

Harnessing Nature: Promoting Student Well-being and Success across UNC System Campuses

- **Thursday, November 6, 2025:** 2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Topic: Collaborative Partnerships

- **Tuesday, February 3, 2026:** 2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Topic: NatureRX

- **Wednesday, April 8, 2026:** 2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Topic: Wellness in Urban Settings

April 8, 2026

Wellness in Urban Settings

Zoom Link: <https://northcarolina-edu.zoom.us/j/5878688663?omn=99055832303>

Substantial evidence shows a strong link between student well-being and academic success, and outdoor engagement is emerging as a powerful strategy for improving both. This webinar highlights collaborative approaches across the UNC System that connect students to nature, support diverse student experiences, and strengthen access to research opportunities.

Promoting Well-Being Through Outdoor Labyrinths



Denise L. Levy, Ph.D., LCSW, REACE

Dr. Denise L. Levy (she/her) is a Professor of Social Work at Appalachian State University and a Registered Expressive Arts Consultant / Educator. She has facilitated labyrinth walks to promote wellbeing at App State for over ten years, and was involved in the 2024 installation of two permanent, outdoor labyrinths on campus.



Jordan Perry, MPH, MCHES

Jordan Perry serves as the Director of Wellness and Prevention Services and adjunct faculty at Appalachian State University. They advocated and secured grant funding for the initial permanent campus labyrinth to honor students, staff, and faculty in recovery as part of the Outdoor Wellness Locations (OWLs) initiative.

The Art of Gratitude in the (Botanical) Gardens



Jennifer Bueno-Hutchens

Jennifer Bueno-Hutchens is a Nature & Forest Therapy guide through the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy and an outdoor horticulturist for 8 years at UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens. The garden's Nature Therapy program began as an idea to encourage students to spend time outdoors, specifically in the gardens which are located in the middle of campus. The concept developed into Gratitude in the Gardens and grew to include a second walk called Nature Therapy Walk; both walks feature elements like creating mandalas, painting gratitude rocks, nature journaling and birdseed gratitude.

High Utility Foodscaping in an Urban Environment



Kyle Parker

Kyle currently works as a program coordinator for UNC's community gardens programs: Edible Campus UNC and Carolina Community Garden. He's been growing food with college students and giving it away for free on UNC's campus for over 12 years and graduated from UNC in 2006.

Beyond the Gym Walls: UNC Charlotte's Commitment to Community Wellness and Functional Training



Liz Forman

Liz Forman serves as the Associate Director of Operations for University Recreation at UNC Charlotte. She has worked in Higher Education for 17 years and has been a member of the Niner Nation team since 2018. Liz played a pivotal role in the September 2019 grand opening of the C.O.R.E. (Calisthenics Outdoor Recreation Equipment) facility.

Co-Host: Dr. James and HOPE Lab



Dr. Joy James, a Professor at Appalachian State University since 2007 and co-leader of the Healthy Outdoor Play and Exercise Lab, integrates her teaching and research in camps, park interpretation, and environmental education with her passion for lifelong learning to promote outdoor exploration, foster connections with nature, and advance professional engagement through the NCRPA since 2008.

