



## 2023-2024 Parent Handbook

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is excited to offer a Forest Kindergarten program for students ages 3-6 on Fridays during the 2023-2024 school year. Our program is designed to integrate children with nature and engage them in quality outdoor activities which stimulate their innate curiosity about the natural world.

### **Our Philosophy:**

We believe that children when guided thoughtfully and provided plenty of time to play freely in varied natural environments will naturally develop into whole and healthy people. In our play-based program children will develop small and large motor skills, empathy for each other and the natural world, social skills, imagination, risk-assessment skills, endurance and resilience, ecological literacy and connection to the natural world. Free play, which we see as the work of the child, will be balanced with hikes, stories, circle time and teacher organized seasonal crafts/activities.

### **Teachers:**

Our 2022-2023 Forest Fridays team includes:

KVR Education Coordinator- Maggie Schultz - 608-625-2965

Principal Teacher – Susana Ruder

While in session we can be reached on site at 608-625-2960 (KVR front desk). Specific questions or concerns should be directed to KVR Education Coordinator at 608-625-2965.

Forest Friday instructors are current in their First Aid/CPR certification and have passed a criminal background check.

### **Your Child's Safety and Well-Being:**

The KVR Education program is committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth, its creatures and each other. This always includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others. We know that we will see lots of social play, and that we will also see social bumps and developmentally appropriate conflict arise as the children learn to play with each other. Our instructors will redirect behaviors such as hitting, grabbing, pushing or name-calling, and help to guide the children in respectful and skillful social engagement. Additionally, we see behavior as communication, and always seek to see and understand what children experiencing challenges are communicating to us. We honor that free social play in a natural environment is some of the most work young children can do. It provides the space and context for children to navigate social challenges, imagine, experience wonder, develop communication skills, physical strength, coordination, express needs and with much more. We will hold and carry your child if it is necessary to their feelings of safety. If your child ever reports any type of negative experience at KVR, we ask that you please bring it to the Education coordinator's attention *immediately*, so we can all communicate and work as a team to support your child's wellbeing.

**Dressing Appropriately:**

Dressing your child appropriately is CRITICAL to the success of our program. For details about the clothing we require, please review the enclosed clothing list.

Simple guidelines:

- \*Please label all of your children's clothing.
- \*Dress your children in clothes they can get messy in
- \*Do not use one-piece clothing as it is difficult to remove when children have to use the bathroom
- \*Clothing and footwear should be loose fitting and roomy to allow the body's own insulating layer to surround the skin.
- \*It is mandatory that you bring a full set of extra clothes to the Visitor Center each Friday.

Remember this program will be almost entirely outdoors. Make sure that you and your child are both okay with that. Remember too that your child may not experience cold in the same way that you do and that most children really love being outside no matter the weather. Send extra clothes and know we will be very diligent about when to insist they put on more outerwear. Most importantly, please keep YOUR attitude positive about blustery cold and rainy days as some of our best fun can be in this type of weather!

**Tick Disease Prevention:**

Ticks are present at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. The best prevention to tick-borne disease is to check your child thoroughly after they return from the KVR. Long pants tucked into socks and hats can also be a deterrent. Natural insect repellents can be helpful, we ask that you apply this to your child outside of the Visitor Center.

**Toilet Proficiency:**

Although we can handle occasional accidents, all children must be mostly toilet-proficient to attend Forest Fridays. Children must be able to know when they must go to the bathroom and be able to communicate that. Many children choose to pee outdoors in a designated place; however, we also have indoor bathrooms available for their use. We regularly prompt the children to check in with themselves about whether they need to go to the bathroom.

**School Year Schedule and Fees and Snow Day Policy:**

**Fall Semester:** 8 sessions each Friday beginning September 8- October 27, 2023. 8:30am-11:50am. \$210/child.

**Winter Semester:** January 5 -- February 23, 2024 - 8 sessions - 8:30am-11:50am each Friday

**Spring Semester:** April 5 -- May 24, 2024 - 8 sessions - 8:30am-11:50am each Friday

**Snow Days:** KVR will cancel Forest Fridays if/when La Farge schools are canceled or running two hours late due to poor weather. Please check local school closings via the radio or internet.

**Drop off/Pick up:**

Children will be met by KVR Forest Friday instructors in front of the Visitor Center (S3661 State Highway 131, La Farge, WI) at 8:30am each Friday. Children will be ready for prompt pick up back in front of the Visitor Center at 11:50am. This is a drop-off program, if your child needs to transition into being independent of their parent please let us know right away so we can be prepared to work on this with you and your child. Our expectation is that the drop off can become smooth after one or two sessions. If your child continues to need a parent to attend after the second session teachers and parents will meet to re-evaluate the child's readiness for the Forest Friday program.

**Snacks:**

We will provide your child with a healthy organic snack at approximately 10:30am and will make sure they are drinking plenty of water. We do not serve peanuts, refined sugar or artificial colors or flavors. Examples of snacks include fruit,

veggies, nuts, cheese, hard boiled eggs, popcorn, and will be supplemented by foraged wild and seasonal plants and forest tea. If your child has food allergies, please let us know.

**Communicating with Teachers:**

If you need to communicate future plans about your child such as absences, late arrivals, early pick-ups, vacation times, medical information or family situation please do so by emailing Maggie Schultz, the Education Coordinator, at [maggie.manke@wisconsin.gov](mailto:maggie.manke@wisconsin.gov). For last minute correspondence please call the education coordinator at 608-625-2965. Please do not pass along logistical information to teachers at drop off or pick up.

**Sick Child Policy:**

Please do not send your child to Forest Friday's if they are unwell.