



The Nature Connection

Bringing Nature, Animals & the Arts to People

Spring 2012 Newsletter

Note from Executive Director

This past year The Nature Connection has been in full bloom. Your support has helped us to expand our elder programs by adding a new site, *Concord Park Assisted Living*, where we serve elders challenged by memory loss. Focusing on sensory and mental stimulation, our staff and volunteers share plants, fragrant flowers, and New England animals—including our rehabilitated crow who amazed the residents!



Rose Lincoln

We also continue to offer transformative experiences

for at-risk youth in Greater Boston, including two residential programs: Walden Street School in Concord, and Glenhaven Academy in Marlborough. These youth, ages 11-18, face severe behavioral challenges; our programs help them to rebuild their self confidence, positive identity, and trust. As they get to know therapeutic animals—such as our rabbit, dove, and chinchilla—they experience non-judgmental connections that can significantly improve their ability to form healthy attachments. Glenhaven program director Sean Rose mentioned a particular student, Christa, a student who struggles with hyperactivity: “One day during an NC program Christa sat very still, and she said to us: ‘I want to see if I can get the rabbit to sit in my lap without running away.’”

In staff news, Jennie Dubitsky—a seasoned program volunteer with a master’s in social work—stepped into NC’s Operations Manager role last fall. Jennie brings great energy, deep concern for our mission, and superb administrative expertise. Already she has done terrific work leading our outreach, with events such as our March *Eyes on Owls* benefit.

Your support continues to improve the quality of life for elders and youth in our communities. Excitement about our mission increases as we reach out to new program sites this year. Thank you for all you do to keep children and elders connected to nature—the strong, fragile web that holds us all.

Sophie Wadsworth, Executive Director

NC Improves Children and Elders’ Lives “Rediscovering Enthusiasm for Being Alive”

I can’t bear to toss out the newsletters that come into my house—a dizzying assortment of pleas for help and money. Save a species! Save a child’s life! Then I think: Why is the work of The Nature Connection so important? Why does my support—and yours—matter so much? This is why: I believe an appreciation of nature can nurture a future with vibrant people whose interests in science and nature can make our world a better place. A future with a beautiful, abundant sustainable planet, and a vision of humans who are renewed through connections with the natural world. At the end of the day, all we have is ourselves and the resources planet Earth provides.

How does our support for The Nature Connection bring people the awareness of this outdoor world? Our programs bring indoors installations of dirt and mud,



Sue Huszar

Delighting in smells of spring, a boy connects with a mentor during NC Program

Learning about chickens and eggs in spring U.U. Urban Ministry, Roxbury



Sue Huszar

salamanders and tadpoles. We splash and toss, we push and discover. During our programs, young people and elders alike build stonewalls, tap maple trees, muck through vernal pools. A withdrawn girl learns how to net tadpoles; a hyperactive boy connects with the soft shy rabbit. A disabled elder observes the prickly hedgehog. The Nature Connection program allows participants—at-risk youth, elders, people with disabilities—to discover and rediscover their enthusiasm for being alive.

Ultimately this contact improves the life of each individual. And that makes the world a better place.



—Jude Aronstein, NC advisory board member, donates her expertise in program development, volunteer coordination, and animal care

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**Like us and share
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 on Facebook!**

Program participant names have been changed.

*The Nature Connection
 is a nonprofit organization that
 brings nature-based programs to
 people with limited access to the
 natural world. Founded in 1983,
 The Nature Connection brings
 individuals together with nature's
 capacity to heal and to teach.*

New NC Program Supports Elders with Memory Loss

Renewed Excitement for Residents at *Concord Park*

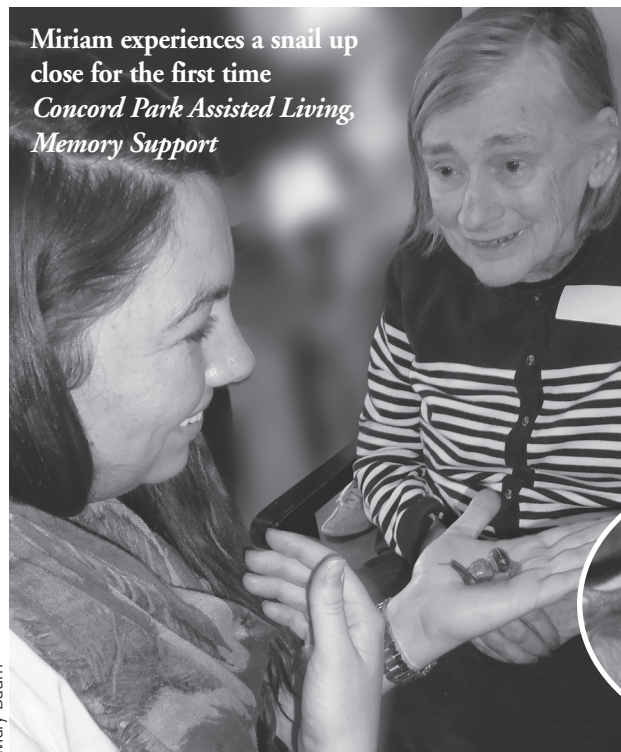
This February, NC began a year-long partnership with Concord Park Assisted Living. We bring programs to elders in Memory Support, sharing nature to inspire, engage and improve quality of life for each individual resident.

One elder, Miriam, is a retired professor who tends to be shaky—but she was very engaged . . . As Miriam looked at the snails up close, Program Director Mary Baum was struck by her transformation: “She was intrigued, quizzical at first, then Miriam’s expression said ‘Wow!’ and she got very excited.” NC Program Coordinator Josey Kirkland showed her a snail’s little antennae and Miriam was able to turn and focus—in spite of her limited vision.

Sue, a resident who usually sleeps through much of the day, and nods off during activities, stayed alert for the whole program: head up, focused, attentive during the whole hour! Each item that NC shared, Sue followed, wide-eyed: from observing the

tapping of a maple tree trunk to watching the crow being shared with each elder around the circle.

Activities director Cheryl Young commented: “your program keeps everyone engaged and entertained the whole time. Mary Alice who is often withdrawn even helped with the setting up and taking down of the program!”



Mary Baum



Pito Salas



Photo by Jana Leon

Patty Larkin

in concert to benefit The Nature Connection
 Saturday June 9, 2012
 8:00 pm Concert / 7:00 pm VIP Reception
 Tickets available by mail or online at
www.nature-connection.org

“critics choice” —*New York Times*

“masterful” —*Billboard*

“hypnotic” —*Entertainment Weekly*