



River Valley Current

February 23, 2016 No. 435

"The mark of the educated man is not in his boast that he has built his mountain of facts and stood on the top of it, but in his admission that there may be other peaks in the same range with men on the top of them, and that, though their views of the landscape may be different from his, they are nonetheless legitimate."
-E.J. Pratt, poet

School Calendar

This Week

Thursday, February 25

School Tour 9-11:30 am

Saturday, Feb. 27

3rd Grade Workday

Looking Ahead

Tuesday, March 1

7th Grade Parent Evening 6:30 pm

Wednesday, March 2

6th Grade Parent Evening 6:30 pm

Saturday, March 5

RVWS Open House 10:00 am-12:30 pm

Monday, March 7 – Friday, March 11

3rd Grade Farm Trip to Hawthorne Valley Farm

Thursday, March 10

Board Meeting 6:30 pm

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

March Lunch Menu

The March lunch menu is attached to this week's Current Please return completed forms to the folder on the kitchen door by Friday, February 26th.

Soup To Go

The 8th Grade is offering delicious Soup to Go every week from The Peasant Grill! Soup is available in pints for \$6 or quarts for \$10. Flavors available include Veggie Chili (GF), Chicken Barley and Cream of Tomato (GF). Soup is refrigerated and available to take home at pick-up. An order form is attached to this week's Current.

Parent Council Corner

Today's Study Group has been re-scheduled for Tuesday, March 15th at 6:30 pm

Operation Helping Hand Food Drive

Every year RVWS participates in United Way of Bucks County's Food Drive to help people in need in our community. One in ten people in our community don't know where they will get their next meal.

Bring in a donation and you will help change that.

There is a box in the lobby to collect your donations.

Items will be picked up on Wednesday, March 9, 2016

All non-perishable foods are accepted, but our local pantry really needs:

- Fruit juice (100%)
- Breakfast cereal
- Peanut butter
- Canned chicken
- Soup
- Applesauce (no sugar added)
- Canned fruit (no sugar added)
- Canned vegetables (low sodium)
- Canned tuna
- Beans (dried or canned)
- Canned salmon
- Canned pasta
- Oatmeal
- Rice
- Pasta

No time to shop? No problem! Financial contributions are welcome. Just \$10 can feed a family of four.

Checks should be made payable to United Way of Bucks County, memo line: Operation Helping Hand/School Name.

If you or someone in your family needs help, call United Way of Bucks County's

First Call for Help at 215.949.1660 ext. 7 or visit www.uwbucks.org

Open House at River Valley! Saturday, 3/5/2016 10am – 12:30pm

Invite your friends and neighbors – and come yourself! Enjoy lively exercises and presentations from RVWS teachers - both early childhood and grade school. This is an excellent way for parents of young children to get a sense of how students learn at RVWS and a terrific introduction to the school for those considering RVWS. Contact Cindy by telephone, in person or by email with questions or to register (cschretlen@rivervalleyschool.org).

Parking Lot Update

Thank you for your patience with the alternate afternoon pick-up plan necessitated by the wintry weather. The recent warmer temperatures and sunshine have done their work to open up our driveway and parking areas more and more. The teachers feel that it is safe enough to return to indoor afternoon dismissal for grade school students.

It is still very muddy along the driveway so please be careful not to pull your car in too far.

Grandy's Kitchen will return to offering afternoon snacks in the lobby on Wednesday!

From Administration

Box Tops for Education

The next deadline for submitting Box Tops is March 1st. If you have some that you have been saving please bring them to school by next Friday, February 26 so that we can send them in on time to earn money for this school year. Of course Box Tops collection is ongoing and will continue to raise money for our school, year round. Thanks to all those who have done a terrific job collecting Box Tops and earning Box Tops rewards through ShopRite.

Lost and Found

Once again our Lost and Found is overflowing. Please claim your items on Wednesday and Thursday and take what you can use on Friday. After that whatever remains will be donated.

Thank yous

Thank you Jennifer Zosa (mother of Noah Buggel in the Star Room) for managing our Box Tops for Education program this year. Your hard work is appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who hosted our Teaching Sensible Science guests and presenters.

Thank you to those who provided vehicles for the week and for the airport rides.

Thank you to Hilary for organizing all of the housing and coordinating between our families and the participants.

Classroom Visitors

In the coming weeks there will be visiting teachers observing and teaching in grade school classrooms. One will be Mrs. Zamorano from Sunbridge Institute who is working toward her Waldorf teacher certification and is student teaching in Mrs. Sweeney's 4th grade, as well as observing and teaching in other grades. There will also be teacher candidates who have applied for positions for next year. If you see our guests in the hallways, please make them feel welcome.

Outreach/Enrollment Coordinator – Immediate Opening!

River Valley Waldorf School is accepting applications to fill a part-time Enrollment Outreach Coordinator position to start immediately. This position is responsible for the development and implementation of the school's marketing and outreach plan to achieve targeted enrollment goals. This person's primary activity will be out in the community to generate enthusiasm for the school and potential enrollment leads. This person will work closely with the Admissions Coordinator, Administration, Faculty and Board of Trustees to develop and implement outreach events and activities to foster the growth of the school. This person will also develop, maintain and quantify reporting statistics on the results of enrollment and outreach activities. Compensation is commensurate with work background and experience.

Qualifications:

- Thorough understanding of Waldorf education and prior involvement in a Waldorf school; training or experience with Waldorf education preferred
- Background in private school marketing, outreach and enrollment development
- Experience in public speaking and, in general, working with the public
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills; works closely with administrative staff, board, faculty, parents and volunteers
- BA/BS – Degree in Marketing, Business, Communications, English or related field or equivalent experience

The application deadline for this position is March 24, 2016. Interested applicants should submit resume, references and a short biographical sketch by email to info@rivervalley.school.org

If you have any questions please contact Cindy Schretlen, at (610) 982-5606 or cschretlen@rivervalley.school.org

'Tis the Season for High School Musicals!

Whether you're looking for a family night out, want to support talented RVWS alumni or are interested in taking a look at options for your child's high school experience, the annual flurry of musical theater presented by area high schools can be a ton of fun! There are RVWS alums attending each of these schools; when we know there are former RVWS kids in the cast or stage crew we'll list them. If there is something or someone we've missed, please let us know!

Solebury School Musical: RENT

Thurs & Friday 2/25, 26 at 7:30pm; Saturday 2/27 at 2:00 and 7:30pm; Sunday 2/28 at 3:00pm

RVWS Alums Teva Skovronek, in the cast, Kathryn Warner assisting the director and Adeline Skovronek and Bianca Sessegolo on the stage crew.

Kimberton Waldorf School Musical: The Boys From Syracuse

Thursday 3/3 7:00pm, Friday 3/4 7:30pm, Saturday 3/5 2:00pm & 7:30pm

RVWS Alums Daniel DeVan & Lauren Goodyear

Delaware Valley Regional High School Musical: Into the Woods

Thursday & Friday 3/3&4 7:00pm, Saturday 3/5 2:00 & 7:00pm

RVWS Alum Greta Bernhardt

Palisades High School Musical:

Friday & Saturday 3/4 & 5, 7:00pm

Sunday 3/6, 2:00pm

Moravian Academy Musical: Big Fish

Friday & Saturday, 3/4 & 5, 7:00pm; Sunday 3/6, 2:00pm

RVWS Alum Marcella Harvi on the tech crew.

New Hope-Solebury High School Musical:

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

Thurs, Fri & Saturday, 3/10, 11 & 12 7:30pm

Central Bucks West High School Musical:

Thurs, Fri & Saturday, 3/17, 18 & 19, 7:00pm

Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts: The Bald Soprano (not a musical)

Thurs, Fri & Sat 2/25, 26, 27 at 7:00pm; Sunday 2/28 at 2:00pm

Musical: Evita

Thurs, Fri & Sat 4/14, 14 & 16 at 7:00pm; Sunday 4/18 at 2:00pm

From the Faculty

What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – Language Arts

Second Grade – Language Arts

Third Grade – Science/Arithmetic

Fourth Grade – Language Arts

Fifth Grade – Ancient Egypt

Sixth Grade – European Geography

Seventh Grade – Drama

Eighth Grade – Drama

Dear River Valley Community,

It is time for our Middle School Musical and this year we are excited to present **Fiddler on the Roof** on the 17th, 18th and 19th of March. While that still seems like a long way in the future we are gearing up for rehearsals, building sets and looking for props. On behalf of a very grateful cast, Carol Diven (co-director)

Please see this list and let Bonnie Pariser or Saba Siddiqui (8th grade parents) know if you can loan us any of the following:

- An old, (small) rustic table
- 3 rustic benches about 40" long
- Old fashioned kitchen wares - pots, pans, brooms, metal bucket, baskets, wash mop.
- An old leather-bound book
- Two place settings - plate, bowl, silver ware - all oldish and not fancy at all.
- An empty green or brown wine bottle (no label) and two glasses (not wine glasses, more like whiskey glasses!)
- White table cloth (any size)
- Wine goblet
- Clubs (like baseball bats) 2 or 3
- An old fashioned suitcase
- 2 silver goblets

An Opportunity

Every child works at his or her own pace in Handwork and sometimes a project does not get completed by the end of the year. Miss Till is offering after-school opportunities (free of charge) for help with current or past handwork projects. She will be offering these most Tuesdays 3:30 - 4:30. Please get in touch with her to let her know to expect your child. mtill@rivervalleysschool.org

From the Leadership Council

What we are working on?

LC is working with faculty on class teacher placement for next year. This will be shared with parents as soon as the plan is complete and certainly by mid-March.

Working with TDC on teacher mentoring and evaluation.

Looking at the math curriculum in the grade school.

IAT evaluation with the Board of Trustees

The LC has open hours every Tuesday from 3:30-4 for anyone who would like to meet with us. If you have a question or a concern, please stop by. All are welcome.

From the Board

Board Nominations

As per the Board of Trustees bylaws, the Board has established a nominating committee whose charge is to provide a slate of candidates for vacant Trustee positions. The committee is comprised of Kristyn Lederer, Clare Wargaski, John Wesp, and Richard Kroth. We anticipate four vacancies for next year, and are soliciting nominations from the school community. Please feel free to forward suggestions to any member of the Nominating Committee prior to April 30. The committee will carefully review and consider all nominations and prepare a slate that best suits the needs of the board moving forward. We will share the slate and distribute ballots for election in May. Please feel free to email rich@kroths.com or reach out to any member of the committee with nominations, questions, or concerns.

Building & Grounds

School Work Days

Below is the calendar of the upcoming workdays. Please note that some changes have been made from the school calendar. Please RSVP to Mary K. Till (mtill@rivervalleysschool.org), to let us know if you will attend. This way we can plan what projects can be undertaken. Mary K. Till and Lynne Allbaugh - Building and Grounds

2015-2016 Work Days

TBD - 5th grade

February 27 - 3rd grade

March 12 - 2nd grade

April 23 - 1st grade

May 14 - Early Childhood

From the Community

Waldorf Doll-making Class

Mary Hirsch Jones will be teaching a Waldorf doll-making class on Saturday, March 6th from 1-5:30 at the Community Educational Center, 5151 Cold Spring Creamery Road in Doylestown, PA. The cost is \$75 and participants will take home a completed doll made with all natural materials scented with lavender essential oil.

To register: Google Mary Hirsch Jones Etsy and contact her through her Etsy site.

Female Trumpet Swan and Runner Duck available

Former RVWS family is searching for a good home for a friendly, female Trumpet Swan and Runner Duck we have inherited. Please call Anna Dieterly at 908-303-1688 if you are interested.

Want to play Travel Soccer? Then PYSA is looking for you!

The Palisades Youth Soccer Association is now accepting registrants for our upcoming Travel Tryout and Travel Team-Building Sessions. All ages from all areas welcome! Youth from both PA and NJ are welcome! 2016/2017 Tryouts will be held on March 5, 6, 12 and 13.

BOYS

Sat 5th and Sat 12th

U11/U12: 9:00am - 10:30am

U13/U14: 10:30am - 12:00pm

U9/U10: 12:00pm - 1:30pm

GIRLS

Sun 6th and Sun 13th

U13/U14/U15: 9:00am - 10:30am

U11/U12: 10:30am - 12:00pm

U9/U10: 12:00pm - 1:30pm

Please register at pysanet.com to be added to the Travel Tryout distribution list.

Please note: Tryouts and registration for Tryouts are free.

Calligraphy & Art Classes are BACK!

Wednesday evenings in Frenchtown...learn this gorgeous skill from an experienced, fun teacher!
Classic Copperplate: Pointed Pen Calligraphy (Feb. 24 and March 2)

Classic Italic: Broad-Pen Calligraphy (Mar. 16, 23, & 30)

Modern Script Calligraphy Workshop (April 6)

Brush Lettering Workshop (April 13)

Paper Marbling (pending confirmation): March 26th

Origami for Teens & Adults: May 18th

Sign up at CatherineLentDesign.AcuityScheduling.com or find more information: at catherine@calligraphybycatherine.com, 908-328-4460, Catherine Lent Design on Facebook or Instagram.

Learning Opportunities

Teens and Education - Upcoming Events

Presentation: Finding Your Path with Richard Schwab
March 9th, 7-8pm, Lawrenceville, NJ

Info Session: March 17th, 3pm at Princeton Learning Cooperative

Hosted by Princeton Learning Cooperative & Bucks Learning Cooperative - Personalized Learning Communities for Teens.

www.PrincetonLearningCooperative.org

www.BucksLearningCooperative.org All events are free and open to the public. Contact MaryBeth Healy @ 908-672-3455.

PEACE-Youth.org presents the First Annual Upper Bucks Sustainable Living Expo

Connections, Education, and Encouragement for individuals or companies interested in Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Independence, and Sustainable Living Practices
Saturday, April 23rd (10am – 4pm) in the Palisades High School and Auditorium

Educational Presentations from notable speakers in the Auditorium throughout the day

Vendor Tables to provide consumer information on obtainable and sustainable products and services.

Food and Beverages available for purchase with Organic and Vegetarian options

- Business Directory from Expo will list all Vendors plus include advertising from other suitable companies
- \$100 per Vendor: provides an 8 foot space (can bring own display or we can provide a table) Vendors will be able arrive and setup at 8am, with time to tear down at end of Expo
- Vendor business information will be listed in a Sustainable Living Directory (black ink only)
- Advertising in the Sustainable Living Directory can also be purchased
 - \$25 for Business Card Ad (1/4 page in Directory)
 - Larger ad space is available – contact Kathy Gentner

Expo Contact Information: Kathy Gentner – email: kgentner1@gmail.com phone: 267-884-2388

Learn the ancient art of natural HENNA!

Local mehndi artist and RVWS mom Catherine Lent is offering a five-part workshop series for all levels on alternating Tuesday evenings from March. 1 through April 26...you can take them a la carte or sign up for all five!

Workshops are:

March 1: Introduction to Henna

March 16: Recipe for Success

March 30: Flowers, Leaves, and Paisleys

April 12: Geometric & Moroccan Designs

April 26: Upping your Game.

You can see Catherine's work at Catherine Lent Design on Facebook and Instagram, and you can sign up at CatherineLentDesign.AcuityScheduling.com. Sign up for two, get \$10 off a third, sign up for three and get \$25 off a fourth, sign up for four and get the fifth night FREE! 908-328-4460

Music Lessons

Heidi Breyer is accepting new music students in piano and violin at her home in Frenchtown, NJ. Heidi has a 15 year career in teaching, both privately and in schools including RVWS. She is focusing currently on teaching, performing music from her 4 albums around the country on an intermittent basis and is also writing her 5th collection in addition to substantial choral work. Her phone number is 908 319 9528. www.heidibreyer.com

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center

Every Wednesday

Open Jam with Richard Finch

6:00-8:00 pm • \$5 suggested donation

More at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com • 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville Pa.

Upcoming Real Girls Meetings:

March 13, April 10, May 15

If you know a girl aged 12-17 from any family, background, or location, please let her know that she is welcome and will be valued at the next monthly meeting of the Real Girls. The Real Girls are an unaffiliated, grass-roots youth group with girls from over a dozen schools and home-school groups who come together to build a loving connection to self in a safe social sisterhood, to practice active kindness, listening, creativity, self-awareness, and body positivity. We seek to challenge limiting stereotypes about females and we reinforce positive messaging for ourselves and each other. We have guest speakers, make art, and stretch ourselves in every imaginable way.

For more information, you can contact RG facilitator Catherine Lent at 908-328-4460, go to RealGirlsFrenchtown on Facebook, or check out @girlsbeingreal on Instagram. We'd love to include your girls!

Coming to Yoga Loka

Stress Clinic with Bonnie Pariser

Fridays 6:30-8:30 pm - 3/4

TRE (Tension and Trauma Reducing Exercises) with

Bonnie Pariser

Sundays 7:00-8:00 pm 2/21

Wednesdays 1:00 am-12:00 pm - 3/16

For more information and to register visit the website at

www.Yoga-Loka.com

Upper Bucks Code Blue Shelter

If you or someone you know is lacking indoor shelter in Upper Bucks County during periods of extreme, life-threatening weather (temperature or wind chill of 26F or below between 12/1 and 3/31 your neighbors and friends are ready to help at the Quakertown Masonic Lodge, 501 W. Broad Street, Quakertown, PA 18951 from 9 pm to 7 am the following morning. We'll have hot meals and breakfast as well as shelter. Car rides will be provided from Turkey Hill on Rt. 611 in Ottsville at 8:20 pm and Perkasio Square Shopping Center at 8:30 pm. Call 267-450-5191 to request a ride. To find out if the shelter is open contact the Code Blue Status Line: 215-274-5241 or 267-450-5191 after 1 pm.

Camp Glen Brook

Do you know a 3rd or 4th grader who is looking for an amazing summer camp experience? At Camp Glen Brook we offer special sessions for first time campers within our fun and caring summer camp community. What sets us apart? We are a small Waldorf-inspired camp with a family feel and wholesome farm-to-table food in the beautiful Monadnock Region of southern New Hampshire. Find out more about all of our programs for 3rd - 10th graders at www.glenbrook.org

Reconnecting with Nature

The Bucks County Audubon Society is pleased to continue its free lecture series on the theme "Re-connecting with Nature" on the dates listed below. All of these lectures take place at the University's auditorium in the Life Sciences Building at 2:00 PM on Sunday afternoons;

March 20 -- Miles Arnott, Executive Director of the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve will speak on "Heralds of Spring," the often showy spring wildflowers that can be found in our natural environments in the early Spring season. These "spring ephemerals" are plant species that generally live in the shade of taller woody plants and must complete their reproduction and produce seeds before the taller plants leaf out in the Spring.

April 3 -- Deborah Cramer, author of the recently published book, "The Narrow Edge," will speak about her experiences following the migration of a medium-sized shorebird, the red knot, on its annual migration from wintering grounds at the southern end of South America, to nesting grounds in the high Canadian Arctic. Along the way many of these birds stop along the shores of the lower Delaware Bay to refuel on the eggs laid at the surf by horseshoe crabs, a species often described as a living fossil that has remained virtually unchanged for 500 million years. Other enterprises compete with the knots for the crabs, including medical researchers who have found that the unique blue blood of this animal can provide a reliable bioassay of bacterial contamination in biological preparations, such as vaccines, that must be produced free of bacterial contamination.

Questions about the lecture series may be directed to the Bucks County Audubon Society at 215-297-5880.

New Cycle in 2016 of the Foundation Studies Program in Princeton

The new cycle for the Foundation Studies at the Waldorf School of Princeton will begin in the winter of 2016. This is the sixth cycle and the fourteenth year of the program. Over one hundred people have participated in our studies, some for personal development, some for the first step towards a professional life in Waldorf Education, and others to enhance the work in which they are already engaged.

The program covers Rudolf Steiner's basic books, and gives a foothold into his immense body of lectures and written works. Anthroposophy is dense and difficult to read independently at first without the foundational understanding offered in the program. After this five semester course, one can more easily delve into the many topics within Anthroposophy, i.e., education, agriculture, Eurythmy, the Arts, healing arts, medicine, and spiritual investigations such as karma.

The course meets 8 times per semester on Saturday mornings, at the Waldorf School of Princeton, from 8 am to 1 pm. We follow the school calendar and try to meet the needs of students' and parents' schedules when possible. Each morning includes a lecture, discussion, and two artistic workshops that enliven the concepts covered. Often the courses offered are Eurythmy and an artistic experience such as painting or sculpture. Guest teachers are invited to present other topics, for example, Speech or Biography. We now offer summer courses so that students can potentially finish in 15 months and begin teacher training if that is a path they wish to pursue. The cost per semester is \$600-800 sliding scale fee. The course provides a unique opportunity to form a small community together, sharing thoughts and partaking of small meals brought by the students. We have seen new friendships develop, and former friends become closer through the meaningful, shared experiences. The program is open to any interested adult of any age or background.

Faculty:

Elan Leibner lectures and leads discussions for the program. He was a class teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 18 years. After that time he taught at Emerson College in England training Waldorf teachers. For the past five years he has been the Chair of the Pedagogical Section Council of North America and editor of the Research Bulletin for Waldorf Education. He mentors and evaluates teachers in Waldorf Schools around the country.

Pamela Shafer facilitates the program and offers artistic workshops. She has been the sculptural arts teacher at the school for 16 years and the fine arts teacher for the middle school for 3 years. She has been a potter for 35 years and has also worked with college students, the elderly, and in hospitals for 15 years before finding the Waldorf movement.

Tertia Gale has been teaching Eurythmy in the Foundation Program since it began. Before that she taught Eurythmy at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 20 years and was one of the founding members of the school. Her roots in Anthroposophy reach back even further to her work at the Fellowship Community in Chestnut Ridge, NY, supporting the elderly in conjunction with the work of Anthroposophical medicine.

If you are interested please contact Pamela Shafer at foundationprinceton@earthlink.net.

From: theconversation.com

Why a Walk in the Woods Really Does Help Your Body and Your Soul

By Jeffrey Craig and Susan L. Prescott

Have you ever wondered why you feel healthier and happier when you stroll through the trees or frolic by the sea? Is it just that you're spending time away from work, de-stressing and taking in the view? Or is there more to it?

For more than 20 years, scientists have been trying to determine the mechanisms by which exposure to biodiversity improves health. Japanese scientists pioneered the search when they travelled to the island of Yakushima, famous for its biodiversity.

The Japanese already had a name for the experience of well-being in nature: *shinrin-yoku* or "forest bathing". Bathe yourself in the forests of Japan's Yakushima island. Alan Logan, Author provided
We do know that a diverse ecosystem supports a varied and beneficial microbial community living around and inside us.

We also know that exposure to green space, even within urban environments, increases our physical and mental well-being. But what are the mechanisms?

(Continued on next page.)

The Forest Air

The Japanese researchers suggested that we are taking in beneficial substances when we breathe forest air.

Research has identified three major inhaled factors that can make us feel healthier. These factors are beneficial bacteria, plant-derived essential oils and negatively-charged ions.

From birth to the grave, beneficial bacteria surround us; they live in the environment and, importantly, in the air we breathe. We also share almost our entire body with them. The more interaction we have with them, the happier and healthier we are.

This is in part due to our gut-dwelling bacteria, which break down the food we cannot digest and produce substances that benefit us both physically and mentally.

Plants and the bacteria living on them can produce essential oils to fight off harmful microorganisms. These are referred to collectively as phytoncides, literally, "plant-derived exterminators".

Research on the health benefits of plant essential oils is in its infancy. But one recent study found that a phytoncide from Korean pine trees improved the health and bacterial make-up of pigs.

Notwithstanding some of the pseudoscience that gets wrapped around negative ion generating machines, there is evidence that negative air ions may influence mental outlook in beneficial ways. There are relatively higher levels of negative air ions in forested areas and close to bodies of water. This may factor into the benefits of walking in a forest or near the ocean.

But as the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said:

Nature has neither kernel nor shell; she is everything at once.

Bacteria, essential oils and negative ions interact and influence each other. For example, negative ions and phytoncides may dictate the microbial make-up within a natural environment. There is evidence that this could also be taking place in the human gut.

More to be Done

Nature-relatedness, or biophilia in which an individual feels connected to nature, has been linked with better health.

But we have a long way to go before we can more fully understand the mechanisms by which an innate love of nature can benefit our health. An important part of this discussion – an overlooked one in our opinion – is further understanding of an individual's connection to nature.

Psychologists have convincingly demonstrated connections between nature relatedness and mental well-being. But how does a greater personal affinity to nature interact with dietary habits, personal microbiome, physical activity levels and many other lifestyle variables that might be intertwined with having such an affinity?

In the meantime, while scientists turn over stones and search for important mechanistic clues – including those related to biodiversity – there are many simple ways to capitalise on our biophilia.

Live in a city? The take time to walk in the city's parks and gardens such as Melbourne's Botanical Gardens.

Flickr/Stephen Barber, CC BY-NC-ND

Why not run in the park or by a river instead of on a treadmill, or take a walk through a park on the way to work or at lunchtime?

Critically, there is increasing evidence that we can help shape our children's mental and physical health by exposing them to more green environments as they work, rest and play. The US-based Children and Nature Network is a great resource of research news and activities bringing children and nature together.

In the World Health Organization report *Connecting Global Priorities – Biodiversity and Human Health*, released in December last year, it was concluded that:

Considering 'microbial diversity' as an ecosystem service provider may contribute to bridging the chasm between ecology and medicine/immunology [...] the relationships our individual bodies have with our microbiomes are a microcosm for the vital relationships our species shares with countless other organisms with which we share the planet.

It is easy to see that discussions of natural environments and human health are no mere matter of intellectual fancy.

In a paper published last month in *Journal of Physiological Anthropology*, we've called for more research into the links between biodiversity and human physical and mental well-being, particular in relation to childhood, that most formative of times.

Wouldn't it be good if by nurturing our environment we were also nurturing our children's future health?