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Contact: Jamie Allen
616-643-4896 (o) 616-706-8386 (c)
jamie.allen@rdvcorp.com

Ada Leaders Announce Plans for New Ada Covered Bridge Park and Enhanced Trail System; Launch Final Phase of \$8.5 Million Fundraising Campaign

ADA, MICH., May 15, 2024 —Today, Ada community leaders and township officials announced the public launch of the *Connecting Community* campaign, a bold initiative aimed at raising \$8.5 million to create an expanded park space on both sides of the Thornapple River with the Ada Covered Bridge at the center and an enhanced trail system. The park will include land that held Leonard Field and the property on the western edge of the bridge that was acquired by Ada Township in June 2023.

The Ada community has rallied together with major donors already contributing \$7.3 million toward the \$8.5 million goal. This tremendous momentum underscores the collective belief in the importance of Ada Covered Bridge Park as a central gathering space for the community. With a large portion of the funds already secured, the campaign is well on its way to achieving its financial goal.

Leading the fundraising efforts are *Connecting Community* campaign co-chairs, Loren and Kelly Crandell and Joshua and Leslie Hulst. Both families reside in the Ada community.

“As the *Connecting Community* campaign enters a public phase, the entire community is called upon to get us to the finish line of this visionary project,” said Loren Crandell. “Every donation, large or small, contributes to the realization of Ada Covered Bridge Park. It’s an investment that will provide countless joyful experiences for so many in our community.”

The new Ada Covered Bridge Park will be a testament to the community's commitment to fostering connections and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. The envisioned park will feature a broad range of amenities, including a splash pad, pickleball courts, a dog park, river overlooks, picnic spaces, and more. Pedestrian walkways will link Ada Covered Bridge Park with Legacy Park across the street, creating a seamless and accessible connection between these two open spaces along the riverfront.

Beyond the park space, an additional fifteen acres across the Thornapple River from Legacy Park will be transformed to offer walking trails, a kayak launch, and additional river overlooks. This expansion aligns with Ada's dedication to providing outdoor experiences and opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of the area.

“The Ada Covered Bridge is really the heart of this project,” said Cheri DeVos, honorary co-chair of *Connecting Community*. “It represents the history of Ada. It’s a connector. It’s the first thing many people think of when they hear the words “Ada Village,” and it is only fitting that it should be the

centerpiece and name of this beautiful new park. Optimizing this space to meet community needs while enhancing the trail network that connects to it will be a wonderful addition to this growing area.”

In 2006, the Ada community produced a resident-guided vision for the future of Ada Village. In 2013, township officials, business owners, residents, and visitors joined together in a series of more than 100 meetings and community forums to further clarify that vision. One of the key requests was to expand outdoor recreation opportunities and enhance existing parks and green spaces, connecting them with a regional network of trails and open spaces.

“We are so happy to support this campaign and are excited to know that this beautiful outdoor space will be available for members of our community for generations to come,” said Amy Van Andel, honorary co-chair of *Connecting Community* alongside her husband, Steve. “This is a perfect complement to all the growth in Ada over the recent years and will do so much to create an even more engaging, vibrant and fun environment for everyone to enjoy.”

Construction of Ada Covered Bridge Park and the associated trails is anticipated to begin in early 2025. For more information on the project and ways to support the *Connecting Community* campaign, visit www.connectingcommunitycampaign.com.

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