



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

NATURE™

FALL/WINTER 2023

TOGETHER WE ARE

*GROWING
COMMUNITY*



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



SOUNDS OF PROGRESS AT SHEPARD FARM



For the past year, new sounds have filled the grounds of Shepard Farm: construction whirring away on the soon-to-be Education Center, ducklings quacking, turkey poults gobbling, chicken and quail chicks chirping in the renovated coop, and blacksmithing students striking iron as they craft in the new forge. On September 21, the excited chatter of supporters at Night for Nature overflowed the new Education Center as people experienced an evening at Shepard Farm.

“We’re super excited about teaching at Shepard Farm!” shares Pete Cleary, Director of Environmental Education. Dodge’s team of 11 naturalists have been developing and testing curriculum for Shepard, creating new classes like Farm Life and Forest Wildlife. The property offers a unique teaching environment different from the Main Property in West St. Paul—100-year-old-woods, new farm animals, and regional wildlife (salamanders, pocket gophers, and more) all offer something new for students.

The Education Center, completed this September, brings Shepard Farm fully online for field trips. With two new classrooms, a large teaching kitchen, and accessible restrooms, Dodge can expand its offerings at this site. Naturalist and Outreach Specialist Mick Garrett explains: “Nature is the key to our educational programs, but the new building allows access to the outdoors and our education programs.”

The first classes of students to experience the Education Center at Shepard Farm will be kindergartners, first, and fourth graders from Crestview Elementary School in Cottage Grove. After their initial visits, Pete will meet with Crestview teachers to fine-tune field trip programs before they welcome more local schools like Nuevas Fronteras Spanish Immersion Elementary, Cottage Grove Elementary, and more in 2024.

“It’s great to have such a unique experience so close to our school,” says Jodi Husting, Principal of Crestview Elementary. “The hands-on and investigative nature of Shepard Farm is appealing to all students, and for many, offers an opportunity they would not otherwise have.”



Soon enough, more sounds will join the symphony at Shepard Farm: the laughter and excitement of students learning in the outdoor classroom.

You can experience nature learning at the Education Center, too! New public programs for all ages are coming soon to our calendar at DodgeNatureCenter.org/Calendar.



Supportive Sisters

Kathy Messerich and Betsy Moran-Johnson love getting their hands in the soil. They've been gardening since they were kids in Hawaii, planting zinnias with their parents. Now settled in Mendota Heights, they started gardening at Dodge to get outdoors during the pandemic. "The gardens saved me," shares Kathy. "Being able to go (to Dodge) before my day started, listen to the roosters crowing, and work in the garden—it was a godsend!"

At side-by-side plots the twins share their work and fruitful harvest, but the garden gives more than fresh produce. "I wanted to garden but had no idea how therapeutic coming to Dodge would be. It was amazing! It's been a tough three years," Betsy recalls. "I wasn't ready for the impact it would have on me. It made me feel so calm just to be there."

Betsy and Kathy also help collect native prairie seeds for Dodge's restoration work. Through Master Naturalist classes they've learned more about the interconnectedness of our

world and the importance of native species. "The second benefit (of being at Dodge) is the numbers of wonderful people I meet," shares Betsy. "Magical—that's a good word for it!"

Both Kathy and Betsy also support the work of Dodge through personal gifts. "I love what Dodge does," says Kathy. "Which is grassroots work: really taking care of the world and affecting change. It's doing. It's action."

YOU CAN GROW DODGE WITH A GIFT

Plant a seed of support today by giving a gift—your donation provides fruitful environmental education opportunities to learners of all ages. To give online, visit DodgeNatureCenter.org/Donate or contact Development Director Brenda Teats with questions at BTeats@DodgeNatureCenter.org.



As a community-funded nonprofit, Dodge relies on the generosity of **donors like you** to make connections with the natural world possible. With the opening of the new Education Center at Shepard Farm, your support is needed as Dodge grows into the next chapter of providing exceptional experiences in nature through environmental education to more learners than ever before.

Join us for Give to the Max Day on November 16—Minnesota's annual day of giving—by donating now: GiveMN.org/Dodge

Nature Activities

NOVEMBER 2023 - FEBRUARY 2024

For activity details and registration, visit

DodgeNatureCenter.org or call 651-455-4531

NOVEMBER

7	Down on the Dodge Farm	All ages
9	Pride Outside	Grades 5-12
11	Forest Bathing	Adults
16	Give to the Max Day	All ages
16	Preschool Information Session	All ages
17	Nature Playdate	Families
20-27	Storytime on the Trails	All ages
22	Morning at Shepard Farm*	All ages
30	Getting Ready for Winter	All ages

DECEMBER

4	Minnesota Wildlife	Families
6	Girls Explore Science: Candle Creations	Grades 5-8
8	Minnesota Undiscovered	Adults
12	Preschool Information Session	All ages
13	Reptiles and Amphibians of Minnesota	Adults
16	Taste and Learn: Holiday Cookies*	Adults
21	Winter Solstice Bonfire	All ages

JANUARY

6	Ice Fishing for Beginners	Families
10	Preschool Information Session	All ages
13	Guided Spanish-Language Trail Hike: Winter	All ages
17, 24, 31	Girls Explore Science: Wintry Mix	Grades 5-8
20	C.S.I.: Critter Sighting Investigations	Ages 8+
25	Preschool Information Session	All ages
26	Tracking Our Wild Neighbors	Families
27	Winter Expedition!	Families
29	Outdoor Adventures*	Grades 3-5

FEBRUARY

7, 14	Girls Explore Science: Wintry Mix	Grades 5-8
10	Taste and Learn: Chocolate Indulgence*	Adults
17	Winter Fun Fest	All ages
23	Full Moon Hike*	Families

*Located at Shepard Farm in Cottage Grove



Veterans Joyce Rudquist, Paul Peterson, and Zac Kotschwar (above) and West St. Paul resident Mary Burrell (below) show their harvests from their community garden plots.



FINDING COMMUNITY IN COMMUNITY GARDENS

What makes gardening at Dodge an enriching experience? The supportive community of fellow gardeners and experienced volunteers, who are always eager to get in the weeds (quite literally) and help you have a successful season.

"There's always somebody you can ask for help or advice," says Mary Burrell of West St. Paul. Mary has been gardening at Dodge for 26 years since her daughter was two years old. Her now-grown daughter recently moved to Rochester but brought her gardening experiences with her, growing her own produce.

Since the mid-90's, the community garden program at Dodge's Main Property in West St. Paul has thrived. For \$125, participants can grow their own plants in a 15x15 plot and access water, tools, and compost made right at the nature center.

Master Gardener and longtime Dodge volunteer Don Feeney finds joy in seeing families like Mary's garden together. "You have to hope once they're exposed to it, it's something they'll carry with them for the rest of their lives."

Gardener numbers have grown steadily at the Main Property, but this year was the first time plots sold out. Among the returning gardeners were first-timers from the St. Paul Vet Center. Outreach Programs Specialist and Air Force veteran Paul Peterson reached out to Farm Director Don Oberdorfer when he found Dodge so close to the Center. Don offered them two plots in the garden as a new space for veterans to connect and grow with each other.

"It's not only a great garden and experience, but works with the therapeutic aspects of what the Vet Center has to offer," shares Joyce Rudquist, Army veteran. "Gardening and getting out here gives something back. You're able to let some worries go and be in the soil and see the fruits of your labor."

Joyce and Paul, along with Navy veteran Zac Kotschwar and several others, have cultivated beautiful plots. Cherry and Roma tomato plants lean heavily with fruit, plentiful tangles of beans intermix with peas and carrots, and a large patch of pepper plants boast a bountiful harvest from bell peppers to Carolina reapers. Broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, and more dot the edges of the plots.

Paul is especially grateful for the green space at Dodge. "The Vet Center is right in the U.S. Bank building in downtown Saint Paul. Thank goodness Dodge is here—otherwise we'd be in a concrete jungle." Zac adds, "For some of us, it decreases anxiety to meet in an outdoor space, instead of behind four walls."

For those who are looking for community, gardening is a great place to start.

Want to join the community garden program next year? Registration opens in January at **DodgeNatureCenter.org/Garden**

If you or a veteran you know are seeking support, contact your local vet center. Counselors, groups, and other resources are available. Call the St. Paul Vet Center at **651-644-4022**.

**THANK YOU FOR
SUPPORTING DODGE!**

651-455-4531 | DodgeNatureCenter.org

