

News Release  
For Immediate Release

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**RCU Foundation Announces \$250,000 Gift to The New Nature Center at Willow River State Park**

Hudson, Wisconsin – October 31, 2019 – *Paths to Discovery Campaign* announced a \$250,000 contribution from Royal Credit Union Foundation in support of the new **Nature Center at Willow River State Park**. The announcement event was hosted by Tim Sass and the local RCU Branch in New Richmond. RCU executives that came to make the announcement included Brandon Riechers, Royal Credit Union CEO-President and Doug Olson, RCU Foundation Vice President, Royal Credit Union Board Chair. *Paths to Discovery Campaign* was well represented at the event, including John Collins, Sally Giese, Judy Remington, Nick Schmit, and Tim Sass.

“RCU Foundation is pleased to provide a \$250,000 gift to the new Nature Center at Willow River State Park. This is a terrific project for Hudson, New Richmond, Somerset, Stillwater and the area,” stated Doug Olson, RCU Foundation Vice-President. “The RCU Foundation’s purpose is to create a positive impact in the lives we touch and the communities we serve,” said Doug Olson, “and the *Paths to Discovery Campaign* offered us a chance to make a difference in this community.”

**The New Nature Center** will have classrooms and indoor and outdoor education spaces to inspire young learners and adults. Along with the community rooms, exhibits and the classroom facilities will be flexible and expandable, making this an ideal facility to meet the needs of the community.

“This is a wonderful cornerstone level gift from RCU Foundation and I want to thank their leadership for making this important investment in our community,” stated John Collins, President of the Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Parks, Inc.

**In recognition for the cornerstone level gift, The New Nature Center will now be home to the RCU Community Room.**

Serving more than 3,500 students each year Willow River Nature Center builds a passion for education and hands-on experiences that promote a healthy respect and appreciation for the natural world. Says Judy Remington, Paths to Discovery Campaign Vice-Chair, “Education is the heart of our mission. A new and improved Willow River Nature Center will take education to a new level and benefit tens of thousands of students, seniors, and families in our community.”

“With RCU Foundation’s generous gift today -- and with the contribution from others -- together, we can create a new center that will inspire and serve our community for generations to come.”

Remington commented

**The New Nature Center** will be a place and a purpose. It is likely more individuals will lean toward outdoor activities to exercise their bodies and their minds. Outdoor recreation promotes health, wellness, and quality of life for park visitors of all ages. By showing park patrons how and where to kayak, camp, hike, ski, and bike – to name just a few activities – the center will enhance their lives.

**The New Nature Center** will provide children with more opportunities for educational learning. Whether through school-organized field trips, summer camps, or weekend programs, these future leaders are building the foundations for making wise and informed decisions about how our environment will benefit everyone in the community. Providing a wide variety of positive learning opportunities, Willow River Nature Center is proud to be a wholesome place that welcomes everyone with a passion for learning.

**The New Nature Center** will be a unique gathering place where people will have access to all the community spaces. This new facility will be a regional destination and, at the same time, a comfortable gathering place – with indoor and outdoor areas for the community.

**The total cost of the project is \$4 million.** The capital campaign, relying on philanthropic donations from corporate and private foundations and individual donors, will fund \$4 million dollars for The New Nature Center. When in full operation our financial models show the center will be financially self-sufficient.

**About the Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Parks:** The Friends is 501(c)(3) nonprofit that is in full compliance with the IRS. A volunteer Board of Directors, representing a broad spectrum of community interests, is responsible for setting Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Parks policies and long-range goals, while ensuring adequate funding for services and programs. The Board employs a naturalist who develops and delivers programs and services.

**About the RCU Foundation:** The RCU Foundation (Foundation) was established in 2012 to support organizations and initiatives in communities where Royal Credit Union operates in western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota. The Foundation focuses on large-scale, capital projects that help build community and create the spaces where people come together. Focus areas include education, health, and the arts. The Foundation hosts the annual Rock the Hudson. Currently, it has awarded over \$3 million in grants. Contact [foundation@rcu.org](mailto:foundation@rcu.org) for more information.

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Paths to Discovery Campaign for the Nature Center

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