

*ANCA membership offers a truly personal network of highly skilled, experienced leaders who are willing to share their learning and expertise with their colleagues. Ken Finch is a great example of a long-term ANCA member who has benefited for more than 20 years from countless networking opportunities with his peers and is now giving back to the profession.*



After many years as a nature center administrator, Ken Finch was looking to increase environmental education’s impact on influencing conservation values. With the help of ANCA members, Ken began to rethink his approach. The culmination of this process was the founding of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood in 2005.

Green Hearts was one of the country’s first conservation organizations dedicated entirely to restoring and strengthening the emotional bonds between children and nature through frequent, unstructured childhood play in natural settings.

Ken states, “The bright, creative, extraordinary members of ANCA helped me talk through my ideas of overhauling the methodology we all use to try to create a culture of conservation. The diverse ANCA membership opened up a new universe of thought that pushed me away from teaching about nature and instead towards play-based approaches to strengthening the bonds children have with nature. That’s just one of the reasons that I’ve been an ANCA member for over 20 years.”

As an executive director of several nature centers and a former ANCA Board President, Ken knows the value of ANCA in helping members to grow intellectually and as managers. “Managing a nature center is tough enough in any circumstance. Now add the fact that most nature center staff function in relative isolation from other nature center professionals, and you create an extremely challenging atmosphere for making sound decisions and determining new directions. Within ANCA, you quickly learn that you aren’t alone! There are so many opportunities to network with true peers who have dealt with or are going through the same challenges. ANCA has that vital ability to break you out of your own small world to see new ideas and perspectives.”

Today, Ken is a much sought-after presenter, bringing his messages and trainings about children and nature to nature centers and other organizations around the world. Ken is an active participant on the ANCA online discussion group and a valuable member of the ANCA network.

“I am reaching many more people now than I ever could have as a director of one center, but my nature center work laid the foundation for all I do. Thanks in part to my friends and colleagues in ANCA, I believe I am making a difference.”