



N O U R I S H Y O U R N E E D F O R

NATURE

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

CAMPAGNING
To Connect
YOU TO NATURE

D O D G E N A T U R E C E N T E R A N D P R E S C H O O L




Welcome

This special edition of our newsletter features **Nourishing Everyone's Need for Nature**, the \$40 million fundraising campaign for Dodge Nature Center and Preschool. Inside, you'll read rich stories showcasing the three vital areas of the campaign: Access, Sustainability, and Legacy. Thanks to your support, Dodge is growing and ready to **connect more people in our community to nature**.

We're in the final year of the campaign with \$5 million remaining to reach our goal. Learn how **you can help Nourish Everyone's Need for Nature at DodgeNatureCenter.org/NNN** or connect with Development Director Brenda Teats at 651-789-5218 or BTeats@DodgeNatureCenter.org.

SUSTAINABILITY: REVITALIZING HABITAT AND HUMAN CONNECTIONS



Rolling hills of restored prairie and lush oak savannah forest sprawl across the Lilly Property, Dodge's 170-acre nature destination in Mendota Heights. The Lilly is home to abundant wildlife (including endangered rusty patched bumblebees) and flourishing native habitat, but rarely hosts guided nature programs for school and family groups. Buildings and Grounds Director Sean Gokey says this is intentional.

"Our Main Property has a lot of feet on the ground—our focus there is to get everyone outside," says Sean. "At the Lilly, our restoration work benefits the land and visitors who enjoy native habitat."

A dedicated space just for hiking and habitat diversifies Dodge's offerings for environmental education. For those who prefer a more meditative outdoor experience, the Lilly offers a quiet escape—the natural hum of birds and bees the soundtrack to a self-guided hike.

Sean and his team, which now includes a Restoration Specialist position made possible by the campaign, have big plans for Dodge's largest property. A grant from the Minnesota DNR will revitalize

40 acres of prairie by removing invasive species and restoring pollinator-friendly native plants. The multi-year project will bring Conservation Corps to Dodge for hands-on work and learning.

"We're bringing folks out to the Lilly to learn as they work—it's still environmental education, but with work-force development layered in," Sean explains.

Support from the campaign will also strengthen connections with the surrounding community. Restoration projects in partnership with West St. Paul and Mendota Heights neighbors are ongoing at both the Lilly and Marie properties.

As Dodge welcomes more visitors every year, balancing preservation and education on 460+ acres of land within a bustling city is a constant challenge. Sean envisions how his team can still fulfill Dodge's mission—and provide nourishing experiences in nature for everyone.

"Our purpose here is always to have visitors. We're restoring and revitalizing greenspace for our visitors, whether they be people or wildlife."

To learn how you can lend a hand in restoration work, visit **DodgeNatureCenter.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer**. Stay tuned—conservation volunteer opportunities coming soon!

Legacy: LEADERS FROM WITHIN

More than 55 years ago, Olivia Irvine Dodge had the vision to preserve natural space amid a rapidly expanding urban area. Her legacy lives on through long-time staff whose dedication keeps Dodge a thriving oasis for outdoor learning.

If you've visited Dodge, chances are your experience was made exceptional by an enthusiastic teacher, naturalist, or leader. These 20+ year Dodge staff members are creating lasting legacies of their own. Here are some of their stories.

JULIE ALLEN SCHEDULE AND EVENTS COORDINATOR • 23 YEARS



STARTING POSITION: Restoration Specialist

Julie came to Dodge with years of teaching experience and a degree focused on forestry—land restoration was a natural fit.

In her first year, she planted the willow tree that graces the banks of the Farm Pond. It still stands tall, a beloved playscape for countless children and habitat for wildlife.

Since 2000, Julie has worn many hats from planting acres of native prairie to cultivating hundreds of volunteers. She envisions her legacy as a Jill of All Trades: "I hope I'm remembered for how I contributed to all aspects of Dodge," Julie says.

PETE CLEARY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR • 30 YEARS



STARTING POSITION: Naturalist Intern

Pete taught high school physics in Maine and decided to apply for an internship at Dodge that better fit his degree and interests—but didn't originally make the cut. After a candidate backed out, he began his journey at Dodge in 1993. Pete now leads Dodge's team of talented naturalists.

"Legacy is hard to get your head around because it's the future that you're not directly in," says Pete. "Through environmental education I've been planting seeds, both metaphorically as well as in the prairie, that will prosper after my time."

MICK GARRETT NATURALIST AND OUTREACH SPECIALIST • 20 YEARS



STARTING POSITION: Naturalist Intern

Mick didn't know about Dodge until a friend from Richardson Nature Center suggested he apply for an internship opening. He began at Dodge in 1997, switching from intern to seasonal positions, then landed as a full-time naturalist in 2010.

The reason he always returned?
"The amazing and creative staff!"

Mick now leads outreach opportunities, partnering with schools and communities to bring environmental education to them. "I hope my work has left people feeling more connected to the natural world around them," says Mick, "and skills they learned will stick with them for the rest of their lives."

DON OBERDORFER FARM DIRECTOR • 25 YEARS



STARTING POSITION: Seasonal Naturalist

When Don moved back to Minnesota from California, he started at Dodge as a seasonal naturalist. He helped around the farm and was eventually offered an opportunity to step into the Farm Manager position. Over the years, Don grew the seasonal model farm into a lively, year-round program that thousands of students experience every year.

Don's thoughts on legacy are simple: leave it better than you found it. "Hopefully, I'm setting up the farm for future educators who are excited about the same idea: to take the space we've built and do great things with it."

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

- 2020 LAUNCHED THE CAMPAIGN AT A NIGHT FOR NATURE VIRTUAL BENEFIT
- 2020 KEPT TRAILS OPEN THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC FOR TIME IN NATURE
- 2020 SUSTAINED STUDENT LEARNING SAFELY OUTDOORS AND ON TRAILS

- 2021 INSTALLED CLOVERDALE TRAIL, AN ELEVATED, ACCESSIBLE BOARDWALK
- 2021 CELEBRATED DODGE NATURE PRESCHOOL'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY
- 2021 CREATED GIRLS EXPLORE SCIENCE AND PRIDE OUTSIDE PROGRAMS

JASON SANDERS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR •
20 YEARS

STARTING POSITION:
Volunteer and
Special Events
Director

In 2003 Jason joined the team, leading volunteers and community events.

His passion for Dodge grew when his children attended the Preschool and summer camps: "Seeing my boys develop friendships, connections to nature, and pure enjoyment running through the woods was what I wanted for all," shares Jason.

Jason strives to foster a safe, engaging environment at Dodge for everyone to enjoy—the same space his sons thrived in growing up. "I'm hoping I assisted in making sure Dodge is here for 50 more years—teaching, nurturing relationships, and continuing to inspire curiosity and wonder."

JOEY SCHOEN
ASSISTANT PRESCHOOL
DIRECTOR • 20 YEARS

STARTING POSITION:
Part-Time Lead
Teacher

Joey arrived at Dodge as she was finishing her Master of Education program at the University of Minnesota.

She taught part time, leading children through the seasons and watching them grow alongside the wildlands around them. "To see them so comfortable in the natural world and so confident in their abilities was always moving," Joey shares.

As the Preschool grows, Joey works to provide that same enriching experience. "I hope the children (and families) we serve develop a lifelong connection to nature and begin to see how they are a part of the wider world."

PAM WELISEVICH
NATURALIST AND ANIMAL CARE
COORDINATOR • 24 YEARS

STARTING POSITION:
Naturalist

Pam initially applied for a position at a local zoo but lacked teaching experience.

They advised her to go work at a nature center—she came to Dodge,

and discovered she loved the variety creative freedom. Pam developed her own programs, such as Woolly Bears and Women in the Woods, that welcomed new people into nature.

"Over the years, people have asked me how I became interested in the natural world," says Pam. "I hope when my students are asked that question in the future, their reply will be visiting Dodge Nature Center!"

Nature Activities

MAY - JULY 2023

For activity details and registration, visit DodgeNatureCenter.org or call 651-455-4531

MAY

6	Wild Pride	Adults 16+
8	Green Seniors	Seniors
9	Nature After Dinner	Families
9	Women in the Woods	Adults 21+
10	Girls Explore Science	Grades 5-8
13	Fairy Trail	Families
16	Wild Cooking	Adults
20	Rock the Barn	All ages
23	Campaign Town Hall	Adults
26	Our Wild Neighbors	All ages

JUNE

5	Green Seniors	Seniors
9	Our Wild Neighbors	All ages
13	Nature After Dinner	Families
17	Down on the Dodge Farm	All ages
21	Solstice Forest Bathing	Adults
30	Dodge After Dark	Families

JULY

3	Green Seniors	Seniors
7	Universe in the Park	All ages
11	Nature After Dinner	Families
14	Our Wild Neighbors	All ages
20	Campaign Town Hall	Adults



- 2 OPENED TRAILS AND PILOTTED NEW PROGRAMMING AT SHEPARD FARM
- 0 COMPLETED A NEW POLE BARN AND TURKEY PEN AT SHEPARD FARM
- 2 HIRED AN OUTREACH NATURALIST, RESTORATION SPECIALIST, AND SHEPARD FARM MANAGER

- 2 RENOVATING THE EDUCATION CENTER AT SHEPARD FARM—OPENING SUMMER 2023!
- 0 PILOTTING AND LAUNCHING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WITH SOUTH WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
- 3 RESTORING NATIVE HABITATS AT BOTH THE MARIE AND LILLY PROPERTIES



Access: NOURISHING LIFELONG LEARNING

It's a frigid March morning at Dodge. Sunlight streams into the Olivia Irvine Dodge Library and History Center where conversation over coffee warms the room. Folks are gathered for Green Seniors, a new program welcoming lifelong learners interested in the natural world.

Senior programming isn't new to Dodge. O.W.L.S (Outwardly, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors) was a popular program that began in 2005, welcoming more than 150 seniors to Dodge every year. Because of safety concerns with the pandemic, O.W.L.S ended in March of 2020.

In 2022, Director of Environmental Education Pete Cleary recognized the need to renew senior programming. "It's more than just environmental education," Pete explains. "It's about offering a space for seniors to reconnect with nature and each other."

March's topic is maple syruping. The room is bubbling with questions and laughter as participants learn about and taste maple syrup. For those who desire, there's an opportunity to venture onto trails to identify maple trees, sample sap, and see where syrup is made.

When asked about their thoughts on the program, attendees are enthusiastic about their experience.

"I love being here. I'm so glad I came!" shares Joni Granard of West St. Paul.

Joni frequently walks her dog on paved paths near Dodge but was looking for a reason to visit the nature center. Green Seniors offered her an opportunity—in an accessible, approachable format. "Some things are such a big deal and it's hard to try them. It was so easy to be here with the positive energy."

Dodge is in its final year of the Nourishing Everyone's Need for Nature campaign—increasing access is one area of focus. With Green Seniors, naturalists are creating a welcoming environment for older adults to access outdoor learning and spaces at Dodge.

"I'm so excited that I even learned about coming here today!" says Joni. "It helped me see what else I might come to. Today really mattered to me."

To register for a Green Seniors program, visit DodgeNatureCenter.org/Calendar.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE FOR

Night for Nature

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

THE ANNUAL BENEFIT FOR DODGE NATURE CENTER AND PRESCHOOL
DODGENATURECENTER.ORG/NFN2023



Dodge Nature Center
365 Marie Avenue West
West St. Paul, MN 55118

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING DODGE!

651-455-4531 | DodgeNatureCenter.org

