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Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy News

For immediate release

Editor's note: interviews available upon request

Pittsburgh Selected for National League of Cities' Connecting Children to Nature Leadership Academy

City Officials and Parks Conservancy represent city at national environmental leadership event

Representatives from the **City of Pittsburgh** and **Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy** constitute the Pittsburgh delegation at the **National League of Cities (NLC) and Children's Nature Network Connecting Children to Nature Leadership Academy** in St. Paul, Minnesota, October 28 - 30. Pittsburgh was selected by NLC as one of eight participating cities for the event.

The [Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy](#)'s Director of Community Projects **Heather Sage**, [Office of the Mayor](#) Manager of Special Initiatives **Betty Cruz**, and Deputy Director [Parks & Recreation](#) **Jamie Beechey** will represent the city during the two-day meeting, and 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 selected cities.

The leadership academy will provide city officials and partners with the skills and knowledge to take up new or expanded leadership roles in improving access to nature in their communities.

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.

"Pittsburgh has an incredible resource in our over 1,700 acres of city parkland, and the Parks Conservancy and the City of Pittsburgh share the goal of every child growing and developing with access to the health and learning benefits of vibrant green space", said the Parks Conservancy's Heather Sage. "We're honored to be asked to participate, and excited for the national exposure this opportunity brings to Pittsburgh."

Following the leadership academy, Pittsburgh 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, Pittsburgh will have the opportunity to join the new NLC Children and Nature Learning Network, which will provide ongoing opportunities for city leaders and

partners to learn and receive support from nationally recognized experts in the field and city peers.

In addition to Pittsburgh, other participating cities include Grand Rapids, MI; Knoxville, TN; Providence, RI; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; St. Paul, MN; St. Petersburg, FL.

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About the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy:

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy was founded in December 1996 by a group of citizens concerned with the deteriorating conditions of Pittsburgh's historic city parks. A nonprofit organization, the Parks Conservancy works closely with the City of Pittsburgh under an official public-private partnership agreement to restore and improve the city's park system to its full potential. Originally including Highland, Schenley, Frick, and Riverview Parks, the scope of the Park Conservancy's work now includes a focus on community parks including Allegheny Commons, Arsenal Park, Cliffside Park, McKinley Park, and Mellon Park. To date, the Parks Conservancy has raised \$84 million toward park improvements. The Parks Conservancy works with thousands of volunteers annually, stewards over 1,700 acres, and has completed 14 capital projects.

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