8:50-9:30  Where’s the Tree? Documenting the Health Benefits of Nature

Dr. Teresa H. Horton, Bachelor of Science in Zoology, University of Washington, PhD, Biology, subspecialty: Ecology, Evolutionary, and Organismal Biology, University of Utah. Current Position: Associate Professor of Research, Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Evanston IL. She is also a member of E2HD, a research collaboration focused on Evolutionary and Ecological Approaches to Health and Development.

It is probably safe to say that most people attending the conference already know that spending time outside surrounded by nature can make you feel better. However, as society becomes more urbanized, we are removed from our connection with nature. We are only just beginning to understand the consequences of that disconnection both to the environment and to human health and well-being. This presentation will describe the evidence for the health benefits of nature, the diverse mechanisms by which nature can influence health, and the gaps on our knowledge that need to be filled as we work to devise policies and programs that will conserve nature and improve the health of people and their communities.

Thank you to our sponsors!
9:30-10:00  Rx for Health: Walking in Nature
The Story of an Equitability Expanding Initiative in Lake County, Illinois
Jon Ashworth, MDiv, MA, LPC, I/ECMH-C, Health Equity Coordinator with the Lake County Health Dept. and Community Health Center in Lake County, Illinois
Jon is helping the health department fulfill its mission, which is “Promoting the health and well-being of all who live, work and play in Lake County.” For the past four years, the health department has been partnering with the Lake County Forest Preserve District and NorthShore University HealthSystem to facilitate the Rx for Health: Walking in Nature initiative. Jon will share with us today the story of how this initiative started with limited participation, which also was not representative of the demographics of the entire county. Then, by implementing a change in approach to outreach and promotion, the initiative expanded greatly in its third and fourth years.

10:00-10:20  BREAK- Exhibit Area

10:20-10:50  Health Benefits of Trees
Dr. Kristen Esposito Brendel, PhD, LCSW, E-RYT founder of Per La Vita Wellness, LLC.
Recent research suggests that practicing mindfulness in natural settings such as forest preserves, parks, gardens, near water and even in our own backyard improves mental and physical health, increases happiness and feelings of contentment, and reduces pain and stress. During the presentation, Dr. Kristin Brendel will discuss implications of current research and present practical, evidence-based applications of mindfulness in nature.

10:50-11:20  Forest Therapy: Using Your Senses to Connect to Nature
Brenda Spitzer, Certified Forest Therapy Guide, The Morton Arboretum
Through her training as a Certified Forest Therapy Guide, Brenda will discuss the history humans have with nature and why we are optimized for forest environments. As people become more connected to technology, they need more nature to achieve a balance.

11:20-11:55  Panel Discussion - Existing Health and Nature Programs
Jodi Trendler, The Resiliency Institute
Brenda Spitzer, The Morton Arboretum
Dave Andrusyk, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
Keriann Dubina, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

11:55-12:00  Closing comments

Exhibit Area Remains Open
**Dr. Teresa Horton** grew up in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains north of Seattle, Washington. A childhood spent wandering in the woods led to a career in biology. As an environmental physiologist, she combines the principles of ecology, evolution, and physiology to investigate how mechanisms by which environmental conditions alter physiology and behavior. Her early research was among the first to show that environmental information transmitted by females to their fetuses results in significant changes in development. She has continued to examine the effects of the environment, biological rhythms, and stress on physiology and behavior. Since joining the Department of Anthropology at Northwestern University she has applied those skills to investigating the hypothesis that spending time in nature improves health and well-being. She lives in Evanston with her husband and the dog and chinchilla left behind when their son went to college.

**Jon Ashworth** is known as a system leader, specializing in helping organizations, systems and communities develop and implement health improvement initiatives, through a team-based, quality improvement approach. Jon formerly served for over 10-years as the Social-Emotional Child Development Specialist with Child and Family Connections, within the Illinois Early Intervention System. Jon also currently serves as the Director of Organizational Development and Quality Improvement with Consulting Partnerships, a consulting firm in the greater Chicago area. He also currently serves as a Consultant and Improvement Facilitator with the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and has served as a Professional Development Instructor and Consultant with Erikson Institute in Chicago. Jon has specialized in working with children, adolescents and families (and professionals who serve these populations) over the past 25 years. Jon and his wife love going for walks together in their neighborhood and in local forest preserves and parks.

**Dr. Kirsten Esposito Brendel** is the founder of Per La Vita Wellness, LLC., a company located in Geneva, Ill. That is devoted to mindfulness-based clinical interventions for holistic health and wellness. At Per La Vita Wellness, Dr., Brendel facilitates individual, group, and corporate classes on mindfulness-based stress reduction, as well as organizes mindfulness and yoga retreats abroad helping participants connect with nature as a means of increasing happiness and reducing stress. Dr. Brendel also works as an assistant professor of social work at Aurora University where she teaches, conducts research, leads study abroad and immersion courses on mindfulness, and presents nationally and internationally the benefits of mindfulness for mental and physical health.
Brenda Spitzer has been a member and volunteer of The Morton Arboretum since 1993. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Art Degree from Northern Illinois University. She has earned certificates in Natural History and Botanical Art and Illustration from The Morton Arboretum and a certificate in Sustainable Landscapes from College of DuPage. After attending a Forest Therapy Guide Training Workshop, facilitated by The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs in June 2015, she completed a six-month practicum and became a Certified Forest Therapy Guide. She established the “Nature Rx: Forest Therapy Walk” program at The Morton Arboretum and has been guiding walks there since 2015. She also guides walks for adults with special needs who are members of The Western DuPage Special Recreation Association. Brenda is a featured writer, contributing blog posts, for the website of The Association of Nature Forest Therapy Guides and programs. She also assisted at The Association’s 2017 Forest Therapy Guide Training Workshop that was held at The Morton Arboretum. Brenda is also an avid gardener and member of The Conservation Foundation. Her home landscape has earned ‘Conservation@Home” status. Brenda’s mission is to guide others to connect with and rediscover the healing powers of nature. Facebook Page: Shinrin-yoku Nature and Forest Therapy-Wheaton@shinrinyokuwheaton