

Wonder and Joy. It's in our nature!

**Nomination Call
for
The 2012 Celebration of Children in Nature Awards**

Four Seasons Hotel, Austin, Texas

Date: Fall 2012



In the fall of 2012, Westcave Preserve will host The 2012 Celebration of Children in Nature Awards. The centerpiece of this program is the celebration of extraordinary work in the Central Texas Community to inspire joy and wonder by getting our children out into nature. We will recognize four individuals or organizations who demonstrate the very best in connecting kids to the natural world.

We are seeking the nominations of children, adults, organizations or groups of individuals who are doing exciting, innovative, successful work to offer solutions to the problem of “nature deficit disorder” – a term coined by bestselling author Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Your Children from nature Deficit Disorder*.

Award Categories

***🌿* E. Lee Walker Award for Community Collaboration**

This child, adult, group or organization will have demonstrated the value of working with partners to create opportunities for kids to get out into nature regularly. Lee Walker has established himself as the quintessential collaborator, some might say a collaborator magnet, and so our award for community collaboration is presented in his name. Lee served as the chair of the Westcave Board, and has been its primary benefactor, for more than 25 years. It was Lee’s skill at collaborative leadership that generated the funds to build our fabulous Warren Skaaren Environmental Learning Center and those same skills have guided Westcave in a new and expanded strategic direction.

2011 winner: El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission

***🌿* John Covert Watson Award for Vision**

This child, adult, group or organization has had a far reaching vision for a future that embraces the importance of children reconnecting to the natural world. John Watson is a visionary architect who studied with Frank Lloyd Wright and has created a number of organically designed homes. John was the private landowner of what is now Westcave Preserve. John recognized that the public had a great desire to visit this very unique hill country canyon and he had the vision to partner with our life-long friends at the LCRA to create Westcave Preserve which was dedicated to the restoration and preservation of this extraordinary property.

2011 winner: Dr. Kimberly Avila Edwards, M.D., F.A.A.P. - Medical Director of Happy Living, Healthy Living Program at Dell Children’s Medical Center

John F. Ahrns Award for Environmental Education

This child, adult, group or organization will have innovated curriculum and integrated the natural world, and perhaps their schoolyard, into their classroom so that their students are inspired to become explorers of the natural world on their own time. John Ahrns is among a rarefied group of first rate naturalists and has been the sole preserve director and lead educator since Westcave's beginnings in 1976. John Ahrns began his work at the Preserve by hauling more than 100 full-size garbage bags of trash out of the Westcave canyon. Years later, when he had accomplished astonishing restoration and protection for the Preserve, John set out to build an environmental education program that now attracts more than 6,000 children each year.

2011 winner: William Earley - Teacher, Laurel Mountain Elementary, Round Rock ISD

Westcave Preserve Award for Enduring Dedication

This child, adult, group or organization has a significant history of getting kids out into nature. Like Westcave Preserve, which has been inspiring children and adults for decades, this award recognizes that there are many who have been toiling in the Children and Nature field for many years.

2011 winner: Art Pasley, National Program Director - C.A.S.T. for Kids

To Submit a Nomination

Nominations may be submitted by the nominee or by any individual or organization who wishes to recognize a child, adult, group or organization for their work on behalf of children and nature. Please send completed nomination forms to Westcave Preserve, 24814 Hamilton Pool Road, Round Mountain, TX 78663

Deadline

The nomination process will remain open through February 28, 2012. Selection of the winners will be made by a panel of children and nature-related volunteers and professionals.

About Westcave Preserve

Westcave Preserve, located 28 miles west of downtown Austin in the Texas Hill Country, hosts more than 8,000 visitors each year for guided tours of its canyon and its stunning grotto and waterfall. As modern communities, families and especially children are spending more time indoors and less time in the natural world, they often demonstrate symptoms of "Nature Deficit Disorder" – a term coined by bestselling author Richard Louv. These include increased feelings of stress, trouble paying attention and feelings of not being rooted in our world. Westcave Preserve offers an antidote for "Nature Deficit Disorder".

About the Children in Nature Collaborative

The vision of the Children in Nature Collaborative is *to ignite and fan the flames of the movement to reconnect kids to the wonder and joy of the natural world*. Westcave Preserve has served as the facilitator for the Central Texas Children in Nature Collaborative since the spring of 2007. Examples of the group's work include influencing the way communities are designed, how schools are landscaped, engaging pediatricians who value and encourage outdoor play, helping teachers integrate the outdoors into their curriculum, and supporting the outdoor choices families make when planning for their play time.

