CONGRATULATIONS! Your students are about to embark on an epic learning adventure. Now it’s time to thank the donors who made your trip possible.

One of 17 National Park Service education partners, Dunes Learning Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization providing year-round, standards-based, environmental education experiences for learners of all ages.

Located within Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the Center’s modern residential campus occupies 63 acres of rolling woodland at the southern tip of Lake Michigan, less than an hour from Chicago. Our mission—to inspire lasting curiosity and stewardship with nature—is supported by donations from local businesses, foundations, and generous individuals. **We need your help to make sure our donors know the impact their investment has had on your students.**

You play a critical role in ensuring that we have funds available to keep these learning experiences affordable and accessible. We have put together this toolkit to provide you with all the resources you need to make sure your donors know how important they are. In it, you will find:

- A scholarship deliverables timeline
- Dunes Learning Center scholarship messages
- Social media tips
- Sample news story
- Sample parent letter
- Dunes Learning Center team contact information

If you have any questions, or need anything further, please do not hesitate to ask! Thank you for sharing this valuable learning opportunity with your students, and community.

Sincerely,

Geof Benson
Executive Director
gbenson@duneslearningcenter.org
SCHOLARSHIP DELIVERABLES TIMELINE

Before your trip:
- Identify individuals who can help with scholarship deliverables. Assign roles and start floating ideas.
- Draft and send a letter to parents and administrators sharing news of your scholarship and acknowledging the donors who made it possible.
- Does your school have a social media account, blog, or newsletter? Announce your scholarship and trip plans.
- Share the good news with your PTA, PTO, and administrators.
- Pitch your local press. Use our Sample Press Release to share the good news with local media.
- Establish pre-program baselines for knowledge and attitudes to compare to post-program outcome data.
- “Like” us Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter

During your trip:
- Assign chaperones to help with gathering pictures, video, and stories. You can’t be everywhere at one time!
- Take lots of pictures! A picture is worth a thousand words.
- Collect quotes and stories from students to use in your post-program report.
- Use your social media account to share your experience! Don’t forget to tag and thank your donors and Dunes Learning Center.

After your trip:
- Be thoughtful when completing your post-program evaluation. Your observations help us get scholarship funds.
- Deliver thank you letters, photos, or video to your scholarship funders.
- Share outcome data via the provided form.
- Share your experience and thank your donors via social media, your school newsletter, and/or local press.

DUNES LEARNING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP MESSAGES

- Our students had an incredible learning experience, thanks to Dunes Learning Center donors [your donors here].
- Dunes Learning Center naturalists brought science concepts to life in nature. Thanks to [your donors] for their generous support, which made this experience possible for our kids!
- Our students grew in so many ways during their Dunes Learning Center experience! Thank you to [your donors] for their support of hands-on environmental education in the Indiana dunes.
SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS AND SAMPLES
Social media is key to making sure that your message of gratitude grows and reaches the widest possible audience. It’s also one of the best ways to share photos and stories from your Dunes Learning Center visit. Remember to tag us @DunesLearningCenter on Facebook, or @DunesLearning on Instagram and Twitter.

Sample Twitter Posts
[@SchoolName] students are learning and exploring with @DunesLearning thanks to funding by [@DonorName]. #KidsNeedNature #OutdoorClassroom

Seeing Lake Michigan for the first time, thanks to @DunesLearning and [@DonorName], whose generous donation made our visit possible!

Found a salamander! Thanks to [@DonorName], for making our @DunesLearning trip possible! #environmentaleducation #OutdoorClassroom

Sample Facebook Posts
@DunesLearningCenter naturalists are bringing learning to life for [@SchoolName] students, thanks to funding by [@DonorName]. #OutdoorClassroom #LearnYourPark

Our [fourth grade] students will never forget the lessons they learned on trail with their @DunesLearningCenter naturalists! Thank you to [@DonorName], for the scholarship that made this experience possible for our kids! #LearnYourPark #KidsNeedNature #NatureNeedsKids

Our students learned so much from their @DunesLearningCenter experience! Thank you to [@DonorName], for their generous support of hands-on environmental education in the #IndianaDunes. #KidsNeedNature #NatureNeedsKids

Sample Instagram Posts
An unforgettable learning experience at @DunesLearning, thanks to scholarship funding by [@DonorName]. #OutdoorClassroom #STEM #LearnYourPark #KidsNeedNature #NatureNeedsKids

Today our students hiked to #LakeMichigan, many for the first time in their lives. Thank you to [@DonorName], whose generous funding made our @DunesLearning trip possible! #environmentaleducation #LearnYourPark #KidsNeedNature #NatureNeedsKids
SAMPLE NEWS STORY

Contact: [Contact Name]  
[School Name]  
[Phone]  
[Email]

[School Name] Students Headed to Dunes Learning Center, thanks to a donation from [donor name(s)]

[Your city]— [Number of students] [grade level] [School Name] students are preparing for the learning adventure of a lifetime, thanks to a Dunes Learning Center scholarship made possible by [donor name(s)].

[Insert student or educator quote]

[School name] received a [dollar amount] scholarship to reduce the cost of their trip. During their [number] day visit to Dunes Learning Center’s Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore campus, students will learn about the area’s natural and cultural history.

Guided by Dunes Learning Center interpretive naturalists, [school name] students will learn to work together and solve problems, as they participate in exploration and stewardship activities. Interdisciplinary lesson plans interweave science, history, and ecology with writing, drawing, performing arts, and crafts.

For some [school name] students, this trip might represent their first time away from home, their first time seeing the dunes, or their first visit to a national park. Without the scholarship, this extraordinary learning opportunity would have been out of reach for many [school name] students.

[Insert your hopes/goals for the program]

[Insert thank you to your donors]
SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Dear [School Name] Parent,

In just a few weeks, your student will embark on an extraordinary learning adventure in the Indiana dunes, thanks to a Dunes Learning Center scholarship made possible by [donor name(s)].

During their [number] day visit to Dunes Learning Center’s Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore campus, students will learn about the area’s natural and cultural history through Interdisciplinary lesson plans that interweave science, history, and ecology with writing, drawing, performance, and crafts. Guided by Dunes Learning Center interpretive naturalists, students will learn to work together and solve problems, as they participate in exploration and stewardship activities. It will be the learning adventure of a lifetime for our class.

[School name] is proud to have received a [dollar amount] environmental education scholarship that will reduce the cost of our trip from [regular price] per student, to [scholarship price] per student. I hope that you will join me in thanking [donor name(s)] for investing in our students and supporting this invaluable educational experience. Please send a thank you note to:

[Insert donor name and address]

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
DUNES LEARNING CENTER TEAM
Need help? Have a question? Phone (219)395-9555, or contact one of the team members below:

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Michelle Krueger, Marketing & Development Manager
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