



"It makes me feel like I am in the right place and it makes me feel calm in the world."

- OAKS Afterschool student on their experience at ALNC



HELP US BUILD OUR LEGACY

Together, we can inspire hope in our future...



JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

We know that fulfilling our mission and inspiring the next generation means expanding access now. We see our future clearly; this campaign ensures our legacy of providing equitable, immersive, innovative, and sustainable environmental education for generations.

Betsy Parker
President & Executive Director
betsyp@aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org
(608) 216-9507

Kelley Van Egeren
Director of Development & Stewardship
kelley@aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org
(608) 335-3155

"We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

- Aldo Leopold

ALDO LEOPOLD NATURE CENTER
Engage • Educate • Empower

330 Femrite Drive • Monona • (608) 221-0404
aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org



"I was enchanted the first time I visited as a mom on a field trip... It's the 'a-ha moments' that spur curious people to wonder and want to learn more about the natural world, of which we all are a part."

- Sue Denholm, legacy donor

BUILDING OUR LEGACY:
Sustainability Now & Into the Future

ALDO LEOPOLD NATURE CENTER
Engage • Educate • Empower

Nurturing children, their well-being, and environmental sustainability through connecting and learning in nature.



ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Thirty years ago, the land where the Aldo Leopold Nature Center sits was slated for development until a group of concerned Monona residents came together and petitioned the city to purchase the land. **The proposal went to referendum and Monona residents voted to save the land from development, preserving it as a natural space for all to enjoy.**

BASED IN NATURE

Nature is the heart of every program and children spend a majority of their time outside, using all of their senses to experience and connect with the natural world around them, providing daily opportunities for growth and achievement. Our philosophy, inspired by Aldo Leopold, is that children learn with nature, through nature, and in nature.

ADDRESSING TODAY'S CHALLENGES

The work of the Aldo Leopold Nature Center stands at the intersection of children's health and environmental education, and serves as childcare for many families. **Through our work, we're addressing two of the greatest and inextricably-linked challenges today: the health of our children and the sustainability of our planet.**



“Childhood experiences set individuals up for success in their lives, and the benefits of time spent outdoors is critical to developing healthy and happy minds and bodies.”

- Betsy Parker, executive director

PRIORITIZING EQUITY & SUSTAINABILITY

EQUITABLE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

- Fund low- or no-cost programs and bridge financial, language, and transportation barriers
- Support *Nature Net: The Environmental Learning Network*
- Provide equitable staff compensation to retain quality staff

ESSENTIAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Install engaging, multi-language interpretive signage
- Replace boardwalk, outdated roof, and solar panels
- Restore trails, docks, and bridges for accessibility
- Upgrade *Science on a Sphere* and the *Immersion Theater* climate science exhibits

ACCESS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

- Grow endowment fund to annually support access initiatives

WITH YOUR HELP, WE HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Together, we can ensure that our youth take the critical first steps—learning to love and appreciate nature—on their path to understanding the importance of balancing the needs of our community and those of the ecological systems that are vital to all of our existence.

WHY SPENDING TIME IN NATURE IS IMPORTANT*

At ALNC, students don't learn about wetlands from a book—they muck in the marsh instead! Here, children and adults find adventure—discovering butterfly eggs on a leaf, orienteering with a map or compass, mastering outdoor survival skills, and more.

And, we know people are happier and healthier if they pick up binoculars instead of a tv remote, take a hike instead of eating processed snacks, or investigate pond life instead of checking their social media.

We also know that when people connect with nature, they experience benefits to their mind, body, and spirit.



When a connection to nature is established early in life, children grow up feeling comfortable in, and enjoy being in nature—leading them to live a healthy lifestyle, while also becoming responsible stewards of the land.

*more on why nature is important at aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org/about-us/why-nature-matters/

- 1994** Aldo Leopold Nature Center is founded, promoting environmental education to students in the community.
- 1996** *Nature Net* is launched, promoting environmental education throughout South Central Wisconsin. ALNC offers its first summer camp programs.
- 1997** A 5,000 sq. ft. facility is built, accommodating program expansion.
- 2000** The *Trailside Backpack* program is introduced, empowering the public with tools to explore nature on their own.
- 2001** The *Children's Shack*, a replica of the *Leopold Shack*, gives visitors a glimpse into Leopold family life. After School programs positively impact underserved students.
- 2010** The *Acorns to Oaks* campaign launches new *high-touch, high-tech* programming and climate science exhibits.
- 2012** An 11,000 sq ft addition is built, accommodating public visitors.
- 2018** The *Bridge to the Future* campaign expands access to nature for all children.
- 2019** The Nature Preschool opens, offering new, innovative, and immersive opportunities. A redesign of the facility creates nature-accessible space.
- 2020** ALNC rises to the pandemic's challenge by promoting a healthy, outdoor alternative to virtual learning.
- 2024** ALNC celebrates 30 years of success. Strategic planning generates a roadmap for the future.
- 2029** Endowed program costs and tuition assistance are embedded into ALNCs business model.
- 2034** The ALNC community is reflective of Dane County demographics.

30 YEARS OF SUCCESS TO 30 YEARS OF SUSTAINABILITY

128,016 hours of environmental education provided in 2023

FUTURE VISION

BUILDING OUR LEGACY: Sustainability Now & Into the Future

Over the past three decades, hundreds of thousands of children have discovered the wonders of nature at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center—fostering their health and well-being and nurturing their sense of responsibility to preserve and protect the natural resources that are vital to our existence.

This year marks our 30th Anniversary and we are at a crossroads—celebrating our lasting success and planning our future sustainability. To better reflect the needs of the community, we recently concluded a five-year strategic plan that will guide us as we strive to most effectively and efficiently fulfill our mission *to nurture children, their well-being, and environmental sustainability through connecting and learning in nature.*

We invite you to help us raise \$3M before the end of 2025 (in addition to \$750,000 in annual program support) for the following fundraising goals:

Immediate—EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES—\$500,000

- Subsidies, tuition assistance, and free programming to maintain affordability for schools and families: Nature Preschool, School Field Trips, Wonder Bugs On the Road, OAKS: Outdoor Action Kids in STEAM After-School program, Summer Camps, Vacation Days, and free public events
- *Nature Net: The Environmental Learning Network*
- Equitable staff compensation to recruit and retain quality staff

Intermediate—ESSENTIAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS—\$500,000

- Replacement: Roof/solar panels and signage with multi-language translation
- Maintenance/Restoration: trails, docks, and boardwalk for accessibility, entry road resurfacing (required by the City of Monona), and habitat restoration
- Upgrade: in-floor heating system, Climate Change educational exhibits (*Science On a Sphere* and *Blue Marble Immersion Theaters*)

Long-Term—GROW OUR ENDOWMENT FUND—\$2,000,000

- Creating a sustainable and enduring annual distribution to support and offset the costs to continue our Educational Initiatives in perpetuity

The futures of our children and grandchildren are in our hands.

Together, we can address what we believe are the two greatest and inextricably-linked challenges in the world today—the health of our children and the sustainability of the planet.

BUILDING OUR LEGACY: Sustainability Now & Into the Future

Campaign Committee

Advisors

Diane Ballweg

Jane Coleman

Chair

Tripp Widder

Cabinet

John Hecht

Pete Lundberg

Trish Stevenson

Executive Director

Betsy Parker

Staff

Cara Erickson

Kelley Van Egeren

BUILDING OUR LEGACY: Sustainability Now & Into the Future

Campaign Supporters

As of March 15, 2025

Preservationist—\$1,000,000+

W. Jerome Frautschi / Pleasant T. Rowland

Protector—\$500,000 - \$999,999

In Memory of Robert Alexander

Sustainer—\$250,000 - \$499,999

Oscar Rennebohm Foundation

Guardian—\$100,000 - \$249,999

Diane Endres Ballweg
Sue Neely Denholm
Richard Fritz and Sons
(in memory of Judy A. Fritz)

Conservationist—\$50,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous
Lau and Bea Christensen
Summit Credit Union

Naturalist—\$25,000 - \$49,999

Treva and William Breuch
Ross and Penny DePaola
Evjue Foundation:
the charitable arm of *The Capital Times*
Madison Gas and Electric Foundation
Bill and Jane Moorman
Karen Oberhauser
Peg Smelser and Jody McCann
Starion Bank
Jon and Peggy Traver

Voyager—\$10,000 - \$24,999

David E. Bedri and Jon E. Sorenson
Charles R. and Nancy S. Carpenter
(In honor of Howard Mead)
Courtier Foundation, Inc.
Lisa Munro
Swita Metal Roofing
Tripp and Nancy Widder

Adventurer—\$5,000 - \$9,999

Kristine Euclide and Doug Steege
Peter and Jill Lundberg
Jessica Schwantes and Mark Koehl
Kim and Mark Sponem
Brad and Marge Wennen

Explorer—\$2,500 - \$4,999

Anonymous
Megan Decker

Steward—\$1,000 - \$2,499

Anonymous
Mr. Dusty and Dr. Shannon Dean
Deb Gilpin
Gary Gorman
Amber McReynolds and Casem AbuLughod
Mark Miller and Jo Oyama-Miller
Bill Nelson and Jill Mueller
Betsy and Sam Parker
Molly and Mike Strigel

Ranger—\$100 - \$999

Anonymous
Julia M. Bolz
Suzanne M. Gardner
Alice Jungemann
Barbara Kosak-Schlaefer
Trish Stevenson
Mark and Kelley Van Egeren

The Benefits of Spending Time in Nature

At the Aldo Leopold Nature Center, we envision a world where people understand how we are connected to our natural environment and to each other and, as a result, are responsible for our world's long-term sustainability.

In today's fast-paced society where many kids grow up in urban settings and spend several hours a day on their devices as they shuffle from one structured, indoor activity to another, they have few opportunities to experience the great outdoors.

According to the family technology education non-profit group, Common Sense Media, teens spend more than one-third of their days—or nearly nine hours on average—using electronic media such as online video or music.

Furthermore, only about 25% of kids play outside, compared to approximately 75% a generation ago. Of those kids who do play outside, most spend just minutes per day in unstructured activities such as climbing trees or playing games of catch.

Using technology topped the list of reasons why kids are not getting outdoors, while other factors include reduced or eliminated school recess, overscheduled lives, and concerns about children's safety.

In addition to a lack of understanding of the natural environment and their connection to it, today's generation of children (and adults) is missing out on the many benefits of spending time in nature.



By expanding access and creating opportunities for kids of all backgrounds to experience nature, Aldo Leopold Nature Center is meeting these challenges head-on for the health and well-being of our children and the sustainability of our planet.

According to research supported by the American Academy of Pediatric Health, the Children & Nature Network, the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) and many others, when children (and adults too) spend time in nature, they experience these benefits to body, mind, and spirit:

Body

- Increased fitness levels build active, functional, healthy bodies, reducing rates of childhood and adult obesity
- Elevated levels of Vitamin D lower the risks of developing osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems later in life
- Improved coordination, dexterity, depth perception, and fine motor skills

Mind

- Reduced symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, ADD, ADHD, and other behavioral issues
- Improved performance on standardized tests in math, science, reading, writing, and social studies
- Greater ability to adapt, and think critically and creatively

Spirit

- Increased self-confidence, self-discipline, and resilience to adversity
- Reduced aggression, and healthier emotional well-being
- Heightened meaning and purpose, a sense of coexistence, inner peace and awe in nature's presence with a sense of respect and responsibility for themselves, others, and the natural world



How Aldo Leopold Nature Center is Becoming More Inclusive of our Diverse Community



EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR ALL
DESPITE PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL, OR
GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITATIONS



INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES
FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE AND
FREE, FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMS



WEIGHTED-LOTTERY ENROLLMENT
FOR NATURE PRESCHOOL AND
SUMMER CAMP PROGRAMS

ALDO  **LEOPOLD**
NATURE CENTER

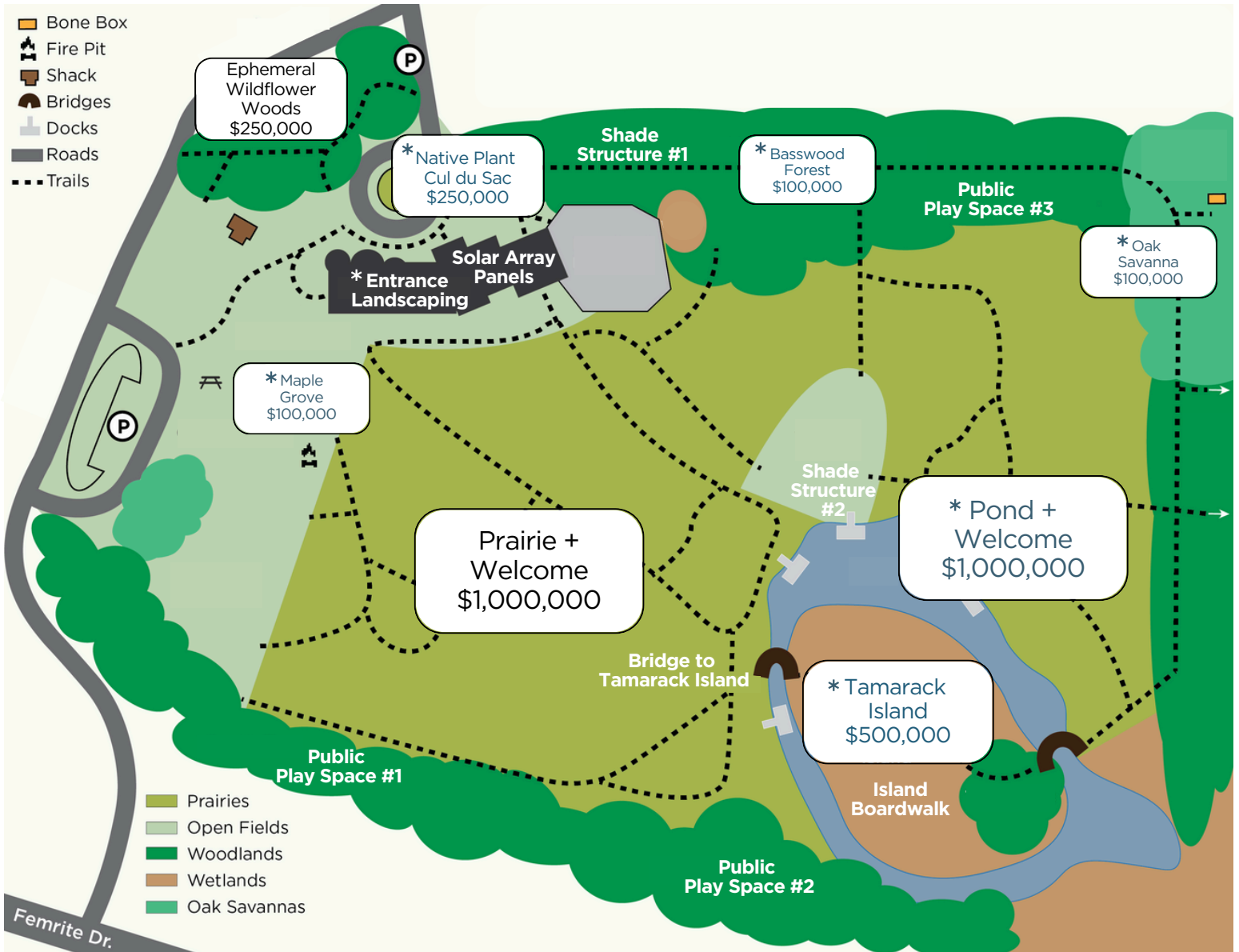
330 Femrite Drive • Monona, WI • (608) 221-0404 • aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org

BUILDING OUR LEGACY: Sustainability Now & Into the Future

Named Gift Opportunities

Named Gift Opportunities are a lasting way to partner with the Aldo Leopold Nature Center as we strive for long-term sustainability. All named gifts are designed to be consistent with exterior standards for grounds and are subject to availability and change.

Recognition will be listed as, "Stewardship of __ Funded by __."



Prairie + Welcome Interpretive Signage - \$1,000,000

*Pond + Welcome Interpretive Signage - \$1,000,000

*Tamarack Island - \$500,000

Ephemeral Wildflower Woods - \$250,000

*Native Plant Cul du Sac - \$250,000

*Basswood Forest - \$100,000

*Oak Savanna - \$100,000

*Maple Grove - \$100,000

New Bridge to Tamarack Island - \$75,000

New Solar Array Panels - \$50,000

New Island Boardwalk \$50,000

New Shade Structure (3) - \$25,000

*New Entrance Native Landscaping - \$25,000

New Public Play Space (3) - \$10,000

***CLAIMED**

