

*Venture Out!*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Chippewa Nature Center's Nature Preschool First  
Gold LEED™ Building in Midland**

Chippewa Nature Center's Margaret Ann (Ranny) Riecker Nature Preschool building has been awarded a LEED™ Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). This is the first Gold Certified building in Midland County, and is the second highest rating awarded by the USGBC. LEED™ certification offers third party validation of a project's green features and verifies that the building is operating exactly the way it was designed. There are eight other LEED™ certified buildings in the Great Lakes Bay Region, only one of which is also Gold Certified – the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), located in Bay City.

The elements to achieve certification range in technology and scale in the following categories: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy Use, Materials and Resources, and Indoor Environmental Quality. As a result, there is a mix of simple, common sense solutions and cutting edge technology to create a building that is energy efficient and a great learning atmosphere for Nature Preschoolers. Some of these features include:

- Solar hot water collectors to heat domestic water
- 10kW solar panel (photovoltaic array)
- Geothermal wells and heat exchanger to provide heating and cooling of the building through a radiant floor system
- Locally and on-site harvested lumber for exterior and interior finishes
- Use of overhangs and windows to provide for ample harvesting of daylight, as well as use of natural ventilation through operable windows high and low in the building
- Highly insulated building through use of Structural Insulated Panel (SIP) construction
- Water conservation through use of dual-flush toilets
- Finishes are no VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) to improve indoor air quality
- Rainwater harvesting with rain barrels

The building was designed by The Kubala Washatko Architects of Cedarburg, Wisconsin. Rockford Construction of Grand Rapids, Michigan served as the project's construction manager. The construction of the building was completed by local contractors from the Great Lakes Bay Region including Answer Heating & Cooling, Hatfield Construction, Harbron Electric, Helger Construction and many other local subcontractors.

The building is the home of Chippewa Nature Center's Nature Preschool, which serves 88 children using a nature-based curriculum. The goal of the program is to help children build a life-long connection to nature through frequent, positive outdoor experiences. Having a LEED™ Gold Certified building is an outward demonstration of the philosophy of the program housed within.

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Chippewa Nature Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to facilitate the enjoyment and understanding of our natural and cultural resources as relevant to the Saginaw Valley's ecosystems, to promote environmental awareness and to foster responsible stewardship. Enjoy free admission to 15+ miles of trails from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year. Our Visitor Center, located at 400 S. Badour Rd., is open 8 am-5 pm Monday – Friday, 9 am-5 pm Saturday and 1-5 pm Sunday and holidays. Learn more at [www.chippewanaturecenter.org](http://www.chippewanaturecenter.org).