

Osprey Wilds

FALL NEWSLETTER

2020



JEDI Committee Initiative

By Erin Anderson, Director of Charter School Authorizing

Osprey Wilds' (OW) mission is to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning. We have long served learners of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and experiences. In the wake of George Floyd's murder last May, it became clear that OW has an opportunity to re-evaluate its work with a new lens to ensure all communities have the same opportunities and abilities to achieve the mission. This summer, board members, staff, and fellows formed OW's Justice, Equity,

Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee. Its purpose is to make OW's work more equitable and just. This fall, the committee will roll out an internal assessment to capture staff and board perceptions of the organizational culture that will inform the work of the committee, helping us develop and launch a plan for anti-bias and anti-racist change. We want to create institutional change, and know that our organizations are made up of individuals who need to be committed to those action steps. In our public

recognition of the need for this work (available on the Osprey Wilds website), we committed to fight for the dismantling of systemic racism in our spheres of work and influence—education and environmentalism. We also committed to updating our community as the work continues. We won't be perfect, and we will make mistakes; however, we are committed to an ongoing process within ourselves and our organization.

Flexibility is Key to Fundraising Success

by Jim De Young, Development Director

Like so much else since the arrival of COVID-19, Osprey Wilds' fundraising has had to take an abrupt turn over the last six months. Last year's annual fund goals included \$60,000 for scholarships; \$150,000 for program support, focusing largely on our K-12 program; and \$25,000 for land and building projects. Last spring, we had to pivot our fundraising for the final quarter of the fiscal year (ending June 30), as COVID-19 restrictions brought a sudden sharp decline in revenue from program fees. Requests for contributions to offset the shortfall took priority over the planned land and building projects, so re-shingling Lowry Lodge was postponed indefinitely, and the development of Trapp Farm proceeded more incrementally than originally planned. We are incredibly grateful for the way the Osprey Wilds' community rallied to support us. The final third of the fiscal year saw a record number of donors (220), gifts (335), and contribution income (\$74,050).

As we headed into a new fiscal year this summer, we knew two things. First, contributions would be more important than ever before. With program revenues projected to remain limited by COVID-19 restrictions, the \$220,000 budgeted for contributions in 2020-21 is 45% of total budgeted income, compared to 20% percent in a typical year. Second, we knew that flexibility would be key for both our leaders and supporters. Expect to hear a "where-most-needed" message throughout this fiscal year, as the COVID-19 landscape shifts and as Osprey Wilds' staff find creative ways to carry forward our mission and tap new veins of program revenue.

Adapting

By Bryan Wood, Executive Director

This year has been unlike any other in the 51-year existence of Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (formerly Audubon Center of the North Woods). In January, we changed our name; in February, we were on track to have our highest K-12 program attendance ever, and in March, the world changed. Following that initial shock, we acted quickly to secure Payroll Protection Program funds, a Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and reduce expenses wherever possible, including the difficult decisions to cut staff hours and positions.

In programming, we shifted our thinking from what we can't do to what we can do. That included virtual summer camps, Picnic Pick Ups, virtual Dinners at the Lake, virtual adult seminars, Live Facebook Story Time readings, promoting the use of our trails and campgrounds, and now with the school year upon us, a whole host of learning options that Education Director Emily Porter highlights in her article. As a nonprofit residential environmental learning center that normally generates over 75% of its income through program revenues, COVID-19 has been extremely challenging. But we have an incredible staff that are up to the task and are continuing to adapt, rolling out innovative programs that are connecting people to the environment in new ways. As we chart our path ahead, we are exceedingly grateful for the generous support of donors like you that will help us make it through this.

What Makes a Summer Camp?

By Emily Porter, Education Director

What makes a summer camp a summer camp? Is it the counselors? The bunk beds? The campfires? Or the lake? What are the things that make a summer camp experience invaluable to so many children? As the staff at Osprey Wilds scrambled to come up with summer programming in the wake of COVID-19 shutdowns, these were the questions we needed to answer. How do you deliver an age-old program in a new way while still preserving the crucial aspects that make it a meaningful experience?

Ultimately, we decided that a socially-distanced camp where kids could not room together, eat together, or play capture-the-flag together, was not a camp experience

we wanted to provide. So our team went about discovering the definitive aspects of a summer camp that we could deliver through a virtual platform. There are things that make a camp great that have nothing to do with where you are: caring counselors, fun outdoor activities, interaction with new kids your age, and a steady, comforting routine. After a lot of hard work from our Education fellows and staff, we managed to deliver two Virtual Camp programs that gave the feel of a summer camp while keeping our campers and staff safe.

This fall, we are going through the same process with our school trips—what can students get here that they can't get anywhere else?

We are implementing many new programs and solutions, including live animal programs through Zoom, sending our educators into communities to run programs at schools, and even some small, socially-distanced programs at our campus.

Yet, even though they may look different, our programs keep the same core of what we do here at Osprey Wilds: get kids outside to connect with nature in an authentic way. And we will keep doing that, no matter what the future may bring.

Learn more about our programming at OspreyWilds.org/schools

If you are receiving this newsletter, you have previously indicated you'd like to receive a printed newsletter. You can help us lower our environmental impact by signing up for our electronic newsletter instead. Please email us at frontdesk@ospreywilds.org to do so.

View our 2020 Annual Report and learn more about our work at OspreyWilds.org

Follow us on social media



Trapp Farm Takes Shape

By Bryan Wood, Executive Director

2020 marks year one as we begin to build Trapp Farm! We have been busy these last several months laying the groundwork for our regenerative farm that will model sustainable agriculture, educate student and adult groups, and provide nutritious, fresh food for our participants. Following the donation of the land in 2017, we took some time to plan before launching initiatives to develop the farm.

These initiatives include planting 48 acres of row-crop fields into pasture, prairie and pollinator habitat, adding a well and electric service, constructing a high-tunnel hoop house, adding compost and

minerals to build the soil, thinning a stand of hardwoods to allow for grazing, and installing more than three miles of woven wire and over 1,300 posts for livestock fencing.

All of this has been possible thanks to cost-share grants from Natural Resources Conservation Service, volunteers helping with construction, donors covering equipment rentals, and you! Your generous contributions this spring and summer helped us with our cost-share requirements and allowed incredible progress to take place this first year! We look forward to 2021 being our first year to grow and harvest crops!

Charter School Authorizing

By Erin Anderson, Director of Charter School Authorizing

In late February, the Charter School Division was planning for spring: site visits to authorized charter schools across the state, school board meeting observations, and interviews with new school applicants. On March 15, Governor Walz ordered all Minnesota public schools to close for an eight-day planning period, and to reopen in a now ubiquitous form called "distance learning."

Overnight, the work of the Charter School Division transitioned from oversight and accountability to support and guidance. Instead of site visits, we were supporting schools to create safe learning plans, offering training related to distance learning, and creating resources to encourage student mental health and safety.

Distance learning also exposed great inequities among students in terms of access to technology, internet, safe spaces, and adult supervision during the school day. George Floyd's murder in May made it clear that the inequities are a matter of life and death. In a piece for Medium, N.L. Webber wrote, "There's a George Floyd in every school where Black children learn." (Of the more than 9,000 students OW authorized charter schools served last year, nearly 65% are Black, Indigenous, or students of color.)

As the new school year approached, the Charter School Division again helped schools prepare state-required Safe Learning Plans for opening in distance, hybrid, or in-person learning. We supported a new school, Three Rivers Montessori in Elk River, to open its doors. And through our annual Charter School Leaders Series, we continue to push school boards to use equity as a lens for every decision and policy.

This school year feels a little bit like riding a roller coaster with no lap bar or seat belt. But we're holding on, and our arms get a little stronger every day. The Charter School Division is grateful for the work of the leaders in the schools we authorize, and proud of the tenacity of students across Minnesota. It's an honor to ride this roller coaster with them all.



Virtual Benefit Weekend

Join us for three nights of free programming, an online auction, and dollar-for-dollar contribution matching!

Schedule

Oct 23 @ 7 pm
The Disconnect between African Americans and the Outdoors, with Dudley Edmundson (webinar)

Oct 24 @ 7 pm
Live Raptors by Family (webinar)

Oct 25 @ 12-1 pm & 5-6 pm
Picnic Pick Up at Osprey Wilds (on-site)

Oct 25 @ 7 pm
Osprey Wilds in the Age of COVID-19 (webinar)

Learn more about each day, register, and donate at OspreyWilds.org or scan the QR Code:



Facilities Expansion

By Jill Rudolph, Operations Director

Some amazing things are happening around campus. On your next visit you will be greeted by a new 40' x 60' maintenance shed. Thanks to two generous donors, this building will house a bottling room for maple syrup, office space, and storage for all our large equipment. We have also been graced with many volunteers helping around campus even after having to cancel our volunteer weekends. These amazing volunteers have been able to improve the sugar shack, clear storm damage, build a firewood storage shed and numerous projects at the farm. Along with these volunteers are seven members of the AmeriCorps NCCC Elm 3 team. They will be volunteering for six weeks and have been able to help in all areas of operations; it's great to have them!

Welcoming our New Fellows

By Ashley Bozman, Fellowship Coordinator

This summer we welcomed four new Environmental Education Fellows to the team: Allie O, Jeff, Josh, and Rock! We are so excited to learn from their experiences. They will join our returning second-year fellows Light, Katrina, and Allie as part of the Education Staff. Their work includes teaching environmental education classes, creating educational videos and content, assisting with events and programming, and caring for our Education Animal Ambassadors.



What drew you to environmental education?

"I believe that it's important to have a relationship with the outdoors so that we all can be advocates and allies for the natural world." - Rock

"I want to pursue environmental education because I want to spend my life in the outdoors doing something meaningful for the world." - Jeff

What are some of your favorite outdoor activities?

"I can be found engaged in activities such as bushcraft, hiking and productively getting lost, and paddling." - Josh

"My favorite outdoor activities are camping, rollerblading, playing softball, badminton, swimming, and exploring." - Allie O

Read the full bios and learn about the Fellowship program at OspreyWilds.org/aboutus/work/fellowship

The Impact of Donors' Foresight

By Jim De Young, Development Director

Gifts from the estates of Frances Duritsa, Betsy Johnston, and Kathy Aust will provide vital support for Osprey Wilds as we face the financial challenges brought on by COVID-19.

Frances Duritsa connected with Northwoods Audubon Center, as it was then known, in the 1970s through her involvement with the Minneapolis Audubon Society. Her involvement culminated in a planned gift benefiting Osprey Wilds—half of the remainder of a charitable gift annuity, which we received in May, following Ms. Duritsa's death in March.

Betsy Johnston was the daughter of Elizabeth Lane Crosby, a longtime Northwoods Audubon Center board member. During our capital campaign in the 1990s, Betsy and her brothers each made significant gifts, resulting in the construction of Elizabeth L. Crosby Lodge, named in honor of their beloved late mother. Following Ms. Johnston's death in June, we learned that she had made the provision for Osprey Wilds to receive a bequest in her will.

Kathy Aust was an Osprey Wilds neighbor on Grindstone Lake, a faithful donor, and a regular at our Dinners at the Lake. When she died in August her memorial celebration was held in Osprey Wilds' Dining Hall. We look forward to receiving the gift she left for Osprey Wilds as the beneficiary of her IRA remainder.

To learn how a bequest, beneficiary gift, or life income agreement can support both Osprey Wilds and your financial objectives contact us at Deyoung@ospreywilds.org