

## Giddy up or giddy out? Dodgeville Equestrian Campground in need of an overhaul

What has over 5,000 scenic acres, two lakes for swimming, fishing and paddling, large rock outcroppings, expansive vistas, beautiful prairies and more miles of trails than can possibly be explored in a single day? If you're at all familiar with southwestern Wisconsin's Driftless area of Dodgeville, you'll know the answer is Governor Dodge State Park.

The park, which has been a destination for equestrians for decades, is in need of help. While the 25 miles of horse trails are still well-maintained, other areas have not fared as well over the years. The equestrian campground, which was designed to be temporary in the 1980s, only has enough space to house 11 visiting parties. Trailers are sandwiched together on asphalt that is deteriorating. And the amenities have not been updated in nearly 40 years. The horse trails at Governor Dodge are some of the best in the state but are underutilized because equestrians prefer to stay at other campgrounds that have electric sites, shower houses, pens for horses. To add insult to injury, state government park funding has been cut significantly in recent years.

Parks like Governor Dodge now

receive barely enough funding to cover annual emergency and infrastructure repairs on systems that are as much as 40 years old. State funds are not available to cover the estimated \$650,000 cost of the new Trails End Campground at Governor Dodge. To assist with fundraising, volunteers known as The Friends of Governor Dodge Equestrian Committee have initiated their first capital fund drive, raising \$205,000 in their first year. Now help is needed to get the project completed.

Of course, volunteers and fundraising activities can only do so much. As a means to raise additional funds, the Equestrian Committee is asking women throughout the area and beyond to pledge their support through the 100 Extraordinary Women initiative. This is a way for women in the community to come together in support of a new campground, leading the campaign by raising \$100,000 or more.

100 Extraordinary Women is a national organization that empowers women to join together to support causes they believe in and create a bigger impact than they could on her own. 100 Extraordinary Women is

asking a minimum of 100 women to each donate or pledge \$1,000 to the Friends of Governor Dodge capital campaign. Pledges can be made over 5 years (approximately \$200 per year; \$18 per month); gifts and pledges can be made directly on the 100 Extraordinary Women website. <https://100extraordinarywomen.com/friends-of-governor-dodge-state-park/>

"A new equestrian campground has been in the master plan since 1984," says Jean Warrior, a member of the Equestrian Committee. "The committee has identified the new site with water and electric already in place. The 21 sites at the new Trails End Campground will be nicely spaced for privacy and ease of use, with scenic views of the park's peaceful north side."

With nearly double the capacity of the current campground, hundreds more users can access the park each season. The improved ambience will encourage families to camp with their children and horses, exposing visitors of all ages to the healthy pleasures of outdoor recreation with their animals.