

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[\*\[Project Images Available Here\]\*](#)

September 5, 2023

## **Wellfield Botanic Gardens Launches Events and Visitors Center Expansion Project Campaign**

ELKHART, INDIANA – Wellfield Botanic Gardens, an oasis of year round natural beauty, special events, and community engagement, is thrilled to announce the commencement of the public phase of an ambitious capital campaign supporting the Events and Visitors Center Expansion Project.

Created nearly 20 years ago, the Master Plan for Wellfield Botanic Gardens foresaw the attraction Wellfield has now become, with over 75,000 visitors per year and true regional impact. The Project realizes four key master plan features—a new 12,000 sq.ft. Visitors Center with event capacity, an Open Air Pavilion, relocation and repurposing of the existing Visitors Cottage, and increased parking capacity. These features will provide not only a transformational guest experience with necessary infrastructure and amenities, earned-revenue through private event rentals, and increased mission-effectiveness, but it will also deliver increased quality of place and promote economic development of the area. The campaign includes an endowment portion which ensures financial sustainability for the future. The total campaign goal including construction of all the features and endowment for the future is \$17,000,000.

Since its founding by the Elkhart Rotary Club in 2005, over 20 beautiful garden spaces, numerous special features, and guest amenities have been installed at Wellfield. These major capital projects have been made possible by the vision and generosity of community leaders in the Elkhart area. A private, 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Wellfield Botanic Gardens has been built completely from private funds. Its annual operating budget receives no tax support. All operating funds are derived from donations, sponsorships, private event rentals, annual memberships, endowment, admission fees, and special event ticket revenue.

“Wellfield is poised for our next transformational stage of development to meet an increasing need as we grow and mature not only as a public garden, but as an important gathering space for our community,” said Eric Garton, Robert and Peggy Weed Executive Director at Wellfield.

“Our growth since our founding is no coincidence. The master plan conceived and adopted by the founders was meant to attract and inspire the community. This project is a part of that original plan and the single largest capital project in the garden’s history,” Garton added.

The quiet phase of the campaign began in spring of 2021 when longtime Elkhart Rotarian and Founding Member of Wellfield, Marlyn “Marly” Rydson offered a significant lead gift to help kickstart the Visitors Center project in honor of his wife Laura Rydson. Laura’s decades of community service made Elkhart a better place, but her health was in decline. Marly encouraged the Community Foundation of Elkhart County to match his gift, and they agreed. After months of research and careful consideration, Wellfield’s Board of Directors made the courageous decision to pursue the capital campaign. Laura Rydson passed away in August of 2021 and will be memorialized with the completion of the Visitors Center.

Throughout the quiet phase of the campaign, Wellfield has been fortunate to receive substantial support from many dedicated donors and friends who share a common vision to complete the master plan. The Project will provide tremendous community benefits and ensure Wellfield’s ability to further its mission to celebrate the inseparable relationship between water and life, inspire creativity and lifelong learning, foster stewardship of our natural world, and grow community. Through the generosity of the campaign's charter donors and supporters, Wellfield has raised 77% of its total goal.

Now, Wellfield invites the entire community to join as partners to meet the goal and make the project a reality. Learn more at <https://wellfieldgardens.org/whats-happening-at-wellfield/>, email [info@wellfieldgardens.org](mailto:info@wellfieldgardens.org) to request information, or attend one of three Campaign Kickoff Open House Events scheduled for:

- Saturday, September 9 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. or
- Saturday, September 9 from 5-8 p.m. or
- Tuesday, September 12 from 5-8 p.m.

Each of these Campaign Kickoff Open House Events will be hosted by Executive Director Eric Garton and members of the Board of Directors. Admission is free for all who attend. Experience Wellfield, learn details about the Events and Visitors Center Expansion Project, and view the progress on the ground as this incredible project takes shape. Enjoy a complimentary celebratory beverage, hear stories about the project, and learn how you can be a part of this amazing chapter in Wellfield's history. Registration is not required; just drop in anytime during the open house sessions.

### **About Wellfield Botanic Gardens:**

Wellfield Botanic Gardens is a “living museum” located at 1011 N. Main St., Elkhart, Indiana. Situated on the historic North Main Street well field, the Gardens are 36 acres in size, including 18 acres of water. The private, not-for-profit was created in 2005 to celebrate the inseparable relationship between water and life, inspire creativity and lifelong learning, foster stewardship of our

natural world, and grow community. The garden is open year-round. Activities include special events and festivals, workshops and educational opportunities, a summer concert series, winter holiday lights, and seasonal programming. Facilities may be rented for private events including weddings, anniversaries, corporate events, and celebrations of life. For more information visit [wellfieldgardens.org](http://wellfieldgardens.org) or call 574-266-2006 ext 105.

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**Note to media:**

We welcome stories on our projects or any of the many events happening at the Gardens. We can accommodate morning, afternoon, evening or weekend television stand-ups at Wellfield or anyone looking for a colorful feature.

**Media Contact:**

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Wellfield Botanic Gardens

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