EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO NATURE AND OUTDOOR SPACES

Spending time in nature is essential for our health and wellbeing. Green outdoor spaces provide options for everyday physical activity, community and social connections, and learning about the natural environment. We need to ensure that all residents of Louisville – no matter where they live, work, or play – have access to safe parks and public outdoor spaces.

WHAT IS THE ENGAGING CHILDREN OUTDOORS (ECHO) PROGRAM?

ECHO offers learning opportunities, activities, and job opportunities to encourage more children, young adults, and families in Louisville to spend time outside and become the next leaders in the outdoor and environmental fields.

For more than a decade, ECHO has provided learning opportunities for children ages 3 to 21, making experiences in nature a fun, interesting, and regular part of the public-school curriculum. ECHO also provides out-of-school opportunities, including summer camps, green career job opportunities for young adults, and community events like Shawnee Outdoor Adventure Day.

WHAT IS THE WEST LOUISVILLE OUTDOOR RECREATION INITIATIVE (WLORI)?

WLORI is a community-led planning effort to make outdoor spaces, such as local parks and along the Ohio River, more accessible to everyone. From designing parks and installing nature play spaces to supporting ECHO classes and activities like boating and hiking that get people outside, WLORI connects more Louisville residents to the health benefits of outdoor activity.

WLORI uses a step-by-step process that allows community members, families, and young people to steer park improvements and programs. This community-led process finds new ideas and solutions to longstanding problems that support the community's priorities.



Environmental education



Out-of-school outdoor activities



Nature play



Recreational sports



Youth summer jobs



Family & community events



ECHO promotes fair and inclusive access to green spaces and outdoor activities for children and families. WLORI improves parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure so community members can enjoy nature and be as healthy as possible.

WHY DOES LOUISVILLE NEED ECHO?

Living in a city, we can easily go days and weeks without spending time in nature and experiencing the health benefits of the outdoors. West Louisville, in particular, has historically been excluded from investment in safe outdoor spaces like neighborhood parks and recreational areas, making it even harder for local children and families to spend time learning from, growing, and playing in nature. ECHO provides ongoing outdoor activity opportunities that promote healthy living, social cohesion, self confidence, and career exploration.

The state-of-the-art Shawnee Outdoor Learning (SOL) Center is the final element and most exciting feature of WLORI's Master Plan to improve West Louisville parks infrastructure and access.

HOW WILL THE SOL CENTER HELP ECHO INCREASE ITS IMPACT?

The SOL Center is a yet-to-be-built nature education center that will be located in Shawnee Park in West Louisville. It will provide opportunities for children and families to connect with nature and connect with their community – both of which are essential for good health and wellbeing. The new space also will allow ECHO to expand its programs, including outdoor education, recreational activities, and environmental stewardship activities like tree planting. The SOL Center is part of the WLORI Master Plan that was approved in 2016 after two years of working with the community.

5,000 Children

will have opportunities to experience outdoor activities and nature education with the new SOL Center, doubling the number of children ECHO engages with today.



Inspiring the next generation

Imagine a landscape architect, photographer, mountain climber, environmental engineer, or writer who found their calling through a childhood spent exploring the banks of the Ohio River, rock climbing at the SOL Center, or walking nature paths in Shawnee Park.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Join other organizations and donors that have signed on to support building the SOL Center. Learn more about how to be a part of the movement. <https://www.wildernesslouisville.org/get-involved/donate/>

We're helping Louisville fulfill its commitment to just and fair access to open outdoor spaces. Join us in our journey to nature justice for all by exploring our ECHO programs! <https://www.wildernesslouisville.org/programs/louisville-echo/>

This publication was made possible by cooperative agreement number OT18-1802 Strengthening Public Health Systems and Services Through National Partnerships to Improve and Protect the Nation's Health from the CDC, which includes the Improving Social Determinants of Health—Getting Further Faster initiative.