

Tahoe City route transformed into kids' discovery trail

A new nature trail at Granlibakken, just outside of Sunnyside-Tahoe City, allows parents to introduce their children to nature in an entertaining and educational manner.

The half-mile “discovery trail” features a variety of stations designed to teach kids about the lifestyles and habitats of animals. Its format combines the fun and excitement of a playground with the educational possibilities of a museum. By combining active elements, where children crawl, jump and run, with opportunities to explore and observe interesting natural phenomena, it simultaneously caters to a child's need for physical exertion and desire to learn about the natural world.



Members of Family Nature Summits build the discovery trail at Granlibakken.
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For instance, a gathering of tree stumps encourages kids of all ages to hop from place to place while pondering a frog's mode of transportation, and a set of “critter covers” – hinged lids that open up to reveal salamanders and millipedes – teach them about the habitats of crawling creatures.

The trail was built by volunteers from around the country, who assemble every year at a different wilderness destination to learn about, enjoy, and give back to the environment. This year the organization, called Family Nature Summits, selected Lake Tahoe for its week-long program.

During the week, participants of all ages hike, kayak, bird-watch, and participate in a variety of other activities designed to teach them about the ecology and culture of the area in which they are recreating.

As part of the week's activities, each participant dedicates a few hours to a community service project decided upon by the group's leadership. Since the program attracts hundreds of attendees each year, this small investment of individual time is multiplied into a considerable labor force. Past projects have included planting trees in Utah's Wasatch National Forest, removing invasive vegetation in the Smokey Mountains of North Carolina, and maintaining trails in several wilderness areas.

This year's community service project was designed and led by Liz Brownlee, a conservation educator and longtime summiteer.

"The Discovery Trail is a space for kids to connect with nature, to see its wonders, and to have fun. That connection with nature is incredibly valuable for kids because it stimulates creativity, confidence, respect and so much more. Nature benefits, too, because each child playing in the woods is one more person who cares for the land, who wants to see it protected for the next generations," Brownlee said in a press release.

For more information or to register, visit the website.