



**DODGE**  
NATURE CENTER

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Dodge Nature Center & Preschool Launches \$40 Million Campaign to Nourish Everyone's Need for Nature**

***More than \$28 million in gifts secured to date***

(West Saint Paul, Minn.) – Dodge Nature Center & Preschool today announced the launch of a \$40 million campaign to increase access to and improve sustainability of the pioneering center. More than \$28 million has been committed to date to “Nourishing Everyone’s Need for Nature,” which will extend the legacy of visionary founder Olivia Irvine Dodge for generations to come.

“Beautiful, accessible environmental spaces close to urban centers are rare, yet they are critical to the health and well-being of people and communities who often lack access to nature,” said campaign co-chair Chadwick Dayton. “All people should be able to nourish their need for nature, without regard to background, life experiences, geography or socioeconomic status.”

Campaign co-chair Vicki Ford, a niece of Olivia Dodge, said, “My aunt had the foresight to preserve this beautiful piece of land at a time when the area was rapidly developing. Today, Dodge is an oasis in the midst of a busy metropolitan area and a place that has inspired curiosity and wonder for more than 50 years.”

#### **About the Campaign**

The campaign will help reduce and remove barriers so that everybody has access to the nourishing power of nature; provide for updates to historical buildings and preservation of natural spaces; and ensure that Dodge remains a relevant, accessible sanctuary in the middle of a busy metropolitan area for the next 50 years.

“The experience of nature is a vital social determinant of health and well-being,” said Dodge Executive Director Jason Sanders. “Connection to nature is proven to improve physical health, reduce risk of obesity, improve relationships, reduce stress and aggression, and enhance academic performance. The significant increase in outdoor activity in this time of COVID-19 demonstrates our collective—and growing—need for nature.”

Specifically, the campaign will fund:

- **Access:** Through an inclusive, equitable and holistic approach, Dodge will update trails and gathering spaces, expand educational outreach to historically under-represented populations, and make the preschool more affordable for families from lower incomes.
- **Sustainability:** Dodge will update its historical buildings to reflect climate-friendly standards (including its new Shepard Farm property) and ensure natural spaces are preserved for generations to come. The campaign will also allow Dodge to expand staff to meet increasing demands for programming and sustain the tradition of the grounds being free and open to all.
- **Legacy:** The campaign will make sure that Dodge remains a relevant, accessible sanctuary in the middle of a busy metropolitan area for the next 50 years, welcoming an ever-increasing number of children, adults and families. The campaign will also provide more resources to support the volunteers who contribute to the legacy of Dodge.

### **About Dodge Nature Center & Preschool**

Founded in 1967 by Olivia Irvine Dodge, the Thomas Irvine Dodge Nature Center was one of the first nature centers in the state of Minnesota and a pioneer in environmental education. The Main Property (110 acres) in West St. Paul offers miles of hiking trails, a working farm, raptor mews, bee apiary, and an on-site nature preschool. The Marie Property (40 acres) in West St. Paul and Lilly Property (170 acres) in Mendota Heights are peaceful places to hike through prairies, woodlands and wetlands. Dodge's newest site is Shepard Farm, a 140-acre site in Cottage Grove that includes an old-growth forest.

More information about the "Nourishing Everyone's Need for Nature" is available at [www.dodgenaturecenter.org/campaign](http://www.dodgenaturecenter.org/campaign).