



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

# NATURE™

FALL/WINTER 2024

SPARKING  
CURIOSITY

FOR ALL  
AGES

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





# BRINGING Dodge CURRICULUM INTO MORE CLASSROOMS

Last fall, the Education Center at Shepard Farm opened its doors. Brand-new classrooms, a spacious teaching kitchen, and easy-to-navigate outdoor spaces welcomed people for programs. Two new naturalists are now staffed at the Cottage Grove property and ready to serve schools in South Washington County.

Michael Harrison and William Sutphin are excited to bring nature into the classroom. “I’ve always been a people-person and I’m very enthusiastic about the environment,” William says. “I love sharing that with students.”

Dodge has been serving the eight schools and 5,000 students of Independent School District (ISD) 197 since the nature center’s founding. By comparison, South Washington County Schools (ISD 833), the sixth-largest district in Minnesota, encompasses twenty-five schools and 18,700 students—**nearly four times the size of ISD 197.**

Thanks to state funding through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Dodge can begin serving educators and students in Cottage Grove and surrounding schools—fostering a deeper environmental education experience.

As the Naturalist/Elementary Liaison, Michael will be in kindergarten and first grade classrooms at Crestview Elementary School one day a week. This naturalist-in-residence position is modeled on Dodge’s longtime partnership with Garlough Environmental Magnet Elementary School in West St. Paul.

Field trips have already been piloted and finalized for kindergarten and first graders. William, the Naturalist/Curriculum Developer, will create programs for second and third graders, with fourth and fifth graders joining the fold in the future. This curriculum will help teachers meet Minnesota state academic standards.

Michael and William’s teamwork in classrooms and on trails at Shepard Farm will lead to a more continuous and impactful learning experience for students.

“I’m laying the in-school groundwork so when students come to Dodge, they get that ‘wow factor’—they experience what they’re learning in a hands-on environment,” Michael explains. “It helps them see how their lessons apply in the bigger world around them, instead of a one-time experience.”

Michael has a special connection to the Cottage Grove community. He grew up only four minutes away from Shepard Farm and has family history in the school district.

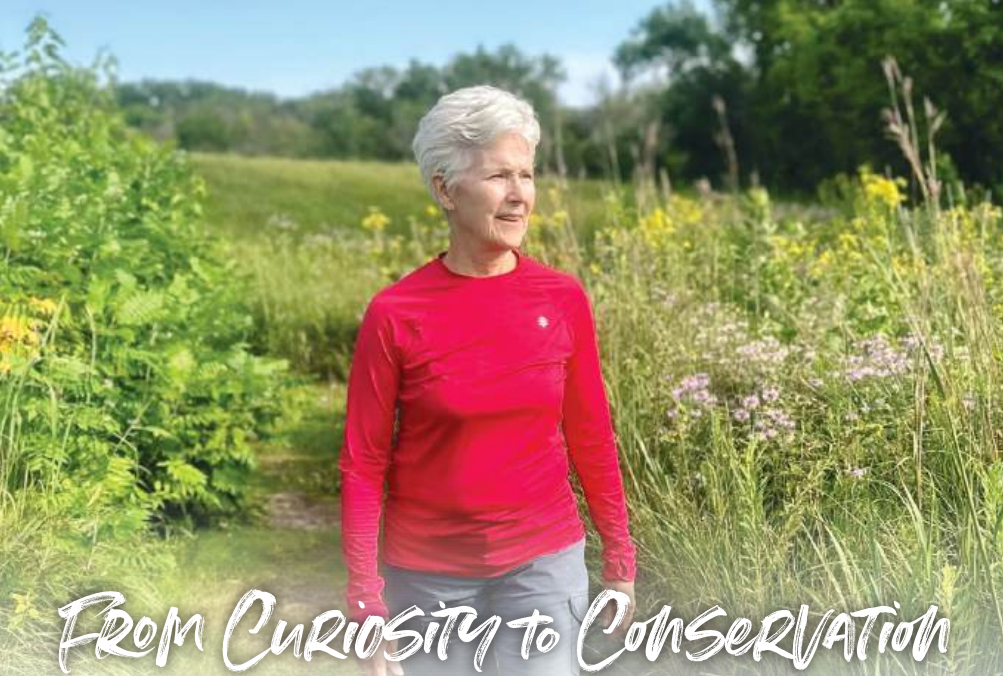
“My grandpa was the principal at Park High School and my mom worked in the district for more than 20 years,” Michael shares. “I want to get students excited about nature and provide an experience I didn’t have growing up. I’m thrilled to give back!”

Curious about field trips at Shepard Farm for your classroom? Learn more at [DodgeNatureCenter.org/Field-Trips](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/Field-Trips)

**Left:** Naturalist and Outreach Specialist Mick Garrett teaching students in one of the new classrooms at Shepard Farm. **Middle:** A student tries axe throwing, a hands-on activity used to teach physics. **Right:** Students building fires at Shepard Farm in the woods.







# From Curiosity to Conservation

Every idea starts with curiosity and a question. For Alice Berquist, her concern about the undesirable highway grass behind her house led her to ask, “How could this habitat be better?”

Alice is a longtime neighbor of Dodge’s Marie Property, located across the street from the Main Property in West St. Paul. Quiet and remote, the Marie Property’s 40 acres is a peaceful destination to hike and an excellent ecosystem to view native woodland flowers.

Seven years ago, Alice acted on her idea. She rallied her neighbors to contribute funds for a joint prairie restoration project on the land adjacent to their properties and Dodge’s Marie Property. Buildings and Grounds Director Sean Gokey oversaw the project with Landbridge Ecological, a local landscape restoration company, and the work began.

The project bloomed into more than a benefit for the land and wildlife.

“It’s become an opportunity to learn what’s growing and how we can better care for this space,” Alice shares.

“I wanted to learn the names of the flowers and what they bring (to the ecosystem).” The neighbors have learned more about native plants and animals, too.

Alice now sees the impact of her action. In the years since native plants have taken root, she’s noticed more birds, bees, and butterflies in their backyard and on Dodge’s property.

“I really love what it’s become,” Alice says. “I try to go out every day for a walk. It lifts my spirits.”

You can make a meaningful gift online to grow Dodge’s restoration efforts. Donate at [DodgeNatureCenter.org/Donate](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/Donate)

# Nature Activities

OCTOBER 2024 - FEBRUARY 2025

For activity details and registration, visit

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

## OCTOBER

2, 9, 23, 30	Girls Explore Science: Natural Art	Grades 5-8
3	Apple Pie Date Night*	Adults 16+
5	Better Birding	All Ages
9	Women in the Woods	Adults 21+
10	Pride Outside	Grades 5-12
11-13	Locally Grown Theatre presents: Frankenstein*	All Ages
12	Taste and Learn: Soup’s On!*	Adults 16+
13	Blacksmithing: Pizza Rocker*	Adults 18+
16	Full Moon Night Hike*	Families
17	Full Moon Forest Bathing	Adults 16+
17, 18	Fall Break Camps	Grades K-8
17-27	Storytime on the Trails	All Ages
19	Sensory-Friendly Saturday*	Families
26	Halloween Extravaganza*	All Ages
29	Tuesdays on the Trails	Adults 16+

## NOVEMBER

2	History Hike	Families
7	Candlemaking Date Night*	Adults 16+
9	Taste and Learn: Flatbreads*	Adults 16+
14	Pride Outside	Grades 5-12
15	Full Moon Forest Bathing	Adults 16+
16	Brewing Basics*	Adults 21+
23	Sensory-Friendly Saturday*	Families
26	Tuesdays on the Trails	Adults 16+
29	Turkey Time*	Families

## DECEMBER

21	Sensory-Friendly Saturday*	Families
21	Winter Solstice Bonfire	Families

## FEBRUARY

15	Winter Fun Fest	All Ages
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\*Located at our Shepard Farm Property in Cottage Grove

## DODGE HIKING CHALLENGE!

1. Hit the trails 2. Earn a sticker!



Visit and explore all four Dodge Nature Center properties this fall and winter! Learn how it works at [DodgeNatureCenter.org/Dodge-Hiking-Challenge](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/Dodge-Hiking-Challenge)

Supporting the preservation of our natural world is a choice we can make today that will echo for generations.

Join us on Give to the Max Day, **November 21**, and be part of a legacy that nurtures our world for years to come.







# COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES

When was the last time you colored with your kids, picked up a paint brush, or even doodled in your daily planner? On a Thursday evening at Dodge, adults of all ages are gathered around tables scattered with vibrant paints to try their hand at watercolors.

Naturalists Mary Dybvig and Ashley Johnson created Wild Watercolors, a new program for ages 18+, to reengage adults in art. “The idea behind this class was the intersection of art and nature, but also mindfulness,” says Ashley.

The format is easy and approachable—no experience necessary. For a small fee of \$10 all the materials needed are included. Some participants haven’t touched art since childhood.

“A lot of people when they reach adulthood think, ‘I’m not good at art, I can’t do art,’” Mary says to the class. “At some point in childhood, you realized you couldn’t make your art look exactly like what you were seeing. This activity helps us let go of that expectation.”

Dodge Nature Center and Preschool is most known for its field trips, seasonal camps, and early-childhood education for children—but adult education is growing and just as impactful.

“I color with my kids, but this is pretty new!” says Crystal Shores, a Dodge Nature Preschool parent. Crystal has been hiking at Dodge for 10 years and frequents other adult classes like Women in the Woods and Forest Bathing.

“I take adult classes at Dodge because I want to explore feeling safe outside of my comfort zone, knowing my child is coming here and doing the same thing.”

The class begins with students painting abstract and whimsical patterns. Ashley provides guidance: “Think of it as finger painting as a kid!” Around the room, canvases fill with colorful swirls and small scenes. While the paint dries, participants head outside to meander the nature center for inspiration.

Ona Sussman, a naturalist for the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, pauses by prairie flowers to sketch.

“This is a slightly different way of approaching nature,” Ona explains. “I work with kids so much—I don’t get to experience a deeper level of mindfulness. Anything that makes me a little bit more aware of what I’m surrounded by is really nice.”

Back inside, students take pen to paper to finish their watercolor with linework. Tiny rabbits, intricate flowers, wandering lines, and more spring to life on each painted piece. Mary brings out Pretzel the hognose snake for people to meet and see her pretty, patterned scales. Childlike smiles and oohs & aahs of cuteness break out around the room.

“The sad fact of life is no one can be a kid forever, but you can be a kid at heart forever,” Mary says as she shows off Pretzel. “Your inner child is still welcome and meant to come here.”

Check out upcoming adult programs online at [DodgeNatureCenter.org/Activities](https://DodgeNatureCenter.org/Activities) Interested in an art program for youth? Girls Explore Science: Natural Art is available for students in grades 5-8 this October.



Above: Kristi Culp and Kate Grote painting their watercolor works of art.

Below: Ona Sussman sketching black-eyed Susans in bloom.



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