



Foundation for Dane County Parks
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Madison, WI 53718
foundationfordanecountyparks.org

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Executive Director's Message

My first four months as the first Executive Director of the Foundation for Dane County Parks have been inspiring! I am inspired by the Parks' staff and volunteers who show tremendous dedication to caring for one of our community's most important assets, our natural spaces. I am inspired by our park users. The daily stewards of our green spaces, recreation areas, dog parks, and waterways. The young park users who are learning to become more comfortable outside and away from their screens. Whether they are learning to fish, ride a bike, kayak, or about the conservation of our natural resources, our youth and our entire community benefit so much from everything the Dane County Park System provides. And I am inspired by all of the donors who are investing in our community because of their commitment to our environment and our natural spaces and equitable access to it.

Thanks to generous donors like you, the Foundation for Dane County Parks has raised more than \$2.4 million to support one of our community's best assets, the Dane County Park System. Donors have made possible park improvements like new accessible fishing piers, accessible kayak launches, and outdoor programming that provides local youth with the opportunity to experience and gain confidence in the outdoors. In 2022, donor funding supported things like making accessible wheelchairs available for use in the parks, outdoor programming for individuals with dementia, and events to help reconnect our community to Ho-Chunk ancestral lands.

Thank you for all you do to make our community a better place for all of us. I hope you find some time to get out to the parks and enjoy all they have to offer. Maybe I'll see you out there!

Aaron Mullins

P.S. I love to hear from our donors! Please don't hesitate to reach out. We could meet for a walk in the park!



In This Issue:

Learn more: foundationfordanecountyparks.org
Contact us: foundationfordanecountyparks@gmail.com



2022 Grant Awards



Reconnecting with Ho-Chunk Land



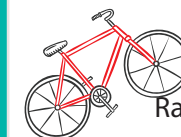
Junior Naturalists

2022 Annual Report Edition

Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Photo by: Michael Knapstein

Foundation for Dane County Parks Stats

\$2.4 MILLION
raised to support
Dane County Parks



Raised over
\$800,000
for the endowment to
sustain the parks for
years to come



over
\$52k
awarded in grants to
Friends and
volunteer groups



Spearheaded raising
funds for **accessible**
piers and kayak lifts
in **three parks**

Dane County Parks Stats

4.25 MILLION
visitors a year



25

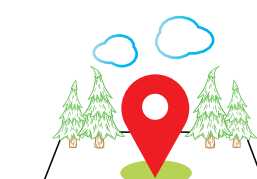
Recreational
Parks



&

38

additional natural
and cultural sites



17,000 acres



Served
5,000
youth in educational
programming in 2022



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In 2023, we are reducing our print publications in favor of e-newsletter communications. Make sure you are subscribed by signing up on our website!



Grant Projects

The Foundation has awarded more than \$52,000 to Dane County Park's Friends and volunteer groups to enhance education, interpretation, and volunteerism in the Dane County Parks. Thank you to these wonderful partners who are an important part of the education and conservation initiatives taking place in our parks.

The Foundation is proud to award grants to the following six groups for 2023 projects:

Access Ability Wisconsin (AAW) rents all-terrain outdoor wheelchairs and trailers for individuals to use for free. These chairs allow those with mobility issues to participate in outdoor educational programs, hike, fish, and explore the natural wonders of Dane County. With funding from FDCP, AAW will provide outdoor wheelchairs at five park events this year.

The Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA) aim to continue their outreach with the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin with two events: Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Winter Event and Ho-Chunk Nation Family Wellness through Parks and Outdoors Event. The purpose of these events is to provide fun and interesting educational opportunities for Ho-Chunk Nation youth to connect with Capital Springs Recreation Area, their ancestral homeland. You can read more about the origin of this project in the annual report's feature story.

The Friends of Donald Park will print updated interpretive brochures with maps to guide new visitors through the park. Donald County Park, located in the Driftless Area, has welcomed a significant increase in visitors due to the pandemic. The brochures will highlight the diverse natural features, prehistoric Native American and early European settler archaeological sites, and many other points of interest.

The Friends of Schumacher Farm Park will address the nature-deficit disorder by connecting youth from underserved areas of Dane County to fun, hands-on environmental education through seasonal events like hikes and workshops. Youth will learn about plants, wildlife, and phenology while also deepening their understanding of the natural world.

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy (FOPBC) will expand their Make a Memory Days program which provides adults with limited mobility and/or mild to moderate dementia with sensory-based nature experiences. Previous sessions have included forest bathing, slow and deliberate nature walks, local musicians, nature learning stations led by Master Naturalists, and music therapy.



Naturalist-led tours by trishaw made exploring Pheasant Branch Conservancy more accessible. Photo credit: John Kalsen

The Friends of Stewart Park will complete several grounds and restoration projects with funding from FDCP. They will repair their rotted picnic tables with the help of high school students in tech ed and engineering classes, update their kiosk display to better display restoration and recreational activity announcements, and rent a brush mower to complete the next stages of the Oak Savanna restoration project.

canoeing, gain knowledge of environmental science by using tools like binoculars and microscopes, and contribute to important conservation work through citizen science activities. Funding from the Foundation allowed Dane County Parks to pilot a special session of Junior Naturalists for Centro Hispano youth with all program costs covered. This pilot included a celebratory evening at Lunney Lake Farm Park with the Centro Hispano youth and their families.



In 2023, the Foundation will support the expansion of the Centro Hispano pilot into a full summer camp program called Las Naturalistas Jóvenes to allow 25 middle school students from Centro Hispano to experience a fully immersive nature experience.

Healthy Parks, Healthy You

Scan with
cell phone
camera



The Foundation for Dane County Parks, Dane County Parks, SSM Health, and Dean Health Plan are proud partners on the Healthy Parks, Healthy You initiative. Together, we aim to find new, creative ways to engage youth and families in improving their mental, physical, and emotional health through the use of our beautiful Dane County Parks system. Some of the highlights from last year include a partnership with Access Ability Wisconsin to provide all-terrain outdoor wheelchairs at park events and the installation of the third accessible pier and kayak lift funded through the Foundation's Healthy Parks, Healthy You program.

For 2023, we are excited to bring back the annual Dane County Parks Passport program through Healthy Parks, Healthy You. Visit at least five recreational parks, mark them on your passport, and submit. We will draw a submitted passport each quarter and the winner will receive a \$50 gift card. Scan the QR code to learn more!

One of the most fulfilling aspects of the Foundation's work is seeing the impact of funded projects. Below is the story of how the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area developed their relationship with the Ho-Chunk Nation in 2022 through a grant from the Foundation.

Reconnecting With Ho-Chunk Land

The Capital Springs Recreation Area is the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. Tribal members shared with leaders of the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA) that the community felt disconnected to the land. Working with Shelley Thundercloud, Center Director at Ho-Chunk Nation Madison Youth Services, FOCSRA hosted Youth Week to welcome Ho-Chunk families to explore the park and remake connections to their cultural history with the park. Youth took walks through woods and prairie, used binoculars to observe wildlife, played Ho-Chunk Nation traditional outdoor games, canoed on Lake Waubesa, fished, and discussed traditional Ho-Chunk uses of plants found at the park.

Clare Carlson, Naturalist for FOCSRA, believes that one of the most rewarding aspects of this initiative is the building of new relationships between communities: "The FOCSRA Board is appreciative and honored to be a part of these new friendships, and I know that they will carry us all forward to continue the good work of honoring the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation with the Ho-Chunk Nation, protecting the cultural and natural

resources of this wonderful park, and sharing our learned knowledge with all who visit here."

The relationship stems from an ongoing collaborative project with the Ho-Chunk Nation, FOCSRA, and other partners to develop updated interpretive resources reflecting the Ho-Chunk Nation's long cultural history at the Capital Springs Recreation Area. In 2023, thanks to funding from the Foundation for Dane County Parks, FOCSRA will also co-host Ho-Chunk family and youth programming, including a winter day at the Lussier Family Heritage Center with bonfire, fun prairie seed projects, a traditional Snow Snake game, and a winter hike or snowshoe. This summer, plans are in the works for a family wellness and nature day at the William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park, a unit within the Capital Springs Recreation Area.



FOCSRA co-hosted a the Dug-Out Canoe Celebration with the HCN, welcoming Bill Quackenbush and HCN Youth as they made an historic journey through the Four Lakes region in a dug-out wood canoe made from a Cottonwood tree from the Capital Springs Recreation Area. The journey began at Mendota County Park and ended at William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park where event attendees took dug-out canoe rides, enjoyed traditional food and drum music, and listened to speeches from community leaders. Photo credit: Clare Carlson

Junior Naturalists

Thanks to support from American Family Insurance and the Evjue Foundation, The Foundation for Dane County Parks was able to help Dane County Parks grow their Junior Naturalists education program in 2022 to introduce more youth to nature. This summer program helped youth increase their confidence in exploring nature through activities like hiking, fishing, and

Thank You To Our 2022 Donors!



\$25,000+

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\$5,000 - \$24,999

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\$1,000 - \$4,999

Aaron Mullins
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Message From Foundation President:

"Our Foundation continues to grow. That growth has benefited our Dane County Parks in ways that would not have been available just a few years ago. For example, we helped sponsor the Junior Naturalists program with the American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation through a partnership with County Parks staff and the Healthy Parks, Healthy You coalition. I wish you could have seen the excitement among the families from Centro Hispano who participated in the program as together they learned about the wonders of our natural world in our parks and shared that with each other. That program along with our many others mentioned in this Annual Report would not have been available without your generous gifts. Thank you for your support and confidence in the Foundation and our work." – Bill Lunney, President



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 Foundation allows us to
 continue making Dane County
 Parks beautiful, sustainable,
 and accessible to all.**



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