

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT



Josh Van Hecke

## BY THE NUMBERS: OUR IMPACT IN 2024

**Connecting** with over **7,500** youth, families and adults

**Serving** through **3,100** volunteer hours of stewardship by  
**665** different volunteers

**Educating** through **928** hours of educational programs and retreats;  
working with over **65** parishes, schools and organizations



### FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Wow, 2024 was our most amazing year yet! It's so exciting to see the new building addition be used for God's glory in so many different ways. Our impact is record breaking with over 7,500 people taking part in programming in 2024 alone. Since we opened our doors in March of 2021, nearly 25,000 people have experienced our mission. I am so very grateful to all the donors, members, volunteers and prayers that make the Catholic Ecology Center a beacon of hope to our world.*

*It is fun seeing the property come alive in different ways during all four seasons. In addition to our diverse and faith-filled programming, we love being able to create a great visitor experience, keeping our building and trails open everyday for those wanting to explore, pray, relax and enjoy. I continue to be humbled by all the amazing things God is doing through our ministry.*

*With a grateful heart and invigorated spirit, I look forward to a blessed 2025!*

- Joe Meyer



# CONNECTING TO CHRIST AND HIS CREATION

### OUR MISSION

To deepen faith and foster a stewardship ethic through hands-on encounters with the natural world.

The Catholic Ecology Center began in 2021 and is a ministry of Laudato Si' Project, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization our founder began in 2016.

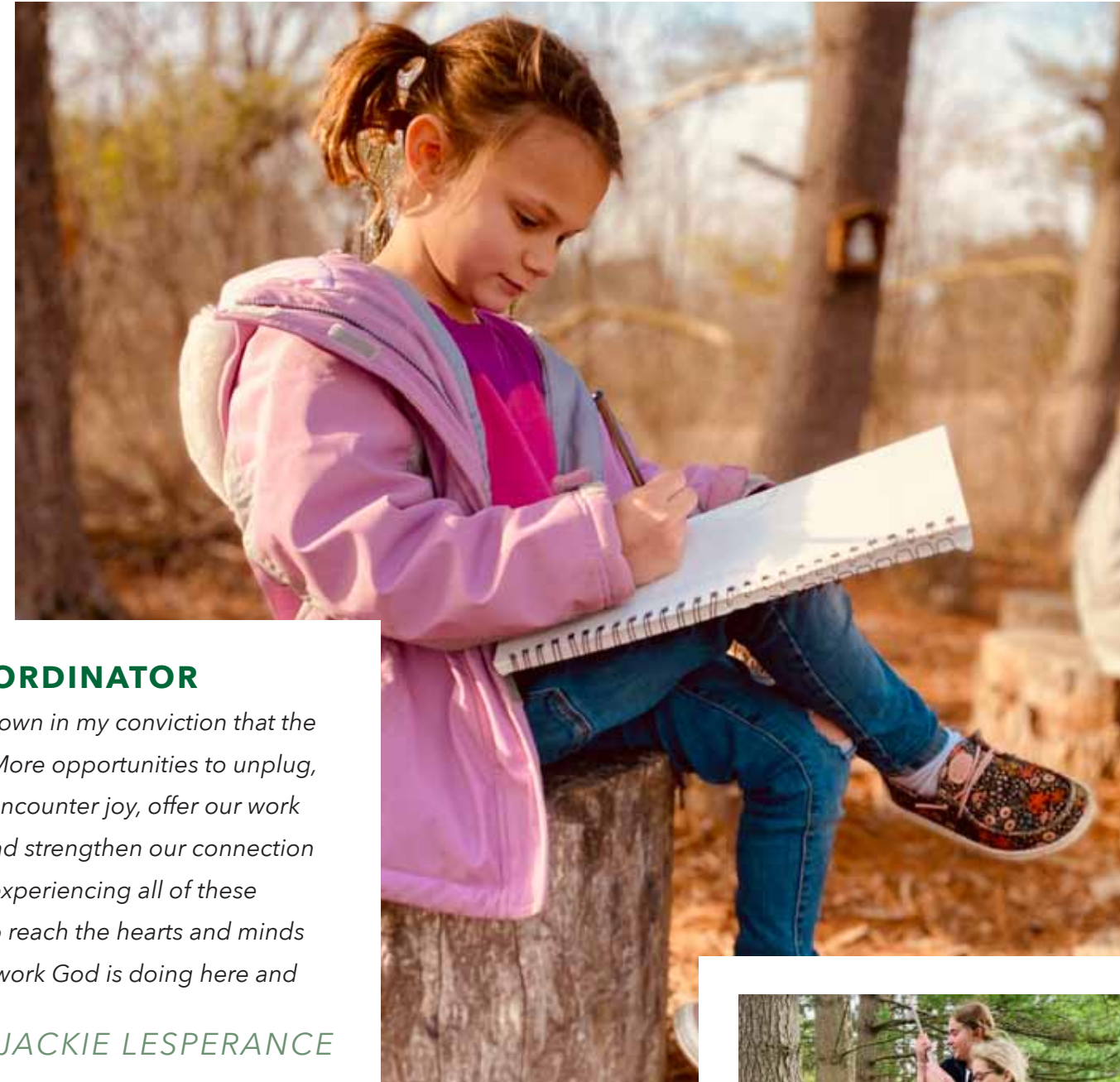


# RETREATS



*The CEC provided our students with a tremendous space to encounter our Lord on their retreat. We noticed a significant impact on the depth of prayer, authenticity and contemplation of our students in a way I have not seen before.*

*NINO REBHOLZ, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry*



More and more people are discovering the rich ways in which nature can draw us closer to God. Surrounded by life, beauty and simplicity, we can hear and see God in new and deep ways. With the addition of our beautiful new chapel and overnight accommodations, the Catholic Ecology Center provides a magnificent place for people of all ages to encounter the Lord and grow in relationship with Him!

We were privileged to journey with a multitude of students, families and staff from dozens of parishes, schools and organizations throughout 2024. Quiet time for prayer and reflection, learning to work as a team, connecting the wonders of creation to the beauty of our faith, putting our faith into action through service and creating joy-filled memories have become staples of our grace-filled retreats.

## MEET OUR NEW PROGRAM COORDINATOR

*Since joining the staff last summer, I have only grown in my conviction that the world needs more of what the CEC has to offer. More opportunities to unplug, soak in the beauty of nature, connect with God, encounter joy, offer our work in service to something greater than ourselves and strengthen our connection with others. I have witnessed people of all ages experiencing all of these and more here! The CEC is uniquely equipped to reach the hearts and minds of those we serve. I continue to be in awe of the work God is doing here and I am humbled and grateful to be a part of it!*

*JACKIE LESPERANCE*



# ECOLOGY PROGRAMS



St. John Chrysostom says, "From creation learn to admire the Lord!" This year's ecology programming truly helped us grow in awe and wonder not only of creation, but of the marvelous Creator behind it all! Through water quality testing, students monitored our water sources and learned how to care for them and thus the multitude of people the water affects. We surveyed moths, bats, bluebirds, minnows and small mammals to better know what is on our land and how to care for the critters. We even collected seeds to help others start prairies of their own. Whether in the forest, pond or prairie the heavens proclaim the greatness of the Lord!



*The sun's light that plays on the cedar trees, plays on each tiny flower as if it were the only one in existence; and in the same way our Lord takes a special interest in each soul.*

ST. THERESE OF LISEIEUX



## MEET OUR NEWEST EDUCATOR DOMINIC CARSTENS

Hailing from Wisconsin's driftless region, Dominic developed a deep fascination with nature from an early age. Dominic pursued his passion for learning at Wyoming Catholic College, guiding outdoor adventures and helping others encounter Christ through the beauty of the natural world. With over 200 days spent in the backcountry, he has honed the skills needed for all kinds of wilderness experiences.

Dominic joined the Catholic Ecology Center as an educator after completing his time this summer as a perpetual pilgrim on the National Eucharistic Procession. He is thrilled to inspire a love for God's creation in outdoor enthusiasts of all ages.



*We must therefore encourage and support the 'ecological conversion.'*

ST. JOHN PAUL II

# STEWARDSHIP



## FROM OUR VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

*We are extremely grateful to have volunteer help at the CEC! It would not be possible for us to exist without this help. Some of the 2024 projects included trail work, bluebird house monitoring, assisting with events, cleaning, and keeping our gardens weeded and looking great! MSI General also helped build our new educational animal shed which will house goats, chicks and a pig.*

KIM KREIMANN



Lend a hand!



A new volunteer put it very well, "I love that this place exists and I want my child to be in programs here in the future, so I want to do what I can to help." What a great example to set for your kids, teaching them the importance of giving back!

We always need help. If you are interested, please visit our website [CatholicEcologyCenter.org](https://CatholicEcologyCenter.org)

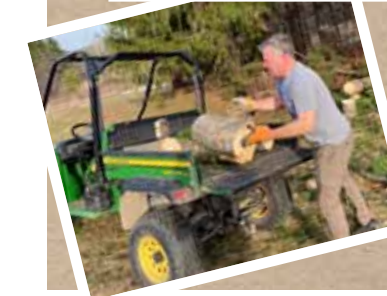
or contact Kim Kreimann  
[kreimann@catholicecologycenter.org](mailto:kreimann@catholicecologycenter.org)



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



David Fulcher, CEC board member, has helped in so many ways this past year. With the building addition in full swing, he was crucial with the planning, AV installation, educational signage and even helping build our new deck during the polar vortex last winter.



Dave is always ready to lend a hand whether on our trails or staffing our programs and events.

*Thank you to all of our volunteers!*

## SOME OF OUR GREAT VOLUNTEERS

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Auggie & Amy Cunningham | Colleen Malone              |
| Keith & Monica Everson  | Frankie Meier               |
| Dave Fulcher            | Joe & Andrea Meyer          |
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| Laurie Gramz            | Denise Murre                |
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| Jack Lawlis             | Connie Trahar               |
| Andre Lesperance        | Matt Vogel                  |
| Steve LuMaye            |                             |

We are grateful for all the clergy who help make our mission of bringing Christ to the world possible. Thanks also to all the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts for their service projects!

All of Creation is a song of praise to God!  
ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

# WORKSHOPS



## FROM OUR LEAD EDUCATOR

What a blessing it has been to be a part of the workshops this year! Whether searching for wild edibles, painting with foraged inks, making delicious chocolate or sampling foraged drinks, it has been moving to see people pour themselves into their work. Some of my favorite memories include sharing in the laughter of the ladies during the Advent wreath making class, seeing delight from kids as sap dripped from a maple tree and witnessing everything sparkle during a morning class of cross country skiing. God's goodness and creativity have certainly been on display!

REGINA LAWLIS

Stay up to date by following us on facebook or visit our website:

[CatholicEcologyCenter.org/events](https://CatholicEcologyCenter.org/events)



*The end for which we are created invites us to walk a road that is surely sown with a lot of thorns, but it is not sad, it is illuminated by joy.*

*BLESSED PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI*

# EVENTS



Josh Van Hecke

The atmosphere was abuzz this year as the Catholic Ecology Center hosted many fantastic events. Friends, family and fun were no strangers to the CEC with maple syruping, candlelight hikes, owl prowl and more! With our partner organizations, we hosted events like the Catholic Garden and Homestead Symposium. The annual family camp-out was a big success, with many marshmallows roasted, friendships forged and faith shared.

Most importantly, the CEC is a home for Christ. His blessing was upon us as He made a stop at the CEC during the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage!

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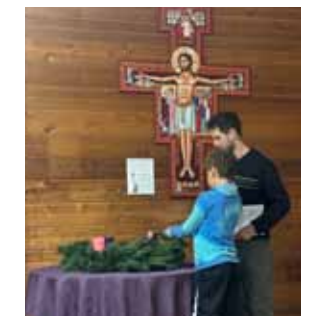


Josh Van Hecke

National Eucharistic Procession comes to the CEC!



Josh Van Hecke



*Being in nature here gave me time to really think about God and what He has done for us.*

5TH GRADE STUDENT



# CLARE GARDENS



Greta Taxis

Trinity Senior Services, a senior living provider and partner of the Catholic Ecology Center, moved Clare Gardens to the CEC property in 2021. They provide farm fresh produce through a subscription share service to long-term care institutions in the Milwaukee area. Clare Gardens uses regenerative and organic growing methods and aims to provide consistent, nutritious, high-quality produce to kitchens while striving to be good land stewards.

In 2024, Clare Gardens completed its third full growing season at the CEC with over 18,000 pounds of vegetable produce! Additionally, Clare Gardens has an orchard, beehives, hens and composted 2,400 pounds of kitchen scraps this year alone. The CEC offered educational workshops to the public about organic gardening and how to bring these practices home.

The fall farm stand allowed for this amazing organic produce to be available to all of our visitors.



Greta Taxis



Greta Taxis



Greta Taxis

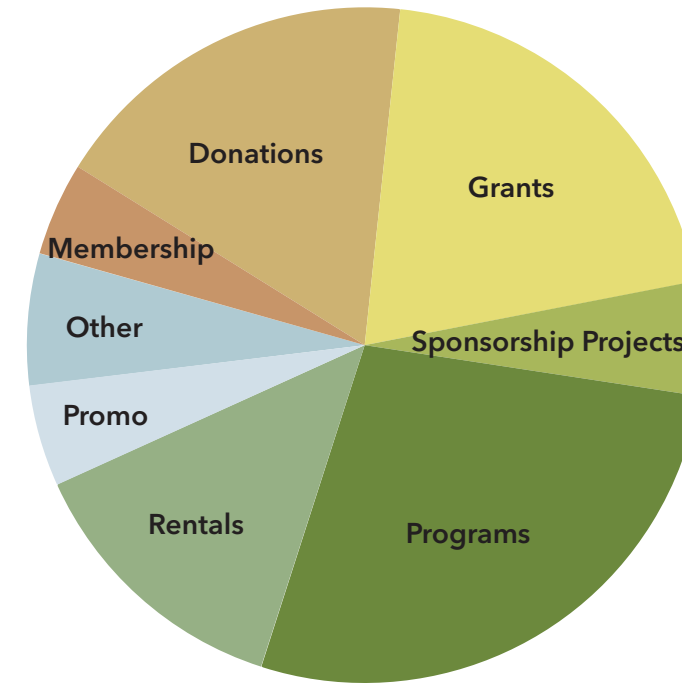


Greta Taxis



Greta Taxis

# CEC FINANCES



## 2024 REVENUES

Membership	\$13,945
Donations	\$55,713
Grants	\$63,200
Program Fees	\$85,827
Sponsorships Projects	\$16,572
Rentals	\$41,236
Promotional Items	\$15,382
Other	\$19,534
<b>Total Operational Revenue</b>	<b>\$311,378</b>

*Building Addition Restricted Revenue '24 (\$247,090)*

## 2024 EXPENSES

Programs	\$167,194
Operational and Administrative	\$85,326
Supplies and Office	\$6,827
Marketing and Advertising	\$10,492
Sponsorship Projects	\$10,319
Promotional Items	\$13,242
Other	\$3,580
<b>Total Operational Expenses</b>	<b>\$296,980</b>

*Building Addition Expenses '24 (\$801,248)*

*86% of building addition funded from previous donations and pledges. Please donate today!*





GRAND OPENING, BUILDING BLESSING  
AND CHAPEL DEDICATION

# NEW ADDITION CELEBRATIONS



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[catholicecologycenter.org](http://catholicecologycenter.org)  
[info@catholicecologycenter.org](mailto:info@catholicecologycenter.org)  
262-419-8558

W1468 County Rd NN  
Neosho, WI 53059

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