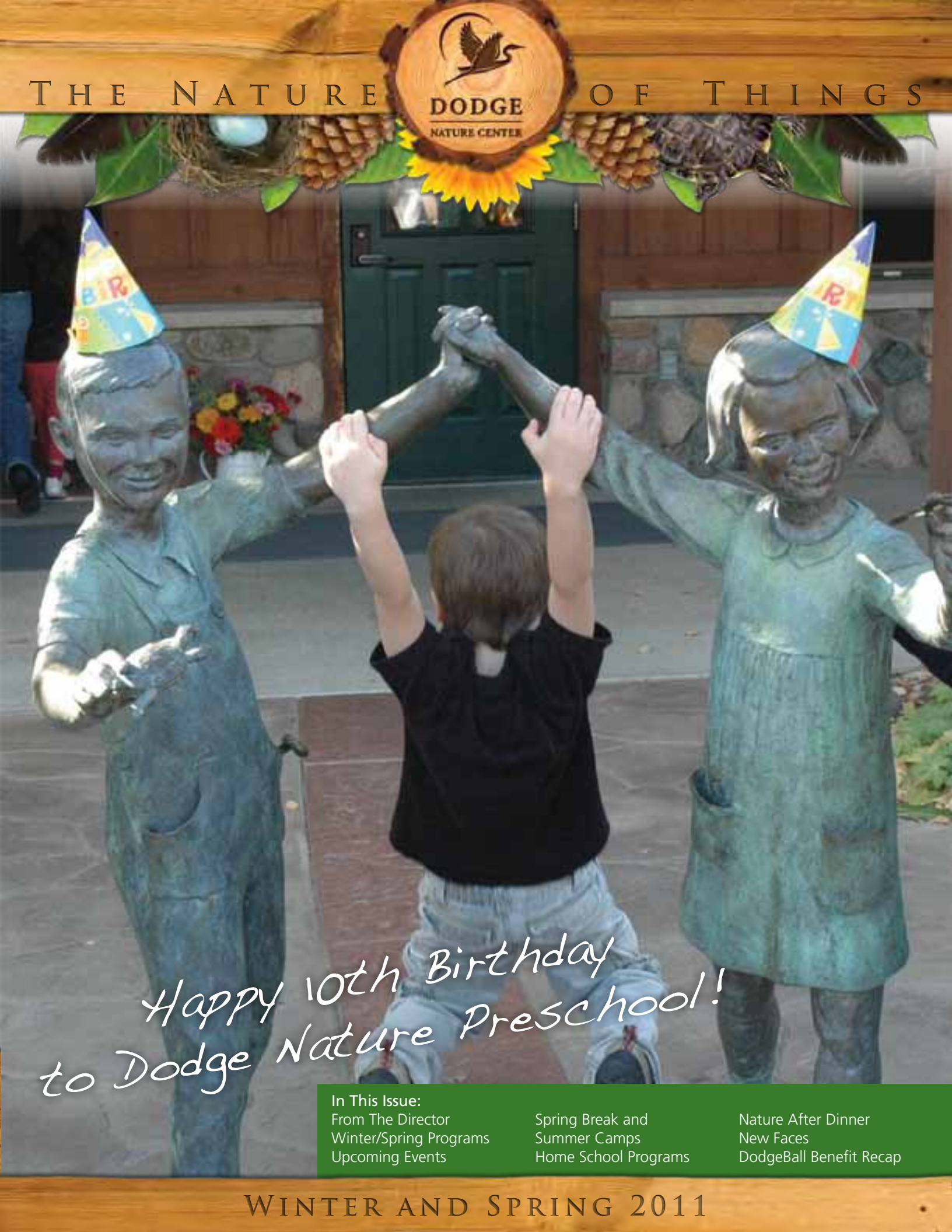


THE NATURE OF THINGS



*Happy 10th Birthday
to Dodge Nature Preschool!*

In This Issue:

From The Director
Winter/Spring Programs
Upcoming Events

Spring Break and
Summer Camps
Home School Programs

Nature After Dinner
New Faces
DodgeBall Benefit Recap

WINTER AND SPRING 2011

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Happy Birthday Dodge Nature Preschool!

Ten years ago, Dodge Nature Preschool opened its doors to the community. Since then, thousands of preschoolers have experienced nature climbing up “Challenge Hill”, collecting eggs in the chicken coop, and yes, even jumping in mud puddles. Each day, these children have spent time outside exploring, no matter the weather. They have witnessed amazing natural wonders such as caterpillars hatching into monarchs and most recently watched three bucks mark their territory with a battle of antlers. These experiences in nature become great memories that the children will likely never forget.

In October, Dodge Nature Center held an anniversary party for the preschool in which approximately 300 current and alumni families came back to Dodge to share their experiences and memories. Some of the preschoolers from the inaugural class stand six feet tall but still

remember the days of climbing Challenge Hill, which doesn't look as much like a challenge when you are now 15 years old. However, the passion for being outside is still there, the love for their surroundings is still apparent, and the connection to Dodge is evident. Below is a letter written by Anne-Marie Wittenberg, a preschool alumni mom, that truly reflects what Dodge is all about.

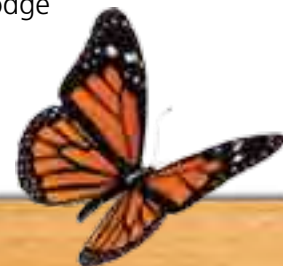
We're proud to be a Dodge Nature Preschool Alumni family. I first learned about Dodge from a blurb in MN Monthly magazine. We were living in Rochester at the time and had plans to move to the cities. Like any practical person, I put my oldest son, Milo, on the waiting list, and then turned my attention 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.

Dodge Nature Center works to create an experience you will never forget. It has become very apparent that we are doing just that; just ask Milo, Kelby, or Jackson. I would like to thank everyone involved with Dodge Nature Center and challenge all of you to come back, visit us, explore with us, celebrate with us, as we “Inspire commitment to the thoughtful care of the environment.”



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1918 - 2009

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The Newsletter Goes e-Friendly

We hope you'll join Dodge in its efforts to transition *The Nature of Things* newsletter from paper to e-mail. This initiative not only helps the environment, but also helps us put your dollars to better use. To switch to the electronic newsletter, please send an e-mail with your full name and email address to info@dodgenaturecenter.org or call us at 651.455.4531.

Thank you in advance for helping Dodge fulfill its sustainable mission!

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DODGE NATURE CENTER PUBLIC PROGRAMS

365 Marie Ave. W., West St. Paul, MN 55118 • Programs are also listed on our website:

WOOLLY BEARS

A Parent-Preschooler Program
10 to 11:30 a.m.
Marie Ave. Entrance

Members \$12/class
Non-members \$14/class

Join a Dodge Nature Center Naturalist and introduce your preschool-aged child to the wondrous natural world. Topics will be explored through creative storytelling, music, puppetry, and more. Children can also learn about the earth by exploring art or visiting with live animals. This program is designed for children ages 3 to 5. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required.

Tracks and Scat
January 12, 13, 15

Amazing Ice
January 26, 27, 29

Who's There? Owls
February 9, 10, 12

Oh Those Antlers
February 23, 24, 26

It's Syrup Time
March 9, 10, 12

Here Comes Peter Cottontail
March 23, 24, 26

Bats
April 6, 7, 9

We also have additional spring/summer sessions from April 20 through August 6.

Feeding Reptiles and Amphibians

Saturday, January 8, 10 a.m.

Marie Ave. Entrance
Members \$5/\$15 family
Non-members \$7/\$15 family

Is it true that snakes can go a month without food? Do frogs really catch flies with their tongues? Why does a snapping turtle need to be in the water to eat? Come learn how these creatures live and catch their food. You might even get to feed one of the animals yourself. Pre-registration is required.

Spoon Carving in the Scandinavian Tradition

Saturday, January 29, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Farm Entrance
Cost: \$50

Learn to identify and harvest noxious buckthorn and put it to good use – carving a beautifully grained eating spoon for yourself or for a gift. Beginners and experienced carvers are welcome. All materials will be included. Tools will be available to borrow or purchase. Basic, safe carving strokes will be taught. Class size limited to 10. Class length will be 6 hours. Bring a lunch. Recommended for ages 14 and older. Youth must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is required.

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike

Friday, February 18, 6:30 p.m.

Marie Ave. Entrance
Members \$5, Non-members \$7

Enjoy the beauty of a winter's night on snowshoes! Watch as the moon rises to light our way as we trek over prairie, on frozen ponds, and through the forest dark. Snowshoe history and techniques will be covered by your naturalist guides. A warm beverage will be provided following the program. Recommended for ages kindergarten through adults. Pre- registration is required.

Winter Picnic

Saturday, February 26, 1 p.m.

Farm Entrance
Members \$5/\$15 family
Non-members \$7/\$20 family

Put on warm clothes and bring the whole family for an outdoor, wintry adventure. We'll make our way through the nature center using snowshoes and sleds to observe the wildlife that is out and active that day. After finding a good spot, we'll throw down blankets, stoke up a fire and have hot drinks and treats. Pre-registration required.

Maple Syrup Time!

Saturdays, March 12, 19, 26, 1 p.m.

Farm Entrance
Members \$5/\$15 family
Non-members \$7/\$20 family

Celebrate the return of spring by observing the age-old process of turning tree sap into syrup.

Observe a tree tapping demonstration, collect sap, visit the evaporator, and sample some delicious maple syrup. This program is designed for kindergarten and older. Pre-registration is required. Special sessions for Boy and Girl Scouts on March 5.

Reserved for Girl Scouts
March 5 at 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Program cost is \$6 per scout.

Reserved for Boy Scouts
March 5 at 1 to 2:30 p.m.
Program cost is \$6 per scout.

Spring Break Camp 2011:

Adventures in Nature

March 21 through 24, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Students in grades K through 4
Cost per day: Members \$45, Non-members \$55
Register for one to four days.
Pre-registration and pre-payment are required by March 14.

As winter turns to spring, now is a great time to get outdoors, and Dodge Nature Center is the place to be. Each day of camp is a new and different adventure. Come for one day or come for them all. The weather might be unpredictable, but you can count on having fun.

Monday: Wake Up Wildlife - Discover the wild animals of the nature center
Tuesday: Nature Explorer - Explore the woods, hills, and prairies
Wednesday: Maple Syrup Time - Time to eat some delicious maple treats
Thursday: Cooking and the Outdoors - Spend your day cooking tasty food

Summer Camp 2011:

Adventures in Nature

Full-day, half-day and Friday camps from June 20 – August 19.

Scholarships are available. Registration begins February 1.

Send your children on a fun-filled adventure where they will gain an appreciation for nature while participating in hands-on recreational, nature, and agriculture-based programs. Day camps for children entering grades 1 through 8, and families.

Minnesota Rock History and Fossil Collecting

Saturday, April 16, 1 p.m.

Marie Ave. Entrance
Members \$5/\$15 family
Non-members \$7/\$20 family

Hike through St. Paul Lilydale Brickyards where sandstone, shale, limestone, underground springs and caves are in abundance. We will scramble up steep rocky ravines and search through clay pits where fossils can be collected and identified. This program is designed for persons 6 yrs of age and older. Pre-registration is required.

JANUARY - JUNE 2011

www.dodgenaturecenter.org • Pre-registration is required for most classes. Call 651.455.4531 to register.



Rise and Shine Breakfast and Birding Saturday, May 7, 6:30 a.m.

Farm Entrance
Members \$10, Non-members \$13

Rise and shine early on a Saturday morning and join other early birds for a hearty breakfast followed by a birding hike around the nature center. It will be a great way to start your weekend! This program is designed for adults. Pre-registration is required by Thursday, May 5.

Critters in the Evening Pond Wednesday, June 15, 6:30 p.m.

Marie Ave. Entrance
Members \$5/15 family
Non-members \$7/20 family

The Dodge Nature Center ponds and cattail marshes are teeming with under water and above water wildlife. Come explore our water habitats with buckets, nets, and field guides. Get to know who's who in the water!

Home School Programs Winter/Spring 2011, 1 to 3 p.m.

Farm Entrance

Dodge Nature Center is offering regular programming designed specifically for home school students. Home school children and their families are invited out to the nature center on specified Thursdays throughout the year to explore a variety of natural phenomena. Programs will vary depending on season, and are created to offer hands on activities to students ages 5 and older. Pre-registration is required.

Animal Tracks and Signs February 10

Members \$4/student
Non-members \$5.50/student

Learn to decipher the stories that animals leave behind. Come out and be detectives as we hike through the nature center grounds in search of animal homes, tracks, scat, and who knows what else.

Maple Syrup Time March 10

Members \$4/student
Non-members \$5.50/student

Learn about the age old process of turning tree sap into maple syrup. Identify and tap a maple tree, collect sap, visit the sugar shack and sample some delicious maple syrup.

Seasons Hike April 14

Members \$4/student
Non-members \$5.50/student

Each season is unique and many changes occur in nature. In this program students will explore the prairie, ponds, and forests of Dodge using all their senses.

Campfire Cookout May 12

Members \$5/student
Non-members \$6.50/student
Additional fee for supplies included

Learn the art of making a great cooking fire and assist Dodge staff in preparing and cooking up some campfire goodies. You may even take home a new recipe.

Nature after Dinner Tuesdays 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Marie Ave. Entrance
\$5 per child

After you have had your dinner, come explore the natural world. This is a parent - child program, designed for children ages 3 to 8. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Your whole family can come if you would like. Pre-registration is required.

Maple Syrup Time March 29

As spring approaches, the sap begins to flow in the maple trees. Come and learn about the centuries old process of making sugar and syrup from maple sap. See and try the equipment, learn to identify the trees, and taste your way through the whole process.

Cold Blooded Adventure April 26

Come get a closer look at some of our not-so-furry friends! Join us as we explore the differences between reptiles and amphibians. Find out where snakes hang out, learn what salamanders love to eat, and maybe even make friends with a turtle!

Chickens, Chickens, Everywhere May 24

Some people like cows, others like horses, but everyone loves chickens. From meat, to eggs, to even pest control, chicken are an important part of the farm. Learn about them as you get up close with hens, roosters, and even some baby chicks.

Meet the Milk Makers June 28

Come learn about milk and all the wonderful things we can make it into. Meet the animals on our farm that make milk, and learn about what animals people use around the world to get milk. You will even get to try your hand at making some of the best butter you have ever tasted.

O.W.L.S.

Outwardly • Wiser • Livelier • Seniors
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

January – June (First Tuesday of each month)
Farm Entrance

\$3 for program only. \$12 for the program plus lunch.

One hour nature/history programs for seniors interested in learning more about the natural environment.

Donations accepted.

*Pre-registration is required by the Friday prior to the program.

January 11 - Them Bones, Them Bones, Them Mystery Bones!

During this hands-on program, we will compare and contrast vertebrate bones. Assembling a mystery skeleton will be part of the fun. Hmmm... I wonder what's for lunch today? Our presenter today is Dodge Naturalist, Mick Garrett

February 1 - Pointing the Camera at Dodge Nature Center

Alan Johnston, Buckthorn activist, nature photographer, and our 2009 Volunteer of the Year, captures photo images of Dodge that few of us get a chance to see. You may be surprised at who's been spotted frolicking after hours here at the nature center!

March 1 - How Sweet It Is!

It's tree tappin' time, so we'll be heading out to the Dodge sugar bush to locate and tap a maple tree and then taste the sweet rewards. Cultural and natural history of this rite of spring will be discussed. Since we'll be outside for a short time, dress warm and wear boots!

April 5 - Beyond Election Day: The Legislature and the Environment

Electing officials who will represent your environmental views is only the first step. Learn about the process of creating legislation that protects our natural resources. Staff Naturalist, TJ Yocum, will discuss how to take your enthusiasm for the environment and make it law.

May 3 - A GEM of a Program!

What is this Dodge Nature Center/Garlough Environmental Magnet School partnership all about? Join DNC staff as we tour the school and see grade K through 4 students immersed in a nature-based curriculum. This program will begin in the farm parking lot at 10:30 a.m. Once everyone is checked in, we'll walk over to Garlough School to begin the tour. We'll be back to DNC for lunch at noon.

June 7 Farm Babies

It's springtime at the farm and we have a barn full of babies. Let's breathe in the farm perfume and follow the sounds of baaa's, oinks, and, peeps to the newest arrivals to Dodge.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dodge Nature Center's Annual Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, March 19, 2011

7:30 a.m. to noon

Farm Education Building, 1701 Charlton Avenue.

Once again this all you can eat pancake and sausage breakfast is open to the community for (\$5 non-member and \$2.50 for ages 3-12). Members, volunteers and 2 year olds and younger are FREE.

Maple sap collection and syrup production processes will be shared by Naturalists along with short hikes. More details to follow in February. Contact John at 651.789.5218 for more information and/or to be recognized at the event as a sponsor.

Celebrate Earth Day by Making an Impact with Dodge Nature Center

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

5:30 to 8 p.m.

Farm Entrance, 1701 Charlton St.

Join Dodge Nature Center for our annual Earth Day volunteer event. Volunteers will arrive at 5:30 to enjoy a burger or hot dog off the grill and then head out on the grounds for some earth day activities. Note that this is an evening event this year.

Help us celebrate Earth Day by removing European buckthorn, a non-native shrub that spreads rapidly and shades out native trees and seedlings. Other projects that evening may include litter pick-up, preschool clean-up, and garden bed preparation. As volunteers, you will assist Dodge staff with various projects throughout the nature center property.

Volunteers are also encouraged to invite friends, co-workers, and neighbors to become involved with Earth Day. If you are an individual, group leader, corporate volunteer leader, or want your family to get involved with volunteering, this is a great opportunity.

Please RSVP to Sue Richter by April 15th at 651.455.4531 or www.dodgenaturecenter.org. There is no fee but pre-registration is required.

Spring Farm Festival at Dodge

Saturday, May 14, 2011

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Farm Entrance, 1701 Charlton St.

Activities Include:

- Live entertainment
- Bake sale
- Old-fashioned farm games
- Wagon rides
- Bread baking
- Face painting
- Kids farm chores
- Barn visits and animal demonstrations
- Pony rides
- ...and more

Some activities will require an additional fee.

Non-members: \$5/person or \$20/family

Members: \$3/person or \$12/family

Free for ages 2 and under.

Register online at www.dodgenaturecenter.org
or call 651.455.4531.

HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY TO DODGE NATURE PRESCHOOL!

By Marty Watson, Preschool Director

October 16 was one of those perfect autumn days in which to enjoy a delightful 10th birthday party. The Dodge Nature Preschool spiffed up and was looking quite handsome. The fresh painted interior, bouquets of bright zinnias, matching frosted cupcakes, and a groomed playground with various gardens welcomed almost 300 preschoolers, alumni families, teachers, and friends. Delightful hugs, memories, laughter, stories, and pure joy quickly dominated the atmosphere. Some of the oldest alumni, once little four and five year olds, were now lanky teenagers. Many alumni walked through old classrooms reminiscing about pets and playing on the lofts.

After a great big alumni group photo, live music, and some formal words of appreciation, the highlight for most was hiking to old favorite places. Children hiked to "Challenge Hill", toured the farm, and enjoyed rides on the hay wagon. On the playground, naturalists helped children make cider while a beautiful Linden tree was planted under the direction of our Executive Director, Jason Sanders, to mark the strength of a decade of innovative environmental education. It was a wonderful celebration!

As I was thinking about writing this story, I decided to get the big box of files that Joey, my assistant, had brought into my office this fall. She told me that she thought someone should really go through these files because there was a lot of information about the history of the preschool, and she was correct. In order to appreciate the joy of a 10th anniversary, one should read about the thinking, researching, planning, discussing, challenging, compromising, fundraising, and risk taking that went on before the preschool doors opened in September 2000.

I felt a bit like a detective as I looked at this box of files. There were many letters written to Greg Lee, Dodge Nature Center Director at the time, answering questions and requests. Here is a glimpse into the five years leading up to the preschool's opening.

A proposed four year budget was prepared in February 1995. A letter written to Greg from another nature center administrator, dated November 3, 1995 has a line in it that reads,
"If you have a chance to move on establishing a preschool, I would recommend it as one of the best things you can undertake."

Words that were listed as part of a shared experience by a committee working on the idea of a nature preschool:

Share, curiosity, invent, involve, impact, imagine, enjoy, create, explore, nature.



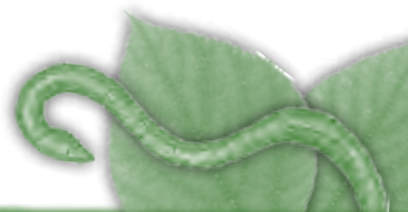
In a letter dated November 19, 1997 to the Director of Public Affairs, NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) a request is made for a preschool director:

"As an organization, our goal is to create the finest preschool program possible. I would greatly appreciate your sharing the enclosed position announcement with potentially interested candidates who would share that vision." Dr. Gregory J. Lee

From a memorandum from the early childhood/nature consultant to the architect, dated July 23, 1998:
"Ultimately, the design of the building will not make this preschool special, unique, wonderful or successful. The staff, children, families, curriculum, experiences and daily encounters with nature will make this program special.we could be in a cinder-block building and still be successful. Fortunately, we'll have more than a cinder-block building---we'll have a beautiful structure that enhances and reflects the people, nature and activities surrounding it."

Note from the architect, dated July, 29, 1998:
"When kids come in with a frog and wet and drippy things, there needs to be a place to have it."

So I am wondering, just how old is the Dodge Nature Preschool? From these few remnants of words it is clear that a great effort was made to create something very special and of highest quality for children. Maybe our school is a little older than we thought... at least another five years of wisdom and experience!



THE DRAGONFLY



By Marlais Olmstead Brand

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Dodge Nature Preschool, I am about to celebrate my first anniversary as a teacher here. I have learned more in one year at Dodge than I have in my entire ten years of working with young children. In a single year, my transformation as a teacher has been radical and exhilarating.

If you spend time at the Preschool, it dawns on you that the dragonfly is the insect mascot of the Preschool. There it is on those cozy sweatshirts. It embroiders the ubiquitous neck warmers. Three dimensional reproductions dangle here and there. It is the namesake of our newsletter. What is the origin of this admiration? Any number of smart people are likely responsible for identifying Anisoptera as our resident fetish, and I probably should consult them, being the "newbie," but I haven't yet; this first year has just been too busy, so I consult Google and wonder, "What does a dragonfly have in common with a three to five-year-old?"

Wikipedia: "Most of a dragonfly's life is spent in the naiad form, beneath the water's surface, using extendable jaws to catch other invertebrates or even vertebrates such as tadpoles and fish. They breathe through gills in their rectum, and can rapidly propel themselves by suddenly expelling water through the--" Okay. I've been warned about quoting Wikipedia. The insect sounds vicious, hardly a common trait in my young friends at Dodge. The English have called dragonflies "the devil's darning needle." Swedish folklore holds that trolls used dragonflies as spindles to weave their clothes, "trollslanda." For the Navajo, they symbolize pure water, and for other Native Americans they represent renewal. The Japanese revere dragonflies, even using them in medicine. In Indonesia, they snack on dragonflies. With two pairs of wings, the adult dragonfly can move in six different directions. Pretty impressive, but what about that naiad form, when they live underwater? It turns out that the larval stage of the dragonfly can last five years. Now that rings some bells: five years of intense growth and preparation for a big transformation? Sounds like preschool.

Do adults experience periods of intense learning, of radical and exhilarating transformation? The diaphanous wings of the dragonfly hardly seem capable of bearing the heavy weight of so many metaphors, but I'm going to take a chance and pile on one more. In this version I, a new teacher at Dodge, play the nymph, and only, mind you, in the scientific sense of the word. On Thursday evening

of my first week here, I lay in bed reading Paul Gruchow's, *Boundary Waters*, and came upon this dragonfly passage:

"The carapace is the nymphal form...an inch and a half long...As I watch, the fierce, ugly creature's body splits down its back at mid-dorsal line and from it...emerges an enormous adult dragonfly...The whole creature is five or six inches long, dwarfing the skin of its nymphal self... The limp creature dangles...impassively for a moment, and then draws in a big gulp of air, leaving behind forever the gills of its water existence, committing itself to a new life on the wing."

Wow! I wanted to wake my snoring husband to relate my epiphany, but reality and decorum had me wait until Friday night at dinner.

"I was reading Paul Gruchow," I said.

"Who's Paul Gruchow?" he said.

Well, to make a long story short, I marveled out loud at the notion that from time to time we humans undergo intense change in very short periods of time. There is birth, but that has a pretty long build-up by biological standards. There is childhood, marriage (or divorce), job change and last but not least, death. All of these milestones have long lead-ups and lasting implications, but they all demand change on a dime. One minute you are three, the next you're four. You say your vows, you're married. Walk out the door of your old job and step over the threshold of a new one. During that Friday night dinner, reflecting, a mere week at Dodge felt like it had lasted at least a year. It was as though I had entered a new University, or stepped through the looking glass. I had observed, and begun to absorb, a new culture and felt all the bigger for it. On and on I chattered to my family that night, until I came up for air and looked at my daughter's face across the dinner table. She caught me off guard. It seemed to me that her face had changed dramatically in a day. She looked thinner, longer, coltish, not babyish, not a trace of baby left in fact. I felt my eyes filling. I turned to my husband and demanded, "When did this happen?" He met my gaze, "She woke up like that."

So you blink, and it's gone, but something new is in its place. Gruchow tells us that the first hour of life is the dragonfly's most vulnerable. In truth, your eyes are not the same eyes they were a minute ago, so it is natural that they see differently. I crawled up on Dodge's shore and shed my old skin. To find out what I saw that first week while I waited for my carapace to harden.

Monday. I am feeling good. I'm feeling that my new students are taking me in stride. In fact, I'm amazed at how blasé they are in the face of change. I am feeling exposed, and a bit vulnerable. I am trying not to attract too much attention while I test my wings. I approach a child in my new room, the Spruce Room. He is at play, talking on a play phone. I hover quietly (dragonflies can do that). Without missing a beat, the boy covers the mouthpiece with his hand and levels his gaze at me, "Don't interrupt," he says, "I'm on the phone with Sarah." Sarah is his old teacher, the one I have replaced. I realize that, despite ten years teaching experience with young children, I am out of my league. I discover that I'm not hovering at all; I'm still clinging to the rock!

Tuesday. Outside start. At the preschool, children start some days outside. No matter what the weather, they go out, if only for 3 minutes. It's all about a commitment to nature. There is no bad weather, only bad clothing. So, it is perhaps 4 degrees and I am approached by a happy little snowman, swaddled head to toe in weather-appropriate gear. He mumbles something at me, but the words disappear in the depths of his balaclava. I get down on one knee, "What did you say?" Again the words are muffled in the muffler. I shed my mittens and expose his mouth to the frigid air. "I like cheese too!" he shouts. He's been doing his homework, reading my letter of introduction with the grown-ups in his life. I am gratified by this care and the enthusiasm. It's very cold out, but the sun is shining like crazy.

Wednesday. I'm getting the hang of it, I think. The day has a very ingenious rhythm. Inside or Outside start. Always there is time for active discovery and play before children are required to harness their energies to sit, listen and take turns for Group Time. These Dodge people are smart, they've spent ten years thinking about how to structure a child's day to meet their needs. The kids are wonderful: confident, self-directed, happy, loved, playful, and at ease. I feel like I am in the right place. I can buzz here and there, up and down. I'm taking attendance and I'm on the roster, if you know what I mean. Then in walks a little girl with her grandfather. She hands me an envelope. It is addressed to "Marlice" and it has a hand-drawn heart stamp in the upper right corner. Inside I find this letter:

Hi Marlice
I like when you go to my school.
I like the letter you gave us.
Thank you. I hope you like my
letter to you.

Her grandfather, who brings her to school, has dictated her words. I kneel and she offers a spontaneous hug. In some ways, I feel like a baby, a naiad. I am awed by the gifts of caring I see everywhere. Here is a grandfather intimately involved in his grand daughter's life. The lines between home and school seem very blurred and I realize that I've flown up into a world where there are lots of other dragonflies zooming around, a whole family of them as a matter of fact.

Thursday. Another day, another hike. I can't believe I get to do this for a living. We inspect a coyote den. We find a deer leg. Hoarfrost lines bare branches. The cold smells like tin. Someone plays in my shadow. A hawk circles in the thin sunlight high above. A dark mouse hops across white snow. There is time to see. Time to listen. Each day has a rhythm that follows the needs of the children. Children are not hurried. There is no need to say, "No." I discover a chain of sparkling secrets that the rest of the world has not heard or seen: Do what they like, do what they need, slow down, listen, look. The day unfolds with care. The careful structure of the day, the room, the building, affords everything to the child. My colleagues appear to be teachers, but they are capable of flying in six different directions; they are marvelously evolved. I want to evolve.

By the end of the week, I am not the same person. I hear Paul Gruchow, dead for nearly six years; I talk to him in my sleep. Nobody I know is the same either. My daughter has left babyhood behind in the blink of an eye, at the supper table. I feel like I see everything with new eyes (compound eyes?), and I am exhausted in the best possible way. Just when I think I will alight, and cling to a reed for a while and let the wind blow me gently to and fro, another young friend approaches. It is Friday, and the last hour of Friday at school. He comes with a gift. It is a small paper bag, a lunch sack, decorated with silver paint like stars and inside there is something very special: a bundle of white wolf hair, bound with silky white ribbon. It comes with a little handmade paper card bearing his mother's handwriting:

"The strength of the pack is in the wolf.
The strength of the wolf is in the pack."
--Rudyard Kipling



New Faces

John Chandler – Director of Development

Dodge Nature Center welcomes John Chandler as our new Director of Development. John joined the team over the summer after five years at Dunwoody College of Technology where he served as Development Director for their Annual Fund and charter high school. Prior to Dunwoody John worked for the Boy Scouts of America for 10 years after graduating from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He also retired from the Army National Guard honorably after 20 years of service.



Volunteers Restore Dodge

By Julie Allen, Naturalist/Restorationist/Events Coordinator

More than 10 years have passed since I pulled my first buckthorn at Dodge Nature Center. During this time I have witnessed areas of land being cleared of various invasive and non-native species, planted thousands of trees and plants, burned and restored acres of prairie, and even watched many areas regenerate with seed that sat so patiently in the seed bank for its turn (some native and many not). Although this is a great deal of work, I have found that there is one thing that makes me want to continue on with this mission day after day: Volunteers!

It is the volunteers and donors that make these accomplishments entirely possible. Hundreds of volunteers have worked over the past several years to remove invasive species (largely buckthorn) from Dodge's woodlands, prairies, savannas and wetlands. Schools, businesses, and individuals have put in countless hours working to remove non-native species from all three Dodge properties. There are many people to thank that have recently spent time on this important mission to restore the land. In the past few months, volunteers from UPS, Target Corporation, Xcel Energy, Augsburg College, St. Paul Academy, Americorp, and many other individuals have made a tremendous impact at Dodge.

One example of the restoration work being done at Dodge involves the woodlands, just west of the amphitheater. During the past two years, volunteers have removed buckthorn and other invasive plants in an effort to restore this site to an oak-basswood forest. With the area cleared of the buckthorn dominated understory, turkey and deer are now frequently seen strolling through the woods and out into the prairie. This fall, the St. Paul Garden Club, an organization that has been a great supporter of Dodge Nature Center for many years, donated thirty trees into this woodland. Twenty additional trees were donated and planted by Xcel Energy in late spring at the Marie Property. Thanks to the donations and hard work that have gone into these sites, we are able to use these parcels as an educational tool to show students and other visitors what a native Minnesota woodland looks like.

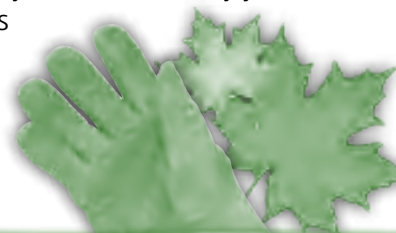
2010 Volunteer of the Year

Pete Fleming

This year's honored volunteer, Pete Fleming, is the sixth recipient of the Shan Knox Volunteer of the Year Award. This award pays tribute to a dedicated volunteer who embodies outstanding commitment to Dodge Nature Center and whose contributions are an outstanding example of all of our volunteers' hard work.

For the past four years Pete has led children on hikes to find animal tracks and signs, taught children about prairies, and has even led many trips over to the Lilydale Brickyards for the rocks and fossils class. In total, he has led over twenty different programs here at Dodge. Pete has been a member of the Program Committee for two years and recently joined the Development Committee. He is the leading force in our Signature Speaker Series, which has brought many new friends to Dodge to learn about a variety of topics.

For all of these accomplishments, we are pleased to celebrate Pete Fleming as the Dodge Nature Center Shan Knox Volunteer of the Year. **Congratulations and thank you Pete!**



2010 DODGEBALL BENEFIT AND SILENT AUCTION

This year's benefit and silent auction, now named the DodgeBall, turned out record attendance and a night of celebration for a great cause. Over \$104,000 was raised for environmental education and restoration, including \$10,900 for scholarships at Dodge Nature Preschool.



Save the Date!

The 2011 DodgeBall is scheduled for Saturday, September 17, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown St. Paul.

Thank you to our wonderful sponsors!



Leader Sponsor: Patterson Companies

Steward Sponsor: Walter & Leona Schmitt Family Foundation

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Corporate Sponsors: Anchor Bank, Briggs and Morgan, Ecolab, Inver Grove Heights Animal Hospital, J. P. Morgan, Lindquist & Vennum, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo, Xcel Energy

Community Sponsor: Alice and Fred Wall Family Foundation

EXPANDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

TJ Yocum, Naturalist/Intern Coordinator

Since the earliest days of Dodge Nature Center, late founder Olivia Dodge considered the impact that environmental education could have on the future of school children. Today Dodge reaches out to tens of thousands of students every year. Over the course of the nature center's history, the method of delivering programs has expanded and evolved to include school visits, camps, community outreach, and one of the latest iterations is Dodge's relationship with Heritage Middle School in West Saint Paul.

Heritage was recently awarded money from a federal magnet grant to create a program focused on science, technology, engineering, and math with projects and field experiences related to the environment. During the school

year, Dodge naturalists will teach fifth and seventh grade students various science topics, both in school and on site at the nature center's main property and Lilly property. Students will then integrate the lessons they learn with modern technology.

The success of the program this year will lead to even more interactions between Heritage and Dodge as money is appropriated the following two years for further development of the program. With hard work by the children and the staff, this program is set to become yet another solid branch of the environmental education tree that Mrs. Dodge planted decades ago.

Save The Date

Dodge Nature Center's 7th Annual Golf Challenge
Monday, June 27, 2011 at Mendakota Country Club

Join us for a good cause and a great day of golf at Mendakota or become a sponsor!

Contact Julie Allen at 651.789.5215 jallen@dodgenaturecenter.org
or Dave Napier at 651.789.5210 dnapier@dodgenaturecenter.org



Thank you to our 2010 Golf Challenge sponsors!

2010 Contest Sponsors - \$1,000

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White Eagle
Zelo

Dodge Membership

If you are looking for a way to help support the nature center while reaping benefits along the way, consider a family, individual or student membership. Members enjoy discounts to Dodge programs, invitations to special activities and savings at many local businesses.

Cost for Annual Memberships:

Family - \$60, Individual - \$40, Student/College - \$10

Benefits:

- Discounted admission to community programs and activities, including maple syruping classes like Frosty Fun Festival in January, Farm Festival in May, and Halloween Extravaganza in October.
- FREE admission to the Annual Members' Pancake Breakfast in March.
- Discount on all camp program fees.
- Reduced fees for birthday parties at Dodge.
- 10% discount to Carbone's Restaurant (West St. Paul), Cardinal Corners, Creative Coaching LLC, Organized to the Core, Signal Garage, Simply Strings Studio and Suburban Ace Hardware; plus great deals at Pirks Coffee and Plaza TV and Appliance.

Call the Dodge Development Office at 651.789.5201 to initiate or renew your membership.



The Dragonfly

Continued from page 8

It is a beautiful, thoughtful gift, a nod to my favorite animal, and a friendly piece of wisdom. It is a compliment to the recipient, and the giver. Some gifts mean more than you can ever adequately say because they come at a time and in a place when they are exactly right. Some call this Karma, but to me it felt like an invitation to join the pack.

And, just last week, eleven months at Dodge, I sat in my classroom, the Spruce Room, enjoying a snack with a table full of my students. A little girl who was in the Spruce Room last year too, suddenly looked up at me and said, "Marlais, I remember when we got you last year! Do you remember that day?"

"Yes," I said, feeling like a lucky puppy or a new baby, "Yes, indeed, I do."

WISH LIST

Battery operated lantern
Bird feeders
Bird seed
Blenders
Butter churn
Children's hats and mittens
Compost bins
Dog food
Dog kennels
Fish for eagle-frozen sunfish
Fish tank pumps and filters
Hand-cranked ice cream makers
Kid size snow boots
Kid size socks
Large storage bins with tight lids
Life jackets, junior size
Small aquarium tanks
Storage containers with lids
Trowels

Ongoing:

Art supplies
Dish and hand towels
Nature stickers
Gloves
Tarps
Canning jars

Call the Dodge Development Office at 651.789.5201 if you have an item you wish to donate.

"The Nature of Things" is printed two times per year and is a Dodge Nature Center member benefit.

For membership information, please call 651.455.4531. Members, please keep our records current by notifying Dodge of any address changes.

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"The Nature of Things" is printed on recycled paper.

Dodge Nature Center is a non-profit environmental education organization.

Please send corrections, comments, and suggestions to info@dodgenaturecenter.org

www.dodgenaturecenter.org



NORTHERN DAKOTA COUNTY TriDISTRICT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Serving Residents of the South St. Paul, Inver Grove Heights and West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan School Districts

Where learning starts ... and never stops!



Early Learning Programs

Early Childhood Family Education: Fun programs and classes are designed for parents and their children to enjoy time together. Fees are based on ability to pay; some programs are free.

Community Preschool: Teachers ensure learning is fun as they help prepare children for a lifetime of school success.

Early Childhood Screening: The State of Minnesota requires that all children be screened before they enter kindergarten. This free service checks a child's mental and physical development.

School Readiness: A variety of free programs help prepare eligible children for school success.



Youth Programs

School-Age Care: High-quality and engaging childcare is provided for students before and after school, on non-school days and during the summer. School-Age Care is conveniently located at the schools in your community. **Look online under Kids' Choice School-Age Care!**

Youth Enrichment: Classes, activities and a diverse assortment of programs are offered for youth.

Driver Education: Both classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction are offered. **Find us online under Youth Programs!**

Aquatics: Swimming lessons are offered at a variety of different levels to accommodate the various needs of all those interested in learning how to swim. **Contact us at 651-403-8313 or at www.comed.isd197.org.**

For more information in YOUR COMMUNITY:

South St. Paul

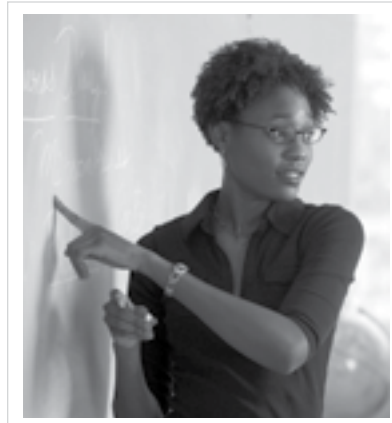
Please call 651-306-3602
or visit www.sspps.org

Inver Grove Heights

Please call 651-306-3602
or visit www.invergrove.k12.mn.us

West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan

Please call 651-403-8313
or visit www.comed.isd197.org



Adult Programs

Adult Enrichment: Educational and enrichment opportunities for adult learners are designed to meet the current needs and interests of community members.

Adult Basic Education: These free skill-building classes include English Language Learning, GED preparation and individualized instruction to help community members brush up on old skills and learn new ones.

Older Adult Programs

Older Adult Programs: Classes, trips and social and educational activities are available for older adults to help keep them feeling young and revitalized.

To register online visit www.celearn4ever.org

MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

Honor Friends and Family with a Gift to Dodge Nature Center

Memorial and honorarium gifts are a thoughtful way to pay tribute to your loved ones and also support Dodge Nature Center. Dodge is proud to be among the organizations chosen to honor the following individuals.

In memory of Mrs. Olivia Dodge
Kenneth and Mary Kay Noack

In memory of Harold Baughman
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Tysk

In memory of Joel D. Bennett
Vance and Darlene Grannis
Bonnie and John Holub

In honor of Blake Davis
Jack Cornwell

In memory of Harold Dorland
Anonymous
David and Natalya Dorland
David Hoppe

In memory of Mrs. Edward P. Davis
Mrs. Litton Field

In honor of Chuck and Mary Field
Dr. and Mrs.
Richard B. Carley

In memory of Katharine Fitzgerald
Mr. and Mrs.
John D. McCain

In memory of Mrs. Jack Foote
Mrs. Litton Field

In honor of Si and Vicki Ford's
50th Wedding Anniversary
Nicholson Family Foundation

In memory of Jean Gehan
Mrs. Nancy D. Martin

In memory of Jean C. Gilbert
Mr. and Mrs. Hans Abrahamsen
Ms. Margaret Fogelson
Robert and Mary Gilbert
Kathleen Skradski

In memory of Mrs. John Harrison
Mrs. Nancy D. Martin

In honor of Tom Hobert
School teachers Carolyn DeRuyck,
Rachel Klancher, Lois Sortedahl,
and Christi Wallace

In memory of Ralph Johnson
Anonymous
Mr. and Mrs. Hans Abrahamsen
Joan Andresen
Jean Baird
Carol Bjorklund
Richard and Dorothy Bjorklund
Kathi Bouley
Alice Bryant
Maureen Burns
Thomas Campbell
George and Edell Carlson
Diane and Jerry Conlin
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Delonne Fredell-Miller
Edward and Jane Ann Goss
Karyn Anne Lidell
Allan and Helen Olson
Mark and Laura Peters
Glen and Anna Skovholt
Roberta Thorpe
Gov. and Terry Ventura

In memory of Diane Klinefelter's father
Bonnie and John Holub

In memory of George Alexander Mairs
Ms. Alice Mairs
Mr. and Mrs. McNeil V. Seymour

In honor of Gini McCain and the O.W.L.S. presentation on sea turtles
Richard and Margaret Lidstad

In memory of John McDonald
Bonnie and John Holub

In memory of Loraine Mike
Ms. Linda Mike

In honor of Bill Owens and his recent marriage
Steve and Cathy Grego

In memory of Mrs. Frederick Owens, Jr.
Mrs. Litton Field

In honor of Natalia, Heather and Sheila at the Preschool
Evan and Kabby Jones

In memory of Helen L. Ryan
Sally and Alan Ruvelson

In honor of Jason Sanders
Rita Younger

In memory of Mary Shepard
David and Katherine Swanson

In memory of Skadron Animal Hospital's clients' pets
Skadron Animal Hospital

In memory of Barbara Sovell
Donald Sovell

In memory of Marlene Sperl
Corinne and Michael Ryan

In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wilharber
Gerald Wilharber



This list reflects memorial and honorarium gifts from December 16, 2009 to December 15, 2010. To honor your friend or family member, send your tax-deductible gift to: Dodge Nature Center, 365 Marie Avenue W., West St. Paul, MN, 55118.



DODGE

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FROSTY FUN FESTIVAL



Saturday, January 22, 2011
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Festival Fun Includes:

- Dog sled rides for children ages 4 through 12
Pre-registration and pre-payment required for dog sled rides. Registration is available by phone.
 - Additional \$5/person fee.
 - Call 651.455.4531 to register.
- Kick-sledding, ice bowling, ice mini-golf, and snowshoeing (depending on snow depth)
- Sledding hill and boot hockey
- Bonfire
- Concessions with hot beverages, hot dogs and snacks
- Medallion hunts with prizes
- Winter art activities
- Puppet theater

Admission

Go to www.dodgenaturecenter.org
to pre-pay for a Festival Fast Pass.

Cost

Non-members: \$5/person or \$20/family
Members: \$3/person or \$12/family
Free for ages 2 and under

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