



Mississippi Valley Conservancy

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**A DOSE OF NATURE IS GOOD MEDICINE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
Mayo Clinic Health System to Sponsor Mississippi Valley Conservancy's
"Linked to the Land" Series of Outdoor Activities**

LA CROSSE, WI – November 2, 2017 – A dose of nature is good medicine for public health. That's the premise of the relationship between the Mayo Clinic Health System–Franciscan Healthcare and Mississippi Valley Conservancy, a joint effort to get people outside for a hike. They announced this week that Mayo Clinic Health System will continue its sponsorship of the "Linked to the Land" series of outdoor activities on nearby Conservancy-protected lands.

"Linked to the Land" is a series of twelve guided outdoor activities that are free and open to the public. The activities include hiking, birding, paddling, stargazing, and yoga. One of these family-friendly events is scheduled during each month of the year. Details, dates, trail maps, and directions are available at www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/events/

As an accredited land trust, the Conservancy preserves bluffs, farm fields, wetlands, prairies and streams in the Driftless Area. Mayo Clinic Health System - Franciscan Healthcare serves patients at two hospitals and eleven clinics in three states and employs more than 3500 people.

"We include the Linked to the Land series as one of many components in our community health improvement plan" says Teri Wildt, Director of Community Engagement for Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare. "Opportunities for individuals and families to be physically active are important to reducing the incidence and impact of chronic disease in our community."

Also, she adds, sponsoring the program "allows us to do our part to maintain the region as a great place to live, work, and raise families. As a large employer, we know people are attracted to our region for its scenic beauty and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. MVC plays a key role in that."

Mayo Clinic physician Amit Sood is the author of "The Mayo Clinic Handbook for Happiness." He writes, "'RX nature' is now considered a therapeutic option. Research has validated the benefits of this approach, called ecotherapy."

Mayo physician Jon Rigden of La Crosse says, "I often see patients who have difficulty coping with the stress that is so pervasive in our modern lives. Everyone has their own unique ways to cope with this stress, but sometimes events overwhelm them and they seek help. One of the

suggestions I often make is to take advantage of the soothing effects of being immersed in a natural setting. The sound of the wind through trees, of water tumbling towards the sea, and of birds chattering to their mates can be a powerful antidote to the challenges we face. We are blessed to live in an area teeming with opportunities to embrace the healing effects of nature."

Megan Muehlenbruch, La Crosse County Health Department health educator for its Nature Connections Program, explains why public health and land protection are a good match: "In the last decade, the number of studies linking nature and health has skyrocketed. The mental health benefits appear endless, including reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Positive correlations with productivity, focus, and attention have been found as well. In children, nature is often associated with reduced symptoms of ADHD and asthma."

She adds, "The mission and projects of Mississippi Valley Conservancy play an important role in optimizing health through nature. By conserving the presence of the natural areas around us, by making them places where residents can connect and learn; and by providing community outreach and engagement, MVC is promoting and enabling this nature-health connection.

Carol Abrahamzon, Conservancy executive director, says that the nature connection has added depth to the MVC mission, showing how land conservation benefits, as Aldo Leopold would put it, the entire community to which we belong -- the land, water, wildlife, and people.

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ABOUT MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited regional land trust that has permanently protected nearly 20,000 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. The focus of the Conservancy is to conserve the forests, prairies, wetlands, streams and farms that enrich our communities, for the health and well-being of current and future generations.