EDGERTON EXPLORIT CENTER

2025–2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Curiosity in motion. Opportunity within reach.



Impact at a Glance



100,000+
people reached annually

85
Raptorology programs

9,831
served through Raptorology

1,595
students in the Trades library soft launch

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FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Science That Meets the Moment



This year asked the Edgerton Explorit Center to be resilient, inventive and deeply connected to our community. Even as we responded to the devastating February fire in our outdoor raptor enclosure, our staff kept moving forward: serving schools, rebuilding programs and creating new ways for young people to see themselves in science and skilled careers.

The launch of the Ken Wortman Trades Science Program marked one of the most significant expansions in our history. With Central Community College, 6 Regions One Nebraska and partners across business and industry, we are addressing Nebraska's long-term skilled labor shortage by exposing students to careers in the trades through hands-on, science-based learning experience.

Our raptor program also entered a new chapter. Aquila recovered, new ambassadors Valor, Strix and Jet joined the team, programming resumed, and supporters rallied behind a safer, fire-resistant home for the birds.

Every number in this report represents a student who tried something new, a teacher who gained a resource, a family who learned together, or a community that helped make discovery possible. Thank you for building this future with us.

OUR MISSION

Inspire curiosity and lifelong learning through engaging, hands-on science experiences.

Mary Molliconi
Executive Director

John Nelson
Board President

2026 SPOTLIGHT

A Year of Resilience and Renewal

FEBRUARY 13, 2026

The outdoor raptor enclosure fire took the lives of Doc, Roy and Chetan. Aquila, Edgerton's Bald Eagle, survived.

The response showed the strength of the Edgerton community: care for Aquila, restoration work, new ambassador partnerships and extraordinary donor support.



Aquila with Raptor Specialist Deb Miller

$150,000+
raised toward a safer raptor home

4
raptor ambassadors now educating audiences

1 month
approximately, before programs resumed

Dedicated to Chetan, Doc and Roy, whose impact continues through every learner the program reaches.

MILESTONES

From Recovery to a New Chapter

FEB

Fire response

Aquila survived. Cleanup, care and recovery began during the Center's temporary closure.

FEB 23

Safe reopening

The Edgerton Center reopened 10 days after the fire.

MAR–APR

New ambassadors

Valor the Red-shouldered Hawk, Strix the Barred Owl and Jet the American Kestrel joined Edgerton.

SUMMER

Education in motion

Raptor programs resumed statewide while the education trailer and interior exhibits moved forward. 52 summer camps in full swing.

FALL

Rebuilding

Planning advanced for an all-metal, fire-resistant enclosure and four free-standing cages.



Damage from February 13th, 2026 fire in our raptor enclosure.

RAPTOROLOGY

Conservation. Care. Community.



Strix, the Barred Owl, with Raptor Specialist Deb Miller

Live raptors, artifacts and inquiry-driven learning connect students with habitats, food webs, rehabilitation and conservation.

85	10,211	6,278
programs in Year One	people served	served through 26 grant-funded programs

Nebraska Environmental Trust support expands access for Title I schools and communities unable to afford program fees.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

A Safer Home for Education Ambassadors

The new raptor facility supports safety, care and long-term program growth.

44′ × 18′

all-metal lean-to footprint

14′ / 10′

high-to-low roofline

4

free-standing species-specific cages



RAPTOR DISCOVERY

NEST 529 Eagle Nest Exhibit

Exploring the world of bald eagles



Inside the eagle nest



Measuring up to an eagle's wingspan

A word from NEST 529

> The Edgerton Explorit Center's Eagle Nest Exhibit is the perfect sponsorship opportunity for NEST 529 (and not only because of our name). Just like the Center itself, this exhibit makes it easy for kids to get excited about education and imagination.
>
> It's important for kids to dream big for the future and develop a love for learning new things. That's why we're proud to help parents, grandparents, and friends plan for their kids' futures — and why we're so excited to see how this exhibit inspires families for years to come.

On behalf of NEST 529 Education Savings

Sponsor of the Eagle Nest Exhibit



KEN WORTMAN

TRADES SCIENCE PROGRAM

Science students can build on

Connecting science, engineering, problem-solving and career exploration to the skills that build our world.

FREE FOR NEBRASKA SCHOOLS

During the program's first three years

EARLY IMPACT

A Strong Start for Trades Science

27
pilot locations

1,595
students participated

5.00/5
Would host again



Summer Library Pilot Survey (June – July 2026)

100% Rated the program as good or excellent

100% Said grant funding helped make participation possible

100% Agreed the program helped students understand how science is used in real-world jobs

100% Rated students as highly engaged or very engaged in the hands-on activities and demonstrations.

7,000+ PEOPLE REACHED

After the reporting year, Trades Science and Raptor programs reached 7,000+ people at the 2026 Nebraska State Fair's school and public days.

EDUCATOR VOICES

Trades Science Makes an Impact



"The Edgerton Explorit Center's Ken Wortman Trades Science Program was a fantastic experience for our students at Jefferson Elementary School. The hands-on labs, engaging demonstrations, and excellent staff kept students excited and actively involved in learning while introducing them to the many ways science connects to skilled trades careers."

Jamie London

Principal, Jefferson Elementary School, Norfolk Public Schools

"The AirWorks Trades Science Demonstration gave our young patrons an exciting, hands-on opportunity to explore how science connects to careers in construction, manufacturing, and technology. From experimenting with airflow and air pressure to trying on protective equipment, building freestanding paper towers, and experiencing the always-popular ping-pong ball cannon, students were engaged from beginning to end."

Carol Baker

Youth Services Manager, Kilgore Memorial Library, York

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Grant Programming for Nebraska Schools



Ken Wortman Trades Science Program

Designed primarily for grades 3–8, grant-funded experiences connect science and problem-solving with skilled trades careers. Central Community College and other donors make this access possible.

Demonstrations and hands-on labs

Discovery Days and Family Nights

Trades Science Field Trips

At the Edgerton Center: STEAM Explorit Zone time, trades demonstrations, and labs.

Grant Funded Raptor Programs for Eligible Schools

Nebraska Environmental Trust funding supports Title I schools and others unable to afford programs. Live raptors and hands-on lessons explore adaptations, habitats, and conservation.

Customize your visit. Schedule early.

Combine qualifying grant activities with regular STEAM programs and deduct their cost from normal fees. Contact Mary for options and travel estimates.

edgerton.org/tradescience • 402-694-4032 • mary@edgerton.org

Discovery at Every Age

SUMMER CAMPS

52 options

Hands-on camps for PreK–8th grade, including new full-day trades experiences.

AFTERSCHOOL

50 spots

Weekly STEAM, movement, art, snacks and monthly field trips for local students.

FIELD TRIPS

School groups

Three-hour museum experiences with demonstrations and labs.

ON THE MOVE

Statewide

STEAM demonstrations, labs, family nights and multi-day events brought directly to communities.

SUMMER CAMPS 2026

Full STEAM Ahead








1,507

Camp experiences

679

Scholarship-supported camp experiences

45% of all camp experiences

75%

Of camp experiences taught by high school and college student mentors

Explore our complete list of summer camp offerings at www.edgerton.org/camps

Your support made summer discovery possible

Thank You to Our Camp Sponsors



Edgerton Dog Science Camper

PRESENTED BY

Central Community College
Hamilton Telecommunications

Aurora Cooperative
Pinnacle Bank

GOLD SPONSORS

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FAMILY VOICES

Making Summer Camp Possible



A Summer to Look Forward To

“Having scholarships for the Edgerton Summer Camps means a lot to me because going to these camps is something my daughter looks forward to so much and counts on for her summer experience. It takes a lot of financial pressure off me to be able to provide that for her.”

Tiffany R.

Summer camp parent (2026)

Opening Doors to Opportunity

“The camp scholarships have provided opportunities my child would not have otherwise.”

Robert A.

Summer camp parent (2026)

“With programs like the ones that are offered at Edgerton, you bring opportunities to my child that she wouldn’t have access to otherwise. From a mom who struggles financially, I appreciate the scholarships and all that you do for the kids and community!”

Chelsea B.

Summer camp parent (2026)

Active Minds, Happy Kids

“It is a great way to keep the brain and body moving during summer, but also so much fun!”

Ginny S.

Summer camp parent (2026)

Supporting Our Mission

August 2025–July 2026

76% **of total expenditures directly supports Education Programs & Exhibits**

*BBB Wise Giving Alliance recommends a benchmark of at least 65% of a nonprofit's total expenses support programs

24%

Supported facilities, administration, and fundraising

Building and grounds maintenance, salaries, insurance, utilities, payment processing fees, and professional services support the operations needed to deliver programming. Fundraising helps finance the Center's work.

20%

Admissions revenue increase

$3.3+ million

Total assets

Up $211,444, nearly 7%

$2.38 million

Endowment investments

Up $60,364 over the prior year



Edgerton guests exploring the Bed of Nails Exhibit

"This place is AMAZING!! It far exceeded our expectations for a science museum. It was absolutely worth the stop and price of admission on the long road trip across Nebraska with kids. There were so many interactive exhibits to play with that were top-notch quality, featuring the latest science and technology."

Google review

Building Capacity for Tomorrow



RAPTOR RESTORATION

$150,000+ raised

A fire-resistant enclosure, species-specific cages and renewed education infrastructure.

TRADES SCIENCE

Raised $819,000 toward a $1.024M three-year plan

Educators, mobile delivery, curriculum, trailers, equipment, and exhibits serving schools statewide.

CLASSROOM RENEWAL

Flexible learning space

After the fire, the renovated classroom supports field-trip overflow, a trades demonstration, and a lab area.

Your support makes hands-on learning possible.

NEW EXHIBITS

$206,347 invested

Build-It Zone, eagle nest, laser, sound, energy and trades on the move career-connected experiences expand what families can explore.

MADE POSSIBLE TOGETHER

Partnership Powers Discovery



Major program and project partners

Recognizing donations of $5,000 or more

6 Regions One Nebraska

Associated General Contractors Nebraska Building Chapter

BD Construction

Bernard K. & Norma F. Heuermann

Central Community College

Chad and Bridgett Svoboda

Decker and Family

Dr. James M. Woodard and Mabel Woodard Trust

Frank M and Alice M Farr Trust

Hamilton Community Foundation

Hamilton Telecommunications

Heuermann Family Charitable Trust

Interstate Battery of Nebraska

Jay and Tina Oswald

John and Deb Nelson

Kolar Foundation

Mather Foundation

Molliconi Family

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Nebraska Environmental Trust

NEST 529

Phillip Hupf

Nelson Family

RMV Construction

Robert and Bethel Kolar Charitable Trust

Roy and Gloria Dinsdale Family Foundation

Sherwood Foundation

The Wortman Family Charitable Trust

THANK YOU

To every donor, sponsor, school, volunteer, family, and community partner who keeps curiosity moving.

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Deb Miller
Raptor Specialist

Nicole Havlik
Educator

John Boeder
Trades Science Educator

Joe Almont
Front Desk Manager

Joe Havlik
Front Desk

Shawna Vinkenberg
Afterschool Coordinator

One team. Shared purpose. Statewide impact.



CURIOSITY IN MOTION

OPPORTUNITY WITHIN REACH

The next chapter is already taking shape: more schools served, stronger career pathways, a renewed home for raptor ambassadors and more reasons for every learner to believe, “I can do this.”

EDGERTON EXPLORIT CENTER

208 16th Street • Aurora, Nebraska 68818
edgerton.org

Hands-on science. Statewide reach. Lifelong impact.