

# ANNUAL REPORT

**FISCAL YEAR 2024**



**DODGE**  
NATURE CENTER

**A Note from Leadership  
Annual Overview  
Nature by the Numbers**

# Dear friends,

As we reflect on this year, we celebrate the strides we have made together toward our strategic priorities of sustainability, access, legacy, and relationships. These guiding pillars continue to shape our mission and inspire our work.

Our commitment to **sustainability** is evident in the successful expansion of programs at Shepard Farm and enhanced stewardship of our cherished spaces through preservation.

**Access** has flourished through initiatives ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, can experience the wonders of nature.

**Legacy** thrives as we invest in future generations, fostering deep connections to the natural world through impactful environmental education.

Lastly, **relationships** remain at the heart of our efforts, strengthening partnerships and community ties that make our mission possible.

Thank you for walking alongside us. Your dedication helps us continue offering exceptional experiences in nature for all.



**Jason Sanders**  
Executive Director



**Carol Bouw**  
Board Chair





# Sustainability

Take care of our resources today and into the future.

For 25 years, the Preschool's outdoor spaces have been an essential part of the nature preschool experience, providing a place for students to climb, swing, and dig. Over time the backyard had slowly eroded towards the Farm Pond and **needed major work to meet the needs of future students.**

During the pandemic, teachers noted how dedicated outdoor classrooms benefitted students. New classrooms have open fencing that allows for classes to operate independently and connect with others—plus sandboxes, garden beds, swings, and climbers for exploration.

**These new spaces are built to last and to inspire,** offering children a place to play, learn, and form a lifelong bond with nature.



# Legacy

Build on our legacy of environmental education across all of Dodge.

Our history of providing nature education is rooted in our community events, decades-long relationships with schools, and groundbreaking nature-based preschool. This year, **we focused on self-guided experiences.**

**The team redesigned our dated maps** to ease navigation for first-time (and returning) hikers. New maps note trail surfaces, so folks can choose the right trail for them, and mileage markers that match up with signs onsite.

**Naturalist Teresa Root created Storytime on the Trails,** a free program that weaves learning into the landscape, blending storytelling with the sights and sounds of nature. Hikers found the program enriching, noting it was educational, memorable, and fun!

# Access

Identify, reduce, and remove barriers so everyone has access to nature.

Dodge is well-known for nature education in West St. Paul. By thoughtfully expanding programming and public spaces at Shepard Farm, **we are now reaching new audiences in Cottage Grove.**

For some, access to nature simply means having greenspace close to home—quiet trails where they can relax, explore, and connect. For others, it's about **creating experiences that meet different needs**, like Sensory Friendly Saturdays, a program for those who benefit from less noise and structure.

Whether through inclusive programming or providing **a place where everyone feels they belong**, Shepard Farm is opening doors to the outdoors.



# Relationships

Cultivate relationships that reflect our mission, vision, and values.

**Relationships** with staff, students, and community partners are at **the heart of Dodge** and our mission.

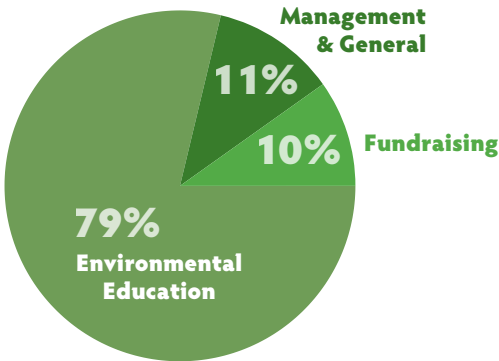
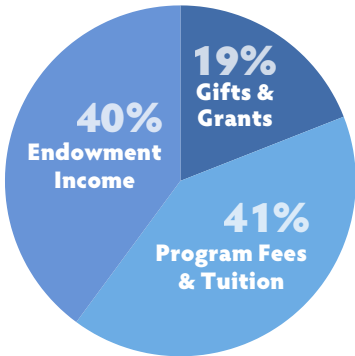
**Adding two new naturalists** deepened our connection with students and educators in South Washington County Schools. Michael Harrison (pictured left) and William Sutphin (pictured right) developed in-classroom curriculum and unique field trips, engaging students in seasonal topics that meet state academic standards and provide crucial time outdoors.

**We collaborated with Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center** to offer blacksmithing classes at Shepard Farm, sparking creativity in adults through hands-on education. So far, 93 students spent 111 hours crafting in the forge.

# Nature by the numbers

## FINANCIALS

September 1, 2023–August 31, 2024



**REVENUE** *Total* \$5,688,145

**EXPENSES** *Total* \$3,605,115

### NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$32,559,628
Increase	\$2,083,030
End of Year	\$34,642,658

Full financial information is available online in our [990](#) or at [DodgeNatureCenter.org/FY24](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/FY24)

## IMPACT STATS

We're grateful to **donors like you**, corporate partners, and foundations that help us make an impact.

Make a gift online: [DodgeNatureCenter.org/Donate](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/Donate)



**Awarded**  
**\$45k**  
**in scholarships**  
increasing access to nature preschool



**Cared for**  
**150+**  
**farm animals**  
that engage students in agricultural education



**Reseeded**  
**45** acres of prairie  
with Minnesota native plants



**Brought**  
**programs to**  
**6,862**  
**learners in**  
schools, senior living facilities, libraries, and more



**295** volunteers gave **5,192** hours  
restoring habitat, teaching students, and supporting events







**DODGE**  
NATURE CENTER

## **DODGE NATURE CENTER *and* PRESCHOOL**

365 Marie Avenue W, West St. Paul, MN 55118



651-455-4531



info@DodgeNatureCenter.org



[DodgeNatureCenter.org](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org)



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## **MISSION**

Providing exceptional experiences in  
nature through environmental education

