



connecting people with nature

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Contact information:
Beth Avey 270-872-8001

Bernheim Opens Free Play Zone at IdeaFestival® 2017, Launches Children at Play Network

Clermont, KY – Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest publicly launched its Children at Play Network today with the opening of the Bernheim Free Play Zone at this year’s **IdeaFestival®**.

IdeaFestival® featured presenter, Dr. Peter Gray, joined Bernheim leaders at the opening of the Free Play Zone – a tent filled with boxes, tarps and twine on the Belvedere adjacent to the Kentucky Center for Performing Arts.

Bernheim partnered with IdeaFestival® organizers to bring Gray, a developmental psychologist and leading expert in the importance of free play, to this year’s annual event for creative thinkers and the intellectually curious.

The Children at Play Network helps organizations, schools and communities create amazing places to play outdoors to better connect children to the natural world. Additionally, the network offers free play days, teacher trainings and is even piloting a forest kindergarten called the Muddy Boots Play Group that meets monthly at Bernheim.

According to Gray, free play is the primary means by which children learn to control their lives, solve problems, get along with peers and become emotionally resilient. He attributes the rise in anxiety and depression in children to the decline of play.

“Play is critical to physical, intellectual, social and emotional development,” said Claude Stephens, Director of Bernheim’s Children at Play Network. “That is why we’ve launched the Children at Play Network.”

Stephens added that the initiative is incredibly important to Bernheim as it works to grow the next generation of environmental stewards.

“We are building a network of regional expertise focused on improving outdoor play environments,” Stephens said. “The quality of a child’s play environment sets the stage for a lifetime of passion, interest and wonder since it is through play that children build their first connections to the natural world.”

Stephens thanked PNC Bank for their generous support to the Children at Play Network, including bringing Gray and creating the Bernheim Free Play Zone.

“PNC’s support for the Children at Play Network is a shining example of the bank’s commitment to our community and early childhood learning through its PNC Grow Up Great initiative,” said Stephens.

He also emphasized that play is important no matter your age and invited the public to come to the Free Play Zone that will be set up now through the end of the festival on Thursday.

For more information on the Children at Play Network visit childrenatplaynetwork.com.

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About Bernheim. Bernheim’s mission is to connect people with nature. Whiskey maker, Isaac W. Bernheim established the 15,625-acre arboretum and research forest in 1929 as a gift to the people of Kentucky. Bernheim’s gate is open every day 7 a.m. until approximately sunset, except December 25 and January 1. Admission to the park is always free for members and free for all every weekday. Weekends and holidays have a \$5 environmental impact fee per vehicle for the public. Schools and tour groups are welcome; please call in advance for fees and scheduling. The Visitor Center and Gift Shop are open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. every day, including weekends. Isaac’s Café, located in the Visitor Center, is open 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. with refreshments. Bernheim is located in Clermont, KY, about 20 minutes from the Louisville airport. From I-65, take exit 112 and follow the signs. The entrance is approximately one mile from the interstate. Bernheim is a non-profit organization that relies on memberships, grants and donations for support.

About IdeaFestival®

Founded in 2000, **IdeaFestival®** is a celebration of ideas to foster creativity, innovation and transformational learning. It’s an eclectic network of global thinkers and one-of-a-kind innovators bound together by an intense curiosity about what is impacting and shaping the future of the arts, business, technology, design, science, philosophy and education. Please visit www.ideafestival.com for more information. Follow them @ideafestival and #IF17.

