



WOLF RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025



Learning. Just as nature intended.



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 Joe Walewski, **Naturalist Training Manager**
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Program Assistant

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 Jonny Tostenson
 Leah Kessler

Mentor Naturalists:

Logan Woods
 Emmerson Kuhl
 Haley McCauley

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 Carter Acker, **Maintenance Technician**
 Bob Wolke, **Maintenance Technician**
 Doug Dusenberry, **Maintenance Technician**

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 Barb Doherty, **Custodian**
 Nash Hanson, **Custodian**

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 Louise Covert, **Prep Cook**
 Beth Lane, **Prep Cook**
 Valerie Melander, **Prep Cook**

Organic Farm Team

Sarah Mayer, **Farm Manager**
 Lucy Carlson, **Farm Assistant**

MEMORANDUM FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Peter Smerud



When I think about this past year, one word keeps coming back to me: resilience.

Not as an abstract concept, but as something I watched unfold — in the land, in the young people who arrived nervous and left transformed, and in the community that has always rallied around this place. After nearly four decades here, that still moves me.

This year felt like a culmination of so much shared work. In June, Minnesota passed Outdoor School for All — legislation that affirms what we've long believed: immersive outdoor education isn't a luxury, but a foundational part of how children learn and grow. We're proud to stand alongside fellow residential environmental learning centers across the state in making that a reality, and grateful to partners like LCCMR and the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, whose support continues to expand our scholarship program and open our doors to more students every year.

On campus, we invested in infrastructure that will serve students for generations. Following several years of damaging rain events, our road reconstruction project was fully funded by FEMA and rebuilt with climate-ready improvements. We installed our first automated backup boiler system to ensure we can serve the community year-round. New microscopes, updated Summit Lodge furnishings, a 15-passenger van, snow equipment: each investment is, at its core, about removing obstacles between students and learning.

But what I carry with me most from this year is the learning itself.

Our Native Narrative work moved fully into implementation, woven now into the curriculum across our campus. Becky Meyer, Wolf Ridge's Program Director, and I had the honor of presenting this work at the Association of Nature Center Administrators' National Outdoor School Summit, sharing how environmental education and Indigenous perspectives can genuinely strengthen one another when the relationship is built with care and authenticity.

Students banded birds and contributed data to continental conservation efforts. They studied peregrine falcons alongside members of the Peregrine Banding Society and examined lichens as bioindicators of environmental health. At Wolf Ridge, science isn't something students read about; it's something they do and contribute to in real time.

Camp enrollment is growing. Teachers are deepening their craft through our Teacher Training Institute. High school students are stepping into leadership through our summer naturalist programs. And scholarships are ensuring that the experience of this place isn't determined by a family's financial situation.

As I prepare for retirement in the coming year, I find myself more grateful than I can easily say. Wolf Ridge has never been about any one person. It is a community of students who discover something important about themselves here, educators who give their lives to this work, alumni who carry these experiences far into the world, and donors who understand, deeply, what happens when young people learn where nature teaches.

Thank you for being part of this.

The future of Wolf Ridge is strong, resilient, and bright — and it belongs to all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Smerud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "P" and "S".

Peter Smerud
Wolf Ridge ELC Executive Director

SCHOOLS & CROUPS

FISCAL YEAR SEPTEMBER 1, 2024 TO AUGUST 31, 2025

Ain Dah Yung Center
Andersen United Middle School
Ashby Elementary School
Assumption School
Awakening Spirit Homeschool
Collaborative
Badger School
Barnum Elementary
Bay View Elementary
Beacon Academy
Bethlehem Academy
Birch Grove Community School
Birch Lake Elementary
Blue Earth Area Middle School
Breck Middle School
Brooklyn Center
Bug O Nay Ge Shig School
Carleton College
Cathedral School
Cavalier
Central Cass Middle School
Central Middle School
Chisago Lakes Middle School
City of Lakes Waldorf School
College of Saint Scholastica Biology Department
Community of Saints
Congdon Park Elementary
Cook County Enviro Club
DaVinci Academy of Arts & Science
Dowling Elementary School
Duluth Nature Group
Ecohealth Quest
Ely Memorial Middle School
Emanuel Lutheran
FAIR Middle School
First Lutheran Church- Detroit Lakes
Fisher Public School
Five Hawks Elementary
Forest Lake Area Community Ed
Friends School of MN
Girl Scouts North Shore Service Unit
Glen Lake Elementary
Glendale Elementary
Great Expectations Fall
Hamilton Ridge
Hazel Park Prep Academy
Hermantown Elementary
Hilltop Primary
Hinckley Finlayson Elementary
Hmong College Prep Academy
Holy Name of Jesus School
Homecroft Elementary
Humboldt High School
International Spanish Language Academy
Jeffers Pond Elementary
Jefferson Elementary
John Ireland Catholic School
Kaleidoscope Charter School
Kelliher Public School
King of Grace Lutheran
La Ola del Lago
Lake County 4-H Water Watchers
Lakes International Language Academy
Lakewood Elementary
Laura MacArthur Elementary
Lester Park School
Lowell Elementary School
Loyola Catholic School
Manvel Public School
Many Rivers Montessori
Maple Lake Elementary
Marshall County Central High School
Marshall School
Midway School
Miltona Science Magnet
Minnetonka East Middle School
Minto School
Mobilize Green
Mounds Park Academy
Mounds View Community Ed
MTS Elementary
Murray Middle School
New City School
New Discoveries Montessori Academy
New London Spicer MS
North Metro Flex Academy
North Shore Community School
North Shore Forest Collaborative Meeting
North Star and Raleigh Academies
Northern Lights Community School
Nyquist School
Oak Crest Elementary
Oak Ridge
Oak-Land Middle School
Onamia Junior High
Osseo Indian Education
Our Lady of the Lake
Our Village School
Park River Area School
Phoenix Academy of Arts and Science
Phoenix Learning Center
Prairie Creek Community School
Prairie Lutheran School
Presentation of Mary
Red Lake
Redtail Ridge Elementary
River Grove School
Roseau School District
Saint Rose of Lima Catholic School
Sawtooth Mountain Elementary
School of Environmental Studies
School of St Philip
Schoolcraft Learning Community
Sejong Academy
Shell Lake School District
Shir Tikvah
Shirley Hills Elementary
Solon Springs
St Mary's School-Morris
St Anthony Park
St Charles Borromeo
St Croix Catholic
St Croix Preparatory Academy
St John School of Little Canada
St Mary School - New Richmond
St Marys School-Breckenridge
St Patrick School
St Paul School of Northern Lights
St Pauls Lutheran School
St Peter's School
St Stephen's Catholic School
St Thomas More Catholic School
Stella Maris
Stillwater Middle School
Stowe Elementary
Trinity Lutheran/Our Lady of the Prairie
TRIO Upward Bound- UMD
Triton High School
Two Harbors Enviro Club
Two Harbors High School
UMD MS Gateways Program
Valley-Edinburg
Warroad Middle School
Watershed High School
Watertown-Mayer Middle School
West Village Homeschool Coop
Westwood Elementary
Wild Wonder Nature Journaling Conference
William Kelley Elementary
Willow River Elementary
Windom Community School
Winterquist Elementary
YES! MN

LEARNING. JUST AS NATURE INTENDED.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

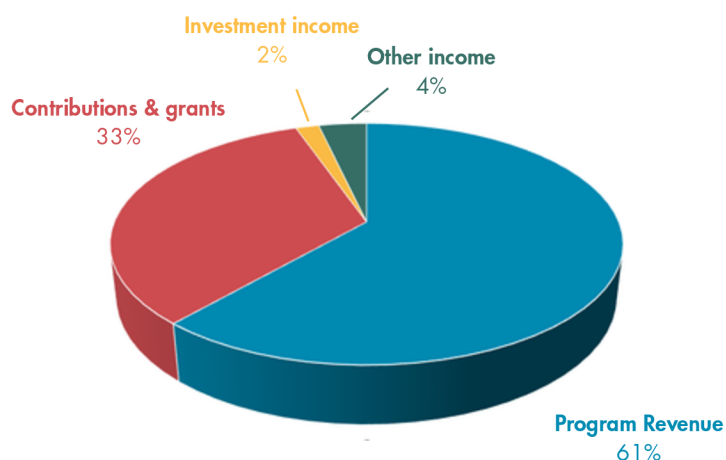
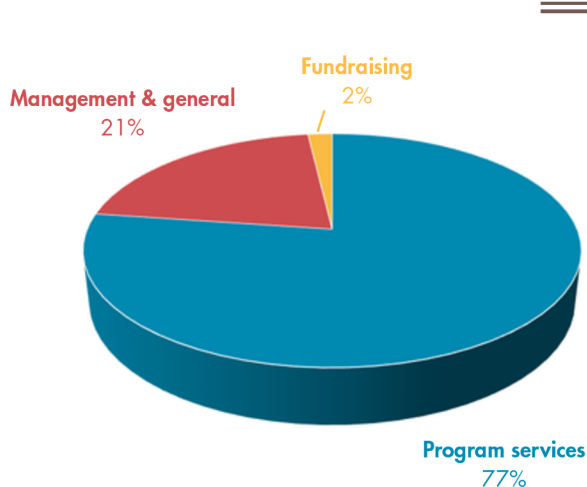
Fiscal year: September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

Expenses

Program services	\$3,388,643
Management & general	\$917,932
Fundraising	\$82,207
Total expenses before depreciation*	\$4,388,782
Depreciation	\$678,954
Total expense	<u>\$3,709,828</u>

Revenue and Other Support

Program revenue	\$2,250,177
Contributions and Grants	\$1,215,544
Investment income	\$63,813
Other income	\$131,471
Total Revenue	<u>\$3,661,005</u>



Statement of Financial Position

Current assets	\$608,938
Fixed assets	\$11,768,169
Operating Lease Right of Use	\$17,228
Investments & supporting funds	
Endowment	\$596,038
Board restricted reserve	\$491,810
Total Assets	<u>\$13,482,383</u>
Total liabilities	\$1,168,656
Restricted net assets	\$1,178,675
Unrestricted net assets	\$11,135,052
Total liabilities & equity	<u>\$13,482,383</u>

DONORS

FISCAL YEAR SEPTEMBER 1, 2024 TO AUGUST 31, 2025

\$10,000+

Patricia Coppo and Susan McCabe
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University of Minnesota
Upper Lakes Foods, Inc
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Bill Burns
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Paul and Joan Fuchs
Donna Hill
Jan Kent
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Charles Lea

Leaders of the Pack:

The Wolf Ridge *Leaders of the Pack* are visionary supporters who have chosen to include Wolf Ridge in their estate plans. Through their enduring commitment, these individuals are ensuring that future generations will continue to be inspired by the natural world and be prepared to care for it. Their legacy sustains and strengthens the mission of Wolf Ridge for decades to come.

If you would like to consider joining this special community, we would be honored to speak with you. Your legacy can help shape the environmental stewards of tomorrow. More information can be found at www.wolf-ridge.org/support or contact Misha Evertz at misha.evertz@wolf-ridge.org.

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71
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