

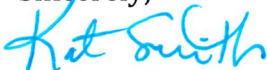
December 30, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing today in support of the proposed Nature Playground at North Mountain Park. I've lived, attended college, and worked in Ashland and the surrounding area since 2006. Myself, my partner, Stuart, and our daughter Sadie Lu have spent countless hours exploring the local playgrounds, parks, and forests of Ashland. Sadie Lu is currently in her second year at the Little Gnomes Nature School held at North Mountain Park and will most likely attend forest kindergarten there next year as well. As a family, we like to explore the 'edges' of the local playgrounds where the creeks tumble by and the fallen trees offer opportunities to practice our balancing skills. We enjoy hopping from stone to stone, climbing trees, birding, and finding nature nuggets like heart-shaped rocks, lichen, twigs, and bark, creating shelters from sticks, and identifying plants, trees, and flowers. We find that our best family time is spent in the natural environment. We are all more relaxed, present, and engaged with each other as well as the world around us.

My love for the outdoors began when I lived and worked in Eugene, Oregon. Spending hours outside gave me a whole new perspective of the world and changed the way I chose to engage in my local community. I started working with the City of Eugene River House Outdoor Program as an outdoor recreation leader and had the opportunity to engage youth in outdoor activities such as rock climbing, rafting, bicycling, hiking, and sailing. A fundamental component of our work was to facilitate experiences that allowed the children to explore the natural environment with Richard Louv's book, *The Last Child in the Woods*, as the foundation for the programs. I witnessed first hand how playing outside changed my behavior as well as the children's behavior for the better. I received my undergraduate degree in Outdoor Adventure Leadership through Southern Oregon University where I studied the benefits of outdoor time for both adults and children. I then went on to get my Master's in Social Work from Portland State University. I was introduced to Ecopsychology and the benefits of nature play on the mental health and well-being of all people. It was during this time that I had my daughter and began sharing the wonders of the natural world with her. Nature playgrounds have the potential to support creativity and problem solving, social relations, emotional and mental health, and self-discipline. They can also reduce stress and improve self-discipline. My hope is that this project will receive sufficient grant funding to move forward.

Sincerely,



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