



# So much life



## ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2021 - AUGUST 2022

SEE HOW YOU'RE CONNECTING PEOPLE IN CITIES TO NATURE AND EACH OTHER



## MISSION

We connect people in cities to nature and each other.

## VISION

To inspire generations to build environmental curiosity, understanding, and respect. We restore hope and heal our urban natural world, neighborhood by neighborhood.

## BRANCHES

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1500 E. Park Pl.  
Milwaukee, WI 53211  
(414) 964-8505

### Menomonee Valley

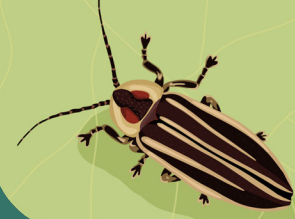
3700 W. Pierce St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53215  
(414) 431-2940

### Washington Park

1859 N. 40th St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
(414) 344-5460



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# Why Your Support of Science Outdoors Matters

Cover: Kasandra Mentkowski, Notre Dame Middle School teacher, with 7th grade students, Cassandra, Leticia, Melanie, and Brittney.



Notre Dame Middle School students on their fall 2022 NEEP visit to the UEC's Menomonee Valley location.

### Q. What is carrying capacity?

You are likely sleuthing through your middle school memory bank, checking the long forgotten file titled “ecology” to find the answer. What if instead of recalling memorized information, you recalled a game?

What if in 7th grade you remembered pretending to be a deer while your friends acted as resources – water, food, shelter? Or maybe in this game, you played the villain in the deer’s story- deforestation, disease, or predator. You’d have a visual (and fun) representation of carrying capacity.

**A. Carrying capacity is the maximum population size of a species that can be sustained by a specific environment.**

For Notre Dame Middle School’s 7th grade students, this particular environmental lesson happened this fall at the Urban Ecology Center (UEC). Kasandra Mentkowski, teacher and UEC field trip chaperone, recalled this day’s impact on her students:

“As a middle school teacher for the last 5 years, I’ve seen how social media impacts kids - they want to look a certain way, act a certain way. Kids are growing up so much faster. **When we go to the UEC, I get to see children be carefree and fun.** The minute students are outside of that traditional school setting, they leave the pressure cooker that school can be and let loose. The creativity and play I saw that day was such a needed boost for everyone. Play is emphasized with younger kids but I believe older kids need it just as much...”

Because of your support, the UEC’s Neighborhood Environment Education Project (NEEP) is able to provide educational experiences like this and others to Milwaukee students. Kasandra recounted another NEEP field trip: “We did a

watershed program at McKinley Beach. I’d say 40% of the students in my class had never been to Lake Michigan before. **The NEEP program brings kids who live in Milwaukee and takes them to some of the beautiful gems we have here in the city.** These natural spaces are a part of the city that, unfortunately, a lot of kids don’t get to experience.”

Your support gives teachers the ability to offer these experiential lessons to students. Kasandra shared that lack of transportation is a big issue for schools, “There are great opportunities in the city but we can’t get there...by providing busing, the UEC removes that barrier.”

Kasandra also knows the obstacles for students don’t stop there. “Many students come from neighborhoods where their parents don’t want them outside for safety concerns. So, it is a necessity to know they are going somewhere where they trust the people who work there and are comfortable letting their guard down. After one visit, they know the UEC is a safe place. **The relationship the kids develop with the parks and with the building is so important.**”

Kasandra’s favorite thing about NEEP? **“These trips spark student curiosity. One thing I don’t get enough of as a teacher is questions. When I am on UEC field trips, the amount of questions they ask and their engagement is tenfold.”**

Environmental curiosity is something Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the whole world benefits from. The carrying capacity of curiosity, play and exploration at the UEC? Limitless...because of you.

**Read more about your impact in our 2021-2022 Annual Report**

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Menomonee Valley  
**Angélica Sánchez Mora**

Washington Park  
**Terry Evans**



*"Because of your support, there is So Much Life at the UEC – children learning, native plants growing, adults hiking, animals returning and more! I hope your reaction to these numbers sounds something like 'Wow!'"*

*— Ken Leinbach, Executive Director*

Number of plants planted:

**13,410**

13,410 native plants were planted and protected in the three parks and public greenspaces in the **75 acres of land** the UEC manages.

Number of wildlife surveys:  
**256**

The Urban Ecology Center's Research and Community Science Program serves as a meaningful bridge between academic research and the community-at-large. This past year, 256 wildlife surveys were conducted to monitor the health of birds, bees, bats and other important species.



**30,476**

Youths Engaged in Programming

*"There are so many things I have learned about wildlife at the UEC. I have been surprised to see new animals I didn't know existed."*

*- Middle School NEEP Student*



**267**

Summer Camp Scholarships Awarded



**2** new-to-Wisconsin beetle species found!

**28** new-to-UEC beetle species found!

Over 350,000 species of beetles are assigned to the Order Coleoptera, which is the largest order of insects. Beetles represent a fifth of all living organisms. They are crucial to a healthy ecosystem as pest controllers, decomposers, nitrogen recyclers, pollinators and more! Big thanks to Heidi Meier for her work with these incredible little creatures!



# IMAGINE CAMPAIGN

## Focusing on Washington Park

### Building on a Strong Foundation

Our Washington Park location was opened in 2007 to serve more neighborhood schools with our acclaimed Neighborhood Environmental Education Project. Located at the former site of the Milwaukee Zoo, we opened a site here to help with neighborhood revitalization efforts.

And it worked. Here's what happened just last year:



5,100+ NEEP experiences in partnership with neighboring schools



88,000+ visits to our building and green spaces



2,500+ hours of volunteer work

Unfortunately, the outdated and inefficient building is limiting our ability to increase our programming and does not provide the welcoming environment we wish to offer.

Imagine if we could do more.

Imagine what could happen if we doubled our programming, increased access to early childhood education programming, and reached more kids and adults from across the city.



### Turning Dreams into Designs

In 2021, we launched the Imagine Campaign to raise funds to reimagine our Washington Park location - to bring the wonder of nature to the heart of this vibrant neighborhood.

First, we listened. Through intentional conversations, we listened to our neighbors, to students, to community leaders, to supporters, to the County and to the City.

Together we committed to:

- Building a new education and community center
- Beautification efforts on the 20 acres surrounding the building
- Partnering with Milwaukee County Parks to upgrade infrastructure

With the help of some incredibly creative and sustainably-minded people, we are wrapping up the design development phase of the new building. Key features include:

- A half-story slide in the lobby area
- A nature-themed art installation in the living area
- Several education spaces
- Flexible basement and functional workspace.



Riverside Park



Menomonee Valley



Washington Park



**Projected Construction Start Date: Summer 2023**

### Imagining What's Next:



Image shows Riverland in its current state as of 2022

**Riverland Development:** A Gateway To Nature With A Neighborhood Feel

#### Future Impact:

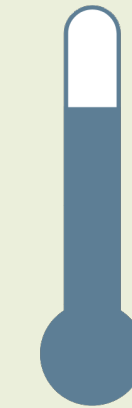
Located to the West of our Riverside Park branch, the Riverland property will feature an engaging greenspace and unique, eco-friendly event hall, providing an essential source of revenue to support our mission.

#### Behind the Scenes:

We are also designing a natural play space next to the event hall to encourage nature-based play!

### Putting a Shovel in the Ground

With a full heart and an abundance of enthusiasm, we are excited to announce that, if momentum and support continues, the rebuild of the Urban Ecology Center's Washington Park location will begin in 2023!



### Finding People Like You!

Imagine the Washington Park neighborhood being a place where every urban child can explore the natural world every day of every season of every year of their life. Through the generous support of people like you, we are already 80% there.



**Organizational Excellence:** Expanding Impact

#### Future Impact:

Investments in this area will allow for needed technology upgrades including new security systems, a website redesign, financial management tools and more.

#### Behind the Scene:

We explored website redesigns and functions using The Hive, UEC's Community of Monthly Givers, as a sample website.



**Endowment Growth:** For A Healthy And Sustainable Future

#### Future Impact:

Support of the Urban Ecology Center's endowment today will have a profound impact on our ability to remain relevant, vibrant, and financially strong in the future.

#### Behind the Scenes:

In the last fiscal year, we were able to grow the endowment by 10%





# THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!



The Urban Ecology Center thanks you, our amazing volunteers, for your work in the 21-22 fiscal year.

Thank you to the following volunteers who contributed 10 or more hours of service to the Urban Ecology Center between September 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022. We are grateful for your gift of time and commitment to our mission.

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## FISCAL YEAR 2021 - 22 FINANCIAL REPORT

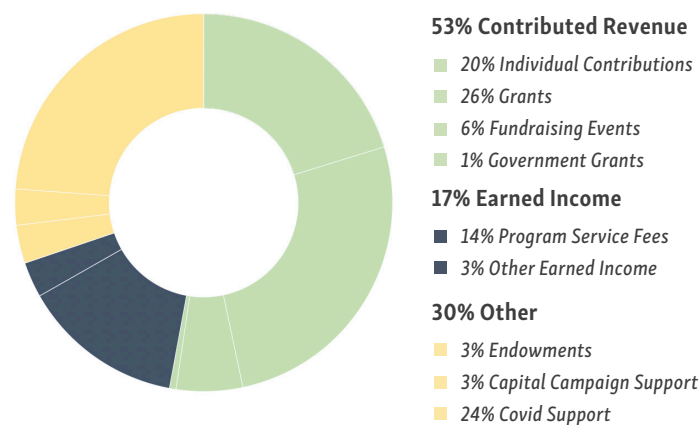
The Urban Ecology Center celebrated So Much Life coming back to 3 locations as in-person attendance increased through activities and programs. Moving towards more regular functioning, budgeting and planning practices normalized. In fiscal year 2021-22, through disciplined spending and strong backing from our dedicated community of donors, the UEC closed the year with a near balanced budget even with a delay in receiving approved COVID-19 related government funding. The Urban Ecology Center embarked on the Imagine Capital Campaign and focused on meeting the goals for this 4 part comprehensive campaign as detailed on page 6. The 990 and audit present the combined balance of Operating and Capital Campaign funds in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

The UEC remains committed to ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability, focusing on both immediate fiscal needs and future strategic planning. The UEC has carried no long-term debt to date - in part by only entering into agreements supported by existing pledges and donor contributions. The Board of Directors and Finance Committee maintain an intense focus on the adequacy of cash and oversight for all material financial aspects of the organization. The UEC has a positive ratio of assets to liabilities and a broad donor base, ensuring a solid financial foundation for future growth. Its annual financial statements are audited by the Milwaukee-based accountants of Scribner Cohen & Co.

Please visit our website at [www.urbanecologycenter.org](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org) for additional information, including the IRS Form 990 and audit report.

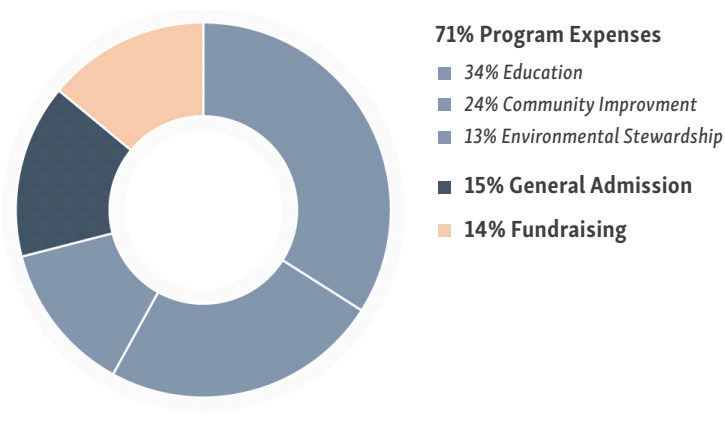
### FY 2021-22 OPERATING REVENUES

**\$5,223,797**



### FY 2021-22 OPERATING EXPENSES

**\$5,282,792**



The charts above represent operational revenue and expenses and are derived from Urban Ecology Center cash-basis financial statements. This statement is not required by Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and is not part of the audited financial statements.

Volunteers are at the core of the UEC's operations. Their contributions of time and expertise are vital to our mission!



**1060**  
volunteers dedicated



**13,005**  
hours of work



**\$362,450**  
in contributed labor

\*Based on a \$27.87 per hour value determined by Independent Sector for the State of Wisconsin.



## HERE'S TO YOU

The Urban Ecology Center thanks you, our generous donors, for your support in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

As an organization that started small, the Urban Ecology Center understands that something small can make a big impact. As we've grown over the years, we've depended on donations - both large and small - to support our mission of connecting people in cities to nature and each other. For that reason, our Annual Report lists supporters alphabetically rather than by giving level. We are pleased to acknowledge the following donors for their generosity and support. A full list of donors is available on our website.

*Every effort was made to ensure that this list of donors is accurate. If you made a gift between September 2021 and August 2022 and your gift is not listed or is listed incorrectly, please contact the UEC's Development Office at (414) 964-8505.*

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## GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

*Gifts given September 2021-August 2022 in memory of an individual.*

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 Harry F. and Patricia H. Weisberg  
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 JoJo Westervelt (2)

## Donors Who Gave in Memory of Chuck Cruse

*Chuck Cruse was a beloved member of the Urban Ecology Center community. His passion for increasing access to nature and environmental education lives on through the seeds he planted. His sense of humor and bright smile are forever cherished.*

Erik and Diane Andersen  
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Cheryl Arnold (2)	Dan Frankel	Ken Leinbach	Lisa Trautner
Logan Bazar	Danni Gendelman	Pam and Paul Miller	The wonderful EE team that connects children with the natural world in our urban community.
Brandi and Tara Beals	Sam Goldsworthy (2)	Linda and Bill Reid and their grandson Oliver	The amazing UEC team (2)
Alice Beck Kehoe	My grandson, a camper at the UEC	Erika Sander	Mark Weber
Kate Betts	Mary Gute Witte and Ned Witte (2)	Ireland bound Callan Schoonenberg and family (2)	Erin Whitney, MaryBeth Kressin, Erin Ganzke, Olivia Raasch, Maggie Steinhauer, and Terrance Davis
Tracy and Dad Bochman	Glenna Holstein (3)	Paula Smith	Bonnie Wise
Maise Buntin and Sam Jonas' wedding	Steve Holt	Jane Somers	Our Witte Family and our very own Jerri Blank Witte
Aleta Chossek's 75th birthday	Linden Houghtby and Tim Urbas' wedding (4)	Michael Stark	Matthew Wolf & Taylor Heinselmann
Penny Cruse (5)	My son, Josh	Heidi and Tyler Steier's wedding	
Eddee Daniel	Jude's 5th Birthday	The lovely couple, Heidi and Tyler Steier	
Will Draper's Birthday	Susie Kasten	Eloisa Stillier's Bat Mitzvah	
Tamara Durand, Jane Kulich, LeAnna Owen, Virginia Sorenson, and Wilhelm Hospel	Ian Klug	Jonathan Stone	
Mr. Flower	Ken Leinbach, Tim Vargo, and Chris Young, from Ryerson University	My son, Chad Thomack	
Gloria and Steven Foster's Anniversary		Scott and Sue Thompson	

## LEGACY SOCIETY

When you include the Urban Ecology Center as a beneficiary in your will, living trust, insurance, or retirement plan you help ensure that the UEC's mission and your values continue into the future. We are pleased to recognize the following Legacy Society members who have made a lifetime commitment to the Urban Ecology Center. \*

Nancy Aten and Dan Collins	Margarete and David Harvey	Charla Reetz
Andrew Bochman and Tracy Staedter	Myrna Hollander	Patricia Santilli
Cheri and Thomas Briscoe	Karon Kiffel	Jim Schleif and Bill Morley
Penny Cruse	Sam Leichtling and Lindsey Tauber	Patrick Small
Dave Glenn	Regina Miller and Karen Molitor	Nancy and Dick Spransy
Kat Grinker	Erik and Carol Moeser	Chris von Briesen
Sara Grotenrath and James Pech	Steve Morse and Jane Waldbaum	Bruce and Theresa Wiggins
Jean Gurney	Patricia H. Mueller	
	Ann G. Pier	

We are grateful for the following legacy estate gifts we received between September 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022

**Petrovic Nature and Art Trust in the memory of Gayle Grubisic Riordan**

**Katherine M. Smith**

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\*Interested in becoming a Legacy Society Member? Please contact Jen Hense at [jhense@urbanecologycenter.org](mailto:jhense@urbanecologycenter.org) or 414-626-8544 for more details.

**Thank you to our volunteers!**

\*Indicates a volunteer service group





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VIEW OUR FULL PROGRAM & EVENTS CALENDAR ONLINE

## URBAN CANDLELIGHT HIKE



**February 25, 2023**  
**Menomonee Valley**

Cure your winter blues with a hike on the Hank Aaron State Trail complete with over 500 candles and fun activities along the way!

## EARTH WEEK 2023



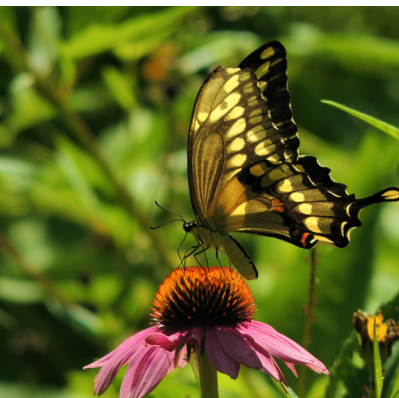
**April 24-28, 2023**  
**All three UEC branches**

Join us for Milwaukee Riverkeeper's annual spring clean up on April 22nd to kick off Earth Week!

## SUMMER Solstice SOIRÉE

**June 16, 2023**  
**Riverside Park**

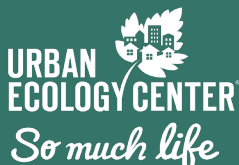
Think sunny thoughts! Save the date for our annual gala - a unique event to celebrate and raise funds for the Urban Ecology Center!



***You can connect more people  
in cities to nature and each other.***

Volunteer. Give. Participate.

Learn more at [www.urbanecologycenter.org](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org)!



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(414) 964-8505

**Washington Park**  
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Milwaukee, WI 53208  
(414) 344-5460

**Menomonee Valley**  
3700 W. Pierce Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53215  
(414) 431-2940

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