

n: No child left inside



RON TARVER, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
Playing outdoors helps kids gain co-ordination in navigating uneven terrain.

fears and structured activities.

But it's bad because being outdoor confers many benefits. Studies have shown that kids gain co-ordination just in navigating the uneven terrain. They learn decision-making skills and gain confidence. Vigorous play counteracts obesity.

It's not just about the kids. It's

about the planet. Kids' relationship to nature will influence everything from what kind of car they drive to how they vote when they are adults.

So now, groups are advocating a return to the outdoor childhood. Their mission: No Child Left Inside.

In October, the National Wildlife Federation in the U.S. announced a goal to move 100 million kids "from their indoor habitat."

Finch is head of Green Hearts, a nonprofit that wants to restore the bonds between children and nature.

In a recent talk — spiked with cartoons, such as the one with adults in a car exclaiming, "Look! Free-range children!" — he made a plea to get kids back out in nature. And not just in nature, but interacting with it.

Too many natural areas have too many rules, he said. Don't run. Stay on the trail. Instead, what kids need is "rough land that adults don't care about, where you can whack a tree with a stick," Finch said.

"We can teach kids all about nature, and if they don't give a damn, it won't matter."