



**national get outdoors day**

## **National Get Outdoors Day Celebrated at Anacostia Park**

Washington, D.C. – The inaugural National Get Outdoors Day (NGOD) at Anacostia Park in Washington D.C. was made possible by 20 partners who created a day full of fun and active outdoor adventure just two miles from the U.S. Capitol. NGOD partners included: American Recreation Coalition, Camp Fire USA, Canoe Kentucky, D.C. Department of the Environment, Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital, Metropolitan Police Department Harbor Patrol, National Bass Fishing Show, National Park Service, National Wildlife Federation, Paddlesports Industry Association, Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, REI, Roots & Shoots, Student Conservation Association, Take Pride in America, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Forest Service law enforcement K-9 units, USA Freedom Corps, Wholeness for Humanity and WOW - Wonderful Outdoor World.

### Activities & Events

The NGOD partners brought outstanding opportunities for kids to have hands-on opportunities to engage in the great outdoors. Casting lessons with rods and reels, boating on the Anacostia River with opportunities to see heron and osprey, tours of an RV and information on camping, hula-hoop games in the grassy fields, the chance to put tents up and take them down – all gave the participants a taste of the outdoors lifestyle. Booklets, pamphlets, maps, coloring books, frisbees, stuffed animals and more offered further information on places and other opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation, volunteer services, and conservation programs. Outdoors celebrities Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl drew great attention from children and adults alike. Families and youth hiked the NGOD trail with guidance from a special passport, listing all of the NGOD stations to visit throughout the course of the day. Completed passports became the entries into a prize drawing for \$500 worth of quality Coleman camping equipment. The drawing at the event’s end drew a cheering crowd, and the winning family, comprised of a father and his three sons, celebrated their win as part of a Father’s Day weekend and made plans for a camping and fishing trip in two weeks. No visitor to the NGOD event left empty handed, though: free Clif Bars, WOW binoculars, “TakeMeFishing.org” hats, and Smokey Bear bandanas made everyone a winner.

### Recruitment

Outreach efforts were made to the local government, media, neighborhood councils, youth ministers and community activists to encourage attendance at the Anacostia Park

National Get Outdoors Day. Over 1,000 flyers were distributed through these channels along with handouts at local metro stops on Wednesday and Thursday. Attendance was lower than anticipated, though, and impromptu efforts were made to recruit participants for the event. A “mini parade” was assembled to tour the linear park and surrounding community: a U.S. Park Police officer in the lead, with lights flashing, escorted a trailered high-performance bass boat carrying Smokey Bear and a U.S. Forest Service K-9 unit, which was followed by a high-speed, DC Harbor Division police patrol boat, also on a trailer! Signage was placed at the entrance of the park to direct visitors to the NGOD event site and volunteers on foot made personal invitations to visitors in other areas of the park.

#### Other Important Information

Take Pride in America conducted a work day to clean out the Anacostia Park boat ramps. Take Pride in America Executive Director Katie Loois and USA Freedom Corps intern Jeff Barnes organized an outstanding group of White House interns for the event. The interns filled 20 large bags and loaded a dump truck with 20 cubic yards of wooden debris cleared from the two boat ramps at the park. One of the ramps had been unusable for several months because of the debris. The Take Pride volunteers made possible the event's boating activities. Volunteers also offered a hand during set up for the NGOD event, preparing materials for the kids to utilize and posting signage throughout the park.

#### Lessons Learned

- A later starting time, perhaps 1:00pm - 6:00pm, would better fit the community.
- Others suggested that the local community would be attracted with music and food into future events.
- During the activities a new partner was discovered, the DC Dragon Boat Club, which is likely to participate in NGOD 2009.
- The goal was accomplished to create an event with multiple partners that provided both hands-on activities and information on opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors. We continue to learn the best methods for reaching out and attracting new users to our public lands and waters.
- The NPS unit manager was delighted with the event, describing it as her idea of the signature annual event for the park and volunteering to help make the 2009 event bigger and better.
- A visible and important Take Pride in America will be included in 2009 plans.
- Our plans for use of the Anacostia Urban Treehouse, an environmental learning center based upon a large wooden deck in the shape of the United States, were not implemented because of inadequate numbers of participants.
- While the Anacostia community did not need bilingual information about the event, we can and will reach other portions of DC in 2009 where Spanish versions of the flyer and announcements will be important.

Photos from the NGOD Anacostia event are available at:

<http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/locations/detail/?id=10>