



URBAN  
ECOLOGY CENTER

NEWS FROM THE

# NATUREHOOD

SEE HOW YOU'RE CONNECTING PEOPLE IN CITIES TO NATURE AND EACH OTHER | WINTER 2021

**You support the  
next generation  
of outdoor leaders**



*Denise regularly sits at the front desk of the Menomonee Valley branch, ready to greet guests.*

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

YOUR SUPPORT CREATES ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS WHO SHARE THEIR CONNECTION WITH NATURE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Denise Manjarrez-Renteria's journey with the Urban Ecology Center all started with a high school community service requirement. Eager to get the requirement out of the way, Denise asked a teacher for suggestions on where she could volunteer and was handed a flier for the grand opening of the Menomonee Valley branch of the Urban Ecology Center. Now, 9 years later, Denise is the Neighborhood Engagement Specialist at that very branch she first volunteered to help open.

After volunteering, Denise joined the Outdoor Leaders Program, where she credits her supervisors and coworkers at the UEC for helping her realize that she could turn her passion for helping the environment into a career. "I remember asking everyone who worked at the UEC what they studied in college, trying to figure out how I could end up back here. Through those conversations, I learned that I wanted to study environmentalism and politics."

Denise started at Alverno College studying Environmental Science before pivoting to Global Studies where she was able to focus on environmental racism and environmental justice,

two topics which are particularly important to her in her role as Neighborhood Engagement Specialist.

"I've noticed that a lot of people feel that outdoors isn't for them. Whether it's their body size, or they might have a disability, or they identify as black, indigenous or a person of color – and even as women, it can be scary to go out in the park. But now in this role, I really want to push our mission statement and show that this space is for our community."

Denise is ready to fulfill the UEC's mission of connecting people in cities to nature and each other. Her goal is to help make the community surrounding the Menomonee Valley location more aware of what is available to them and to promote an environment of inclusivity. "Even if they don't come into the building, just come hang out in the park, explore the trails, go up the hills, go down by the river. There is always someone in the building willing to listen and engage with you here."

To learn more about the Urban Ecology Center's three branches visit [www.urbanecologycenter.org](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org)

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR ALL AGES

*“From the moment I met Zeke and Betsy, I knew I was speaking with fellow bird enthusiasts but I could also see they had a strong interest in plants, insects, water and the sky – they are true naturalists at heart.”*

– Tim Vargo, Manager of Research and Community Science

From birding and botany hikes to dragonfly and bat surveys, siblings Zeke (12) and Betsy (10) have fully immersed themselves in all the various volunteer opportunities offered at the Urban Ecology Center.

Zeke, an avid birder, enjoys the bird hikes and being around others who share his passion. His mother, Ana, shares that he has learned so much from the experienced birders and that “it brings him so much joy to be able to contribute to the bird count every week.” Betsy, who loves all types of animals, has found participating in surveys and botany walks especially fascinating. She has enjoyed learning about how certain plants are edible and have medicinal properties.



***We are grateful to Zeke and Betsy and all of our Research and Community Science volunteers!***

Learn about all the ways **YOU** can get involved at the UEC! Whether volunteering on your own or with a group, the UEC offers a variety of ways to get involved. **Learn more by visiting [www.urbanecologycenter.org](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org)**



## GIVING FIRST

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Giving Tuesday typically falls the Tuesday *after* Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber-Monday. We’re asking you to join the Urban Ecology Center and other amazing local non-profits in flipping the script on this idea! This year, put Giving First through your gift on Tuesday, November 23.

By Giving First to the Urban Ecology Center, you give a child the gift of nature. Every \$42 you give provides a UEC program that connects kids to nature and each other.

Join the movement by giving first on Tuesday, November 23rd. #givingfirstday

Children enjoy the snow at Washington Park in 2021

# JOIN THE FUN!

VIEW OUR FULL CALENDAR ONLINE

## POP-UP EXCURSIONS

A pop-up excursion is a spontaneous outdoor adventure via skis, snowshoes, kayaks, or bikes often involving food, beverages, and campfires. Buy tickets in advance at a discount that can be redeemed for any excursion all year round. Pop-Up Excursions are added to our calendar throughout the year!

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

## CANDLELIGHT WALK

December 11th (for kids and families) & 21st (for adults)

Join us for a magical evening in Riverside Park as we illuminate the trails with hundreds of candles. Children will enjoy the wonder of a night with stories followed by indoor games and treats. Adults will listen to poetry and readings of the season on the night of the winter solstice.

Register at [urbanecologycenter.org/candlelightwalk](http://urbanecologycenter.org/candlelightwalk)



### ***If you have named the UEC in your will or trust, thank you!***

Thank you for considering including the Urban Ecology Center as a beneficiary in your will, living trust, insurance, or retirement plan. For more information, please contact **Jen Hense** at [jhense@urbanecologycenter.org](mailto:jhense@urbanecologycenter.org)



#### **Riverside Park**

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

#### **Washington Park**

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

#### **Menomonee Valley**

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

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