



# Urban Connections Update

*Connecting Citizens to the Land with our many partners!*

## Focus on Boston

### **An Outstanding Partnership Made with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation**

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is one of the Urban Connections Boston Program's best and most revered partners. Since August of 2004, the DCR has worked side by side with the U.S. Forest Service Eastern Region through this program. The Urban Connections office is housed within the DCR's Bureau of Forestry. Jim DiMaio, former Forest Service employee & current Chief Forester for Massachusetts, is a great proponent of the program. Eric Seaborn, Urban and Community Forester for Massachusetts, is a cherished member of the Boston Core team. As the Urban Connections program continues to grow, so will our relationship with DCR. We look forward to many more years of shared success!

## Focus on Detroit

### **Urban Connections Partners with Cabela's in Detroit**

In March, Detroit Urban Connections engaged and educated thousands of visitors to Cabela's in Dundee, Michigan. The partnership was initiated by SCEP participant Wytosha Thacker and was held in conjunction with Cabela's Spring Days. Cabela's is the third largest retail store in the world. Cabela's showrooms feature educational and entertainment displays, huge aquariums, and trophy animals interacting in re-creations of their natural habitats. The Forest Service was able to set up a display staffed by Detroit Urban Connections employees Katie Armstrong and Wytosha (pictured above), as well as, Ken Arbogast, David Riegler, and Becky Riegler from the Huron-Manistee National Forest. Visitors to the display were given information on the Urban Connections program, Michigan National Forests, recreation opportunities, employment opportunities, and fire safety messages. This experience was very positive and Katie and Wytosha look forward to expanding the partnership. Store Managers Scott Kegerreis and Steve Zollar extended an invitation to the Forest Service to take part in future events and have a steady presence in store!



### **Partnership Grows Between the Forest Service & The Henry Ford**



The "More Kids in the Woods" challenge cost share has strengthened an already thriving partnership between the Eastern Region of the Forest Service and The Henry Ford. Formalized by an agreement in 2004, the mutually beneficial relationship has grown steadily and now includes a full-time SCEP student, Wytosha Thacker. Thacker was brought on to be the on-site project manager of the More Kids in the Woods project at the Henry Ford Academy. She works closely with Detroit Urban Connections as well as other project partners to move toward the creation of a "Student Scientist

Edition" of the Natural Inquirer. Barbara McDonald, Science Quality Services Staff (Washington Office), has been instrumental in shaping the efforts of the Academy students into a fascinating collection of articles. Students worked with Forest Service scientists, designed outdoor experiments, collected data and ultimately wrote the scientific articles that will appear in the Student Scientist Edition of the Natural Inquirer!

## Focus on Milwaukee

### **Urban Connections and the Washington Office Partner with Betty Brinn Children's Museum**

Urban Connections and the Office of Conservation Education in Washington, D.C. have partnered with the Betty Brinn Children's Museum of Milwaukee to develop a Smokey Bear interactive exhibit. The exhibit and related programming is designed to help young children appreciate forests as beautiful and valuable places that provide shade, food, and shelter to the animals and plants that call them "home." The exhibit and project will feature the Forest Service's Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl to promote messages about caring for forests. The partnership will be unveiled in April of 2008, and the exhibit is slated to be premiered at the Betty Brinn in June of 2009. Afterwards, the exhibit will be marketed by the Museum for purchase/lease by peer museums and other family-friendly venues nationwide! The Betty Brinn Museum is specifically designed to help young children acquire fundamental skills during the most critical phase of their development. It is a member of the Association of Children's Museums, which includes 300 children's museums in the United States. The Betty Brinn has over 160,000 visitors a year.

## Focus on Minneapolis/St. Paul

### Urban Connections Partners in 9th Annual "Government on Display" at Mall of America

January 26-27, 2008, Minneapolis/St. Paul Urban Connections Coordinator Arlene White, along with volunteers from State & Private Forestry, North Central Research Station, and the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural Science, participated in the 9th Annual Government on Display event at the mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota. A diverse group of approximately 300,000 people were in attendance, which provided an excellent opportunity to share information about the Forest Service and connect citizens to the forests in their back-yard, the Superior, Chippewa, and Chequamegon-Nicolet.



Attendees who stopped by the booth were given forest maps, Islands of Green in a Sea of People DVDs, Leave No Trace CDs, and information on Forest Service careers. Woodsy Owl was a hit with attendees on both days sharing conservation messages. The Government on Display event is an excellent opportunity to reach out to a large number of citizens, and create and/or strengthen partnerships with other natural resource/land management agencies.

## Focus on New York

### Urban Connections & Finger Lakes National Forest Partners with New York's John Browne High School

In November of 2007, the Finger Lakes National Forest in New York and Urban Connections met with representatives of the John Bowne High School, two other New York City (NYC) schools, and various NYC partners at the Green Futures site at the John Bowne High School in Queens. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways to incorporate the Finger Lakes into existing programs, and explore future partnership opportunities. In addition, students from the NYC schools took a tour of the Green Futures site. Natural Resource professionals were on hand to share what they do and career possibilities in related fields. It was a great experience for both kids and adults. This partnership is committed to getting "More Kids in the Woods."

## News & Events

### Meet Ashlee Ransom

Ashlee is our new Urban Connections Program Assistant! Ashlee is a 2007 graduate of Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She began her Forest Service career as a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and Multicultural Workforce Initiative student in the Huron-Manistee National Forest (MI) as a Forester trainee and in the Allegheny National Forest (PA) as a Public Affairs Officer. In March of 2008, Ashlee was converted from a SCEP to a full-time employee in the Region 9 Regional Office.



### THANKS!

Special Thanks to Thomas Haines, Salem District Ranger on the Mark Twain National Forest, for his contributions to the Urban Connections program during his detail!

### Daryl Pridgen & Undersecretary Mark Rey

March 25, 2008, Daryl Pridgen and White Mountain Forest Supervisor Tom Wagner joined Mark Rey, U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, in Concord New Hampshire at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests headquarters.



### New Employee Orientation

March 10-12, Ashlee Ransom attended the New Employee Orientation in Columbus, Ohio.

Ashlee attended several sessions that provided information about Human Resources; Civil Rights; Career Development; and Financial Planning, among others. A number of dynamic speakers addressed the new employees, including Chief of the Forest Service Abigail Kimbell, Associate Chief Sally Collins, Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems Joel Holtrop, and Chief Financial Officer Jesse King. Ashlee was particularly impacted by Eleanor Towns, who is known as a master communicator and motivator. Eleanor provided very useful information to the new employees on what tools they need to succeed in the Forest Service. The Orientation also featured a Career Expo to introduce new employees to the various departments within the Forest Service. Urban Connections was represented at one of the Region 9 booths. Ashlee found the New Employee Orientation to be very beneficial, and she took away knowledge that will serve as an aide throughout her Forest Service career!

### Boston Urban Connections Coordinator is Heading for the Forest

Tonika Goins-Heath, Boston Urban Connections Coordinator, has accepted a new position as the Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist on the Bradford Ranger District of the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. Her start date is April 28, 2008. We thank Tonika for the work she has done in Boston, and wish her all the best in her new position!

### R9 Public & Government Relations Combines with Recreation, Wilderness, & Heritage

Sherry Wagner, R9 Public & Government Relations Director, has been appointed as the Director for the newly combined Public and Government Relations and Recreation, Wilderness, and Heritage staff group; for up to one year.