



# So much life



**ANNUAL REPORT**

September 2016 - August 2017

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*This page:* A summer camper enjoys splashing in a puddle near our Menomonee Valley branch. *Photo: Sarina Ryals*

*On the cover:* An excited Autumn Celebration participant prepares for a canoe adventure on the Washington Park lagoon. *Photo: Ryan Dale*



## A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

When was the last time you splashed in a puddle or caught a snowflake on your tongue? Do you remember what it feels like to catch a fish or taste sap from a maple tree?

These simple moments of childhood joy made us smile, squirm and laugh with delight and discovery. They encouraged us to ask deeper questions about why the natural world captures our imagination and dazzles us the way it does. For many of us, myself included, these experiences sparked a lifelong love of the environment.

Every day at the Urban Ecology Center children and adults are connecting to our green spaces in ways that change their lives for the better. Through science and research, free access to outdoor equipment, volunteering to maintain the land and spending time in our three community centers, our youth, families and neighborhoods are alive with that same sense of childhood delight and discovery.

I love this note from a Menomonee Valley UEC summer camp parent who illustrates these feelings beautifully:

*“Camila reminds me of the countless animals the group spotted in and around the Menomonee River including the snapping turtle, garter snake, praying mantis, tadpoles and frogs. She also enjoyed the walk along to the river’s edge and treasures the fossil rock she discovered with a seashell on top. Natalia enjoyed pretend games, for example dancing like birds with feathers and listening to different animal sounds. I enjoyed the diversity of the group and how by the end of the camp all the children related to each other well, walking holding each other’s hands during the treasure hunt.”*

The real gift in all of this great work is YOU. All of the enjoyment we’re able to share with others is only possible because you’ve chosen to support the Urban Ecology Center. From the bottom of our collective hearts, we thank you!



Ken Leinbach  
Executive Director





# 20,000+

native herbaceous plants and trees planted at our three branches by our land stewardship staff with the help of thousands of volunteers!



## SUMMER CAMPS

# 767

camp spots filled by 583 kids during 60 different camp sessions

# 49%

of camp spots were filled by kids whose families qualified for a scholarship

# 32,290

student visits from

# 60

partners schools in our Neighborhood Environmental Education Project (NEEP)



# 90%

of NEEP students agreed that:

*“Being outside in nature makes me healthier.”*



# 99%

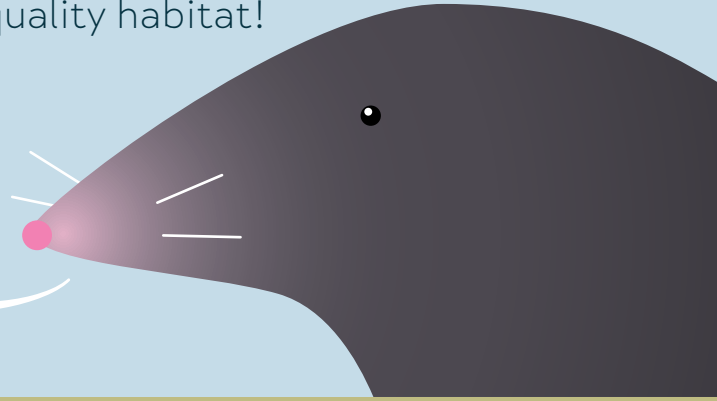
of teachers whose class came to UEC agreed that:

*“This program helps boost academic performance.”*



# NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED SHREW DOCUMENTED!

After searching for signs of insectivores living in Riverside Park for over a decade, our community science research team successfully documented the presence of this furry friend – a clear indicator of a high quality habitat!



*I live in Riverside Park!*

## GREEN CAREER PIPELINE

programs develop urban leaders with the commitment and the capability to move our community toward a more sustainable future.

### YOUNG SCIENTISTS CLUB

82%

of participants surveyed agreed that they learn new things about nature.



### HIGH SCHOOL OUTDOOR LEADERS

100%

feel confident approaching new challenges after participating.



### SUMMER INTERNS

96%

see themselves in a career of environmental work after participating



3,154 student visits  
Ages 6-12

17 2-year interns  
9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> grades

28 college-aged  
seasonal interns

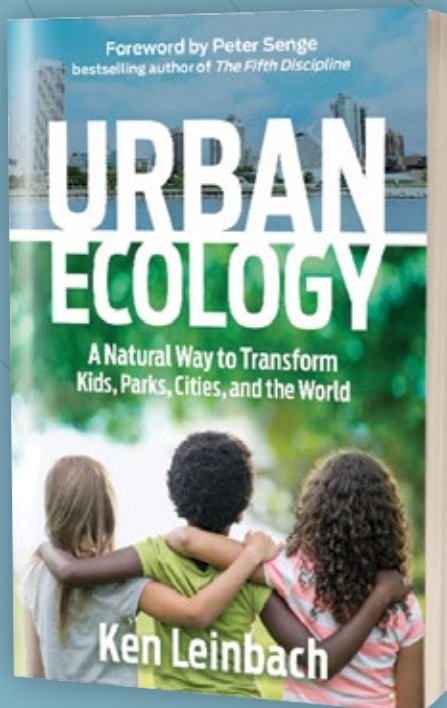
# 225,312

people visited the UEC buildings and parks at our three branches

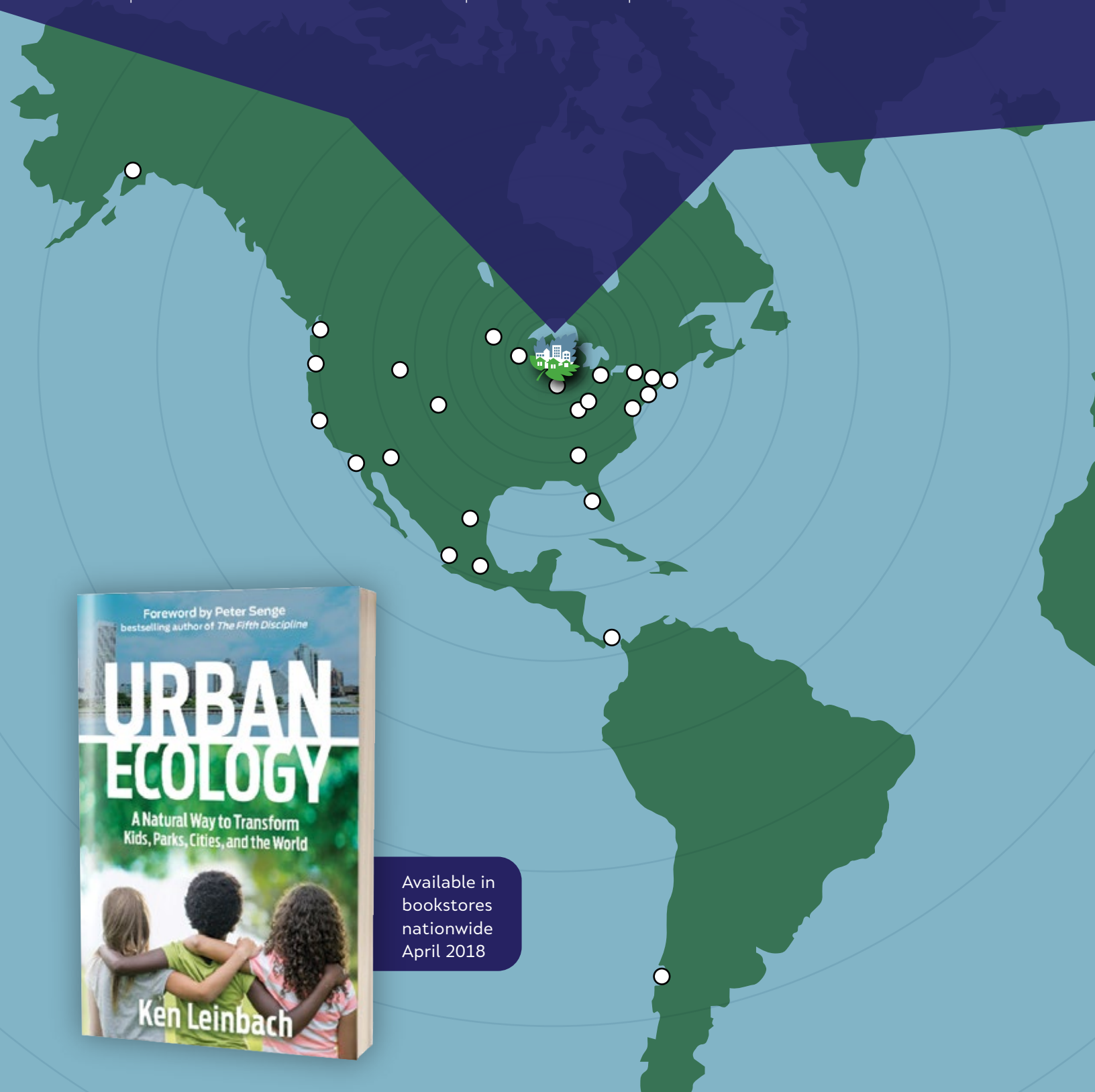


# Sharing the Model

Word is spreading! The Urban Ecology Center is fortunate to receive inquiries from people all over the world who are interested in the UEC model. Just this year, groups from Denver, Atlanta, and the Twin Cities came to Milwaukee to learn about the UEC and how we operate. The new book, *Urban Ecology: A Natural Way to Transform Kids, Parks, Cities and the World*, is already being used as a course textbook for two university classes. In the summer of 2018 we'll pilot an institute to teach and inspire others to replicate the success of the UEC!



Available in  
bookstores  
nationwide  
April 2018

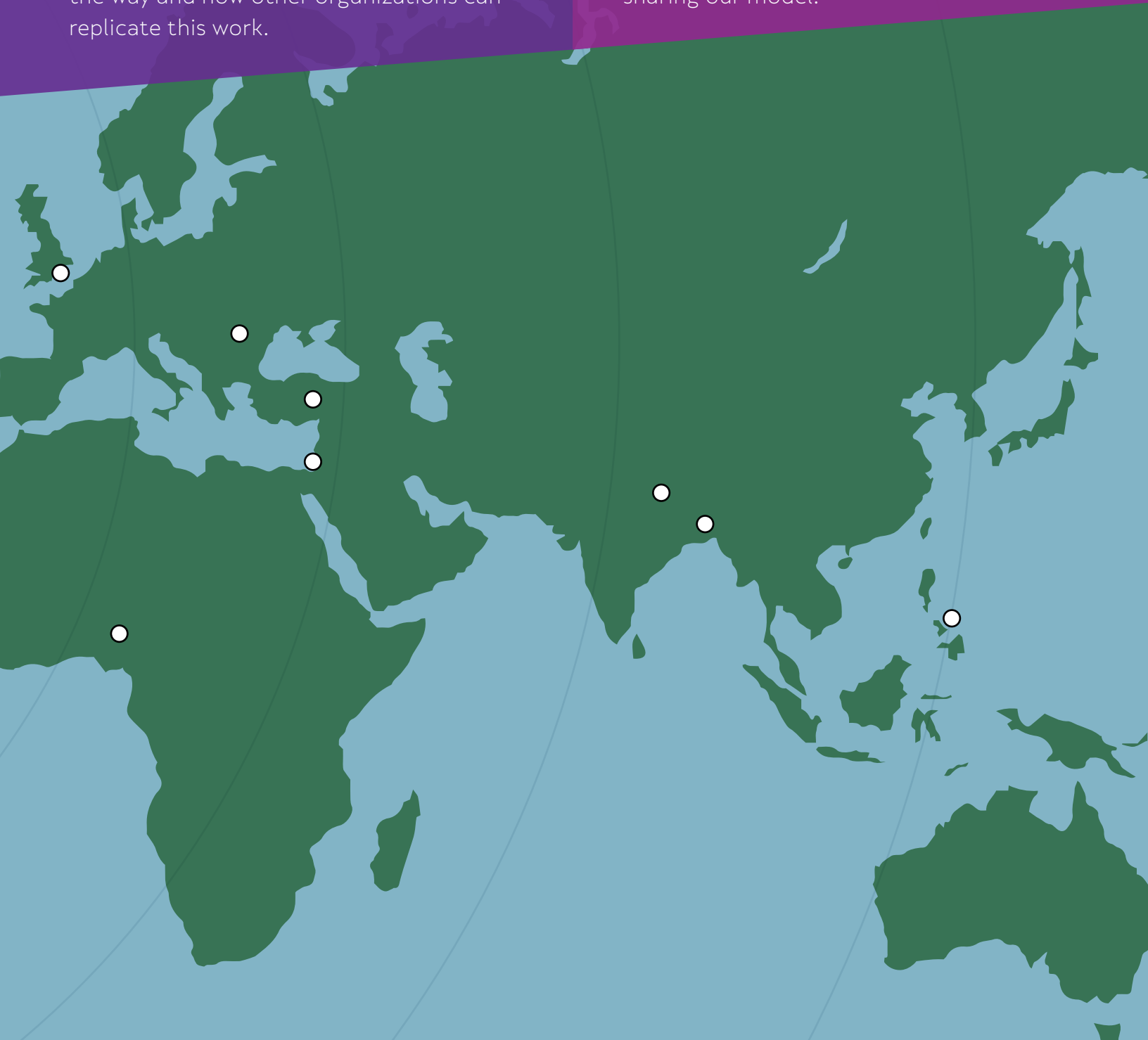


## BOOK

As a way to share the Center's story far and wide, our Executive Director, Ken Leinbach, wrote *Urban Ecology* which was published as an e-book in February 2017 and became available in paperback at UEC branches in October 2017. Through *Urban Ecology*, Ken shares the story of how the Urban Ecology Center came to be, lessons learned along the way and how other organizations can replicate this work.

## INSTITUTE

As the Center continues to grow and deepen our connections in Milwaukee, we are also exploring options for sharing our model with other cities and organizations that have expressed interest. The Center's Board of Directors and Leadership Team are currently developing an Urban Ecology Center Institute to formalize the process for sharing our model.



○ = Cities with organizations that have expressed interest in our model

# Fiscal Year 2016-17 Financial Report

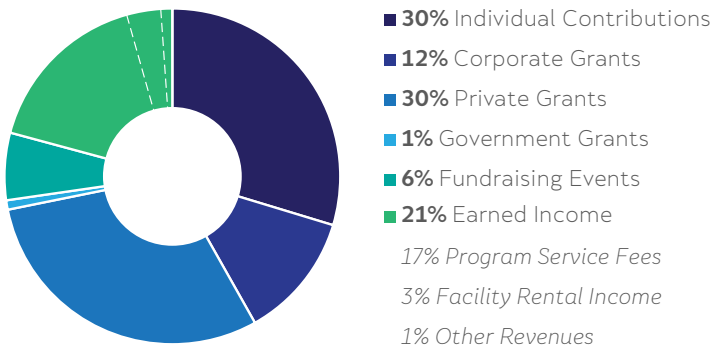
Thanks to generous community support and the dedication of volunteers and staff, the Urban Ecology Center experienced another successful year.

Our 2016-17 operating budget grew by 6% in order to support the committed staff who carry out the mission, to increase programmatic activities at the Menomonee Valley branch and to support increased volunteer management and marketing activities of the organization. While we did not meet our revenue targets, the budget was balanced through careful attention to expenses and through the Center's strong operating reserve.

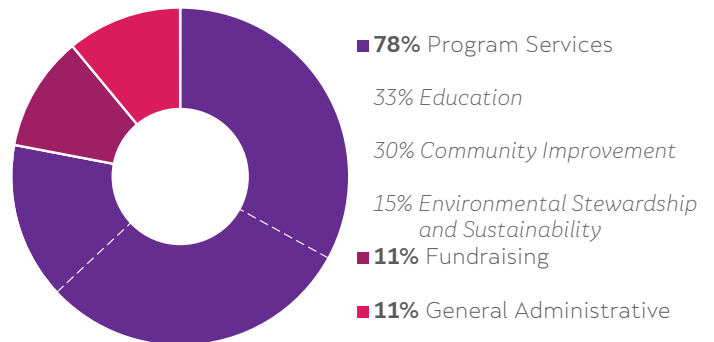
The Urban Ecology Center carries no long-term debt and only enters into agreements that are supported by existing pledges and contributions from our donors. The Board of Directors and Finance Committee maintain a keen focus on the adequacy of cash, while also providing oversight for all material financial aspects of the organization. The Center has a positive ratio of assets to liabilities and a robust donor base, ensuring a solid financial foundation from which to cultivate future growth.

Our 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.

## FY 2016-17 Operating Revenues



## FY 2016-17 Operating Expenses



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 invaluable!

**3,419** volunteers dedicated

**24,794** hours to the Center.

That's **\$571,749\*** of contributed labor!

\* Based on a \$23.06 per hour value determined by Independent Sector for the state of Wisconsin.



# In Memory of Else Ankel, 1931 – 2016

## With deep gratitude we commemorate Else's legacy

Else Ankel influenced and was a critical part of the formation of the Urban Ecology Center when she was a Scientist in Residence at Riverside University High School. A joint city and county commission was trying to determine what to do with the crime-challenged Riverside Park in the early '90s. At an early meeting in Else's living room on Bartlett Avenue, a small team of neighbors decided they should incorporate a nonprofit nature center. They pooled their \$10 bills to pay the incorporation fee and set out to see what they could do for the neighborhood.

Else was a force to be reckoned with! She was strong headed and determined and it was through her resolve that the first education programs, park classroom (a trailer that felt like a castle after having no indoor gathering space), and hundreds of children came to

Riverside Park and the Milwaukee River. She carried the work of the Center for 8 years, both as a volunteer and as a lightly paid executive director, until her retirement in 1998. After her retirement, she continued to be deeply involved in the Center, often advising staff with sentences that began with "you must..." It was hard to say "no" to Else! Partly because she had excellent ideas, but mostly because what drove her strong will was a giant heart, deep compassion and a vision for Milwaukee's youth to grow up healthy, scientifically curious and playful, with a connection to nature in their neighborhood.

We are deeply thankful for Else's vision and all those listed below who gave a gift in her memory.



Anonymous  
Bob and Shirley Anthony  
Ann Armstrong  
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Nancy Aten and Dan Collins  
Kay Augustine  
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Margene Woida



The Else Ankel Prairie in Riverside Park



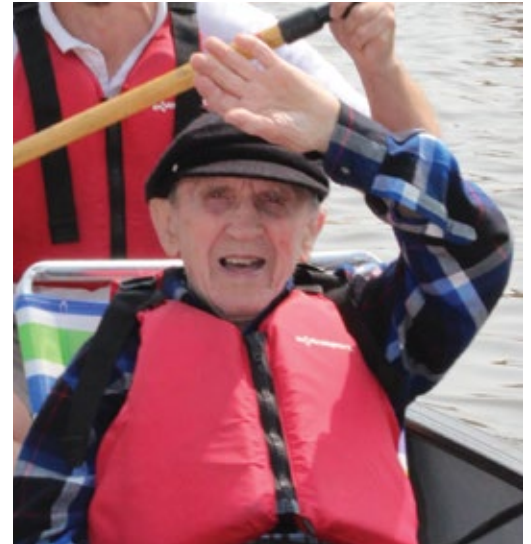
# Legacy Gifts

## Richard M. Franz

Richard was a wonderful friend of the Center who was especially inspired by our programs for teenage youth. Seeing him, at the age of 100, engaging with these kids was a sight to behold. His gentle approach yet challenging questions inspired many.

A legacy gift to the Urban Ecology Center is not only an investment in our community, but it is an investment in a world where every child can explore nature every day of every year of his or her life. Richard Franz's bequest is exactly such a gift. This gift will ensure the Urban Ecology Center's financial health for generations to come.

If you would like more information about a legacy gift, or if you have included the Urban Ecology Center in your will or estate plans and would like to be recognized, please contact the Center's Development Department at (414) 964-8505.



*Richard enjoying a trip down the Milwaukee River to celebrate his 100th birthday.*

# Deep Roots

The following individuals and organizations contributed to our Bench or Deep Roots: Native Tree and Plant Program during our 2016-2017 fiscal year. Their support helps transform post-industrial land into a flourishing native ecosystem.

### **Olmsted Sponsorship**

In honor of Tom Ela

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Milwaukee

### **Memorial Bench**

In honor of Chaz Pichette

- Betsy and Geno Pichette

### **Visionary Sponsorship**

In honor of Rhoda Sherwood

- Marquette University - Trinity Fellows Program

In honor of Chaz Pichette

- Lake Bluff Elementary School- Lake Bluff Friends

### **Biodiversity Sponsorship**

In honor of Chaz Pichette

- Lake Bluff Elementary School- Lake Bluff Friends





# Here's to You

The Urban Ecology Center thanks our generous donors for their support in the 2016 -17 fiscal year.

We are grateful for the support of the following foundations, corporations, and individuals who made a contribution to support our mission, programs, or operations. Donor levels reflect total giving for the year, including gifts-in-kind. The following list includes gifts \$250 or more; a full listing of donors can be found on our website.

*Symbols next to a donor's name reflect that either a portion of their gift or their entire gift supported one of the following: the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum (\*); Riverland Property Acquisition (†); Menomonee Valley – From the Ground Up (‡).*

## \$25,000 and Up

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## \$5,000 - \$9,999

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## \$2,500 - \$4,999

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Greater Milwaukee Association of Realtors Youth Foundation

*Every effort was made to ensure that this list of donors is accurate. If you made a gift between September 2016 and August 2017 and your name is not listed or is listed incorrectly, please contact the Center's Development Office at (414) 964-8505.*





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Planting in the new stormwater habitat pond at Riverside Park



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Tim Vargo and our lovely kids: Timur, Henry and Cecilia

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*Every effort was made to ensure that this list of donors is accurate. If you made a gift between September 2016 and August 2017 and your name is not listed or is listed incorrectly, please contact the Center's Development Office at (414) 964-8505.*



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