

register | create a profile | log in | e-mail news

ALASKA'S NEWSPAPER

Help | Follow on Twitter | alaska.com



Anchorage Mom Lost 47 lbs Following 1 rule!
I Cut Down 47 lbs of Stomach Fat In A Month By Obeying This 1 Old Rule [Learn More...](#)



Anchorage Mom Makes \$5k/Month
Stay At Home Makes \$5397/Month with just \$1.97. Read Her Secret... [Learn More...](#)

Anchorage Daily News



48° 60° | 43°
forecast | statewide
Daylight : 5:01 AM - 10:54 PM



Subscribe | manage subscription | E-Edition

adn.com Web search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

find >>

Last Update: 10:13 AM

- News
- Sports
- Outdoors
- Features
- Money
- Entertainment
- Opinion
- Blogs
- Multimedia
- Classifieds

- Home
- Alaska Newsreader
- Obituaries
- Archives
- TV Listings
- Movies
- Music
- Restaurants
- Submit Event
- Deals
- Jobs
- Homes
- Cars
- Rentals

Outdoor activities lose allure for today's kids

Summit studies show how to reconnect children with the environment

By CRAIG MEDRED

Published: December 10th, 2008 11:51 PM

Last Modified: December 11th, 2008 12:24 AM

Several inches of soft, fresh snow blanketed the Hilltop Ski Area on Wednesday, and the chairlift ran less than half full through the beginning of the after-school hours.



more
ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News /
Kellene Cooper goes for a ski on the trails bordering Goose Lake on Wednesday afternoon in East Anchorage. "It's nice out here," said the East High School student, who also plays hockey for her school.

Related Links

Photos: Snow gallery

More Outdoors stories >>

- Shrimp: Catch 'em if you can
- Scooping human poop not an option
- Fat halibut piling up in Homer derby
- Hunting trips offered to paralyzed veterans
- Bear-attracting Russian River fillet tables are history

Story tools

- Comments (0)
- E-mail a friend
- Print
- Share on Facebook
- Digg this
- Seed Newsvine
- Send link via AIM
- Follow on Twitter
- MY Yahoo!
- Yahoo! Buzz
- Font size : A | A | A

Meanwhile, at the same time downtown, officials from local, state and federal organizations and agencies gathered at the Get Outdoors, Anchorage! summit to discuss why it is kids no longer go outside to play as they once did.

There were myriad reasons offered: changing American demographics, socioeconomic strains, busy parents, indifferent parents, schools burdened with too many test standards, the seductiveness of all of today's

electronic entertainment.

"I don't really have time to go outside," said Nara McCray, a senior at Dimond High School and one of a pair of teenagers who sat down with the recreation bigwigs at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center for a panel on "Understanding Nature Deficit Disorder."

Nature-deficit disorder has become the catch phrase for the disconnect between today's youth and their environment. Author Richard Louv wrote a book about it -- "Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder" -- that has helped sparked a national discussion among agencies, interest groups and businesses with a stake in outdoor recreation.

ADVERTISEMENT

HIKE * RIDE * PADDLE

Trail Mix

MAT-SU

www.alaskavisit.com/trails

Cheryl Piazza, the outreach coordinator for Recreational Equipment Inc., was blunt about her firm's interest in this.

"These children are our future," she said. "They are our customers 100 years from now."

Begun as a Seattle co-op, REI has grown into one of the big-box stores of outdoor recreation, and managers there have watched with alarm as youth involvement in camping, skiing, climbing and other outdoor sports has crept downward in recent years. But it's not just business that is concerned.

People with connections to nature make up the constituency of agencies as diverse as the National Park Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and conservation groups note

Sell it today ▶ Place an ad | Find an ad

ARALifestyle.com



Are You Snoring Yourself To Death?



Ancient Secret Gives You Younger-looking Eyes



The Secret to Getting Highly Discounted Cruise Tickets

Advertising provided by: ARALifestyle.com

that resolution of some of the most important environmental issues of our day hinge on human connection to the planet.

Global warming really doesn't matter much if your whole world is indoors. This only applies more to issues like endangered species.

If you're not interested in plants or animals to begin with, what's to care about if they disappear?

Unfortunately, no one on the panel had a quick or easy solution for reconnecting kids to nature. A lot of buzz words were tossed around. There was talk about the need to partner and organize and coordinate.

And Dr. Pete Mjos of the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center noted obvious concerns about child safety in a wired society where it seems almost any story about a child gone missing can sweep the nation as if the child were the one next store. Given this, it is easy for parents to grow a little paranoid.

"If they don't feel safe," Mjos noted, "they won't let them leave the house."

But there is more to the shift in American behavior than this.

Decades ago, noted landscape architect Dwayne Adams of Land Design North, everyone in the country was worried about America being out-paced by the productivity of Japan. People immersed themselves in their work. It became a fixation.

"We got it (the productivity) back," Adams said.

At what cost?

After the panel adjourned, Mjos wondered what has happened to the value of play in our society. Are Americans so focused on getting ahead they don't have time for it?

Up at Hilltop, snowboarder Benny Aho, a 20-year-old student at the University of Alaska Anchorage, had to make one wonder. When asked why so few people were on the slopes, he had a one-word answer: "Finals."

OK, maybe for university students, but what about the younger kids?

"They have finals too," he said.

Young Jonathon Lundberg, another snowboarder at Hilltop, didn't have any friends with him either.

"My best friend doesn't snowboard," he said. "He just never has."

"He's playing video games," said Sandy Lundberg, Jonathon's mother. She was along to ride. She noted the snow was perfect for snowboarding on a slope that had been icy only days earlier.

Most of Anchorage's youth were missing out on it. Most of them were obviously indoors, not outdoors.

"It's a mindset," said Adams. "Maybe there aren't enough computer screens in the backyard."

The outdoors summit continues downtown today.

Indoors.

[Allure Fragrance](#)

Allure Perfume for Women. Designer Fragrance, Free Shipping.
Perfumania.com

[Cheap Flights](#)

[Anchorage](#)
Save on Flights to/from Anchorage. Search Now.
iCheapAirlines.com

[Anchorage Auto](#)

[Rental Agency Deals](#)
Compare Anchorage Auto Rental Agency Deals With One Search. Save Now.
Sidestep.com

Ads by Yahoo!

Comments

UPDATE ON COMMENTS POLICY: [Read before posting](#) | [Edit your profile and avatar](#) »

By submitting your comment, you are agreeing to adn.com's [user agreement](#).

Top stories »	Most read	Most e-mailed	Most-viewed galleries
Photos: Arbor Day and the best of May	Deadliest Catch skipper slams Pebble mining project	Teacher charged with 14 sexual abuse counts	Best of May 2009
Bear Haven man faces state game charges	Bear Haven man faces state game charges	Feelings run high among Iditarod back-of-packers	The Good, bad and ugly of Anchorage
'Deadliest Catch' skipper slams Pebble mining project	Charlie Vandergaw with bears	Bear Haven man faces state game charges	Suicide leaves everyone asking why
Dogs suffer as Yukon flood wipes out mushing kennels	Complaint over Palin wardrobe during VP campaign dismissed	Native corporation contracts get a close look in US Senate	2009 Fur Bikini Contest
Palin criticizes Obama policies, backs RNC chairman Steele	Sports domes partial deflation frightens exercisers, workers	Sports domes partial deflation frightens exercisers, workers	Bear sightings
Two alleged sexual abuse victims await jury's verdict			