



American Recreation Coalition

Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right to health and happiness through recreation.

NEWS

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Outdoor Recreation Village Unites Many to Get Kids Off Couches and Into the Great Outdoors

Washington, DC (February 12, 2008) More than 40 organizations formed a unique team of outdoor advocates to help tens of thousands of visitors to Glendale, Arizona, drawn by Super Bowl XLII, discover healthy fun in the Great Outdoors. For four days, the organizations produced the first-ever Outdoor Recreation Village at one of the world's top media events and used the Village as a platform to announce new initiatives to connect all Americans, and especially American youth, to the nation's wonderful array of parks, forests, refuges and other public lands and waters.

In addition to the public, the Outdoor Recreation Village located at the Westgate City Center, drew distinguished visitors ranging from NFL Legend Mike Ditka to Smokey Bear. The Village included a mix of active fun and valuable information sources. Kids scampered up a 25-foot- tall climbing wall and fished in a 60-foot pond stocked with 800 rainbow trout. Professional anglers gave casting demonstrations and lessons. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission hosted a laser shooting range to introduce hunting safety and fun. Youth climbed into tents at the WOW-Wonderful Outdoor World campsite and used binoculars at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service site to spot pictures of birds, snakes and animals posted around a large tent hosting interactive exhibit centers operated by federal, state and non-governmental entities. Visitors to the National Park Service site in the *Get Outdoors Technology* section signed on as Web Rangers and learned about a brand new interpretive tool, the Pocket Ranger, developed in partnership by Apple Inc., LightSpeed Technologies and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. USA Freedom Corps led the *Get Outdoors Initiatives* team, highlighting its Arizona AmeriCorps efforts on public lands across the state and the programs of Take Pride in America.

In the *Get Outdoors Opportunities* section, three partners teamed up to demonstrate the power of the Internet in finding things to do and great places to do them on public waters managed by the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation joined in, showing off its new national database on great boating and fishing places and its efforts to encourage outdoor fun, including its Anglers' Legacy program and TV messages. Also in the Opportunities neighborhood was a joint Bureau of Land Management/Forest Service center with

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information on camping, trails and much more. Additional information was provided by Utah and Arizona State Parks agency personnel and the Good Sam Club.

Special lures for visitors included: a luxurious 75-foot houseboat available for rental at Lake Mead and Lake Powell by National Park Service concessioner Forever Resorts; an Airstream trailer, which will be the operations center for Get Outdoors USA! for its new National Get Outdoors Day campaign; and an exhibit of ATVs, mountain bikes and even an Arizona Game and Fish Commission Hummer! Bass Pro Shops, which sponsored the climbing wall, fishing pond and laser tent, also provided a large display of native animals and new outdoor technologies, including handheld GPS units used for geocaching and other fun activities.

Numerous performances and events occurred at the Village center stage – a dock attached to the houseboat. On Friday, Interior Assistant Secretary Lyle Laverty, Agriculture Under Secretary Mark Rey and USA Freedom Corps Deputy Director Alison Young outlined key federal initiatives underway to reverse a decline in public lands visitations – visits that yield important physical, mental and spiritual benefits at minimal cost. The Washington visitors also were featured in the NFL Parade that toured the Westgate City Center site – joined by four public lands characters: Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl of the USDA Forest Service; Puddles, the Blue Goose of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Bobber, the mascot of the U.S Army Corp of Engineers' (USACE) water safety program. The characters were such a hit that they were recalled for a repeat participation in the Saturday evening parade.

Other on-stage performances included pro angler Clay Dyer, national spokesperson for C.A.S.T. for Kids, and USACE water safety training sessions. In addition, the stage was used for autograph sessions by the Gridiron Greats, more than 75 NFL retirees who provide financial assistance and coordination of social services for retired NFL players. The Gridiron Greats appearing on the Outdoor Recreation Village stage were Mike Ditka and Merlin Olson.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on making the Village environmentally responsible, with limited distribution of paper. Participants instead linked websites and other sources of information to the www.getoutdoorsusa.org website. Hundreds of youth who posed for photographs taken with Smokey and other celebrities will receive their pictures via email – along with a link to the new info-packed website.

The Village concept was developed by Forever Resorts at the invitation of the Super Bowl host committee. Forever Resorts provided overall coordination, with additional coordination provided by the American Recreation Coalition.