

# Laudato Si' Project

Newsletter

*Restoring Our Natural Connection*



***Mission: To restore humanity's connection to the natural world through education, stewardship and recreation***



Winter 2017

## *1 Year Anniversary of Laudato Si' Project*

*Laudato Si' Project* was established in February of last year with the mission of *restoring humanity's connection to the natural world through **education, stewardship and recreation***. The summer of 2016 was also the 1-year anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. In an impressive decision, Pope Francis made "care for our common home" a work of mercy this year! This solidified *Laudato Si' Project's* mission and gave us even more momentum moving forward.

In the past year, *Laudato Si' Project* was able to connect with several hundred school students ranging from kindergarten up through college. Whether it is speaking at a school, parish, conference, or out in the woods, education is at the core of what we do. Our school partnerships have really expanded *Laudato Si' Project's* reach. With over a dozen partnerships and growing, we are able to work with teachers to help them connect students to the teaching of the Church and *Laudato Si'*. This ensures they find ways to get students into nature, sparking curiosity and developing a love for this amazing natural gift. Be sure to read our new "partner pages" on our website that detail how each school is Living *Laudato Si'*.

Our ability to engage students and adult groups with stewardship projects has been a powerful and rewarding part of our first year. In the last 12 months, *Laudato Si' Project* has helped volunteers log over **330** stewardship hours!! Now that's Caring for Our Common Home.

Our goals for the coming years are ambitious, as we look to partner with more schools, do more speaking engagements and connect more people to the natural world. We do all this while fostering a faith-based stewardship ethic. There have been so many highlights and adventures in the last 12 months and it is all because of our generous members, donors and volunteers. Thank You.

-Joe Meyer, Executive Director

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## NEW: Care for Our Common Home Patch

We are excited to announce the creation of a Care for Our Common Home patch. With the generous support of the Shambarger Family, we were able to create a patch that can be used to educate and encourage stewardship in a wide variety of settings. The patch itself is 2.5 x 2.5 inches with a plastic backing and it even has an optional button hook if you don't want to stitch it on.

*Laudato Si' Project* created recommended guidelines for the earning of the patch that are age specific. You can access these on our website under the education and stewardship tabs. The guidelines are broken up into 2 age groups; ages 5-10 and ages 10+.

The intention is that families, scouts, parishes and schools can utilize these guidelines in assisting young people in earning the Care for Our Common Home patch. The guidelines consist of an educational component; to learn about Care for Our Common Home and a stewardship project; to put into practice our call to care for this planet.



# Living *Laudato Si'* Highlights



St. Agnes Grade School



Saint Agnes partnered with *Laudato Si' Project* in Fall of 2016. Pictured are St. Agnes students proudly wearing their Living *Laudato Si'* stickers. St. Agnes students are able to do this in various ways. Students do a nature walk through each season and discuss the changes they observe. They also designed an environmental bulletin board and wrote letters to Pope Francis about the *Laudato Si' Project* along with notes of gratitude to him for writing the encyclical.



## *Laudato Si'* Clothing Line for April Fools



If you are unaware, Executive Director Joe Meyer raises organic chickens for eggs which he sells to friends, family, and colleagues. He is known around Marquette High School as the “egg baron” and can usually be seen carrying egg cartons through the halls.

MUHS art teacher, Peter Beck, created this masterpiece using Photoshop. They will be using it for a spoof school newspaper article titled “Mr. Meyer retires from MUHS to pursue eco-clothing line.”



# *Laudato Si'* at Home

## Connecting Your Family to Nature

Written by LSP Board Member Ryan Grusenski

*"I want to thank You, Jesus, for the sunshine." -6 yr. old daughter*

When I talk about my experience of Scouting I often will describe it as an experience in learning what it means to have common sense. Take the principle of "Leave No Trace" summed up succinctly in the catchy phrase "take only pictures, leave only footprints" as an example. This is part of my developed common sense thanks to the lessons I learned as a Scout on those countless cold nights in a lean-to. I never imagined how living a life with this type of common sense would affect how I raise my three children.

My common sense is now becoming their common sense and all for the sake of our common home. There is a long list of things that fill me with awe and wonder, but there are very few at the top of my list above the earth, its goodness and watching my children. When I let my children play outside with only what nature has to offer, they start playing with the earth. Dirt becomes mud pies, a snow-laden Blue Spruce becomes a kitchen utensil for sprinkling sugar, sticks become swords and batons and javelins and pointers and pencils. Children treat the earth like this generous gift they have been given and observing them play with it is an amazing combination of two of the most powerful gifts on which God has ever let me lay my eyes. The more that I can do to introduce them to the bounty and wonder of our natural world, the better it is for them and for our world.

*All the earth falls in worship before You, they sing of You, they sing of Your Name!* Psalm 66:4

On paper this feels terribly tall. What I DO in order to help my children appreciate and understand God's gift of this planet is slow and that's ok. It's slow and glorious like the earth. In one season it was the introduction of a compost bin to our backyard and the word "decomposition," a season later the area around that compost heap became an excellent place to track the footsteps of frozen foragers like mice and moles and opossums. One small garden in the summer becomes lessons in small-scale farming for a 5-year old with an eye for design and a penchant for weeding. Bird feeders placed near window perches that my children can watch from inside have even the two-year old enamored and engaged with our tiny bird friends. Just the other day at 27 months, she exclaimed, "Cardinal!" and sure enough, she has spotted a bright red cardinal picking through our seeds.



## Connecting Your Family to Nature Continued

*“The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it. Psalm 24:1*

Woodpeckers don’t often visit our families bird feeder. Of the common yard birds that we have flitting around our house in Southeastern Wisconsin, he is the most infrequent visitor. So, while I welcome the nuthatches and juncos and finches and chickadees willingly and often as I gaze out my front window, when the woodpecker arrives it feels more special. He feels like a special guest, and when he is there he has my full attention for what usually amounts to a moment that is over too soon. One weekend morning that wily woodpecker was briefly visiting our bird feeder and only my 4-year-old son was facing the window to see it. “Woodpecker!!” he exclaimed. A year ago I might have second guessed him; this time I knew he was right because I would have exclaimed it the same way if I had seen it.



Perhaps the greatest lesson that the Lord has taught me through these introductory lessons that I have provided for my children is to not hold back from the opportunities to explain beauty and to simply let them wonder. Some of the best lessons happen when I don’t know the answers and we have to ponder and eventually head to the library to solve a natural mystery. When I give them the time and space to just be outside, to just enjoy nature, to explore and collect, wonder and question, their curiosity and creativity runs wild. Their vision of the world still has a purity to it that, when nurtured, I hope will become a vision for caring for our common home that is beyond my own.

# Save the Date

## Green Alliance Sustainability Fair

Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup> 9-3pm

*Lapham Peak State Park*

**Free**



As part of the Green Alliance, *Laudato Si' Project* is helping plan an unprecedented event that will take place this summer

When the Green Alliance formed in late Spring of 2016, the group wanted to do something big that would engage people from all over southeastern WI to learn about sustainability and connect with nature on a new level; The Sustainability Fair was born. It will take place at Homestead Hollow in Lapham Peak State Park near Delafield, WI. Organizations and businesses will be exhibiting and vending while presentations on various topics will be happening throughout the day. This event is very family friendly and will include rock climbing, bike demos, a WI live animal show and guided nature hikes. It is sure to be a magnificent event. [Come Join Us This Summer!](#)



## By The Numbers: Winter Care for Our Common Home

### Education

*Laudato Si' Project* has conducted **14 hours** of presentations, interpretive hikes and educational tours.

### Stewardship

*Laudato Si' Project* has contributed **63 volunteer hours** in stewardship projects to better the ecological value of our world's outdoor places.

### Recreation

*Laudato Si' Project* has sponsored **10 hours** of recreational outings to visit, explore and learn about our natural world.

*Laudato Si' Project* is a 501(c)3 tax deductible organization that depends on membership and donations to continue its vital mission. Thank You!