



# Gateway <sup>to the</sup> Outdoors

JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER / CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



## OUR VISION

Jester Park Nature Center will serve as one of Iowa's leading nature centers – a gateway to experience Iowa's natural environment.

## OUR MISSION

As a place where education and tourism intersect, Jester Park Nature Center will provide exceptional value and leadership through avenues of recreation, education and conservation.

## *The Land is Our Legacy*

We have a bond and we have a responsibility — to protect, preserve, and promote the land. Our duty is to wisely guide use of the land so all who live in Central Iowa can enjoy it for generations.

## *We need a focal point, a conservation gathering place.*

Jester Park Nature Center will be a place that not only welcomes those who come to learn or play, but also tells the story of the land they are about to enjoy. We need a center that puts our bond, our legacy, our responsibility into context for all who come.

We want all to enjoy the outdoors more. Understand it better. Care for it more deeply. Share in our common need to preserve what we have been given.

### *for* EDUCATION

Education is foundational to our mission. Jester Park Nature Center takes it to a new level and benefits tens of thousands of students, seniors, and families in our community.

### *for* RECREATION

We take care of the land because we should, we must. But we also enjoy it. Jester Park Nature Center will be the hub of recreational activity. Families will have a clear “starting point” to their adventures in nature.

### *for* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A place where tourism and education intersect, Jester Park Nature Center will provide exceptional value to this region. Outdoor nature-based recreation is one of the largest industries in Iowa.

### *for* ENVIRONMENT

We must do all we can to conserve and protect our environment. It is a shared responsibility. We all need clean water and air. We all need abundant, useful land. Jester Park Nature Center will bring to life this need to conserve.

### *for* PUBLIC HEALTH

Outdoor recreation will promote health, wellness, and quality of life for every park visitor regardless of age. By showing park patrons how and where to kayak, camp, hike, fish, and bike – to name just a few activities – the center enhances their lives.

### *for* OUR COMMUNITY

Take all of Iowa's urban centers – which is the only one without a nature center? Ours! Central Iowa needs this. This facility will be a regional destination and, at the same time, a comfortable gathering place for the community.

WHAT WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR BOND AND  
MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS... A CONSERVATION GATEWAY.

# Using the Environment for Education

For more than 35 years, Polk County Conservation environmental educators have been providing quality environmental education programming to people of all ages in the Greater Des Moines area. Recognized as one of the fastest growing urban populations in the Midwest, there is increased need and public demand for environmental education programming in our dynamic community.

More than 276,000 individuals have participated in one of 11,463 Polk County Conservation environmental education programs in the past eight years. When Jester Park Nature Center opens its doors, programming numbers are expected to double!

## THE JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER WILL:

- INCREASE** year-round environmental education opportunities
- EDUCATE** with interpretive exhibits on the importance of biodiversity, water quality, and conservation of natural resources
- INSPIRE** through enhanced STEM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programming
- PROMOTE** community health through increased outdoor skills programming and increased time in nature
- OFFER** rental equipment such as cross country skis, snowshoes, insect nets and fishing poles
- CREATE** a destination site for tourists to engage in outdoor discovery



**DR. THOMAS AHART, SUPERINTENDENT  
DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*“Students discovering insects in the prairie, crayfish in a wetland or a beaver chew along the stream in the woodland brings learning to life and has a positive impact on our urban students. Students who experience some form of education in the outdoors are more enthusiastic about learning and perform better academically.”*

**DAN COHEN, DIRECTOR  
BUCHANAN COUNTY CONSERVATION**

*“Within just a few years opening the Nature Center, we had visitors from all 50 states and more than 50 foreign countries. The Nature Center provides a more inviting place to encourage people to stop in, ask questions, find information, and increases use from tourists, area families, and adult groups.”*

*“Children today are growing into environmentally illiterate adults because of nature deprivation.”*

**RICHARD LOUV,  
LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS, 2005**

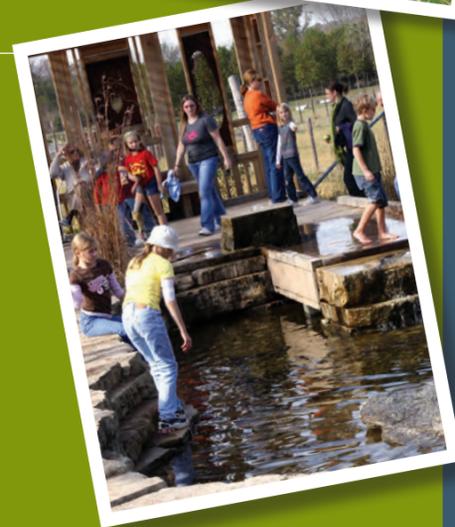
**THE CENTER WILL PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS, SHOWING THE RELEVANCE OF CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY TO STEM STUDIES.**

# Infusing STEM-based Programming Naturally

The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) program provides students with an innovative, problem solving, and discovery-based environment that focuses on real world application. The program will engage students in authentic, real-world problems through the infusion of technology and curriculum.

## NEW STEM-BASED PROGRAMMING POSSIBILITIES WITH A NATURE CENTER:

- Extended ecology and biology studies for K – college levels
- Teacher externships
- Numerous community based project learning opportunities such as native pollinator projects, water quality workshops, invasive species mapping, and green living programming
- STEM-based summer nature camps
- STEM-based nature focused Pre-K partnerships



*“My family and I met some friends at the Jester Park Playscape last weekend. The kids spent hours in the water area designing barges and dams with the rocks and wood provided. It was STEM heaven! I am excited to have a nature center that will provide more of these types of innovative learning opportunities.”*

**SARAH DERRY,**  
SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL  
STEM MANAGER  
DRAKE UNIVERSITY



## Cultivating Stewards of the Land

We have a bond...Iowa and the land. Prairie, woodlands, waterways. It shapes our character, forms the foundation of our prosperity, and guarantees our future. It also tells a story. The land is our legacy. Jester Park Nature Center will be surrounded by the natural beauty and educational value of prairie, woodland, wetland, stream, pond, river, and reservoir. It is critically important that all of these habitats are within close proximity of the center so our educators can interpret biodiversity at its finest.

Polk County Conservation Board has made water quality a priority focus in the coming years. We will be a leader in managing for and advocating on behalf of improving water quality within Polk County and the State of Iowa. This nature center will:

- Serve as a training base for the Polk County Water Monitoring Program
- Allow for more in-depth science and nature-based ecology programming, discussions, and forums
- Host hands-on water themed special events
- Demonstrate effective and successful restoration efforts affecting water quality
- Showcase local watershed restoration and greenbelt expansion efforts

*“Citizen engagement is a critical piece of the water quality puzzle – the goals that we set for Iowa’s waters, how we achieve those goals, and setting of water quality priorities require citizen involvement at every step. The new Nature Center in Polk County will serve as a catalyst in protecting and improving local waterways. In the Center’s rich learning environment, citizens will learn about the issues facing our resources and how they can become active in water quality stewardship.”*

**MARY SKOPEC, PH.D. IOWATER & STREAM MONITORING COORDINATOR**

**SEEING CHILDREN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN STEM IN THE CLASSROOMS & AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS IS WHAT THE STEM COUNCIL IS ALL ABOUT.**

— **Kim Reynolds**, Lt. Governor and Co-Chair of the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council

# Health, Wellness and Quality of Life Outdoors

Jester Park Nature Center will serve as an outdoor recreation hub where both education and access intersect resulting in a myriad of available activities that include hiking, birding, canoeing, geocaching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, and camping.

This center will embrace the opportunity to partner with local health care agencies and initiatives to improve our state's overall health and well-being.

*"Principal Financial Group supports projects that add to the quality of life and promote healthy living. The Nature Center will provide our employees and their families a place to check out outdoor rental equipment from fishing poles and GPS units to snowshoes and cross-country skis. These activities encourage healthy lifestyles and outdoor discovery."*

LARRY ZIMPLEMAN, CEO, PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP

*"Polk County Conservation and UnityPoint Health-Des Moines have been partnering to encourage people to **Do More Outdoors**. The physical and mental health benefits people derive from being outdoors is significant. Educating the public about outdoor health and recreation will be enhanced greatly because of the Jester Park Nature Center."*

JOSEPH F. CORFITS, JR., CFO, UNITYPOINT HEALTH

*"Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department values the expansion of environmental education that this center will provide throughout the county. The interpretation inside the Nature Center will build the confidence of children and adults alike, encouraging both to use green spaces as much as possible — for their health and enjoyment."*

BEN PAGE, DIRECTOR, DES MOINES PARKS & RECREATION



## Art Shares in the Beauty of Nature

Jester Park Nature Center will showcase local art pieces in the Art Alcove for visitors to enjoy. Art will be thoughtfully infused throughout the nature center from the welcome sign to the hiking trails and tie in with the existing art at the Jester Park Playscape and Elk & Bison Exhibit. The incorporation of art into the center's programming will come alive through traveling art exhibits, cross-curriculum fieldtrips with an art component, nature and art camps, public program offerings with artistic offerings, such as, creating willow art pieces and artistic bird houses and feeders.

*"I applaud the efforts of Polk County Conservation to incorporate art and work with local artist to aid in telling the conservation story. As a place where tourism and education intersect, this facility will provide a unique venue to show collaboration and creative partnerships via art and nature. The conservation center will combine the power of scientific discovery with the wonders of exploring nature and the arts."*

KIM POAM LOGAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
METRO ARTS ALLIANCE



# Economic Vitality and Tourism

As a place where education and tourism intersect, this facility will provide exceptional value to this region. This center will be a significant tourist attraction and welcome center, portal to Polk County's family of parks, and Jester's Park new front porch. Tourists, students, educators, families, and others will connect through this center to the natural playscape and bison/elk exhibit, restored woodlands, Saylorville Lake, and a network of nature trails that will immerse people back into nature.

**OUTDOOR NATURE-BASED RECREATION** is one of the largest industries in Iowa. Iowa's natural areas are vital to the state's economy.

**BUSINESSES** benefit from having quality parks, trails, and outdoor recreation available for their employees. Potential employees and entrepreneurs make job choices based on outdoor opportunities.

**VISITOR** survey results from the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau indicate that 62% of respondents marked *Outdoor Activities & Parks* as a preferred interest of theirs. The CatchDesMoinesActive.com website topped 14,800 visitors in the first three months after it was launched.

*"The recent Iowa Trip planning survey of families and adults shows a high demand for tourists seeking outdoor opportunities, visiting parks, and seeking outdoor wildlife experiences. The Jester Park Nature Center will provide visitors a destination for outdoor discovery as a portal to the outdoors."*

**ANN VOGELBACHER,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CENTRAL IOWA TOURISM



**THE CENTER WILL BE A NATURAL ATTRACTION TO FAMILIES, MILLENNIALS, AND INDIVIDUALS SEEKING WILD PLACES.**

**TOM HAZELTON, CEO**  
IOWA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARDS

*"Attracting and nurturing a vibrant workforce requires strong economic growth and bountiful healthy quality of life opportunities. Across the state, county conservation facilities and programs serve as catalysts on both fronts - providing a huge local economic impact! This visionary flagship facility will compliment the multitude of programs, services and dedicated staff in providing unparalleled opportunities for tens of thousands of visitors for years to come."*

**TODD ASHBY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
DES MOINES AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

*"This center not only provides much-needed elements for stewardship and education in Central Iowa, but it also provides a gateway to the entirety of our region's economic and tourism offerings. It will enrich lives in the MPO region and a population that is projected to grow by as much as 50% in the next 30-35 years. Developing facilities that launch people outdoors aligns perfectly with our plan's goals promoting healthy places and people through high quality natural environments and education."*



Jester Park Nature Center embodies the missions and goals of *The Tomorrow Plan* and *Capital Crossroads* in achieving long-term environmental health for our region.

# Exciting and Innovative Partnerships in Motion!

Through various collaborations with school districts and universities, non-profits, municipalities, and more... Jester Park Nature Center is the hub for outdoor education and recreation in central Iowa.

## WE SHARE PROUD PARTNERSHIPS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES WITH...

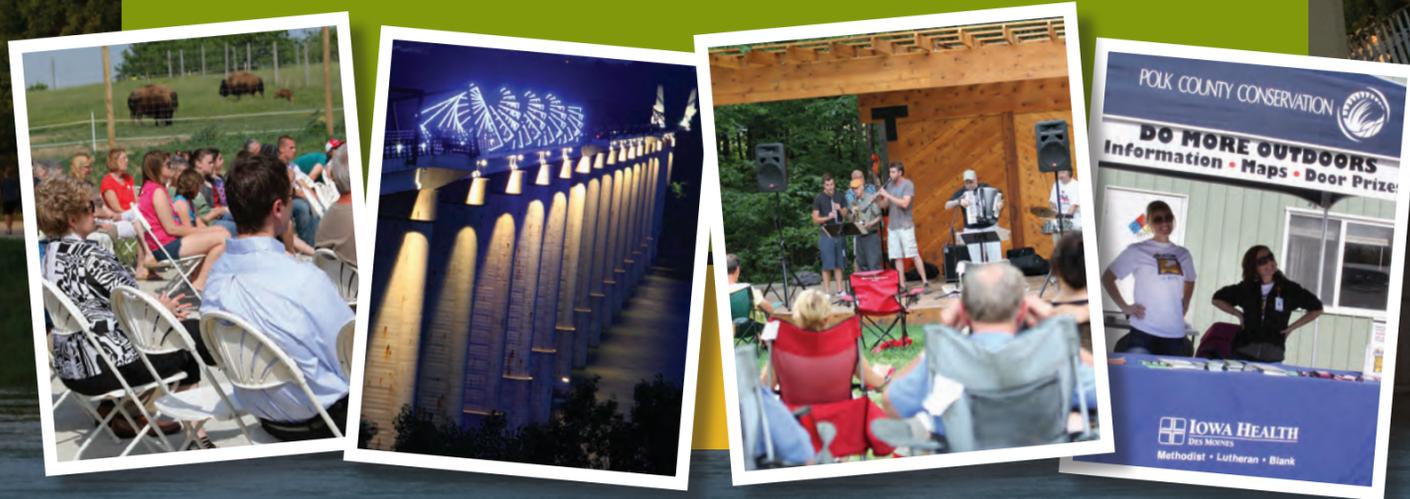
- Blank Park Zoo
- Central IA Tourism
- Cities of Grimes, Ankeny, Des Moines, West Des Moines, Polk City, Granger, Pleasant Hill
- Des Moines Area Community College
- Des Moines Izaak Walton League
- Des Moines Water Works
- Drake University
- Greater Des Moines Partnership
- Greater Des Moines Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Great Outdoors Foundation
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Iowa State University
- Local Parent Teacher Associations
- Local Boy and Girl Scout Troops
- Metros Arts Alliance of Greater Des Moines
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Polk County's 10 Public School Districts, Parochial Schools, & Home School Educators
- Polk Soil and Water Conservation District
- Numerous corporate partners
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- UnityPoint Health - Des Moines

Support for Jester Park Nature Center has been generous and inspiring. Listed below are some of the initial public and private patrons that we would like to thank and recognize as of October 2015. This list is not all-inclusive. A complete list of contributors is available.

- Polk County Water and Land Legacy bond referendum
- Polk County Board of Supervisors (*dedicated to office space costs*)
- Great Outdoors Foundation (*our project partner*)
- Vision Iowa- Community Attractions & Tourism
- Cities of Des Moines, West Des Moines, Ankeny, Johnston, Grimes, Polk City, & Granger
- Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines
- Robert Jester
- Fred & Charlotte Hubbell Charitable Foundation
- Principal Financial Group
- EMC Insurance
- Casey's General Stores
- Scheels
- Wells Fargo
- Blank Children's Hospital
- The Graham Group

**GREG EDWARDS, PRESIDENT & CEO**  
GREATER DES MOINES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

*"Jester Park's focus on citizen engagement with diverse natural systems through quality environmental education and outdoor recreation provides a place for our communities and visitors to learn about water, natural systems, sustainability and the outdoors, educating youth, families and adults."*





## What we Need Now...

The need for the Jester Park Nature Center is clear. And the benefits for our entire community are clear as well. Our plan allocates \$10 million exactly where it needs to be — in innovative development of the center’s site, responsible construction of the facility, and effective outfitting of the interior and outdoor spaces. We have needs to meet, and the plan to meet them.

### WHAT WE NEED NOW, IS YOU!

With more than \$6 million committed, your support is vital in helping raise the remaining \$4 million. Together, we will provide an environmentally responsible entryway — parking, building, surrounding grounds — to all that Jester Park offers. In Iowa, the land is our legacy. Let’s educate a new generation about the vital need to conserve it. Let’s greatly expand the number of Central Iowans who use and enjoy it. Let’s build the Jester Park Nature Center...for our community, for our legacy, for all of us.

Gifts of all sizes are needed. The contributions of many will combine to form a solid foundation of support. Together, we can build the Jester Park Nature Center. All gifts to the campaign are tax deductible through the Great Outdoors Foundation which is a 501(c)(3) organization. You can help now by contributing online at [www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsfoundation.org) or by sending a gift to PO Box 8071, Des Moines, IA 50301.



POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION • 515-323-5300  
PCCB\_INFO@POLKCOUNTYIOWA.GOV  
WWW.LEADINGYOUOUTDOORS.ORG

*“This is a facility that will serve over half a million people in Polk County and Central Iowa each year. At the Conservation Board, we say we are **Leading You Outdoors**. The Nature Center will be the doorway through which we lead thousands of people into nature. And it’s where we will educate them and excite them about Iowa’s amazing natural resources.”*

**RICHARD LEOPOLD, DIRECTOR**  
POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD





*When we see land as a  
community to which we belong,  
we may begin to use it with  
love and respect.*

**ALDO LEOPOLD**



*Gateway to the Outdoors*

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