

**CATHOLIC
ECOLOGY
CENTER**



2023 IMPACT REPORT





BY THE NUMBERS: OUR IMPACT IN 2023

Connecting with over **7,000** youth, families and adults

Serving through **2,600** volunteer hours of stewardship by
over **450** different volunteers

Educating through over **645** hours of educational programs and retreats;
working with over **55** parishes, schools and organizations



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our building addition has begun! It's so exciting to see the building we designed being built and envisioning all the ways we can utilize it in the coming years. 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. I continue to be humbled by all the amazing things God is doing through our ministry. Our impact in 2023 has been incredible, reaching over 7000 people! We are bursting at the seams and are thrilled to have the building addition done in June.

It is also 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 keep the trails open everyday for those wanting to explore, relax and enjoy. So many people take advantage of the miles of trails for hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and even the rental canoes we have to explore the Rubicon River! With a grateful heart and invigorated spirit, I look forward to a blessed 2024!

- Joe Meyer



CONNECTING TO CHRIST AND HIS CREATION

MISSION

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

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



CEC Director Joe Meyer was voted 2023 Notable Leader in Sustainability



RETREATS



Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA



We know that our relationship with God is of the utmost importance - it permeates all our other relationships: with others, with the world around us, even with ourselves! It's so important to nourish that relationship and take special time for God - to bask in the quiet, to become aware of His loving presence and to challenge ourselves to grow ever closer to Him and what He desires for us. It is such an honor and beautiful responsibility then, to offer retreats that provide people the opportunity to come to know God ever more deeply.

This year we were able to journey alongside teens as they prepared for the sacrament of confirmation, adults as they readied themselves for RCIA, school staff as they anticipated the school year, students as they celebrated the community of their classrooms and many other holy men and women as they entered into the liturgical season with our various Lent, Advent, St. Francis Day retreats and more!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN

There remains a symbiotic dynamic between our respect for the dignity of man and the dignity of nature. The Catholic Ecology Center remains wholeheartedly invested in the truth that the more we learn to care for God's creation, the better stewards we will be of the human heart. Inasmuch as we learn to protect and care for what we have been entrusted with, so, too, will we learn to care for the voices in our society that are the most vulnerable, the most marginalized.

The rich, fertile soul of the Catholic Ecology Center is the training ground for the human heart; learning care and protection, in the hiddenness of God's creation, renders us docile to receive what the good Lord provides.

- Fr. John LoCoco



ECOLOGY PROGRAMS

This year's ecology programming covered all ends of the earth! In March we hosted the nationally renowned Bug Bonanza showcasing thousands of incredible creatures including rhinoceros beetles, beautiful iridescent butterflies and walking sticks that are over a foot long!

We spent plenty of time loving the land right here too! With owl prowls, maple syrupin', water quality testing, pond studies and wildlife monitoring. In the summer we offered a plethora of summer camps including wilderness survival, summer explorer and canoeing camps. We also welcomed many school and parish groups, homeschool science classes, volunteers and the general public to learn more about this amazing common home!



The initial step for us all to come to the knowledge of God is contemplation of nature.

ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS



MEET OUR NEWEST EDUCATOR

Regina Bettag joined our staff in August. Her love of nature stems from spending much of her childhood outdoors with her family. After studying Life Science Education at St. Mary's University of Minnesota, she moved out to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana where she has spent the last five years teaching science at a Catholic middle school. Whether in the rivers of Minnesota or the majestic peaks of Glacier National Park, Regina has always found that wild spaces bring her peace, joy and an easy connection with God. She is so grateful and excited to help others discover that beauty here at the Catholic Ecology Center!



The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.

GENESIS 2:15

STEWARDSHIP



VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Kim and Todd Kreimann logged the most volunteer hours in 2023! They work tirelessly to care for our trails, facilities and critters. Their love for God and our ministry motivates their work and we are humbled and thankful for the gift they are to us!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

After doing a service project at the CEC in 2021, Zach Stikel joined us as a summer intern in 2023.

He was a "Zach of all trades" doing everything from cleaning the buildings to leading canoeing groups down the Rubicon River. We are so grateful for Zach's enthusiasm and hard work!

Thank you to all of our volunteers!

SOME OF OUR GREAT VOLUNTEERS

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Jean Bosenbecker | Tracy Marconnet |
| Ethan Brown | Mia Marcotte |
| Peter Budnik | Ernie Meyer |
| Gail Butka | Karen Meyer |
| Angela Cummings | Andrea Meyer |
| Christian Diehnelt | Joe Meyer |
| Roland Diehnelt | Denise Murre |
| Keith Everson | Ben Pfundstein |
| Monica Everson | Wendy Rahn |
| Kevin Fraundorf | Lea Rosenberg |
| Grace Freiboth | Andy Schoofs |
| Dave Fulcher | Bonnie Schoofs |
| Ben Guido | Joan Schnorenberg |
| Ryan Grusenski | Jim Senglaub |
| Anna Jace | Peggy Senglaub |
| Jim Kostenko | Jim Siepmann |
| Andrew Kruszka | Sue Siepmann |
| Mic LaCrosse | Connie Trahar |

Thanks also to all the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and American Heritage Girls for their service projects!



Service projects are a fun and tangible way to live our faith that is called into service.

The dedication of our tireless volunteers is matched only by their joy! This year we had over 2600 volunteer hours logged as people shared their time and talent through all sorts of avenues including gathering seeds, cleaning the chicken coop, taking care of our critters, maintaining the trails, helping run events and so much more! Thank you SO much for your cheerful giving!

WORKSHOPS



This year the CEC provided many opportunities for laborers, craftsmen and artists alike! Folks were able to spend time honing their drawing skills through wildlife art classes, or create their own natural paint with foraged ink classes. Many had the chance to become familiar with the property and our Wisconsin natives ecosystems as they foraged for wild edibles, collected mushrooms and learned how to make tasty drinks from foraged plants. Plenty of women enjoyed faith, fun and fellowship with our ever popular Advent wreath making class. Our newest chocolate making workshops were a hit. Participants learned about sustainable cocoa production, made some tasty treats and of course sampled along the way!

Stay up to date by following us on facebook or visit our website:
CatholicEcologyCenter.org/events



*If you work with your hands, you're a laborer.
If you work with your hands and your mind, you're a craftsman.
If you work with your hands and your mind and your heart,
you're an artist.*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*Love each other with genuine affection,
and take delight in honoring one another.*

ROMANS 12:10

EVENTS

Spending time and delighting in the presence of our CEC family is definitely a highlight of the year! Our annual CEC campout this summer brought many smiles, s'mores and saints in the making to our grounds! We had so much fun at our St. Francis Feast Day celebration with the petting zoo, pumpkin painting and ax throwing too! And don't forget the beautiful candlelight hikes! Singing carols and gathering around the fire with loved ones makes us feel warm even during these cold winter months. There are so many fond memories to look back on, and so many good things to look forward to in this new year!

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There is no humanity without the cultivation of the land.

POPE FRANCIS

CLARE GARDENS



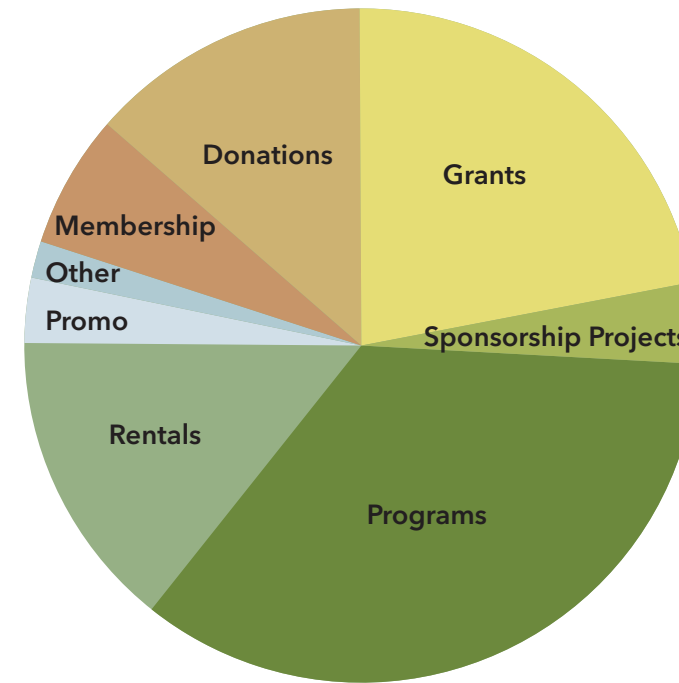
Milwaukee Catholic Home, a senior living provider and partner of the CEC, moved Clare Gardens to the CEC property in 2021. Clare Gardens is a sustainable, organic farm-to-table project that offers acres of organic vegetables, an orchard, beehives, hens and composting of food waste. The program is modeled after traditional Community Supported Agriculture farms, or CSAs, and provides senior living communities in the Greater Milwaukee area with regular deliveries of locally grown farm products.

In 2023, Clare Gardens completed its second full growing season at the CEC with 16,000 pounds of vegetable produce despite the drought! We enjoyed offering educational workshops to the public about organic gardening practices and how to bring these practices home.

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



CEC FINANCES



2023 REVENUES

Membership	\$15,717
Donations	\$33,286
Grants	\$54,150
Program Fees	\$85,827
Sponsorships Projects	\$9,504
Rentals	\$35,385
Promotional Items	\$7,635
Other	\$4,422
Total 2022 Revenues	\$245,926
<i>Building Addition Fund '22 & '23</i>	<i>(\$722,773)</i>

2023 EXPENSES

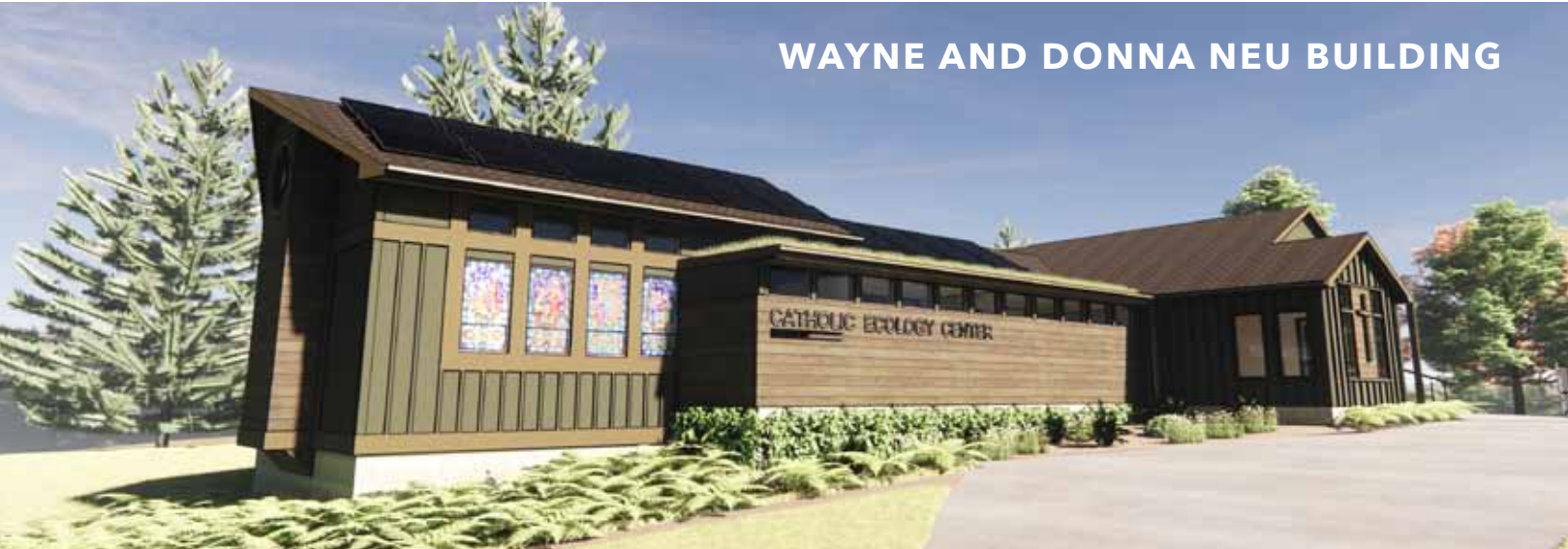
Programs	\$16,875
Operational and Administrative	\$132,515
Supplies and Office	\$3,264
Marketing and Advertising	\$8,329
Sponsorship Projects	\$3,569
Other	\$9,060
Total 2022 Expenses	\$173,612
<i>Building Addition Expenses '23</i>	<i>(\$566,182)</i>

MORE IMPACT THROUGH PROGRAM EXPANSION

With over 7,000 people taking part in programs in 2023, we are bursting at the seams! The additional spaces of a Chapel, welcome area and breakout room will allow for a greater diversity of programs and allow our vital mission to meet the increasing need.

NEW ADDITION

WAYNE AND DONNA NEU BUILDING



PUTTING THE RICHES OF OUR FAITH FIRST

Our beautiful Holy Family Chapel in memory of Al & Gloria Batzner and Tom & Del Jurkiewicz will be a place of prayer during retreats and encounter with our Lord during Adoration and Mass. Stained glass, statuary and artwork will point our hearts and minds toward heaven.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH BEAUTY

Whether it's educational displays, beautiful window views or utilizing outdoor spaces like our new viewing deck, we want the natural riches of the CEC land to permeate your visit.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

We want to ensure that all people can be part of the CEC regardless of their economic status or physical ability. Our 3500 square foot addition is fully handicap accessible and grants for the underserved will ensure programming for everyone!

SUSTAINABILITY - LIVING OUR CALL TO CARE FOR CREATION

We want to be a beacon of hope through our deep faith and commitment to caring for creation. Sustainable building products, renewable energy and water conservation will enable us to educate people first-hand on bringing sustainability into their lives.



We still need your help! Donate today or contact us.

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In Memory of Louis J. Yaeger III

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**CATHOLIC
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catholicecologycenter.org
info@catholicecologycenter.org
262-419-8558

W1468 County Rd NN
Neosho, WI 53059

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