Chippewa Nature Center Delivers "One-Stop Shopping" with Doubleknot

Integrated membership, registration, and donations improve online experience for visitors and staff

About Chippewa Nature Center

Chippewa Nature Center (CNC) is a nonprofit nature center, open year-round to the public. Its mission is to help people enjoy and learn about the environment, as well as to inspire and teach them how to be responsible stewards of the land, water, and air. It is one of the largest private non-profit nature centers in the United States, and includes over 1,200 acres, 40 staff members, and hundreds of volunteers. More than 60,000 people visit CNC every year, including 20,000 school children and 700 Nature Day Campers.

The Challenge: Identify a Single Integrated Solution for Registration, Membership, and More

One of Chippewa Nature Center's greatest priorities was finding an online registration solution for their popular Nature Day Camp, which offers more than 30 different programs to help youth ages 3 to 16 "unplug and tune in to the natural world." In previous years, parents would line up at the CNC office as early as 5:30 AM on the day registration opened and wait for hours to reserve their children's space. And, with only paper registration forms, staff spent a great deal of time on data entry and other administrative tasks.

Membership management was a priority as well. Membership was being tracked in a standalone program that wasn't available to all staff, which made it difficult to confirm whether a membership was current and entitled to benefits.

CNC's goal was to find a single integrated solution that would meet their needs for:

- Camp and event registration
- Membership management, including the application of member discounts to camp registration
- Online donations and fundraising
- Email marketing and communications including newsletters,
- Reporting and analytics

"We didn't want to make a switch until we could do everything we wanted—have people check their membership, register for a program, and make a donation—in a single system," said Rachel Larimore, CNC's director of education.

The Solution: Doubleknot's Integrated Online Suite

Chippewa Nature Center conducted a thorough evaluation process for an online solutions vendor, including research and discussions with members of the Association of Nature Center Administrators, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the American Camping Association. After narrowing the number of potential vendors to five, CNC developed a comprehensive list of desired features and began working directly with vendors to identify the best solution.

After several demos and detailed Q&A sessions, CNC chose Doubleknot. According to Larimore, "Doubleknot made the most sense for us. We liked the integration of being able to manage memberships, camp registrations, and donations in a single interface. Doubleknot had the features that we wanted at the right price."

Implementation
Doubleknot staff worked closely with CNC staff to import the membership database into the new system. Once the memberships were uploaded, CNC used Doubleknot's Communications Center to send email to all members explaining how to log on to their accounts and automatically receive their benefits online.

CNC was committed to ensuring that online registration for Nature Day Camp was fully configured, tested, and ready to go on registration day. Said Larimore, "The program seems intuitive. Once we understood the basics, it was easy to add events." To address possible worries about the new registration process, CNC set up a sample camp registration so that families could walk through the steps in advance.

Other Doubleknot features at launch included an online donations page; a link to purchase or renew memberships on every page; and a monthly calendar that automatically includes all CNC events. Visitors can click an event in the calendar to view more information and start the registration process.

Because comprehensive reporting and analytics capabilities are built into Doubleknot, CNC can view up-to-date information about financials, events, program availability, attendance, and more. Doubleknot provided a range of standard reports that can be configured to include information from anywhere in the system as well as a full-featured report writer to create custom reports. In addition, Doubleknot created an e-newsletter template, making it easy for CNC to prepare and publish their weekly newsletter online. Constituents can manage their subscription preferences in their account profile.

Throughout the implementation process, Doubleknot's customer support and technical teams worked closely with CNC staff to ensure that they understood how to use the software to meet their goals.

"We appreciate the support," said Larimore. "The training and walkthroughs were very helpful and Doubleknot was very responsive to our requests. For example, our camp director didn't like the way one of the reports looked. Doubleknot sent her a YouTube video that showed her exactly how to create the report she wanted."

Benefits for Constituents and Staff
According to Larimore, Chippewa Nature Center realized immediate benefits from the Doubleknot implementation:

- Families were very happy that Nature Day Camp registration was easier and available online so they didn't have to register in person at the CNC office. Doubleknot's robust dedicated servers had no problem handling hundreds of parents logging to register at the same time.
- Members appreciated having their camp registration discounts applied automatically without having to call the office.
- When registration opened, CNC staff could focus on their regular duties instead of spending the morning staffing the registration desk.
- All required registration information—including health and emergency contact forms—is completed online, so staff no longer has to track down incomplete applications.

Larimore expects the benefits to continue: "Our membership information is more accurate now, and more people are renewing, because their expiration information and the renewal process is right there online."

Learn More!
To learn more about Doubleknot's solutions for membership management, event and camp registration, and email marketing and communications, contact us at (408) 971-9120 or Sales@doubleknot.com.