

Nature vs. Technology

How to win the battle for conservation

By Taylor Thompson



Outdoors

Once upon a time, in a world free of iPads and smartphones, there lived a young girl whose outdoor spirit was wholesome and unhindered. Day after day—come rain or shine—she would frolic in nature, savoring every minute of daylight (and moonlight, too) that she possibly could...

Did I mention this was 1990-something, in a world not so free of Gameboy and Sega Genesis?

Okay, so maybe the times have been a-changin' since my childhood, as the phrase "Mom and Dad, I'm going outside to play!" now seems obsolete. But still, when it comes to the battle of Nature vs. Technology, our bets shouldn't be wavering.

Kids these days—they're in desperate need of some fresh air. And as parents, our job is to give it to them.

"Parents should encourage their children to be outside every day," says Bill Warburton of Bend Endurance Academy. "It benefits the child *and* the parent."

Warburton, who specializes in getting Central Oregon's youth off of the couch and onto the bike trails, believes that ample outdoor exposure is the key to improving a child's eating habits, sleeping patterns and behavioral tendencies.

And the best way to succeed? Well, some would say the sooner, the better, like Aimee Roseborough, an experienced climber who first introduced her children to the climbing scene before their second birthdays.

"Getting out in nature is healthy—both physically and psychologically," Roseborough says. "Since my older daughter has been climbing for so long now, she's able to climb better than many kids her age and older."

And thanks to all that time on the rocks, Roseborough has also watched her daughter thrive on goal orientation.

"She finds a climb that she wants to [summit] and

sometimes has to work hard to do it, but she feels very accomplished when she makes it," she explains.

Another firm believer in the start-'em-young approach is local naturalist Jim Anderson, whose children have been exploring and appreciating nature since the day they were born (literally).

"My kids are now doing the same thing with their kids," Anderson says. "They approach everything with respect, wanting to know how and why it works in the world around them."

Talk about a crucial factor for conservation. I mean, how else can our little ones (and their little ones, and so on) learn to preserve and protect? They must first get acquainted with the outdoors, which—according to Anderson—requires plenty of discovery, endless respect and minimal fear.

"It doesn't matter if what you discover gets in your hair, flies over your head or tries to bite your ankle—it's all about the diversity of life and doing everything you can to make sure it keeps working," he says. "Conservation will happen, and it won't need to be preached."

Even if your kiddos aren't fresh out of the womb, there's still time to get on board (not to mention a plethora of local opportunities). So whether it's a spring sports league, a camping trip to Tumalo State Park, or a youth program at Bend Endurance Academy, just get them out of the darn house and into the great outdoors.

"It's even more important now," says longtime climber Mike Rougeux, who currently coaches climbers at the Academy. "As we move deeper into the technological age, we're connecting more with electrical outlets than we are with the outdoor world. If we get kids to explore and play *outside*, we're starting the foundation for the next generation of responsible caretakers and recreation users."