



October 2013

NEWS & NOTES

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The Gray Family Foundation seeks to fulfill John and Betty Gray's faith in the human spirit. The Gray family acknowledges their responsibility to give back to the systems that nurture all of us: our culture, our natural environment and our communities.

Director's Notes

The rain swirled in torrential sheets as I stepped onto Fayette Street in Baltimore. Only two days prior, the locals had been complaining of how dry it was, but today there was none of that. People were ducking under archways. Umbrellas were inverting, dumping water by the cupful onto unsuspecting owners. I had my trusty REI raincoat, but my feet were getting soaked. I ducked into the entryway of an old building and took refuge with some fellow human travelers who had been caught unprepared. We exchanged murmurs about the "crazy weather" for several minutes before the downpour mellowed to a soaking drizzle and we embarked onward to our destinations.

It's not really scientific to draw climate change conclusions from a single rain, but it's also fair to note that the weather isn't what it used to be. When we start having 500-year storms every few years, and Portland sets new records for monthly rainfall, a person starts to draw his own conclusions. At the recent North American Association for Environmental Educators, a researcher noted that climate scientists are so universally convinced that climate change is happening that some of the largest national newspapers are no longer accepting articles from doubters of climate change. Climate change is happening and the effects are becoming more visible.

The question at this point is how do we educate a population that will be in their forties in 2050...mid-century, when some of the biggest effects of global climate change are supposed to happen. This is not some far off future, this is our kids, having to deal with environmental changes that our species hasn't faced....ever.

It's true that in our 5 million year history as a species we've dealt with advancing and retreating glaciers, but we haven't dealt with that

problem since the creation of cities and agriculture. And we really haven't had to deal with severe sea level rise or ocean acidification on the scale that climate scientists are predicting. Our daily decisions, added together are affecting the planet's ability to support us. Given enough time, the earth will recover, but our species may not.

To say that environmental education is the only necessary solution is simplistic and naive, but to say that environmental education is somehow extra or ancillary is also naive. We need to connect our kids to nature early and often in order to give them the best possible understanding of natural cycles. A growing body of evidence suggests that education in the outdoors will help kids be better readers, better at math, better at history, better in PE, and better in science. Getting kids outside improves health, decreases ADHD, and delivers a more engaging education. Our kids will need every advantage we can offer if they are going to create ways to cope with the changes that will envelope them over the next 90 years. And it starts with us, here today, to help make sure they have that opportunity.

You can help us find ways to get kids outside through support of outdoor school, encouraging integration of nature in core curriculum, or donating to school field trips and teacher professional development training. Environmental literacy is no longer a "nice to have." It's an essential.

--Eric
Executive Director, Gray Family Foundation



Notable News

Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration & Education Grants Now Open

Funding for Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods grants has more than doubled thanks to voter approval of Metro's 5-year local option levy. The levy includes \$3.7 million for community partnerships that:

- connect people to their watershed
- preserve and restore local fish and wildlife habitat
- support larger conservation initiatives
- support nature education for school-aged children
- improve the ability of all communities to experience and connect with nature
- implement the Regional Trails Plan.

Pre-application materials are due January 2014.

Individuals, citizen groups, businesses, neighborhoods, nonprofits, schools and school groups, government agencies, faith groups and service groups with nonprofit or other tax-exempt status may apply. Grants may only be awarded to projects and programs that benefit Metro-area residents.

For more information on how to apply for these two to three year grants, please visit the Metro's website:
<http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=43569>.

Grant Cycle Updates

Fall Cycle Docket Announced: Overnight, Residential Outdoor School Programs for fifth or sixth grade students

The Gray Family Foundation Board of Directors approved grant recommendations for our Fall Cycle for 39 organizations, totaling more than \$370,000 to support outdoor school education across the state for 7486 kids, getting them overnight experiences for 21,396 nights. You can see a complete list of our Fall 2013 grantees at our website: <http://grayff.org/Grants/Examples/fall2013/>.

The outdoor school experience has a long history in Oregon going back to 1958 and include engaging educational experiences in science, math, writing, reading, art, and geography. Kids perform hands on experiments with soil, water, plants, and animals while learning social skills in a community setting.

For us, some of the most compelling evidence of outdoor school benefits comes from the number of civic leaders who have outdoor school in their background. If you talk to the heads of many of our non-profit and government agencies, you'll discover a fond outdoor school memory that led to leadership positions that led to their current job. Outdoor school contributes to the growth of tomorrow's future leaders. It gives kids confidence and a holistic understanding of systems that cannot be learned from classroom study alone. The Gray Family Foundation is proud to support the work of teachers, parents, camps and outdoor school providers who make this long tradition in Oregon such a remarkable success.

Next Cycle?

The RFP for our Teacher Professional Development funding category as well as for our Community Field Trips for 5th – 8th grade students category will go up on our website in December. The deadline for proposals is February 3rd, 2014.

GFF makes grants to schools, government agencies, and nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. Please refer to our [website](#) for examples of

recent successful projects and amounts granted.

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