



lifestyle related conditions such as obesity, depression and social isolation.”

She says necessary design elements are a variety of trees and birds – avoid the fashionable, hedge monocultures such as griselinia that support little by way of life, and include “less of the manicured.” Trees that change with the seasons, such as fruit trees, are more enticing than those that don’t. A New Zealand Steiner school is surrounded by bush and lots of green, but “the kids aren’t valuing it. We need more visible connections with the seasons.”

When designing for children we need to let them get a little bit messy and public space needs to allow for that.

“You’re not going to have mud wallow downtown, but you need to have spaces where kids are going to be allowed to get a bit dirty, where they’re allowed to go to the park and dig. If they’re living in apartments – and we are looking at increased densification of all our urban areas up and down the countryside – then not everybody will have gardens.”

Human-scale design that has the end-user and mental health impact in mind is crucial. The softer a landscape is, physically underfoot and acoustically, the more accessible it becomes.

“When we talk about accessible design we are not talking about ramps and handrails, we are talking about a place that is not intimidating.”

“When we talk about accessible design in this sense, we are not talking about ramps and handrails; we are talking about a place that is not intimidating. Depression is the second-largest cause of disability. We have got to be mindful of creating supportive places to help get these people out of their homes and back into the community to once again make them productive members in the workforce and in their families.”

A Learning Through Landscapes study (www.ltl.org.uk) of 700 schools found that improved landscape design enhanced pupil behavior, reduced bullying, improved attitudes towards learning, improved social interaction and increased community/parental involvement. Louv quotes studies of US schools (over one million and half children) that found students attending facilities with a school garden, nature in the classroom and programmes that took students into nature to learn, scored higher on standardized tests.

Many teachers have said almost the same thing to Souter-Brown. “The troublemaker in class becomes the leader when I take the class outside in nature. They become different kids.”

Landscape architects have an answer to some of the ills that afflict modern society Souter-Brown says. But manufactured environments that prescribe the ways people use them “become another ballet class or football class. You don’t get to figure it out for yourself. If you’ve just got a hill and some trees and a rope swing you figure it out.”

Pragmatically, an aging population needs our children to be healthy. “The landscape profession is really well poised. We have been marginalized as a profession for so many years – an absolute after thought, “there to