

The World Outside the Building: Your Generosity Nurtures Youth Through Nature

At 3:00 pm each day excited students flood into the Watertown Boys & Girls Club (BGC).

For many “club kids” this is their safe space - their time to grow and explore. Today is even more special than most, as it’s Nature Connection program day.

A Safe Place for Club Kids

According to Renee Gaudette, BGC Executive Director, The Nature Connection has become an irresistible experience for kids from as young as 7 to 18 years old: “Kids run to the door when The Nature Connection arrives - they say ‘how do I get into that room?!’”

The Watertown BGC is the largest non-profit youth service organization in Watertown, offering support and coaching for students to achieve success in academics, healthy living practices and beneficial peer relationships.



Eva learns about the chicken and the egg from Cauliflower.

“The Nature Connection’s model of hands-on plus instruction works for our kids,” said Gaudette. “It’s not merely an hour of lecturing or an hour of them left to themselves to do a craft. The Nature Connection consistently provides a safe place to grow and learn.”

Many of the club’s students struggle with self-confidence or self-worth, and may have issues controlling their behavior.

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Executive Director
Watertown Boys & Girls Club

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Building Respect and Appreciation

BGC’s after-school activities aim to help kids realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. The Nature Connection’s programming has become a favorite and valued activity at the club, and is in alignment with BGC’s core mission.

“The Nature Connection staff are incredible at what they do,” said Gaudette; “They establish trust, respect and

understanding with our members and they do it with a different group of kids every week.”

Nature and Nurture

On a recent visit Nature Connection staff introduced BGC students to a therapy chicken named Cauliflower, exploring the connection between farm animals and food - making a direct link



Justin explores the shape and texture of an unusual wild plant.

between our breakfast eggs and the need to nurture and care for our animal friends that provide them.

“Activities like this teach our kids how to respect and appreciate the world around them,” said Gaudette. “The kids are able to connect with nature and the environment and think about the importance of the world outside of the building. This awareness will stay with them for the rest of their lives.”

The Nature Connection

is a non-profit 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.

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Nature Connection Newsletter

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Program participant names have been changed.



Like us and share the Nature Connection on Facebook!



Nature Connection on Growth Track: Meet New Staff & Board Members



Rachel Lucas, Director of Marketing and Communications

This new staff position is thanks to a generous capacity-building grant from the Cummings Foundation's **\$100K for 100** program. Rachel brings 20 years' experience in strategic marketing and will focus on growing visibility for The Nature Connection's programs.



Andrew Boardman, Board of Directors

Andrew is a Legal Officer at Middlesex Savings Bank, serving as the primary legal resource for the Bank's branch network and back office operations. Andrew resides in West Concord with his wife and twin sons and is Chairman of Concord Public Works Commission.



Doug Koval, Board of Directors

Doug is the President/Chief Strategy Officer of Affinity Growth Partners, Inc., helping companies grow customer affinity and build passion for their brand. Doug resides in Concord with his wife Susy, and daughter Chloe.



Program Coordinator Kinsey Rosene introduces the gentle cooing of a therapy dove to George, a resident of Concord Park Assisted Living Memory Support.

Michael Desmond Cox Photography

Strengthening Bonds: Trainings Teach and Empower Professional Caregivers

With every visit to an elder partner site, The Nature Connection staff sees first-hand the power of nature for individuals with memory loss. The sensory activities we bring can tap memories long dormant: holding a clam shell may remind an elder of summers spent on the Maine coast, or the scent of spice jars may spark memories of favorite recipes or family gatherings.

Through our professional caregiver training, The Nature Connection gives memory care professionals these and other sensory tools to connect with those in their care on a daily basis.

At each two hour workshop our goal is

The Nature Connection gives memory care professionals new tools and techniques for engaging elder clients

to set caregivers up for success, while sharing “road-tested” activities to enhance their clients’ wellbeing.

Mary Baum, Compass Memory Support Director at Concord Park, believes caregiver training strengthens the relationship between residents and her staff: “I have seen [residents’] amazing ability to retain the memory of The Nature Connection’s visit. Training the direct-care associates [in The Nature Connection’s model] helps our caregivers to strength-

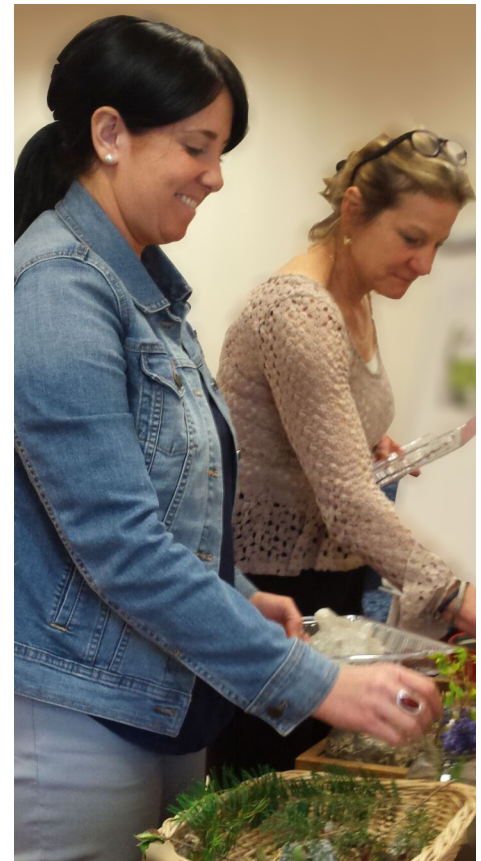
en the bonds of hope with our residents and carry on the energy of the programming and its positive impact.”

At each workshop we offer techniques to increase hands-on engagement; connect elders safely, and dynamically, with the natural world; and increase peer-to-peer, and patient-to-caregiver connections.

Professionals engage in role-playing activities, share experiences from the field, and learn how to implement collaborative sensory projects such as sachet-making with garden herbs.

Joan Yutkins, Program Coordinator of Cooperative Elder Services, Burlington, was inspired by the training: “A lot [of our elder residents] don’t have opportunities to get outside and experience nature as they’d like to ... bringing it inside, having that interaction one-on-one [was energizing],” she noted. “I’d like my staff to see this first-hand.”

The Nature Connection also offers training for families. (*see below*)



Memory care professionals at a recent training learn how to incorporate nature and sensory materials into the caregiving role.

Upcoming Caregiver Trainings

APRIL
20
For Professional Caregivers
3:15 - 5:30 PM

MAY
2
For Family Caregivers
9:15 - 11:00 AM

Location: Lexington Community Center, 39 Marrett Road, Lexington

To register, please email: training@nature-connection.org
We also offer on-site trainings; please email us for details and rates.



Emily the pig delivers affection to people in need.

This Little Piggy Brings Joy to Youth and Elders

At two years old and just 25 pounds, Emily is a miniature pig with a super-sized mission: to deliver warmth and affection to those in need. Since joining The Nature Connection in Fall 2016, Emily’s caretakers, Liz Lerch and 16 year-old daughter Elizabeth Lerch of Sherborn have shared Emily’s gifts with youth and elders at partner sites across Greater Boston.

At a recent visit to the Pappas Rehabilita-

tion Hospital for Children, Emily gave “kisses” and ate carrots right out of participants’ hands, giving love and attention to all of the children.

Program Coordinator Kinsey Rosene has seen the impact that Emily has on the vulnerable people we serve: “For these participants, whose conditions sometimes limit them from viewing animals up close, Emily is very special.”



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Michael Desmond Cox Photography

Spring comes indoors to Regina,
a resident of Concord Park
Memory Support.

Why I Support The Nature Connection



Bob Lotz Photo

“For me, the best medicine has always been surrounding myself with animals and exploring the natural world. The Nature Connection’s staff and volunteers offer this “medicine” at each program to at-risk youth, the disabled, and elderly participants in Greater Boston who are cut off from the outside world. That is why I am a proud Board member, volunteer and supporter.”

- Susan Frey

4 T H A N N U A L

Inspire

A Festive Evening to Benefit
The Nature Connection

Wednesday, May 10, 2017
Rapscaillon Table & Tap
Indoors/Outdoors at 5 Strawberry Hill Road, Acton
7:00-9:00 PM

Master of Ceremonies
Jordan Rich - WBZ

Spoken Word by
Regie Gibson

events@nature-connection.org
www.nature-connection.org/Inspire