



NATURALLY CONNECTED

Summer – Fall 2024



PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

As one of the first and largest nature-based preschools in the region, Lake Erie Nature & Science Center’s early education programs build on children’s inherent curiosity. Our classes serve children ages 1-6 with hands-on, age-appropriate activities that incorporate the unique offerings that can only be found at the Nature Center: a live animal collection, a planetarium, a wildlife rehabilitation facility, and a surrounding 100-acre parkland with access to Lake Erie.

Each nature-based preschool program is designed to support the social, physical, and academic development of a child. Our goal is to create a nurturing environment with unstructured play and exploration, mixed with routine activities and learning opportunities. The Nature Center’s highly skilled educators incorporate Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards in each of our programs to help plant the seeds for kindergarten readiness.

Forest Friends, our parent and child class for ages 1-2, serves as an introduction to the classroom setting with a loose structure and strong focus on socialization, while helping children identify and name objects in their environment.

Frogs & Polliwogs, for children ages 2-3 with an adult, begins to incorporate more structure with a set routine: free play and socialization, followed by a welcome song, an animal encounter, a story, and a craft. After a snack break, children and their adults explore the Nature Center’s live animal exhibits. Then, they end class by learning next week’s theme and singing a goodbye song.

“Each year, we update the curriculum of our preschool programs with a focus on developing the necessary skills for kindergarten,” says Preschool Coordinator Teece Lester. “Along with our unique access to local wildlife and nature, our instructors teach literacy, math, and science concepts.”



“My child really blossomed and loved his class at the Nature Center. Open-ended play is a great way for young children to interact with their surroundings and each other.”

PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS *continued*

Nature Nuts, for children ages 3-5, focuses on the necessary skills for well-rounded preschool development. To promote literacy, each class includes a story time related to a daily topic where the instructor introduces a book, defines new vocabulary, and creates an interactive experience for children through illustrations, rhymes, and clues.

Later, children are encouraged to “read” independently in a cozy reading corner that features a variety of books. This time supports book handling skills, print and illustration awareness, visual comprehension, and most importantly, allows children to see themselves as readers.

Earthlings, the final class before kindergarten for children ages 4-6, practices literacy skills in a developmentally appropriate way. Children learn how to count, sort, and create patterns by using

elements in nature such as leaves and acorns. Journals help to support speech and writing development by asking children to draw a picture and share what they learned with an instructor, who then helps record their words for parents to read later on.

“Our preschool programs help children adjust to the routines and expectations of a kindergarten classroom,” says Lester. “We provide opportunities for peer socialization, set the foundations for literacy, and help foster a lifelong appreciation for the natural world.”

Registration is open and ongoing for 2024-2025 preschool sessions. Learn more and register at www.lensc.org/preschool-programs.

Literacy Activities for Children

- * Practice sounding and writing letters in the sand, dirt, or with sidewalk chalk.
- * Pick a letter of the day, and look for objects that start with that letter.
- * Plant a garden together, and watch it grow – there are fine motor skills in digging a hole, planting seeds, and watering!
- * Gather a collection of objects and sort them by color, shape, or size. Make a pattern with the objects.
- * Go on a hike, watch a sunset, listen to rain, look at stars, or observe animals. Encourage your child to draw a picture of the activity in a nature journal. Then, help them write a description of the drawing.



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Natural Start Alliance, and Ohio Nature-Based Early Childhood Education.

Free general admission | 7 days a week | 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. | Visit www.lensc.org for more details.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

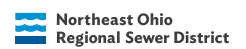
Grateful visitors from near and far contribute more than \$250,000 collectively each year!



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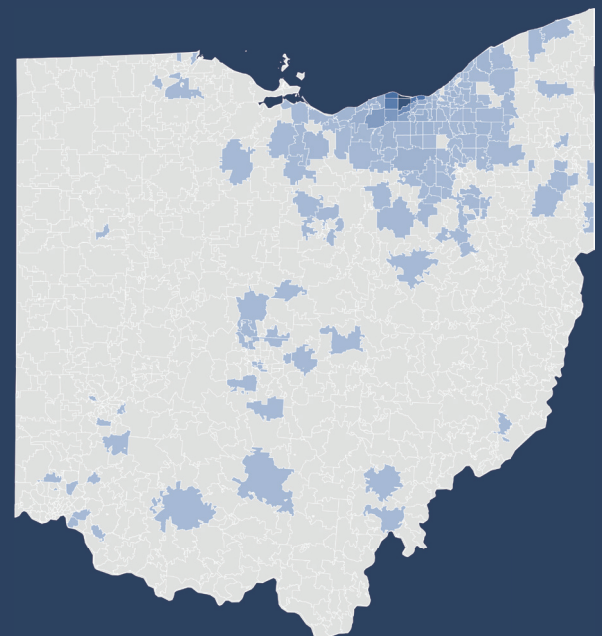
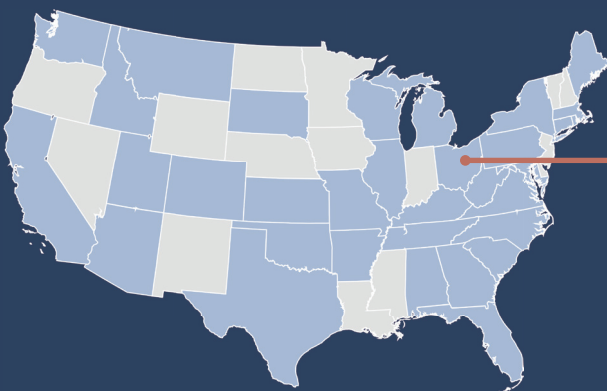
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During fiscal year July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, nearly 100,000 visitors throughout Northeast Ohio and beyond enjoyed free general admission to Lake Erie Nature & Science Center's natural history and space science exhibits, and live animal displays in our accessible and family-friendly facility.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Lake Erie Nature & Science Center Statement of Activities

For the year ended June 30, 2023

Prepared by Card, Palmer, Sibbison & Co.

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	TOTAL
SUPPORT AND REVENUE			
Program and class fees	\$ 554,895	\$ -	\$ 554,895
Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and restricted grants	112,338	-	112,338
Contributions and grants	421,384	511,713	933,097
Special events	52,230	-	52,230
Membership	1,020	-	1,020
Donated services and supplies	4,779	-	4,779
Facility rent in-kind	324,000	-	324,000
Investment income for operations	224,325	38,376	262,701
	1,694,971	550,089	2,245,060
Net assets released from restrictions	149,175	(149,175)	-
Total support and revenue	1,844,146	400,914	2,245,060
EXPENSES			
Program	1,213,375	-	1,213,375
Management and general	219,267	-	219,267
Fundraising	150,432	-	150,432
Total expenses	1,583,074	-	1,583,074
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	261,072	400,914	661,986
OTHER CHANGES			
Pledge adjustment	-	(3,400)	(3,400)
Unrealized gain (loss) on split-interest trusts	-	107,482	107,482
Investment return (loss) in excess of amounts designated for operations	(56,047)	218,064	162,017
Total other changes	(56,047)	325,546	269,499
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	205,025	726,460	931,485
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,464,291	4,859,551	6,323,842
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 1,669,316	\$ 5,586,011	\$ 7,255,327



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Lake Erie Nature & Science Center is an independent nonprofit organization funded by donations and grants as well as community involvement.

RENOVATIONS TO OUTDOOR EXHIBITS UNDERWAY

Open for free general admission and programs 7 days a week



We are excited to announce that renovations are underway in the outdoor Wildlife Gardens! The Project will take approximately 12 months to complete, at a cost of \$1,900,000 made possible with donations and grants from the community. During this time, the Nature Center will remain open for free general admission, nature-based programs, and free wildlife assistance 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Resident animals will be available in new locations for visitors to continue enjoying up-close encounters during the Project.

The Wildlife Gardens Education and Renovation Project will create more engaging learning experiences about native animals, provide ample space for students to learn alongside wildlife specialists, and raise visibility of our wildlife rehabilitation program. For more information or to support this exciting transformation, please visit www.lensc.org/wildlife-gardens-project.

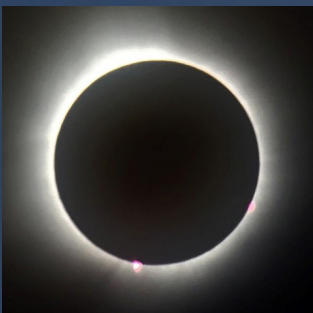
TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

On April 8, 2024, Lake Erie Nature & Science Center welcomed more than 400 visitors, many from out of state, to witness the total solar eclipse in Northeast Ohio. Hands-on activities were available throughout the day, but the biggest draw was the once-in-a-lifetime experience of totality in Ohio.

The visible solar prominences around the outline of the Sun were the most unexpected surprise, and planetarium staff also pointed out Venus and Jupiter during totality. Immediately following totality, wildlife staff noted the unique reactions of some animals, including the American Robins in Huntington Reservation singing their dawn song and our resident Turkey Vulture, Buzz, spreading her wings to enjoy the returning sunshine.



Nature Center staff, volunteers, and guests gathered for spectacular sights.



A **solar prominence** is a large, bright feature extending outward from the Sun's surface. Prominences are anchored to the Sun's surface in the photosphere, and extend outwards into the Sun's hot outer atmosphere, called the corona. The red spots in this photo are solar prominences during the total solar eclipse.

Register for a planetarium program at www.lensc.org/planetarium.



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center

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Bay Village, OH 44140

440-871-2900 | www.lensc.org

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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Follow us on



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center is a nonprofit organization funded by donations, class fees and grants including Cuyahoga Arts & Culture through county residents.

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Mission: Lake Erie Nature & Science Center educates and inspires each of us to understand, appreciate, and take responsibility for our natural world.

Support our nonprofit mission at www.lensc.org/donations.



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center

NATURALLY CONNECTED

THE ONLY
wildlife rehabilitation
facility located in
Cuyahoga County



29,217

students from kindergarten through college participated in field trips, summer camps, scout programs, wildlife programs, and internships



1,855

ill and injured wildlife patients were treated by highly trained staff at no charge to the public



13,192

children and adults participated in nature-based preschool programs



98,570

total people served in 2023

1 OF 2

public-access planetariums in Cuyahoga County serving toddlers through adults