

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

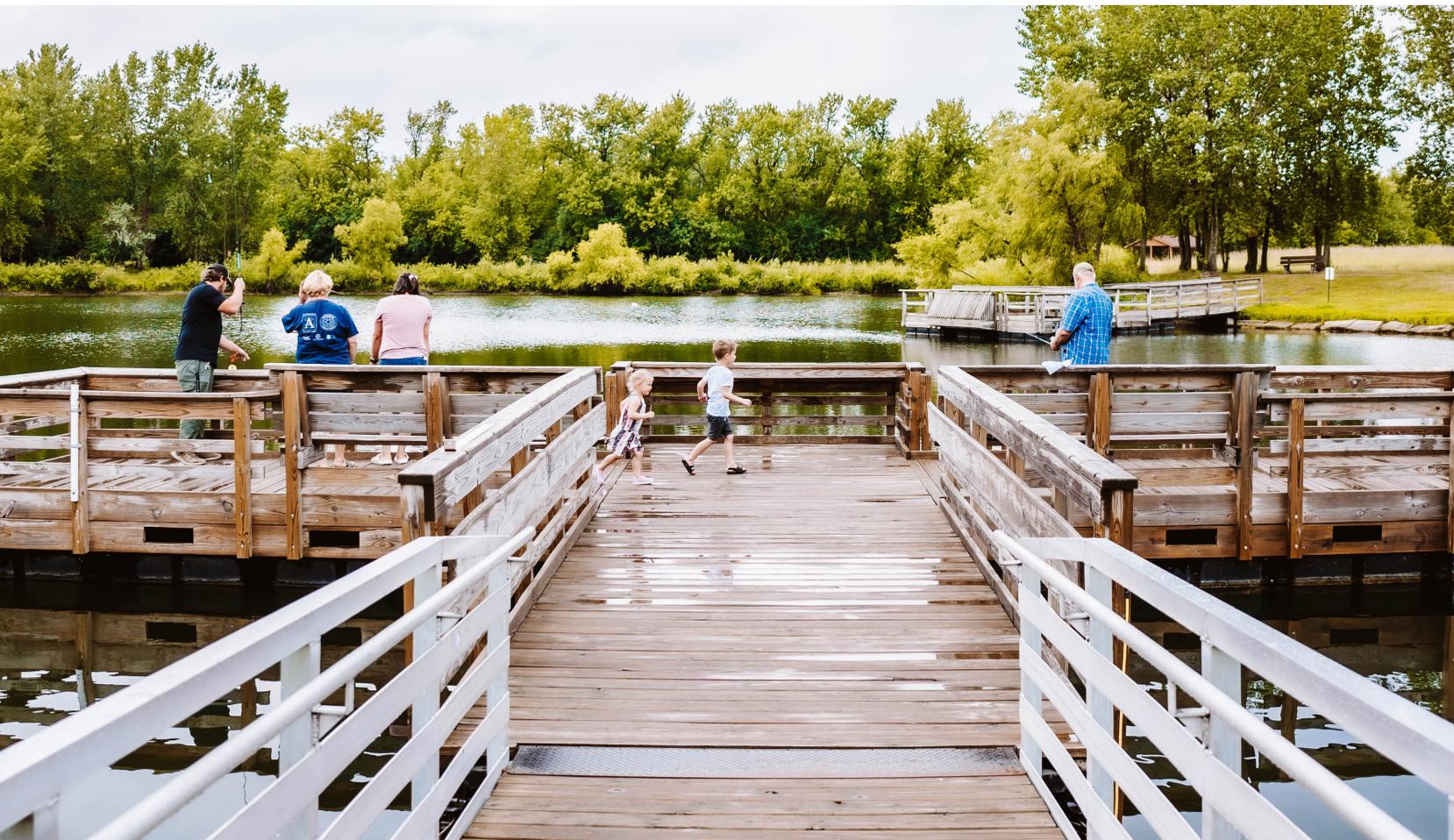
— SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA —



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*South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks serves and connects people and families to the outdoors through effective management of our state's parks, fisheries, and wildlife resources.*



# INTRODUCTION



Hello from Sioux Falls!

2023 was quite the year for the Game, Fish and Parks Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls! The Campus hosted numerous programs, increased our loaner resources, and began the planning process for our big expansion project.

First, we want to thank our participants. The Outdoor Campus is utilized by folks of all ages and walks of life, wanting to learn more about the outdoors and what South Dakota has to offer. Programming staff, interns and volunteers love what they get to do because of our participants! From those who are just starting their journey as an outdoor user to those who are looking to sharpen their skills, there is a class at the Outdoor Campus to engage them.

To our Outdoor Campus volunteers, we are so thankful for the numerous hours you have given to ensure that programming runs well, and the public feels welcome. We have volunteers at the Outdoor Campus who sit at our welcome desk, help with our classes, lead our classes, and some that take mentees into the field for a supported hunt. Along with our volunteers, we want to thank those who have partnered with us and volunteered access to their land for our supported hunts. Our Hunting 101 program would not run as smoothly without these access points and the partnerships that come with them.

Our staff and interns deserve special recognition for their work throughout the 2023 calendar year! Staffs' passion for hunting, fishing, conservation science and outdoor skills comes out in all the classes they design and implement for the public. The interns we hire every year work to bring new and fresh ideas and that's evident in many of new programs they create.

The Friends of the Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls has also worked in 2023 to provide an outside view for advising the Outdoor Campus, help in fundraising for the expansion project, and create a new fund that would aid the Outdoor Campus in creating access to our programming.

As you peruse this 2023 Annual Report, you will find more detailed information that highlights the work of our volunteers, interns, and staff. This document showcases the efforts of the Outdoor Campus to create outdoor users, equip them with the skills to enjoy the outdoor safely, and also help others get into the field.

As we look toward 2024, more exciting initiatives are yet to come including breaking ground on the outdoor range and continued planning for the indoor expansion.

Finally, I want to reiterate a thank you to all the participants, volunteers, interns, staff, and the Friends Board that make the Game, Fish and Parks Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls such a success!

Please swing by and see what we are doing! And always remember to have fun and get outside!

**David Parker**

*Director of the Outdoor Campus Sioux Falls*

## WHAT IS THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS SIOUX FALLS?

The Outdoor Campus is one educational outreach avenue of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP). There are two Outdoor Campuses within the state, located in Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

## HISTORY OF THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS

The Outdoor Campus' story started in 1990 when the City of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department and GFP created a partnership with four key purposes: (1) introducing and empowering folks of all ages to enjoy hunting, fishing, and the outdoors, (2) preserving a valuable green space within Sioux Falls, (3) creating a new GFP Regional Office, and (4) bolstering the mission and vision of both the GFP and the Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department. Over the next 7 years, the Outdoor Campus was created through planning, legislation, architecture designs, fundraising, construction, and numerous volunteers.

With construction beginning in 1996 and doors opening to the public on June 7, 1997, the Outdoor Campus has been proud to offer free programming over the past 26.5 years. Campus educational programming involves hunting, fishing, trapping, conservation and environmental science, and outdoor skills. With seasonal programs running throughout the year and participants ranging in age, background, and experience, the Outdoor Campus has been a haven of learning.

- *SINCE 1997,*
- **21,420 PROGRAMS**
- **534,394 STUDENTS**
- **5,089 PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOLS**
- **3,069 VOLUNTEERS**
- *THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS HAS THRIVED*



# OUTDOOR CAMPUS SIOUX FALLS STAFF

## PERMANENT STAFF



**DAVID PARKER**

*Director*



**JEAN OLSON**

*Senior Secretary*



**JEFF MERKLE**

*Nights and Weekends  
Manager*



**DEREK  
KLAWITTER**

*Groups and Homeschool  
Coordinator*



**SANDY RICHTER**

*Community and Special  
Events Coordinator*



**JASON NELSON**

*Outreach Coordinator*



**PAIGE O'FARRELL**

*Volunteer Coordinator*

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## SEASONAL STAFF



**STEVE GASPAR**

*HuntSAFE Instructor*



**VINCE WEBER**

*HuntSAFE Instructor*

IN 2023, THIS INITIATIVE LED TO:

**12**  
TRADITIONAL  
HUNTSafe CLASSES

**11**  
FIELD DAY ONLY  
HUNTSafe CLASSES

**318**  
STUDENTS

**192**  
STUDENTS

The GFP Outdoor Campus in conjunction with the Regional Wildlife Office, employs two seasonal employees who are the key contacts for HuntSAFE in the Sioux Falls area. These positions were new as of 2022 due in part to the need of this growing metropolis.

## CONTRACT STAFF



**JOE SALVATTI**

*School Program  
Coordinator*

The Outdoor Campus is constantly working to build relationships within the community. The Outdoor Campus has held two contractual positions for the last 3 years that have helped extend programming reach.

Through field trips to the Outdoor Campus, in school programming, and virtual programming, this position works to provide educational opportunities for school aged students about South Dakota and its wildlife.

IN 2023, THIS INITIATIVE LED TO:

**76**  
SCHOOLS

**5,126**  
PARTICIPANTS

**6,274**  
CONTACT HOURS\*

\* Contact hours = # of participants x # of hours of programming



**ISAAC FULL**

*R3 and Veterans  
Coordinator*

This contract position provided through a partnership between GFP and Pheasants Forever that focuses on recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters across the state along with a focus on veterans.

One unique offering during the 2023 season was a Women on the Wing Pheasant Hunt. This was a 3-day, 2-night pheasant hunting experience for 12 women. The event was led by Pheasants Forever and GFP staff (majoritively females). Isaac applied for/received grant funding for this program, and also helped lead and coordinate the event.

POSITION ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023:

**13**  
EVENTS

**79**  
PARTICIPANTS

## INTERNS

Depending on the season, the Outdoor Campus Hires between 5-11 interns to help in offering programming to the public. These interns are sophomore level or above and full-time university students.

### TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS

**Naturalist** – Outdoor educators who help in teaching hunting, fishing, trapping, conservation and environmental science, and outdoor skills classes.

**Horticulture** – Maintain the Outdoor Campus Butterfly Garden and Playscape area.

**Outreach** – Work to provide programming outside of the Sioux Falls area, to groups in southeast South Dakota.

**Brookings Outreach** – Work to provide programming at the Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center and the Dakota Nature Park.

**Volunteer Coordinator** – Works to ensure the volunteer program runs smoothly.

**\*NEW\* School Coordinator** – Assists the School Coordinator in providing quality educational programming to schools.

### OUTDOOR CAMPUS INTERNS

Every summer, interns create and implement their own classes, which include:

#### Introduction to Prehistoric Hunting – Atlatl Basics:

» This class taught students the history of the atlatl, current laws and regulations on using these weapons to hunt today, and then took students outside to try their hand at throwing techniques.

#### Introduction to Firearms for Adult Beginners:

» This class familiarized participants with safe firearm use and handling skills. The class discussed 3 main types of firearms: rifles, shotguns, and handguns. Students enjoyed a hands-on class followed by a class at the gun range.

## BROOKINGS OUTREACH INTERNS

### Events at the Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center:

17  
EVENTS

486  
PARTICIPANTS

### Events at Dakota Nature Park:

38  
EVENTS

361  
PARTICIPANTS

### Class Highlights:

**First Responder Wild Game Feed:** Local police officers and firefighters were invited to partake in the event and taste a variety of wild game, such as deer, pheasant, beaver, crawfish, antelope, and rabbit. For this event, 42 first responders attended, and all tried something new.

**Halloween at the Park:** This event took place at both locations in Brookings. At the Dakota Nature Park, 100 participants showed up to paint bat boxes and either take them home or donate them to the park to be put in the field. At the Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center, 66 participants showed up to enjoy some Halloween themed archery and pumpkin painting.



## VOLUNTEERS

The Outdoor Campus Volunteer Program offers the opportunity for individuals and groups to join our educational and conservation initiatives. The Outdoor Campus has volunteer positions to help with gardening/landscaping, the information desk, educational assistance, and community service.

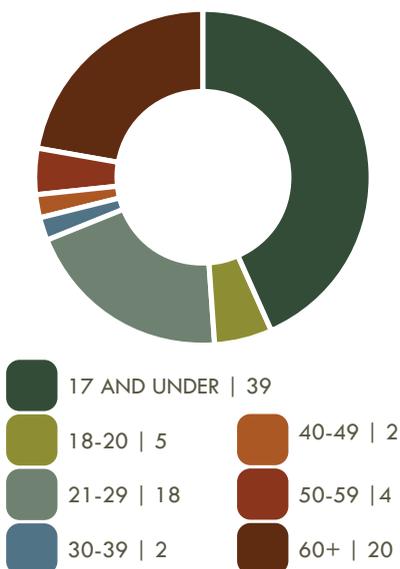


## VOLUNTEER MENTORS

The Outdoor Campus also offers a unique volunteer opportunity called the Volunteer Mentor Program. This program offers the opportunity to adults that are South Dakota Residents, pass a background check, hold a HuntSAFE card, and have a firm knowledge in hunting and shooting sports. These individuals help in our Hunting 101 Program, which is a comprehensive hunting course for turkey, deer, and pheasant hunts.

- » Steve G.- 10 Hours
- » Brent J. - 125 Hours
- » Rex J. - 196 Hours
- » Eric O. - 121 Hours
- » Kurt S. - 110 Hours
- » Ernie T. - 205 Hours
- **Total hours: 767**

## VOLUNTEERS BY AGE



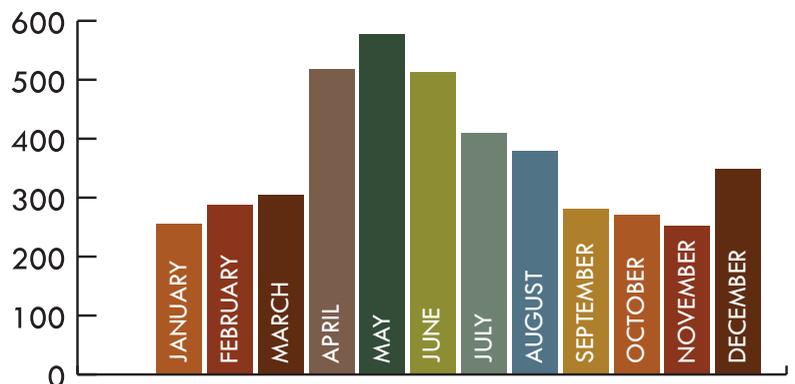
## VOLUNTEER GROUPS

- » Resource for Human Development (61 hours)
- » University of Sioux Falls – Culture for Service Day (51 hours)
- » Midco (18 hours)

## 100 HOURS CLUB

- » Cheryl U. – 421.33 Hours
- » Mike G. – 322.75 Hours
- » Masako G. – 316.75 Hours
- » Ernie T. - 297.77 Hours
- » Rex J. – 196 Hours
- » Steve M. – 163.55 Hours
- » Bobby M. – 155.92 Hours
- » Jan P. – 155.5 Hours
- » Eric O. - 144 Hours
- » Keanu B. - 138.15 Hours
- » Kurt S. – 110 Hours

## MONTHLY VOLUNTEER HOURS





## FRIENDS OF THE OUTDOOR CAMPUS

The purpose of this Committee is to serve in an ongoing advisory role and to work collaboratively with the Director of the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus to provide advice and insight on facility needs and potential improvements, projects, initiatives, and education programming priorities at the Outdoor Campus.

### BOARD MEMBERS

- » Board Chair – Jan Nicolay
- » Board Vice Chair – Tim Kromminga
- » Board Member – Ryan Brown (1983-2023)
- » Board Member - Amanda Oines
- » Board Member – Eric Olson
- » Board Member – Derek Maassen
- » Board Member – Kathy Anderson
- » Board Member – Brian Klatt
- » Board Member – Royce Meritt
- » Board Member – Jeff Scherschligt
- » Board Member – Cheryl Ulvestad
- » Board Member - Eric Kurtz
- » Board Member - Jamie Simko
- » Board Member – Emmett Keyser
- » Ex Officio Member – Kristina Coby, SDPWF
- » Ex Officio Member – David Parker, GFP
- » Ex Officio Member - Kip Rounds, GFP

### During the 2023 calendar year:

- » The Friends Board went from a board of 11 to a board of 13 by adding two new members.
- » The board in cooperation with the SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation helped in the fundraising efforts for the Outdoor Campus Expansion, bringing the donated funds just shy of the \$3 million goal.
- » The Friends Board finalized an endowment that is held at the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation. The goal of this endowment is to help create access to The Outdoor Campus and access to the outdoors.


**SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ENDOWMENT OR TO GIVE.**



# PROGRAMMING AND CLASSES

The Outdoor Campus offers a variety of programs that fit into the following categories:

- » **Community** – Programs that are open to anyone in the public through registration.
  - Open House – community programs that are open to anyone in the public without registration.
- » **Group** – Programs open to “groups” (10 participants or more) that can be reserved by appointment.
- » **Homeschool** – Programs open to students who are currently enrolled as a homeschool student.
- » **School** – Programs offered as field trips to the Outdoor Campus, in class presentations, or virtual programs that are done through the local school systems.
- » **Outreach** – Programs that are made available to communities that are outside of the community reserved by appointment.
- » **Teacher Trainings** – Trainings put on by the Outdoor Campus such as FishSD, Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, HuntSAFE Instructor and HuntSAFE for Schools, and National Archery in the Schools. These can be made available for Continuing Ed Credits or Undergraduate/Graduate Credits (through partnering with local universities).
- » **Hunting 101** – Comprehensive hunting program that teaches students how to purchase a license, time at the range, time in the field, and time processing (if a successful harvest) either a deer or turkey.
- » **Special Event** – Raptor Rendezvous, Women’s Try It Night, and the Gear Swap are just a couple of the programs the Outdoor Campus offers on a “larger” scale to the public. Some require registration and others do not.

IN 2023, THERE WERE:

**939**  
CLASSES OFFERED

**20,132**  
PARTICIPANTS

## SPECIALTY COURSE OFFERINGS:

- » **Hunting 101 – Spring 2023 Turkey Hunts**
  - 20 (18 youth, 2 adults) (all were first time hunters)
  - 14 turkeys harvested
- » **Hunting 101 – Fall 2023 Deer Hunts**
  - 66 hunters (43 youth, 23 adults) (36 first-time hunters)
  - 60 deer harvested
- » **Hunting 101 – Fall 2023 Veteran Deer Hunts**
  - In 2023, the Dakota Gray Ghost Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation sponsored 10 resident disabled veteran hunts. These hunts included time at the range, time hunting and if successful harvest of the deer. Outdoor Campus Staff and Dakota Gray Ghost Chapter volunteers helped take participants into the field for the hunts.
    - 10 veteran hunters (3 first-time hunters)
    - 8 deer harvested
- » **Hunting 101 – Pheasant Hunt 2023**
  - 3 hunters (all first-time hunters)
  - 1 pheasant harvested
- » **George H. W. Bush Vamos a Pescar**
  - This 5-part series class specific to Hispanic and multi-cultural families was offered through a partnership with Augustana University and the Outdoor Campus. Outdoor Campus staff and pre-service teachers from Augustana University worked together to put on the classes below with bilingual capabilities.
    - Class 1 – Catch it, Clean it, Cook it class at the Outdoor Campus
    - Class 2 – Fishing and Boating at Lake Lorraine
    - Class 3 – Fishing and Boating at the Outdoor Campus
    - Class 4 – Boating on the Big Sioux River
    - Class 5 – Celebratory Event at Augustana University
  - This garnered 63 participants with 38 being youth and 31 being adults.

## SPECIALTY COURSE OFFERINGS

### » Snorkel Spearfishing at Lake Lorraine

- In 2021, the Outdoor Campus and Lake Lorraine started a partnership to offer free fishing programs at Lake Lorraine, which is a private pond owned by Friessen Development Inc.
- One unique class offered through this partnership, is a Snorkel Spearfishing class. This class is possible because of the water clarity at Lake Lorraine and has started to become quite the hit locally.
- In 2023, 3 classes were offered reaching 22 participants.

### » Fishing at Family Park

- This is a longstanding open house fishing program that GFP and SF Parks and Recreation partners to offer.
- In 2023, 7 classes were offered reaching 285 participants (170 youth, 115 adults).

### » Dark House Spearfishing

- Another unique course offering we hold at Lake Lorraine is Dark House Spearfishing. This program takes students through the ins and outs of this unique type of fishing and ends with participants being able to try their hand at spearing.
- In 2023, the Campus offered 2 of these classes reaching 12 participants.

### » The Vet Center

- In 2023, the Outdoor Campus continued their partnership with the Sioux Falls Vet Center by offering programs for their group. The Sioux Falls Vet Center provides confidential help for Veterans, service members, and their families at no cost in a non-medical setting. **The Outdoor Campus led 11 programs with the group (3 to 5 participants)** that included fishing, fly tying, wild game cooking, and tree identification hike. In addition, volunteers from the Vet Center donated approximately 450 hours of time to build and personalize 30 fly rods to be used for Outdoor Campus programming and Casting for Recovery – South Dakota retreats.

### » South Dakota Trapping Association/Outdoor Campus Trapping Series Class

- This unique program was held in Fall of 2023 and was a 4-part series class teaching students about ethical trapping, trap and snare ID/rules and regulations, trap preparation, reading signs, landowner permission, and fur handling.
- South Dakota Trapping Association leadership Nancy B. (Secretary/Assistant Treasurer) and Matt B. (Youth Education Coordinator) took the lead on this series class.
- This class had 13 participants (6 youth, 7 adults) partake in the full series.

### » Learn to Fish – “Locating Fish, Any Fish, Anywhere” and “Flathead Catfishing Seminar”

- Both of these presentations were led by Ted Ellenbecker, a multi-species angler, multiple world record holder, nationally renowned speaker, and developer of the “Theory of Three”.
- “Locating Fish, Any Fish, Anywhere” focuses on understanding fish structure to find the best locations for fishing.
- “Flathead Catfishing Seminar” took students through understanding how to fish flathead catfish, which is such a structure focused species.

### » HuntSAFE in the Schools – Sioux Falls

- In the Fall of 2023, Game, Fish and Parks partnered with the Sioux Falls School District and the Sioux Falls YMCA to offer the first HuntSAFE in the Schools at Ben Reiffel Middle School.
- The Program was broken into two Monday-Thursday weeks with classes taking place from 4:00-5:30PM. Week 1 students met in the classroom at Ben Reiffel to learn about the basics hunter safety, wildlife management, and regulations via PowerPoint and lecture. Week 2 students met for 3 days at Camp Leif Erikson for hands on experience with dummy guns and ammo. Finally, on the last day, students met at the Sioux Falls Isaac Walton League for the live fire portion of the program.
- This pilot program was open to a small number of students, with **10 signing up and 9 completing the program to be awarded their Hunter Safety Card.**



## CASTING FOR RECOVERY

Casting for Recovery (CFR) is a nonprofit organization offering support and educational retreats for women with breast cancer. Since 1996, CFR has served more than 10,000 breast cancer survivors nationwide with the help of more than 1,800 volunteers, including medical and psychosocial professionals, fly fishing instructors and program alumnae. The mission of CFR is to enhance the quality of life of women with breast cancer through a unique program that combines breast cancer education and peer support with the therapeutic sport of fly fishing.

South Dakota held their first Casting for Recovery retreat, with the help of GFP and numerous volunteers, September 15-17 at Outlaw Ranch, Custer, South Dakota for 14 participants.

In preparation for the retreat, funds were raised in the form of \$18,000 along with as much in donated time/equipment/raffle prizes. Numerous partnerships were created to ensure the success of the event. Mudhole Rod Building and Tackle company donated 15 fly rod blanks to the South Dakota program. After taking a rod building class at The Outdoor

Campus, volunteers from the Sioux Falls Vet Center built all 15 rods, personalizing each one. In fact, the wife of one of the veterans that built the rods was chosen to be one of the participants at the retreat! Dakota Trout Unlimited along with donating reels, line and tippet for each rod, also sent 7 fly fishing guides to help at the retreat and handmade flies for the participants.

The retreat took place at Outlaw Ranch outside of Custer, South Dakota. Participants arrived around 3p.m. on Friday to get checked in, fitted for waders and boots, and settled in their rooms. Once everyone arrived, introductions were made along with a few ice breaker activities. Saturday was a full day that included fly fishing instruction, practice casting and fly tying as well as a group session led by medical and psych/social staff. Sunday was fishing day. Each participant was paired with their own fly-fishing guide. Fishing took place at Stockade, Bismarck, and Center Lakes. The retreat ended with a certificate presentation to the participants and their guides.



**APPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE 2024  
RETREAT IN WAUBAY, SOUTH DAKOTA ON OCT. 4-6**

## SPECIAL EVENTS



### RAPTOR RENDEZVOUS

- » This program provides the public the opportunity to learn all there is to know about raptors! The program includes 2 live animal 1-hour programs hosted by the Minnesota Raptor Center. Along with the presentation, there are various open-house style activities in the main lobby and some further presentations in classrooms about Eastern Screech Owls.
- » This year, the presentation had a total of **139 participants** between the two presentations.



### HUNT 101 SOCIAL

- » This event has become a standing tradition for the Campus and is focused on building community and celebrating the hunts from the past season. Participants, mentors, and landowners are all invited to partake in wild game appetizers, celebrate successes, share lessons learned, hear stories from others hunts, and recognize those who made these hunts possible.
- » In 2023, **61 participants/landowners/mentors** attended the event.



### WOMEN'S TRY IT DAY

- » The aim of this event is to create a space for women of all ages to come and try some new outdoor skills. This has been a longstanding program for the Outdoor Campus.
- » 2023 was a unique year because Callie Russell, a contestant on the History Channel's show "Alone" gave a presentation about her 89 days in the Canadian Arctic as well as provided a demonstration primitive fire starting.
- » On June 22, **57 participants** showed up to take part in hatchet throwing, archery, kayaking, and fishing.



### SECOND ANNUAL OUTDOOR CAMPUS HUNTING AND FISHING GEAR SWAP AND GIVEAWAY

- » August 12, 2023, was the second time the Campus held its Gear Swap and Giveaway Event. Throughout the year the Campus takes in donations from the public of fishing, hunting, trapping, and other outdoor gear. The goal of this event is to help remove outdoor gear as a barrier to experiencing the outdoors. Campus staff clean, sort, and get the gear ready to be given back to the public for FREE. Along with gear being available, the Campus also hosts open house style archery and fishing.
- » In 2023, a variety of bigger items were donated to the Campus as well for the event such as a kayak and a canoe. These items were "raffled" off for free to the public as well.
- » **Before the event started, 198 people were waiting in line. 45 minutes into the event 372 people had walked into the Campus and by the end of the day 637 people had attended the event.**



### JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT - JA INSPIRES

- » The Outdoor Campus, along with other GFP staff, attended this career pathways event hosted by Junior Achievement. The event encourages students that are 8th grade to start thinking about their future career. GFP had a physical booth with a Conservation Officer Truck at the event. **The event had 3,676 students from 20 schools in the greater Sioux Falls area in attendance. The virtual booth was shared with 11 schools and reached 1,322 students.**



## WATER FESTIVAL

- » The Outdoor Campus every year takes part in the Sioux Empire Water Festival. This educational event focuses on teaching area 4th grade students about water as a precious resource. With the Outdoor Campus's participation, our focus is on aquatic habitats and wildlife adaptations as it pertains to water.
- » In 2023, the Campus led the following classes:
  - Leave it to Beaver- this class focuses on the many adaptations beavers have that allow them to thrive in an aquatic environment, beaver habitat, predators, trapping, and how these animals transform a landscape.
    - This class was taught 20 times over the course of 2 days. Each presentation was for 20 minutes reaching **500 participants** (4th graders with chaperones).
  - » Ecosystem Jeopardy – this class allows students to learn about ecosystems, native plants and animals, watersheds, and other fun facts while playing a game.
    - This class was taught 20 times over the course of 2 days. Each presentation was for 20 minutes reaching **500 participants** (4th graders with chaperones).

## OTHER SERVICES

### SOCIAL MEDIA

#### FACEBOOK

- » Utilized as the main social media platform for disseminating information and sharing about Outdoor Campus Programming (@outdoorcampusSF).

**549**

NEW PAGE LIKES

**29,218**

PAGE VIEWS

#### INSTAGRAM

- » Utilized as the secondary social media platform for sharing information, sharing about Campus Programming, and highlighting Campus stories (@outdoorcampus\_siouxfalls).

**136**

NEW FOLLOWERS

**1,098**

PROFILE VIEWS

#### YOUTUBE

- » Utilized as a shared platform within the department and is used to house educational videos for the public (asouthdakotagamefishandpark780).

**106**

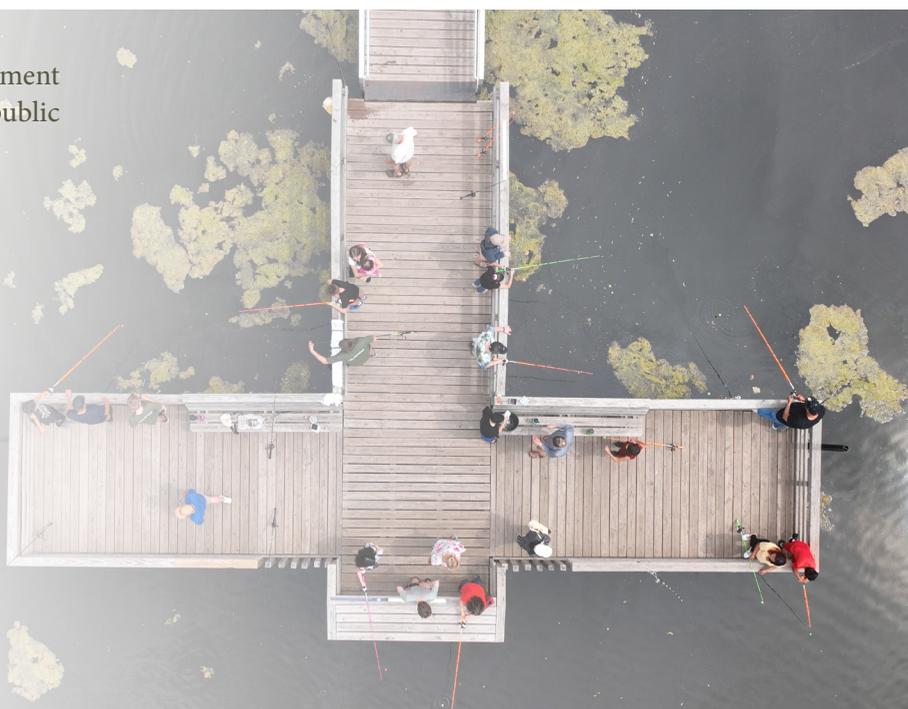
SUBSCRIBERS TO  
DATE

**6,532**

VIEWS TO DATE



SCAN THE CODE TO VISIT  
THE EDUCATION YOUTUBE  
CHANNEL.



# OTHER SERVICES

## ROOM USAGE

The Outdoor Campus encourages the use of our facility as a free meeting space for the public. Room use is dependent upon the signing of a Room Use Agreement and that the organization usage meets the Mission of GFP.

Throughout 2023, **149 meetings** were held at the Outdoor Campus by nongovernment organizations, city departments, state departments, and other clubs (as compared to 121 meetings in 2022).

## LOANER EQUIPMENT

The Outdoor Campus in conjunction with the Region 3 Wildlife Office offer a variety of different loaner options to the public.

### CRITTER CRATES

These are loaner crates filled with educational items specific to the crates “educational topic.” Crates were checked out **89 times** in 2023 (compared to 88 times in 2022).

» These crates reached **3,177 participants** and were used a total of **343 instructional hours**.

Also in 2023, the Outdoor Campus added a new Critter Crate: the Biodiversity Box. This crate was made possible through a partnership with South Dakota State Library. The crate has a variety of resources and information on how to sample and learn more about local flora and fauna for citizen science.

### CRITTER CRATE CHECK OUT - 2023



### SNOWSHOES

In 2023, the Outdoor Campus began checking out individual pairs of snowshoes to participants wanting to snowshoe in Sertoma Park. This arose to meet the need of the public's request for snowshoe access.

» In 2023, 28 individual family units checked out snowshoes for use in Sertoma Park. **This equaled 115 participants utilizing snowshoes for 35 hours.**

### LIVE TRAPS

These are loaned out to the general public for use on their privately owned property for nuisance species.

» These live traps were checked out **17 times** throughout 2023.

### LIFE JACKETS

These can be checked out by the public to use anywhere in the state for boating, fishing, and recreation.

» These life jackets were used **8 times** in 2023.

### WATERFOWL DECOY BAGS

There are 4 duck floating kits and 3 goose floating decoy bags housed at the Outdoor Campus/Region 3 Office. These can be checked out and used anywhere in the state.

» In 2023, 1 goose floating decoy bag was checked out and utilized by **2 people for 5 hours.**

» In 2023, 1 duck floating kit was checked out and utilized by **2 people for 5 hours.**

### PROPANE SCARE CANNONS

The Outdoor Campus/Region 3 Office has a variety of propane scare cannons available for the public to utilize on their property specifically in dealing with avian influenza prevention.

» In 2023, these **cannons were checked out twice.**

## LOANER EQUIPMENT

### WATERFOWL DECOY LOANER TRAILER

In 2022, the Outdoor Campus partnered with the Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center to place 2 decoy loaner trailers for use by the public. One is located in Brookings at the Outdoor Adventure Center and one is located in Sioux Falls at the Outdoor Campus. Funding for this project came from Jan Nicolay in memory of her late husband, Jerry, who was an avid goose hunter and from the Sioux Falls Delta Waterfowl Chapter.

» In 2023, the trailers were checked out **8 times**, utilized **83 hours** by **18 individuals**.

- Brookings Trailer: Checked out 5 times, utilized 51 hours by 9 individuals.
- Sioux Falls Trailer: Checked out 3 times, utilized 32 hours by 9 individuals.

### ACTION TRACK CHAIR

In 2022, an Action Track Chair with trailer was purchased as part of the Operation Mobility Initiative thanks in part to funds donated by Steve Peterson. In 2023, the chair was made available to the public, though no marketing was done since the program is in its infancy. A generous grant was received in late 2023 from the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation that will be utilized to update the webpage with videos explaining how to use the chair as well as adding a visual wrap to the trailer.

» The Sioux Falls Action Track Chair was checked out 6 times and was used **4 times for hunting** and **2 times for outdoor recreation and leisure**.



*Photo by Michael G. Brown*



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

## KIDS IN PARKS TRACK TRAIL

In Spring of 2023 Sertoma Park's Kids in Parks Track Trail Sign was installed. The Track Trail Sign was created from funds provided by The Outdoor Campus and the Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation. The sign has four brochure holders that each hold 1 of the following: (1) The Need for Trees, (2) A Quest for Dragons, (3) Pond Life, (4) Birds of Sertoma Park, and (5) Oxbow Explorers. Participants who utilize these flyers to augment their hike, can afterwards register their hike to earn prizes. Scan here to learn more about the Sertoma Park Track Trail: [kidsinparks.com/sertoma-park](https://kidsinparks.com/sertoma-park)

In 2023, the Outdoor Campus partnered with National Wild Turkey Federation (through their Waterways for Wildlife Grant) and Friends of the Big Sioux River (through donation and help in creation of the flyer) to create the Oxbow Explorer's Flyer. Since Sertoma Park is surrounded by a remnant oxbow of the Big Sioux River, this flyer highlights the uniqueness of this habitat.

2023 Trail Stats:

- » In 2023, **13 participants registered 15 adventures.**
- » Participants who registered the trail, stated that they liked, "seeing geese and other birds" and "watching birds on the pond" as the best part of the Track Trail.



## VOLUNTEER AWARDS

- » **Spirit of Volunteerism Award** – Each spring, the Helpline Center holds an award breakfast honoring nominated volunteers from the community who go above and beyond. This year, Bobby M., Jan P., and Ruby W. were honored for their service at the Outdoor Campus.
- » **Helpline Center Volunteer of the Month** – This area-wide award program is presented by the Helpline Center and is given to an individual or group who exhibit outstanding commitment to volunteer service. One award is given in the Sioux Empire, Black Hills and Brookings County. For April 2023, Steve M. was awarded the Sioux Empire's Volunteer of the Month for his service at The Outdoor Campus.



## AMBUSH BLIND

In 2023, the Outdoor Campus was able to place a unique Ambush Outdoor Products accessible blind on land we have access to for Hunting 101. This hunting blind is unique because it is accessible and large enough for a full track chair to fit in. Along with the blind, Ambush Outdoor Products fabricated a ramp for the Campus that meets ADA requirements while also being strong enough for a track chair. A huge thank you to Pheasants Forever for providing funding for the project and to Ambush Outdoor Products for helping with part of the cost of the ramp.



## AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES EDUCATION

An initiative of the Game, Fish and Parks Department is to provide more education to the public on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).

From January to December 2023, 199 fishing classes included AIS presentations which reached 4,343 people.

Along with the inclusion of educational talks in classes, the Department has partnered with South Dakota State University and South Dakota State University Extension 4H to create a 5-lesson middle school curriculum. The lessons in this curriculum walk students through understanding an ecosystem to understanding AIS and finally what aquatic managers do to slow the spread. The curriculum was finalized in December of 2023 with plans to pilot it in 2024.

To learn more about the curriculum and review it, go to: [gfp.sd.gov/fishsd/](http://gfp.sd.gov/fishsd/)

## OUTDOOR CAMPUS PRESCRIBED BURN

The Outdoor Campus has a couple of large fields that park trails loop. These fields are planted as either native tall grass prairies or pollinator plots. Historically, these fields have been managed by mowing, spot spraying, and limited grazing, due in part to its urban location. However, in 2022, the Campus partnered with the Sioux Falls Fire Rescue to implement a 3-year prescribed burn rotation. Burns are implemented in the Spring to encourage the growth of native grasses and suppress nonnative species. These burns work to mimic historical ecological processes of the area.

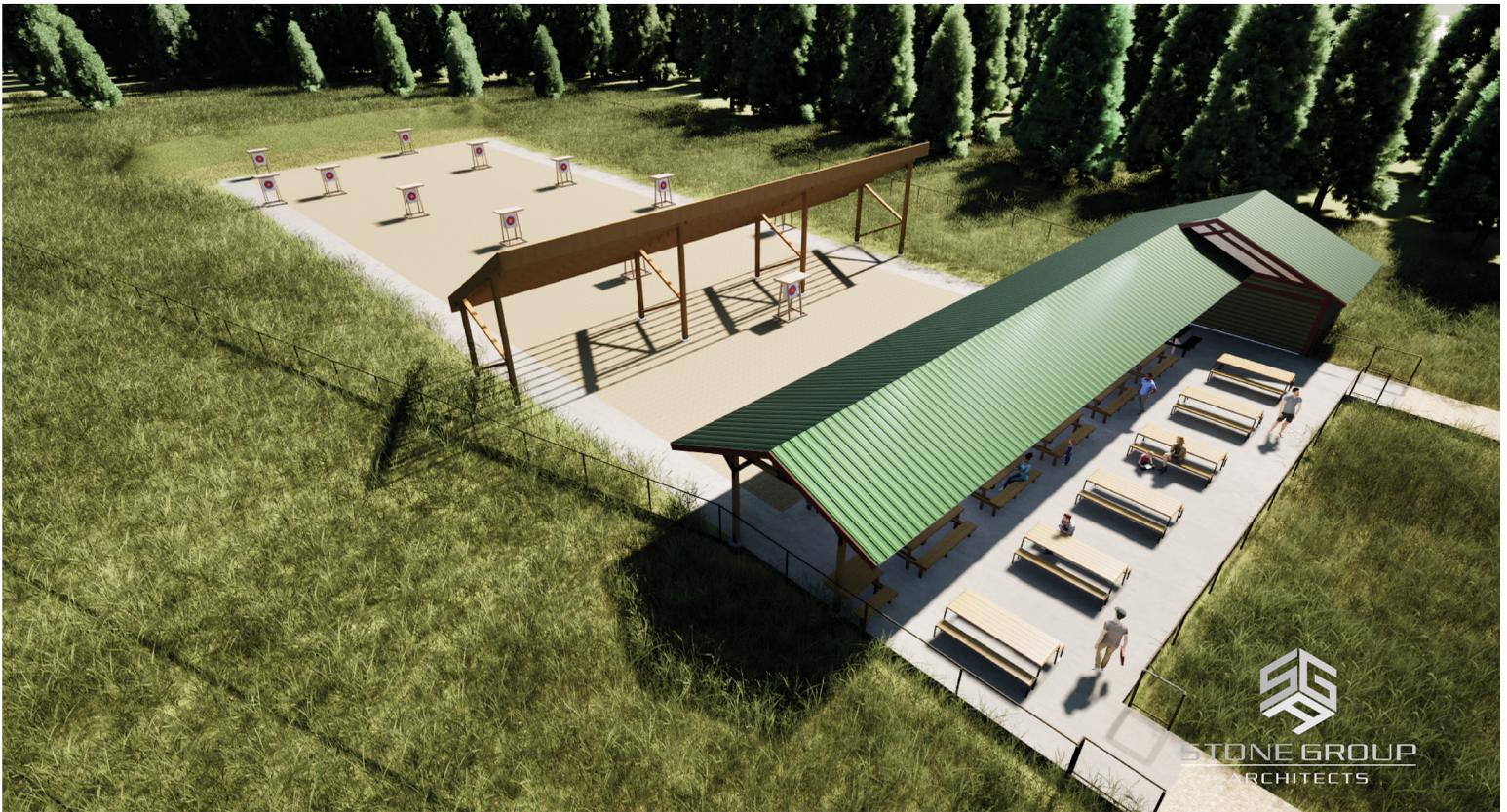
To learn more about the Outdoor Campus prescribed burn, go to: [youtube.com/watch?v=3ecuiufaFWM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3ecuiufaFWM)



## BIG SIOUX BUCK EXHIBIT

The Big Sioux Buck - is a white-tailed deer that resided on the northeast side of Sioux Falls in the early 2000s. This urban deer lived to be an estimated 12-13 years and gained popularity with its massive antlers that score a 236 on the Boone and Crockett Scale.

In 2023, Kelly Kirsch, a local antler shed hunter, donated replica shed antlers to Game, Fish and Parks. These antlers were mounted and now reside in the Outdoor Campus/Region 3 Office. Along with these antler sheds are two art pieces: "Big Sioux Buck" and "Big Sioux Buck Living on the Edge II". These art pieces were commissioned by Gary Sonju, a local landowner, and are done completely in colored pencil by artist, Ray Kelly. The exhibit along with signage explaining the history of the buck can be viewed in the office area of the Outdoor Campus/Region 3 Office.



# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

— SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA —

Since opening in 1997, we have reached over 534,000 participants by offering over 21,000 classes **FREE** to the public!

**IT'S TIME TO EXPAND!**

## FALL IN LOVE WITH THE OUTDOORS

The Outdoor Campus has been connecting the public to the outdoors since opening its doors in 1997! During that time, permanent staff, interns, and over 3,000 volunteers have worked to create a haven of learning and have offered over 21,000 **FREE** classes to over 534,000 participants. With a goal of providing hands-on experiences in hunting, fishing, outdoor skills, and conservation science, the Campus has long been helping families create memories that last a lifetime.

Now, we need your help to expand our facility, so we can provide a destination for more families and individuals to fall in love with and embrace the outdoors through all of South Dakota's seasons.



## COST ESTIMATES

### Indoor Facility

- » \$6.5 million is the estimated cost for this 18,000-square foot expansion/remodel.
- » Goal of breaking ground, Fall 2024.

### Outdoor Facility

- » \$600,000 is the estimated cost for a safe, outdoor shooting range of up to 60-yards in length.
- » Goal of breaking ground, mid-2024.

