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**CONTACT:** Lauri Keagle,  
Communications Director  
(219) 644-3698 or  
[lkeagle@southshorecleancities.org](mailto:lkeagle@southshorecleancities.org)



## **Partners unveil new Dunes Learning Center propane bus**

**Sustainably-fueled vehicle purchased through collaborative grant effort**

PORTER, INDIANA — Dunes Learning Center and its partners on Friday unveiled a new propane-powered school bus for use in transporting students participating in its environmental education programs.

The unveiling took place during a press conference at Dunes Learning Center, 700 Howe Road, in Porter, Indiana.

The vehicle purchase was made possible in part through a \$75,000 grant acquired in partnership with Dunes Learning Center, South Shore Clean Cities and the Regional Development Authority and funds from donors and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

“The propane school bus is helping us fulfill our mission in a number of ways,” Dunes Learning Center Executive Director Geof Benson said. “It allows us to more efficiently transport students to our outdoor classrooms while being good stewards of the Earth by using a sustainable fuel. We are grateful to all of our partners for their help in making this project possible.”

Historically, Dunes Learning Center rented diesel-fueled school buses to transport students participating in its programs to outdoor environmental education sites within the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Those buses had to travel from their bus barns in Gary, Indiana, throughout the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and back to Gary, all the while producing harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Dunes Learning Center received a Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program grant from the Federal Transit Authority for the purchase of 16-passenger propane shuttle buses to assist in their efforts several years ago, but additional help was needed.

“The shuttle buses are propane-powered, so they don’t pollute as much and they are housed at our facility so they’re not having to commute from Gary,” Benson said. “We’re reducing diesel emissions and successfully moving people around, but we still needed a larger bus.”

Dunes Learning Center in cooperation with South Shore Clean Cities successfully applied for a grant through the Regional Development Authority to assist with the purchase of a 72-passenger propane-powered school bus, which was awarded in late 2017.

The BlueBird Vision Propane bus was designed, engineered and manufactured by ROUSH CleanTech and purchased from MacAllister Transportation in Indianapolis. It was graphically designed and wrapped by Signature Graphics, Inc.

Propane-fueled school buses create up to 20 percent less nitrogen oxide, up to 60 percent less carbon monoxide and up to 24 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than diesel-fueled school buses, according to ROUSH CleanTech.

“South Shore Clean Cities is proud of the work of our member Dunes Learning Center and was pleased to assist them in the acquisition of the propane school bus,” South Shore Clean Cities Executive Director Carl Lisek said. “Using propane instead of diesel reduces dependence on imported oil, reduces greenhouse gases, improves air quality and supports local jobs.”

Dunes Learning Center also received a Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality grant from the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) in cooperation with South Shore Clean Cities for the construction and installation of a propane fueling station for the shuttle buses. On-site fueling is more fuel- and cost-efficient and reduces wear and tear on the vehicles.

“Indiana Dunes is very excited to have our partners at the Dunes Learning Center expand their bus fleet with a new 72-passenger bus now available to transport campers to various sites around the dunes for education programs,” Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Superintendent Paul Labovitz said. “Grant assistance via South Shore Clean Cities was critical in helping solve our most basic problem about how to move students around. A propane-fueled bus will deliver thousands of students to National Lakeshore and other public lands sites.

“The colorful bus wrap will inspire all who see this new addition and hopefully have them ask, ‘How can I learn more about Indiana Dunes?’ The answer is check out Dunes Learning Center!”

To learn more about Dunes Learning Center, go to [www.duneslearningcenter.org](http://www.duneslearningcenter.org).

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**CUTLINE:** Partners gathered on Friday to unveil the new Dunes Learning Center propane-powered bus. Those celebrating included (l-r) Signature Graphics Client Relationship Director Donna Lind, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Superintendent Paul Labovitz, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority Communications Manager David Wellman, Dunes Learning Center Board of Directors President Dr. Deb Backhus, South Shore Clean Cities Executive Director Carl Lisek and Dunes Learning Center Executive Director Geof Benson.

### **About Dunes Learning Center**

Dunes Learning Center at Camp Good Fellow in Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization continuing the environmental education legacy of co-founder Lee Botts, a strong advocate for protecting public lands and the Great Lakes for more than 50 years. Year-round environmental education field trips and workshops provide learners of all ages with new knowledge and tools to address the global challenges we are facing today. A more sustainable future for all can be achieved by better understanding the interdependence of a healthy environment, vibrant economy and equitable society. Learn more at [duneslearningcenter.org](http://duneslearningcenter.org).

### **About South Shore Clean Cities**

South Shore Clean Cities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization managed by Legacy Environmental Services, Inc., a woman-owned, certified Women's Business Enterprise. The U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities coalitions are organizations designed to reduce petroleum consumption in the transportation sector by advancing the use of clean fuels and

vehicles, idle reduction technologies, hybrid electric vehicles, fuel blends and fuel economy while reducing dependence on imported oil. Learn more at [southshorecleancities.org](http://southshorecleancities.org).