

Letter from the Director

Giving Thanks...Being Happy!

I stopped into a book store to buy several children's books for gifts for a friend's child and discovered a beautiful book keeping with the upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday. The title of the book is, The Secret of Saying Thanks, written by Douglas Wood, the author of, Old Turtle. The book is filled with beautiful illustrations of nature, family, home, and a beloved pet. The lines that end the book are ones to ponder:

"The more we say thanks, the more we find to be thankful for. And the more we find to be thankful for; the happier we become. We don't give thanks because we're happy. We are happy because we give thanks."

I want to say thanks for the many ways that parents have been stepping up this fall to Partner with teachers, naturalists, other parents, and their own children as we learn and grow together in this beautiful setting. Thanks for taking time to learn about the curriculum and the growth of your child through opportunities such as initial conferences, curriculum night, parent education evenings, daily e-mails from your classroom teachers, and Lunch and Learn. It is important to us as staff that you understand our philosophy, feel comfortable asking us questions, and develop a relationship with

us that you feel is supportive of your work as a parent.

Thanks for offering your skills and talents in the classroom and throughout the school. Children have enjoyed cooking experiences, guitar playing, yoga, and visits from puppies because of you. Your interests and talents are special memories in our classrooms. Keep them coming! Know that you don't have to wait to be invited. A teacher will happily add you to a schedule.

Thanks to those parents who have volunteered to be Parent Partners in each classroom. A great BIG thank you to Stephanie Stowell and Jennifer Nelson for accepting the challenge to be the Parent Partner Coordinators. Parent Partners are a resource for leadership and communication within the school. Please stop in the entry area to identify those who have accepted this responsibility. There are still a few openings for those who would like to support this effort.

Thanks for your volunteer hours that have been given to clean up our playground and building in preparation for our 10th Birthday Party! A party that almost 300 people attended on a beautiful autumn day. Other volunteers have washed dishes....a huge help which allows staff more time in their classrooms and allows us to reuse snack dishes. There will be other opportunities to carry out more things you checked

off on the Family Involvement Questionnaire that was part of your registration forms.

Thanks to parent and teacher volunteers who have planned and supported a number of events including, Meet and Greet, Family Camping, the Parent Partner Luncheon, the Family Halloween gathering, and individual classroom gatherings.

Thanks for your donations to causes in our community. The Kiwanis say thanks for the many donated towels given for their project with the homeless. \$67.00 was collected in the Trick or Treat for UNICEF boxes. This effort supports food, health, shelter, and education for children around the world. Food donations for the local food shelf at Neighborhood House have been appreciated.

Thanks for your warm welcome to Anita Yang, our new office Coordinator. Anita comes to us from the Hmong College Prep Academy where she held a number of administrative positions including Executive Assistant and Business Manager. She is attending Concordia University in Saint Paul where she is working on her MA in Educational Leadership. She has a BA degree in English from the University of Minnesota. Thanks to Kristen Carr and Farrah Brist for covering the front desk until Anita filled the position.

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December 1-3- Winter Bazaar

A small sofa for the Spruce room

December 20-31- Winter Break No School

Lightly used dish towels and washcloths for our kitchen

December 22-Winter Break Play Date

Someone who sews (tell Marty)

January 5 &6- Kindergarten Information Days

Blender

January 17-MLK Day No School

Popcorn popper

January 18- 2011-12 registration starts

The Nature Center has a need for a very inexpensive used pick-up.

January 22- Frosty Fun Event

February 11- Children's Night In

Thank you!!

Check your child's folder or your e-mail announcements for more details.

Call us for more information

Our Seasons in the Community Garden

Gardening has always been a vital part of our curriculum. Over the years, teachers and children—with the support of many green-thumbed parents—have maintained gardens on our playground. As we plant, tend, and harvest our gardens, the children gain insight into the life cycle of plants and where many kinds of food come from. Last spring, we decided to take our garden efforts a step further. We reserved two plots in Dodge’s Community Garden—a short walk from school and just across from the farm. The dream behind this plan was to make an advance in our sustainability and grow a larger quantity of food that could be served in our classrooms. With the expertise of Marty, a South Dakota farm girl; Marlais, a master gardener; and Valerie, an agriculture student-intern from the U of M, we figured it was an experiment worth trying.

As an avid garden admirer, with little in the way of actual gardening skills, I have always enjoyed visits to the community garden. The patchwork of garden plots with all their variety of vegetables and growing apparatus can be an inspiring sight. I was hopeful that the children would enjoy being in that space, surrounded by the bounty of crops, as much as I do.

In the spring, we brought our classes out to start the garden by planting potatoes. Children worked to carefully place most of our seed potatoes in the rows that Marlais had dug. (A few were placed more spontaneously throughout the garden plot.) Weeds and thistle were already encroaching on



our plots, and many children enjoyed the work of digging them up with spades and tossing them out. Children took pride in their farm work. Then, the busy time of the end of the school year set us back in our planting efforts. Valerie planted squash, corn, and beans for us in the break between school year and summer.

Throughout the summer, I would bring children to visit our garden plots. Most days, there was nothing to harvest, but there was still work to be done. Children helped to find potato beetles and pick them off the plants. They weeded (though in the end we lost the battle with the foxtail grass). And, perhaps most fun of all, we sprayed our crops with water.

Being inside the garden provides a very



strong sense of place. To enter, we pass through a tall, wooden gate barred with a 2 X 4 and latches to keep the deer out. This space is only to be used by peo-

ple who garden in it. Having our garden plots means that we belong within those walls. The children seem to understand the specialness of this place. They respect the hard work of the other gardeners. They know not to pick vegetables from someone else’s plot—no matter how tasty their tomatoes look. From the community garden, we can view the animals grazing in the adjacent pasture. Along the opposite side of the garden there are apple trees. On hot summer days, children would sit in their shade and play with the tickly flowers on the tall, unmowed grass.

As the new school year began, we continued to visit the garden. We watched our squash grow and ripen. We devoured raspberries that grow along the fence line. We picked grapes and made jelly. Children noticed bees at work among our sunflowers. We had great conversations sparked by the discovery that animals had been eating our pumpkins. What kind of animal could get past that big gate?

Just last week, I decided to see if any of our potato planting efforts from spring had paid off. I was not overly optimistic as this portion of our garden plots had been quickly overrun with weeds. I brought a pitchfork, and the children bought a bucket. To our delight, there were indeed potatoes! Perhaps not enough for the whole school, as we had dreamed, but it was thrilling all the same.

I hope to repeat the experience next year.

-Joey Schoen, Spruce Room Teacher

Dodge Nature Center Benefit

The Dodge Nature Center Annual Benefit, called the DodgeBall, was held on October 15th at the Crowne Plaza Riverfront Hotel in St. Paul. This year, the Dodge Nature Preschool Scholarship Fund was the designated recipient of the Fund-a-Need portion of the event.

The program included several presentations recognizing the work and value of the preschool. Former Oak Room students Jackson and Kelby Wittenberg spoke about their preschool memories, as did their mom, Anne-Marie Wittenberg. We want to share with you their wonderful words.

-Mary Temple, Willow Room Teacher

We’re proud to be a Dodge Nature Preschool Alumni family.

I first learned about Dodge from a blurb in MN Monthly magazine. We were living in Rochester at the time and had plans to move to the cities. Like any practical person, I put my oldest son, Milo, on the waiting list, and **then** turned my attention to finding a house. My only requirement for a home was that it had to be within commuting distance to Dodge.

Dodge did not disappoint. Its aesthetic appeal hooked me: the wonderful statue out front, its charming door for little people, the inviting living room, heated classroom floors and a large studio for indoor play. But it is what lies beyond its physical space that left its lasting impression on our family. Guided by a group of the most caring, patient and smart teachers, my boys spent countless hours interacting with and observing the world around them. While children in other preschools were learning to hold a pencil and write their names on a line, my sons were drawing their names with big sticks in the sand or muck.

There is the ongoing debate about nature vs. nurture. I like to think that my boys have been nurtured in nature. They all, with their distinctive personalities, felt comfortable at Dodge. So comfortable, in fact, that when I brought Kelby to a summer camp at the Nature Center, he said, “Mom, I grew up here!” They all remember the climbs at the challenge hill, traversing the frozen creek, and feeding the classroom pets. Jackson chalks all this up to play, but I believe that in learning about the plot of land that makes up Dodge, they gained a deep respect for nature, and they learned about themselves. They learned to work cooperatively, to take risks and try new foods! All 3 boys fell into the pond;

Keith and I thought of it as a rite of passage in our family. Unfortunately for Jackson, it was November!

My one regret is that I never met Olivia Dodge. I intended on writing her a letter telling her how meaningful Dodge is to our family. I didn’t get around to it. So in this very public setting, I’d like you all to know how grateful we are to Mrs. Dodge for her generosity and vision. Thanks to her, my city kids are comfortable in the country. And in case you’re wondering, the boys can write their names with a pencil on a line with the best of them.

Anne-Marie Wittenberg

October 15, 2010

Hello, my name is Kelby Wittenberg. I am 9 years old and was student at Dodge Nature Preschool for 2 years.

In honor of the preschool’s 10th birthday I came up with a list of the 10 things that I loved most about Dodge.

1. Watching chickens hatch and then helping raise them.
2. Climbing the Challenge Hill.
3. The kick sleds!
4. Playing in the sandbox.
5. Climbing trees.
6. .Kris Rollwagen.
7. The lab because it’s full of interesting animals.
8. Being treated like family.
9. The “little kid” door.
10. Feeling like I could be myself.

I would like to wish Dodge Nature Preschool a Happy 10th birthday. Cheers!

My name is Jackson. I spent 2 years at Dodge, and now I’m in the 2nd grade.

There were so many things I loved to do at Dodge. In the Oak Room I loved playing with glurch, using the hammers, and petting Ramona the snake.

I loved going on hikes in the fall.

In the winter I loved snowboarding and kiksledding.

In the spring my favorite things to do were riding the tricycles, and digging in the dirt and sand.

My favorite teachers were Kris and Mary because they made me feel safe.

I love Dodge!



Former Dodge Nature Preschool Founding Teacher and Assistant Director (2000-2004), Jenny Hanlon, M.Ed. is now offering Personalized Parenting Sessions through Parent & Teacher Support Services. A Personalized Parenting Session is a time set aside for parents to meet with a licensed parent educator to discuss parenting questions and/or struggles. Questions/ struggles may include, but are not limited to: discipline, understanding child’s temperament, behavioral concerns, setting goals for your family, and/ or managing family time. For questions or to learn more, please contact Jenny at jennyhanlon3@gmail.com or 651-249-6900.



Hermit Crabs-Care and Habitat

Do you have questions about hermit crabs? I have owned Hermit crabs for the last two years, and I also had them when I was in elementary school. Hermit crabs make great pets; they are inexpensive and simple to care for. However, many people are unaware of the specific care that Hermit crabs require.

The topic of Hermit crab care came up in the Spruce Room last winter because a few of the Hermit crabs passed away. I've found this to be a recurring story from Hermit crab owners and personally, when I was in elementary school. Hermit crabs have the potential to live for 30 years or more in the wild, so if your Hermit crab died within a few months there must have been something wrong with the living conditions. The most vulnerable time for a crab is while they are molting; it is common for Hermit crabs to pass away during the molting process if the tank conditions are poor.

The two most important parts of the Hermit crab tank set-up are the humidity and substrate used for the bottom of the tank. It is also important to feed your Hermit crabs appropriate foods, provide extra shells, and have friends for your crab. The temperature of the Hermit crab tank should stay around 72 degrees Fahrenheit or a little warmer. The tank should stay at 70% humidity and should have a tropical feel to it. A substrate that my crabs have had several successful molts in is called coconut fiber, also known as Forest Bedding. This ideal substrate will help maintain a proper humidity. Crabs are able to dig little tunnels all through the forest bedding. The moisture in the forest

bedding helps keep the humidity in the habitat at a good range, without having to mist and use sponges. However, it is important to always have a water dish in your tank, so that your crab(s) may bathe or get a drink whenever they need to.

A fun thing about owning Hermit crabs is that you can feed them a variety of different things! Feeding them a standard Hermit crab food from a pet shop will do just fine, but it couldn't hurt to give them variety once in a while. Hermit crabs enjoy eating canned pet food (for fish or turtles), shrimp, blood worms, mangos, coconut flesh, oranges and most other fruits. Hermit crabs do not eat very much food, so you don't have to put very much in their dish. You may not even notice that they've eaten any of the food because of their small nibbles.

Hermit crabs molt up to 2-3 times per year (smaller crabs molt more often than larger ones). Molting is when a crab sheds its outer layer of skin, called their exoskeleton. This happens because Hermit crabs grow, their exoskeleton does not grow with them. The crab will shed its outer layer of skin, and when they are finished with their molt they will eat their old exoskeleton to replace the calcium they may have lost during the molt. Often when crabs molt they will bury themselves. This is for protection because without a hardened exoskeleton they are very vulnerable to injury from other crabs. Sometimes, a Hermit crab will stay buried for up to three weeks while its new exoskeleton is hardening! It is very important not to unbury the crab-don't worry, they will eventually come back to the surface themselves. It is usually the case that a newly molted crab will move into a new

shell. The reason for moving to a new shell could be that the crab needs a larger home, or just wants a change. Hermit crabs have shells to protect their curled tails, which are not hard like the visible part of their bodies. My crabs will sometimes change shells every few weeks, or sometimes not for months. It is very important for there to be shells available for the crabs to move into when they want or need to. There should be at least 1 to 2 shells available for each crab that are a tiny bit bigger than the ones they are currently living in.

The last and final thing that is important for Hermit crab care is to have friends for your crab! You shouldn't keep a Hermit crab alone as a pet. Hermit crabs travel in packs of up to 100 crabs in the wild! Hermit crabs love to be around their own kind, so don't force your crab to be alone-get a few friends!

Inspired by all of this information on Hermit crabs, the Spruce room Hermit crab tank went through a makeover. Two new crabs joined the lone crab and the sand was replaced with forest bedding in hopes that our remaining crab and new crabs will live a long time.

I would definitely recommend getting Hermit crabs. They only require a food and water change every 2-3 days and otherwise need very little unless you choose to play with them! Come visit our classroom Hermit crabs in the Spruce Room anytime!

-Kirsten Lindstrom, former student teacher, Spruce Room

Autumn's Bounty

Autumn has again been celebrated with the seeds, leaves, apples and pumpkins of the season acting as a backbone. The beautiful



colors continue to dominate the landscape, indoors and out. The easel colors have changed to the yellows, oranges, greens and browns of the gourds and squashes. Fall flowers and leaves have been col-

lected in large handfuls, inspiring the children to create everything from leaf books to songs. But it is the pumpkins, both smooth and warty, which have had the strongest influence. Over the last month, they have had a thorough tour of the classrooms. They've been painted, washed, glued, poked, sold and delivered, hammered into, carved up, baked, dropped from a ladder, hauled from the community garden patch and carried back to the pigs. What isn't used for cooking projects will be observed decomposing and finally tossed into our compost heap. This pile of pumpkin pieces will turn into a pumpkin patch, as the seeds go dormant over the winter and sprout in the spring. Perhaps it is best that those tiny seedlings will be blissfully unaware of their eventual fate, but I choose to believe that they too look forward to their continuing adventures.

Amanda Janquart-Willow Room Teacher



Director's Letter continued from page 1

Thanks for supporting our fall fundraisers with your purchases. We appreciated the attendance and donations to the Annual Dodge Ball. This year our annual Nature Center Fundraiser that had a special emphasis on honoring the 10 years that the Preschool has been connecting children and adults with nature. Thanks for your support of the Holiday Plant Sale, Chinook Book Sale, and ongoing sales of Dodge wear, Dodge Nature Center Memberships, and farm produce. And thanks for supporting our Craft Bazaar by inviting friends to the Preview Party and to shop, being a crafter, baking for the bake sale and helping with set-up and clean-up.

Thanks for spreading the word about Dodge Nature Preschool to your family and friends. Parents have led tours at our Open Houses and continue to post information flyers and cards. You are the most important connection that we have to new families. Thanks in advance for sharing the publicity included in this newsletter. Applications for the 2011-2012 year will be accepted beginning January 18.

I know I have not included all of the Thanking that I could have in this short page...but I know one thing...I do have a smile on my face. I think it works... "we are happy because we give thanks".

Keep Thanking and Keep Smiling!

Marty Watson

No One Has Fun When They Are Cold

As we get closer to colder weather, we want to prepare you for what will be appropriate attire for playing outdoors. For those of you new to the preschool, we convert the hill down to the swings into a sledding hill; we have snowshoes that are just the right size, and winter is so much fun when we can discover it together outdoors. We believe that there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad equipment. The more comfortable your child is, the more he or she will enjoy exploring the frozen forest, discovering various animal tracks, and finding spots where the squirrels have dug through the snow to excavate some hidden treasure.

When temperatures reach 40 degrees or less, a second layer on your child's legs and mittens or gloves on your child's hands would help them stay warm enough. When in doubt, dress in layers. As soon as there is snow on the ground, children should have waterproof snow pants or a snowsuit. Waterproof mittens are better than gloves to keep their little hands warm. Rain boots are not warm enough once the weather is colder than 25 degrees. Ears should be

covered once the temperature reaches 35 degrees or less. Most heat is lost through a person's head; therefore, hats tend to keep people the warmest.

Keep in mind that children grow quickly and may even grow out of winter gear by mid February. If you need any assistance with clothing, please let us know. Gear is available to borrow at the preschool. You may also consider donating gear your children have outgrown for others to use. Many parents have the best luck purchasing winter/rain gear through online purchasing. Stores such as REI, Fleet Farm, LL Bean, and Gander Mountain are great options.

We would like children to be as independent as possible with getting their outdoor clothing on and off. Slip-on boots without laces makes it easier for them to feel independent. Snow suits tend to be easier than snow pants and a jacket. If you have any questions, please let us know. Thank you for helping make your children's outdoor time more enjoyable for them!

-Christine Lambert, Oak Room Teacher



Dodge Nature Center Member Benefits

Dodge Nature Center members are entitled to many benefits both at Dodge and at local businesses around town. Save money at annual festivals such as Frosty Fun in January and the Spring Farm Festival in May. Additional money can be saved on camp fees, birthday parties, and year-round public programs. Enjoy a 10% discount at Carbone's of West St. Paul, Suburban Ace Hardware, and Signal Garage among many other local businesses.

Gift Memberships

Consider giving a gift membership this year to family and friends. Not only do you support environmental education and restoration at Dodge, but you also provide a valuable gift that keeps giving all year round. To purchase a gift membership, please contact Development and Marketing Associate Jenny Weber at 651.789.5201.

5 Senses and a Stick

Recently, I had the good fortune to fill-in for a local educator at a regional conference. Marty got wind of the last minute vacancy and deployed me to speak on my colleague's topic, "Science in the Outdoors." I never got the chance to meet my predecessor or chat with her, but I have a feeling that she intended to give attendees specific curriculum ideas for science activities that they could employ when they happened to go outside. I decided to seize the opportunity to present ideas for how to get outside and stay outside with students. And so, I created a presentation, "5 Senses and a Stick," in which I offered a plan for how to commit to going out with kids on a very regular basis, if not every day. I used our Preschool as my model.

As DNP families and friends already know, if kids go out regularly, they are not only more comfortable in nature, they begin to recognize themselves as part of nature, and, perhaps best of all, they begin to observe phenomena in a more in-depth and sophisticated manner. As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, children across our classrooms are noticing the seasonal phenomenon of the northern hemisphere tilting away from the sun, in other words, they are seeing long shadows. Children are noticing shadows because they are more prominent in our environment now. And, our students are now beyond the novelty of being outside. Unlike some other students, they venture outside enough to see beyond the wonderful initial stimulation of the great outdoors. Kids need to experience the world around them enough to notice subtle differences in it. In September, shadows weren't so long. When children observe differences and detail, they are laying down a foundation of critical thinking skills which are based on first-hand experiences. In short, children are learning how to be scientists. So, I stood before a group of nearly 50 local educators and showed them how we get kids outside at Dodge. I presented "3 Keys" to getting outside and staying there: Willingness/Curiosity, Com-

mittment/Schedule and the all important, Appropriate Gear.

Perhaps the best kept secret to success at DNP, the one laying there in plain sight every day, is our schedule. I'm relatively new to Dodge, and I still can't get over the thoughtfulness of the daily classroom schedule. For 10 years, my colleagues at the preschool have fine-tuned a brilliant approach to supporting and committing to discovery, and as far as I know, this approach is not duplicated in any other preschool. Every kid who comes to Dodge knows that they will go outside when they are here. Young children thrive on the security of habit and our Inside/Outside Start routine helps them anticipate the events of their day. Outside Start days allow students and teachers the opportunity to extend discovery. If a small hiking group spots a deer, they have the time to track it. If kids discover one animal hole, they can go in search of many holes of all different shapes and sizes. Inside time often provides the chance to follow-up on outside discoveries: mixing paint and matching the color of an autumn leaf, tracing a found bone, reading books about a recently tracked deer, writing journal stories about a discovered fish, etc, etc.

The physical needs of kids are also met by the DNP schedule. Children do not settle into Group Time until they have engaged in active, self-directed exploration, inside or outside. As a result, children have an easier time relaxing into Group, listening, talking, taking turns and participating. DNP teachers are able to support emergent curriculum and help children develop social skills because they have designed a very successful schedule. At Dodge, the daily schedule really is curriculum.

So, in "5 Senses and a Stick," I offered our ideas for commitment to a schedule and underscored the notion

that a teacher only needs to remember and implement the most fundamental tools. Showing children how to use their own tools, their senses, to discover, gives them power and confidence. Children can pose questions and work toward answering them with the toolbox they were born with. Children often ask, "What is that?" Kids can begin to answer this question by feeling, touching, listening and so forth. Verbal skills develop as children work toward putting their observations into words and describing what they see. Pencils and paper are secondary tools we do use to extend discovery, but out in the field, perhaps the best and most handy tool is that toy hall-of-famer, the stick. Kids can poke, measure, turn over, hold and even draw what they find with a stick. And kids find and select their own sticks; talk about autonomy!

Dodge kids, with their wonderful self-direction, excellent hypothetical thinking skills and marvelous physical endurance, are living proof of the wisdom of their teachers, who created a scaffold for discovery with the Dodge daily schedule. Perhaps the best part of all is the Dodge community investment in this scaffolding, your buy-in and support of what we do in and out of the classroom every day. Thank you for your trust and encouragement. Perhaps our next conference presentation should be, "Creating Community at Your School."

-Marlais Brand, Spruce Room Teacher



Willow Room Wonderings

A fall hike revealed a child's long shadow dancing before him. "It's a snake!" he exclaimed. Back in the classroom, Kristenza asked the children questions about their shadows...

What do we know about our shadows?

"They are always with us."

"The sun makes a shadow when you stand over it."

"It is a flect of the moon, but really it is a reflect of a person."

"Your shadow can connect with that person's."

What happens when it is cloudy?

"It still follows you, you just can't see it."

"When it is cloudy out, your shadow goes up on top of the cloud."

We spent time taking pictures of our shadows on the patio. We took out an old projector to watch the shadows various objects made on a piece of paper ("What is this!?" many children asked incredulously when they saw the projector). I watched as one child quietly waved sheer fabric in a stream of sunlight. We will wonder about many more things as the year jumps along, but now we know one thing... "Having a shadow is kinda like having a friend."

-Melanie Grue, Willow Room Teacher



Nearby Nature

In October, we devoted two days for staff professional development. For our retreat we visited three locations; the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Gale Woods Farm and Baker-Near Wilderness Nature Center. There were four goals outlined for this time:

- Explore similar places in the local area that utilize nature as a base for education.
- Deepen personal understanding and the value of nature as a source of joy, connection and education.
- Develop opportunities for communication and networks with professionals in the work of children and nature.
- Provide an opportunity for staff to share and discuss ideas, learn about each other's talents and interests and reflect on hopes and possibilities.

Our morning began at the Landscape Arboretum in Chanhassen. We toured the site for the anticipated Green Play Yard. The mission is "for young children to play, in nearby nature everyday." It is being designed as a model outdoor play space that will target childcare and Head Starts. We also learned about one of many community outreach programs that focus on early education through urban gardening. In addition

to the organized programs, there is a play space open to the public in the shadow of an aged Oak tree. It has diverse stick forts functioning as crawl spaces, fairy homes and even a puppet theater. The numerous educational programs and outreach initiatives strongly reflects the Arboretum's value of environmental justice. We enjoyed the empirical science approach for the garden fresh snacks and grinding grain. We plan to begin using a hand grain mill to enrich the preschool experience.

Part of the Three Rivers Park District in Minnetrista, Gale Woods Farm welcomed us with an afternoon tour. For those of us who were unfamiliar with Gale Woods Farm, we were excited to visit another model farm and learn that our own Farmer Don collaborates with their famer. There are hayrides, farm animals, cooking/baking classes inside and outside with an earth oven, and fiber arts with wool. Families are invited to sleep in the barn for the late night "lambing" watches when the baby lambs are born. We had the opportunity to try needle felting with dyed wool from their sheep (who we also met). Fiber art is something we plan to include more of at the preschool with Dodge wool.

The Baker-Near Wilderness Settlement in Medina is also a part of the Three Rivers Park District. In the evening we had time to connect over our potluck dinner at their lodge. Marty Watson shared about her time at the World Forum on Nature

Education for Young Children. We also looked at newly published "Preschool Nature Curriculum Guide written by the North American Association for environmental Education" that our own Sheila Williams Ridge helped develop. We closed our time together the next morning by participating in a nature education class focused on "Feathers, Fur and Bones." This is especially relevant for our hikes at the preschool.

"Nearby nature" is just what we encountered in our Twin Cities neighborhood. What good neighbors we all share. Please stop by and meet them when you have the chance.

-Heather Erickson, Spruce Room Teacher

