



Hotline

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The New Signature Focus: Outdoor Academics - Health, Wellness and the Environment

By Jeanne Andronowitz

Environmental Health and Wellness, the new signature focus for the Junior League of Philadelphia, represents the intersection of two key areas of interest for the membership, health and wellness and the environment. This focus enables the League to address an emerging need in the community, develop new partnerships, provide training for our members and to allow for a continued impact in the community. As a result, three new committees rooted in our signature focus were developed: Campus Community Gardens, The Green Volunteer Corps and the Riverbend Environmental Science Partners Educating Children Together (RESPECT) Nature Club.

Campus Community Gardens provides the opportunity for a legacy project and exemplifies the intersection of health and wellness and the environment. Given that there is a lack of green space in Philadelphia schools, school grounds are in disrepair and many children in the city have limited access to healthy, fresh produce. The Campus Community Gardens Committee provides the opportunity for its members to educate children about urban gardening and healthy habits. The committee will improve the school environment and physical surroundings of underserved children in the City of Philadelphia while educating children about sustainable urban agriculture and healthy lifestyle choices. Over the course of the next five years the committee is expected to create two campus community gardens and

develop and implement a curriculum focused on organic urban agriculture.

The **Green Volunteer Corps** was formed to allow the JLP to reconnect with Fairmount Park and with our League's history as we prepare for our centennial in 2012. Our relationship with Fairmount Park began in 1924 when a proposition was made to the Fairmount Park Commission by which the

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Junior League would become guardian of Sweetbriar Mansion. The Green Volunteer Corps also promotes volunteerism through its activities with community and school groups as well as with corporate partners. The Green Volunteer Corps will plan day long volunteer events, similar in style to DIAD, and training opportunities focused on our area's parks, community environs, community environmental centers and the environment in general. During the first year the committee will focus on two projects within the Fairmount Park System. The fall

project, already developed, is a meadow beautification project in Tacony Creek Park which borders Cheltenham Township. The committee will work with the Friends of Tacony Creek Park, as well as organizing volunteers, to restore and maintain the meadow. Lastly the committee has plans to conduct environmental seminars for our membership to enhance our understanding and awareness of environmental issues.

Created to encourage children to spend time outdoors and explore their local environment, the **R.E.S.P.E.C.T Nature Club Committee** responds to a key need within the Norristown Area School District, which has a limited science curriculum. Members will work with the Riverbend Environmental Education Center and teachers from the Norristown Area Elementary Schools to plan and implement a supplemental curriculum for the approximately 600 fourth grade students in the School District. A total of six “Science Expo” nights will be held, one at each elementary school, throughout the school year for the students and their families. After a brief lesson from Riverbend staff, the children will be able to visit various hands-on stations and put their new science knowledge to work. The committee plans to send the children home with activities that they can do with their families to explore the science in their local area. In culmination, the committee will work to create a Science Fair, providing the opportunity for each fourth grade student to participate. 