

A Workshop and Symposium on

Empowering Neighborhoods and Restoring Outdoor Play

Sponsored by
The Binghamton Neighborhood Project
The City Of Binghamton
The United Way of Broome County

Hands-on workshop: Saturday, Sept 18, 8:30-4:00
Symposium for Public: Sunday, Sept 19, 1:00-3:00

University Downtown Center
67 Washington Street
Binghamton, New York

Join a distinguished group of scientists and activists to address
an important problem in all communities, including our own...

About the Workshop and Symposium

A hidden problem of modern life is the lack of opportunity for self-directed outdoor play in children. In previous generations, kids used to run around in mixed age groups, creating their own entertainment, solving their own problems, and negotiating their own relationships with minimal supervision by adults. Modern science is showing that this kind of play is important for child development and that highly scripted activities supervised by adults do not provide the same benefits.

A related and more visible problem is the quality of neighborhoods as environments for children's self-directed outdoor play. In previous generations, it was usually safe for kids to run around in mixed age groups and there was enough adult oversight to keep play within bounds without micro-managing it. When neighborhoods cease to function as cooperative units, this kind of benign oversight disappears and the children suffer along with the adults.

The workshop on Saturday will bring together leading scientists and practitioners knowledgeable about child development and the value of play with others knowledgeable about neighborhood revitalization and the creation of outdoor play spaces. Our goal is to develop a blueprint for restoring neighborhoods as cooperative units and ideal environments for child development. The symposium on Sunday will present the results of the workshop to the general public in an entertaining and informative format.

These events are integrated with Binghamton's "Design Your Own Park" project, a friendly competition among neighborhoods to turn vacant lots and other neglected spaces into beautiful public places for children and adults alike. Neighborhood groups that have entered the competition will attend the workshop, share their insights, and consult with the speakers so that the latest findings in scientific research can be combined with practical experience for immediate implementation in the neighborhoods of Binghamton.

Please visit <http://bnp.binghamton.edu/> for more information and updates.

Workshop and Symposium Participants

- **Stuart Brown** is an internationally renowned psychiatrist, known for his research and writing on the roles of play in normal psychological development. He is founder of the National Institute of Play and author of the recent book, *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*.
- **Cheryl Charles** is Cofounder, CEO, and president of The Children & Nature Network, whose mission is to reconnect children with nature. She has a Ph.D. in education and is former national director of Project Learning Tree and Project WILD. Her most recent book, co-authored with her husband, Bob Samples, is *Coming Home: Community, Creativity, and Consciousness*, which focuses on how to create environments where individuals feel cherished, productive, and fulfilled.
- **Scott Eberle** is Vice President and Director of Play Studies at the Strong National Museum of Play and acquisitions editor of *American Journal of Play*.
- **Peter Gray** is research professor of psychology at Boston College and author of a general psychology textbook (*Psychology*, Worth Publishers), which brings an evolutionary perspective to all of psychology. He has conducted research and written extensively on the value of free age-mixed play for children's development, and he writes a regular blog for Psychology Today magazine entitled *Freedom to Learn: The Roles of Play and Curiosity as Foundations for Education*.
- **Darell Hammond** is founder and CEO of KaBOOM!, a national non-profit organization dedicated to bringing play back into children's lives. Darell grew up in a group home and knew, from an early age, that his purpose in life was to do good for others. Through KaBOOM! he has overseen the construction or improvement of thousands of playgrounds, mostly in impoverished neighborhoods.
- **Hindi Iserhott** is former president of the Board of Directors of City Repair, in Portland, Oregon. Through their *Placemaking* program, she has been directly involved in the creation of places within neighborhoods that are beautiful, interesting, and bring people of all ages together. Hindi worked as an informal educator for nearly a decade and believes that play is a strong motivating factor for learning, for people of all ages.
- **Rusty Keeler** Rusty Keeler is an artist / designer who works throughout the world creating natural play spaces for children and is the chief consultant for Binghamton's Design Your Own Park competition. He is the author of the book *Natural Playscapes: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul*. Rusty lives among the woods and gorges of the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. When not designing or building playscapes you may find him barefoot in his garden.
- **Peter LaFreniere** is professor of psychology at the University of Maine and past president of the International Society for Human Ethology. He has conducted extensive

research on peer relationships in children and is most recently author of a textbook on evolutionary developmental psychology—*Adaptive Origins: Evolution and Human Development*.

- **David Lancy** is professor of anthropology at Utah State University. He has conducted fieldwork on children’s lives in Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad, Sweden, and the United States. His books include: *The Anthropological Study of Play: Problems and Prospects*; *Playing on the Mother Ground*; *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, and Changelings*; and, most recently, *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood*.

- **Hara Estroff Marano** is former editor-in-chief and current editor-at-large of Psychology Today magazine. Her most recent book is *A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting*. The book grew out of an award-winning article titled A Nation of Wimps published in Psychology Today in December 2004, cited by many as one of the most important articles of the year. She speaks frequently to parent, policy, and educational groups about the value of play and the current culture of parenting. She is a strong advocate for allowing children to play freely, without parental interference. She has written for publications ranging from the New York Times to Smithsonian magazine to the Wilson Quarterly.

- **Danielle Marshall** has worked in the field of child development for over 10 years. She is the former Program Director for Jumpstart for Young Children. Danielle currently serves as the Senior Manager of Research and Education at KaBOOM! conducting research and training on the creation of playspaces that maximize play value and extend children’s learning.

- **Lenore Skenazy** (who will be present for the final day of the symposium) is founder of the book and blog, “Free-Range Kids,” which helped launch the anti-helicopter parenting movement. She is a frequent guest on talk shows, speaks internationally, and has written for everyone from The Washington Post to Mad Magazine. Yep. *The Mad Magazine*. She also invented, “Take Our Children to the Park...And Leave Them There Day.”

- **David Sloan Wilson** is SUNY Distinguished Professor of Biology and Anthropology at Binghamton University. He co-directs the Evolution Institute, which is sponsoring the symposium, and directs the Binghamton Neighborhood Project, which is organizing the Design Your Own Park Competition in collaboration with the city of Binghamton and United Way of Broome County. He is author of *Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin’s Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives* and *The Neighborhood Project: Using Evolution to Improve My City, One Block at a Time*, which will be published by Little, Brown in 2011.

Saturday Workshop Schedule

This event is open to those who want to obtain a detailed understanding of the issues and especially those who want to become involved in implementing the recommendations that emerge from the workshop, in Binghamton and elsewhere. Admission is free but please e-mail Robert Kadar at rkadar1@binghamton.edu so that we can keep track of numbers. A lunch option is available for \$10.00.

Morning session: The Value of Free Outdoor Play

- 8:30 Arrival
8:45 Introductory remarks
9:00 Peter LaFreniere *The Evolution and Function of Peer Play in Rhesus Macaques and Humans*.
9:30 Stuart Brown. *Rough and Tumble Play: An Essential Element for Crafting Social and Emotional Competency*.
10:00 David Lancy *Play Then and Now*.
10:30 *half-hour break*.
11:00 Peter Gray *The Decline of Play and the Rise of Anxiety, Depression, Helplessness, and Narcissism*.
11:30 Hara Estroff Marano. *And You Think It's Kids' Play?*

12:00 to 1:00 Lunch break

Afternoon session: Empowering Neighborhoods and Creating Conditions for Play

- 1:00 Cheryl Charles *The Ecology of Hope: Building a Movement to Reconnect Children and Nature*,
1:30 Hindi Iserhott, *Investing in Community: Engaging People in Reclaiming Public Space*.
2:00 Danielle Marshall and Darell Hammond (of KaBOOM!) *Using Asset-Based Community Development to Build Playspaces and Promote Play*.
2:30 *Half hour break*
3:00 Rusty Keeler. *Mud Pies, Willow Huts, and Water Play: The World of Natural Playscapes*.
3:30 David Sloan Wilson. *Empowering Neighborhoods and Facilitating Play at a Citywide Scale*.

Sunday Symposium for the Public

- 1:00 David Sloan Wilson
Introduction
- 1:15 Stuart Brown
“What Nature Wants Us to Know About Play”
- 1:45 Lenore Skenazy
“Free Range Kids: Why Does an Old-Fashioned Childhood Suddenly Sound So Radical?”
- 2:15 Roundtable discussion workshop participants and audience