

The Gila Conservation Education Center plays an important role in promoting ecological literacy in the Grant County area. In addition to our traditional school and community programming, we have recently launched a new, inquiry-based, outdoor science program as well as a new teacher education program in collaboration with the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico. We have completed construction of two outdoor classrooms in Grant County, developed and implemented the Education and Outreach Plan for the EPA's *La Cienega de San Vicente Wetland Restoration Project* along San Vicente Creek, and supported educational outreach efforts for the *Silver City Waterworks Project*. We have realized these achievements with limited staff thanks in large part to funding from private donations. Now here's a snapshot into the need for your continued support.

In his seminal book *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), Richard Louv coined the term "nature-deficit disorder". This is not a medical condition but a description of the human costs of alienation from the natural world that impacts children, adults, families, and communities. Consider the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation report that shows that the average American adult, regardless of age, income, or level of education, fails to grasp essential aspects of the natural sciences. This is also true of those who sit on governing bodies, town councils, and in corporate board rooms whose decisions often have wide ramifications on natural resources.

At least part of this shortfall is due to the status of science education in the classroom, but a major reason likely stems from the fact that today's adults and children simply do not spend enough time outdoors. Centers for Disease Control research indicates today's children spend up to 90% of their time indoors with 23% participating in no physical activity at all. These numbers are even higher for adults. Because learning is a continuum of experiences, learning about the natural world requires outdoor experiences in a context of good science teaching.

We invite you to support our mission of promoting natural resource stewardship through education, example and involvement. Please know that any amount you are able to give will positively impact the Gila Conservation Education Center's programs and all donations are fully tax-deductible.

*Dr. Kathy Whiteman*