



## Nature Connection Program Benefits Entire School Your Generosity Helps Youth Build New Lives

**T**ucked on a quiet street in Lexington, a group of teen girls live, study, and work together at a place called Pelham Academy. But this isn't a boarding school. Each of the girls here has suffered significant trauma, and struggles with self-confidence, self-worth, and just coping with what most people would consider day to day activities.

*Animals have proven to be one of the best ambassadors for helping the students with their coping skills.*

Corey Meurer, Director of Student Services, explained NC's impact. "NC is helping our students get re-integrated. The programs are a huge asset to us. The staff and students appreciate this place you've created where the kids are asked to be in community regularly."

Animals have proven to be one of the best ambassadors for helping the students with their coping skills. "The NC program is an environment that helps students calm down, being quiet, slow moving with animals . . . listening and learning through the activity."

"We noticed immediately, upon start up with The Nature Connection, that things ran more smoothly at the school." A student who is struggling can trigger others. It's a "domino effect"—and can lead to yelling (and staff interventions) very quickly. NC programs create an environment that "helps these individuals to get 'regulated'—to be quiet with animals, to listen, focus, and learn through the activity. This gives critical support not only to them, but also to their peers and staff.

"Some students refuse to be part of a group—but since it's with animals and sharing, they participate and start to connect with peers."



**Horns up!**  
Natural materials serve as a catalyst for vulnerable kids to open up and share feelings.

Sue Huszar

### Eat Pizza, Improve Lives!

Tuesday, June 16, 2015  
5 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
The Flatbread Company  
213 Burlington Rd.  
Bedford, MA

Dine in  
or order take out  
to benefit  
The Nature Connection!  
Join us for  
fun nature activities,  
and opportunities to  
win prizes.

### Please join us for The Nature Connection's Annual Meeting & Guest Speaker



Maureen O'Connor, Director of Neuropsychology at the Bedford VA Hospital, and Associate Director of Education Core at the Alzheimer's Disease Center, Boston University Medical, will speak about science, the aging brain, and the healing power of nature.

Monday, July 13, 2015 • 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
The Umbrella Community Arts Center, • 40 Stow Street, Concord

NC's board of directors and staff warmly invite you to join us for Dr. O'Connor's presentation and remarks about the past year at The Nature Connection.

Light refreshments will be served.

RSVP: [jjohnson@nature-connection.org](mailto:jjohnson@nature-connection.org) or online: [www.nature-connection.org](http://www.nature-connection.org)

## 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.

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*Program participant names have been changed.*



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The Nature Connection  
on Facebook!



[massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org)

## Note from Executive Director

Dear Spring, come in . . .

With so much in bloom, at last, children of all ages have a chance to experience lilacs, tadpoles, garden herbs, finches, and apple blossoms. We are honored to carry your generosity into the world!

It's springtime at The Nature Connection, too. With support from friends such as Carol Krauss (profiled here) and new volunteers, NC is growing. This season we welcome new board member Ron Bott, who brings abundant business and non-profit experience to our circle.

And our new website has just launched, with colorful wings! Visit [nature-connection.org](http://nature-connection.org) to see new photos of individuals whose lives you touch, and new views of the animals, and people, on our team. We give heartfelt thanks to: The Sudbury Foundation for generous grant funding, Breviloquent LLC, for redesigning our logo and entire site, Nora Priest for expert advice, and many other volunteers who infused this project with time and talent.

We hope you'll share our newly landscaped website with friends and family. And invite them to join us at an upcoming gathering as well! Our events committee, including new volunteer Nicole Pecorelli, has planned our 2nd annual Flatbread Pizza Fundraiser.



Rose Lincoln

In July, our Annual Meeting promises to inspire (and perhaps sharpen our wits) with special guest Dr. Maureen O'Connor. See calendar on back page for details.

Thank you for giving spring—such aliveness—to those we serve.

Sophie Wadsworth  
Executive Director



The Nature Connection brings joy and a sense of well being to a woman at Concord Park.

Bob Lotz

## Sharing Connections: Nature Connection Shares Best Practices with Professionals Who Care for The Elderly

By Daniel Kemp

Fifteen people sit in chairs arranged in a circle. These professionals share one thing in common—they are deeply committed to bringing compassionate care to those suffering from aging and memory loss.

Su Baltozer, Program Coordinator for The Nature Connection, picks up a low-sided "ocean context box" containing some sand, pebbles, and seashell fragments. She slowly tips the box back and forth, back and forth. A sound like breaking waves replaces the silence.

Su tells of an experience with an elder with Alzheimer's. The man had not spoken in a long time, but as they tipped the ocean box back and forth, he began to speak of his childhood in England living by the sea—something he had never talked about to those at the facility where he was living.

This special workshop, generously funded by the Concord Carlisle Community Chest, was designed to introduce professional caregivers to NC's methodology and show them ways to integrate our holistic approach with their clients.

The discussion turns to "failure-free activities" that engage memory-impaired clients without producing anxiety or feelings of inadequacy. Su shares another context box with jars of spices and herbs that memory-impaired elders can grind up, releasing aromas that often trigger memories. The client can select some cinnamon, lavender, or rose hips to place in a "medicine bag," a small pouch that they can keep.



Carol Krauss, "stealth advisor", donates her expertise in strategic business development.

## "The World Needs More Organizations Like The Nature Connection"

NC Supporter Carol Krauss Tells Why She Invests in NC

What I like best about NC's mission is that it's unique. I don't know of any other organization providing the services that NC does. The world needs more small organizations like this—doing good things for people.

When I saw your program first hand, at Minute Man Arc, the participants were so excited to have you come and didn't want you to leave. When they touch and hold animals like a chinchilla or hedgehog, they are like little kids again, having fun. I was touched by the joy shared by the participants.

NC provides people the opportunity to learn and be exposed to part of the natural world that they would not otherwise have. The hope is that they make a memorable connection and open up to their peers, their caregivers and themselves. Animals in particular can relate to others, in ways that people might not. An animal connection can have a long lasting impact.

It is exciting to see NC grow and expand in a strategic way. This growth means you'll be able to expand your services, staff and volunteers. It's been wonderful for me to be part of that as a quiet advisor to NC, drawing on my management consulting background.

A lot of organizations see themselves as the best kept secret in Metro West, but you really are.

*(Based on an interview, April 2015)*

Mary Baum, Director of Concord Park Memory Care, shares stories of NC's work with the residents in her care.



Peter Reicheld

Demonstrating another such failure-free activity, Su strikes a Tibetan singing bowl and produces a tone that commands the attention of the group. Rubbing the edge with a wooden mallet, she creates an otherworldly and complex sound of interacting overtones. Once again time seems to slow, a sense of peace pervades the room.

Workshop participants have gained some new perspectives, some new tools and techniques to reach clients, and, as one caregiver later said, "a deeper understanding of being in the present."