

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Media vs. Mother Nature

St. Augustine, FL (October 27, 2008)—“Go outside!” was a common edict issued by my parents some thirty-odd years ago. Welcomed words that would quickly have my sisters and me scrambling out the back door, racing down to the creek, taunting each other with words like “last one to the old rowboat’s a rotten egg.” Snakes, alligators, and bird-size mosquitoes couldn’t drive us away. Hours would be spent vying for the title “Amazon Queen”—paddle-laden princess of the back-door swamp. Imagination and the great outdoors are perfect companions.

Nowadays, it appears that the new parental decree is “*Don’t go outside!*” These are welcomed words to the new e-generation whose game playing is more involved with media than with Mother Nature. However, this new lifestyle is contributing to an unprecedented rise in health problems for our youth.

Studies show that ADHD, depression, and obesity have a direct link to this newly coined Nature Deficit Disorder. They further confirm that this disassociation will continue to have a negative affect on our physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing until we once again convene with Mother Nature.

Global emergencies like climate change, air pollution, and increased demands for water and energy will require the stewardship of future generations. Can our youth fully grasp the magnitude of these crises and implement lasting solutions without an intimate

knowledge and understanding of how our Earth works? As parents, teachers, and stewards, we have to ask ourselves that question.

National legislators are addressing the problem with the No Child Left Inside Act of 2008. Already passed in the House and now before the Senate, it will provide over \$500 million over the next five years in federal funding for environmental education programs in our public schools. Call your legislator in support if you haven't already done so. National organizations such as Get Outdoors USA and The Children and Nature Network, as well as local providers such as Sagaponack Books are all working to implement school and community programs that encourage outdoor exploration and a connection with nature.

Doing something as simple as adding environmentally conscious books to your child's library such as *Stellaluna*, *Over in the Ocean*, or *Pelican Pete*, can stimulate a child's interest in their surroundings and familiarize them with plants and animals native to their own backyard. Taking a walk around the block, lying on the grass watching the moon and the stars, or planting a flower is not only a nature experience but also quality time spent with your child that will promote the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness mentioned earlier.

Exploring and experiencing nature's wonders is something children can do on their own, or parents and grandparents can join in the fun. You don't have to have all the answers, just be willing to invite Mother Nature back into your life and encourage your children to "Go outside!" Their health and that of the environment depend on it.

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Jennifer Sellars is public relations director for Pelican Pete's Backyard Adventures: Nature Discoveries and Outdoor Fun. (No materials needed!) For free activities go to PelicanPete.com.