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News Release



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Young Heart Patients Follow Doctor's Orders with Visits to the Moapa Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Southern Nevada Physicians Prescribe Outdoor Activities

LAS VEGAS – Two groups of young people and their families visited the Moapa Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) earlier this year for learning and recreation. While it is not unusual for such groups to tour the wildlife refuge, these particular youngsters were there under doctor's orders.



Young heart patients and their families take to the trail at the Moapa Valley NWR. The youths' physicians prescribed the outdoor activity.

The youths who visited the Moapa Valley NWR in January and March 2011 are all patients of the Children's Heart Center of Nevada. Their doctors prescribed outdoor activities, and staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) made sure those prescriptions were filled. It is all part of the Nature Champions Program and it is spreading across the country like wild fire.

Encouraging young people to get outdoors for improved health is the focus of the program, which is a partnership between the Service, the National Environmental Education Foundation, and a variety of

health care professionals and organizations. Doctors and other health care professionals from throughout the U.S. participated in a train-the-trainer class at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, VA. Five of those health care providers practice in the Las Vegas area.

(More)



Young heart patients and their family members crowd in front of the stream viewing chamber for a close-up look at the endangered Moapa dace. The youths visited the Moapa Valley NWR under prescriptions written by their doctors at the Children's Heart Center of Nevada.

Angelina Yost, Visitor Services Manager for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex, recruited the first five trainees. Once trained, these local health care professionals began recruiting and training their peers. To date, more than 70 southern Nevada health care providers are participating in the program.

"The response to this initiative from the southern Nevada health care community has been tremendous," said Yost. "This is one of several ways we are supporting First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Outside campaign."

The first lady launched her "Let's Move Outside!" campaign during her visit to the Red Rock National Conservation Area last June. The campaign is part of her "Let's Move!" initiative to fight childhood obesity in the U.S.

"The Service focuses on connecting people with nature," Yost said. "When a health care practitioner writes a prescription for a patient calling for outdoor activity, it's an opportunity for us to introduce them to one of the four national wildlife refuges in southern Nevada."

The Desert NWR Complex includes the Ash Meadows NWR in Nye County, the Desert NWR just north of Las Vegas, the Moapa Valley NWR in northeastern Clark County, and the Pahrangat NWR near Alamo in Lincoln County. For more information about these wildlife refuges, visit www.fws.gov/desertcomplex/ on the Internet.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.