



For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Jeff Caplinger, NLR Parks and Recreation
(501) 791-8540, jcaplinger@nlr.ar.gov

North Little Rock Selected for National League of Cities' Connecting Children to Nature Leadership Academy

North Little Rock, AR – The National League of Cities (NLC) and Children & Nature Network have selected North Little Rock to participate in the Connecting Children to Nature Leadership Academy in Salt Lake City, Utah this October. The leadership academy will provide city officials with the skills and knowledge to take up new or expanded leadership roles in improving access to nature in their communities.

Over the course of the two-day meeting, North Little Rock Alderman Charlie Hight and Parks and Recreation staff members Jeff Caplinger and Ian Hope will have the opportunity to learn about promising practices and strategies for connecting children to nature. Participants will work with national experts, attend workshops, conduct field visits and engage in peer learning with city leaders from the seven other cities who have been selected for the leadership academy.

"Kids too often do not have experience associated with this incredible natural world around us," said National League of Cities President Ralph Becker, mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah. "This effort to connect kids to nature means there will be less screen time for kids and more time spent exploring the great outdoors."

Benefits for increasing young people's access to nature include improved health outcomes, such as lower rates of childhood obesity, as well as stronger academic skills and increased opportunities for social and emotional learning.

Following the leadership academy, North Little Rock will receive an invitation to apply for planning and implementation grants to support the city's programs and initiatives focused on connecting children to nature. Additionally, North Little Rock will have the opportunity to join the new NLC Children and Nature Learning Network, which will provide ongoing opportunities for city leaders to learn and receive support from nationally recognized experts in the field and city peers.

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The National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.