



"Rooted in Hope"

Racine Dominican Eco-Justice Center

Winter 2020

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View this newsletter in
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on our website:

ecojusticecenter.org

Grounds Temporarily Closed

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MaryLynn Conter Strack

Executive Director

Dawn DeMuyt

Farm Corps Program Manager

Jeff Appenzeller

Maintenance

S. Rose Marie Dischler, OP

S. Kathleen Bohn, OP

S. Mary Ann Weyker, OP

S. Janet Weyker, OP



We Welcome Our New Director!

MaryLynn Conter Strack

I am honored to be the new executive director of the Eco-Justice Center. I've been serving as Eco-J's Program Manager and Developer since May and I was immediately drawn to its mission, land, animals, and staff.

I joined this organization with a unique background of programming and animal experience. My previous position was Senior Manager of Enrichment Programs for the Zoological Society of Milwaukee Education Department in which I oversaw programs for the public and school programs. During my 19 years at the Zoological Society, I developed curriculum, taught classes, created training programs, maintained budgets, produced marketing pieces, and supervised staff & interns.

As executive director, I hope to expand both programming and reach in the community. Our Board is currently involved in strategic planning and I'm thrilled to join this process to help determine our future direction. Eco-J has a wonderful history, and the founding Racine Dominican Sisters as well as Sister Rejane Cytacki, the previous executive director, has given Eco-J a solid foundation from which to grow. The potential of what we can do is exhilarating!

There is a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that is very meaningful to me: "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly." I think this pairs perfectly with the Eco-Justice Center's values of community, justice, reverence and sense of place. As human beings, we are connected socially and economically but we are also connected to the environment.

The health of humans is connected to the health of the planet. Study after study has shown the psychological and physical benefits of connecting with nature. People who are connected with nature are happier, feel more vital, and have more meaning in their lives. But with ever-increasing technology, people have become more and more removed from nature. How can someone care about climate change, pollution or habitat loss when they don't feel they are a part of their environment? The mission of Eco-Justice is more vital now than ever before – leading people towards healing and enabling them to see their connection to the world around them. I'm grateful that I have the opportunity to further that mission.

Sincerely, MaryLynn Conter Strack

**The Eco-Justice Center turned 16 on October 4.
Here's to a Sweet 16!**



Follow us on Facebook
for the most up-to-date
information on events,
wether virtual or on-site,
for animal updates and
fun farm facts.

Eco-J Board Members

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THANK YOU!!! THANK YOU!!! THANK YOU!!! For Making Our FALL FESTIVAL WEEK a Great Success!

This year due to Covid, we extended our annual fundraiser, the Fall Festival, from a one-day event to a full week of fun through a mix of online and on-site activities. We are thrilled to announce that this new format far exceeded our expectations and brought in over \$11,000. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this great success!

- ♥ Our popular **\$1,000 Sweepstakes** raised \$3,400 in ticket sales.
- ♥ We pre-sold 121 quarts of chili and 55 home made pies.
- ♥ Our outdoor **Gift Shop** was a hit! The adorable alpaca-felted animals and wallets were big sellers as were the Eco-J animal-themed face masks and Eco-J shirts.
- ♥ We had great weather for **Yoga with Alpacas**, led by celebrated instructor, Chloé Wright.
- ♥ **Guided Tours** of our 15-acre renewable energy farm came complete with a hay ride and honey tasting.
- ♥ Our first-ever **Eco-J Trivia Night** was such a success that we did it again in October.
- ♥ Our **Fall Equinox Celebration and Drum Circle** was viewed hundreds of times on Facebook.
- ♥ **Video Demonstrations** featuring drum making, butter making, beekeeping, wool spinning, and more were so well received that we're going to offer them again during our *Giving Tuesday* fundraising campaign. Please check our Facebook page on December 1 for more info.

A BIG THANK YOU to our Fall Festival Co-Chairs: S. Rejane Cytacki and Tiffany Behrends

Much gratitude to our Fall Festival Volunteers & Donors: Anonymous Friends of the Eco-J, Margie Curtis, S. Rose Marie Dischler, Rick Fare, Maureen Geglio, Brian Gleichauf, Andy Havron, Hot Shop Glass, Sandy & Chris Jamieson, Jenny LaBelle, Marilyn Lauer, Looking Wolf Studio, Tracey Medves, Marty Meissner, Milaeger's, Nicole Reid, Sarah Ronnevik, Laura Schulz, Deborah & Mike Scott, Robin Smerchek, Charlie Tennesen, S. Janet Weyker, S. Mary Ann Weyker, & Chloé Wright

Special thanks to our Festival Sponsors: Strouf Funeral Home & Draeger-Langendorf Funeral Home

From Dawn DeMuyt, Farm Corps Program Manager:

*Thank you to everyone who visited
the new Eco-J Farm Stand!*

The stand was open Fridays from mid-August to mid-October and sold produce grown by our Youth Farm Corps members. A big thanks to volunteers Margie Curtis & Nicole Reid for overseeing sales which totaled over \$1,600!

It's November at the farm and we are grateful for the abundance of food our gardens produced this past growing season. *We harvested over 1,575 pounds of organically grown produce* including several varieties of tomatoes and peppers, swiss chard, onions, winter squash, beets and more. *One-third of our harvest was donated to the Northside Food Pantry.*

With this beautiful fall weather we've been able to spend additional time amending our growing beds with leaves and compost as we put the garden to bed for the winter. Soon it will be time to start the cycle of seed to harvest once again.

There is comfort in the predictability of nurturing a seed to become a thriving plant. In this very uncertain and difficult time of the coronavirus, we, like many of you, have had to learn new ways to continue our work as we care for the earth and for each other. Thankfully, with the support of the Farm Corps crew and help from some very special people, the gardens continue to provide for us.

We're dedicated to finding new paths that allow us to continue to serve you and nourish our community. We are growing into who we need to be. Thank you to all who support us and share our vision.

Eco-Justice Center
FARM STAND
Fresh Produce

"Being a member of the Youth Farm Corps program was one of the best experiences of my life. It allowed me the space to channel my energy into something outside of myself, whether that be seeding plants, pulling weeds, or taking care of the animals."

-Daphne Adamson, Farm Corps Member, Summer 2020



Godspeed, Sister Rejane

We'll miss you!!!

After a little more than four years, I am pleased with what I have accomplished at Eco-J and it is time for me to move back to Kansas where I will be closer to family. My last day here will be November 30. I am thrilled that the Eco-Justice Board and Racine Dominicans chose MaryLynn as the new director.



I am really going to miss having Lake Michigan and the Root River as part of my daily life—especially walking along the lakefront and kayaking the river from the REC. I am also going to miss the great restaurants and ice cream. I love Racine's downtown! Most importantly, I am going to miss all the incredible people I have met here.

Thank you for all your love and support over the years. Please continue to support MaryLynn and the rest of the staff at the Eco-J!

In Gratitude, S. Rejane Cytacki

Her Fondest Eco-J Memories:

#3 The three amazing Farm to Table dinners

The experience speaks to our vision of *Sowing Community for a Fertile Future*. To see our Farm Corps crew members' hard work of growing food turn into these delicious masterpiece dishes for all to enjoy. It was a celebration of our Farm Corps program, local restaurants, and friends of Eco-J enjoying it all! Thank you to Dawn DeMuyt and Corey Sebastian for all of your coordinating!

#2 Watching a child overcome their fears

With little to no experience around animals, many children who visit the farm are afraid of animals. We educate them with fun animal facts and show them how to safely interact with them. The relief and joy in their eyes when they touch an alpaca or chicken for the first time is incredible to witness.

#1 Leading the Growing Healthy field trips

Working with RUSD, the Eco-J has hosted thousands of first graders on the farm to teach them about food sources, nutrition and digestion. Seeing kids' eyes light up as they try a new vegetable for the first time and say "Yum!" is extremely gratifying.

Scan to Donate



THANK YOU!

We invite you to make a donation in honor of Sister Rejane's leadership. Her cheerful and positive approach to life's many joys and challenges will be greatly missed.

Extra!
Extra!



South Oak Creek Coal Plant to be Retired!

When approaching the Eco-Justice Center, it is hard to ignore the giant smokestacks of the nearby coal plant looming overhead. Thanks to herculean efforts by the Clean Power Coalition, WEC Energy Group has announced they will be retiring the oldest part of the plant in favor of renewable energy.

The Clean Power Coalition includes environmental, religious and social justice advocates. Eco-Justice Center has been honored to host CPC meetings in the past as part of their leadership efforts and *Care for Earth* mission.

In Animal News...



Everyone loves Halloween at the Eco-J! Here is Gaylord dressed as Al Pacino in Scarface.

Our alpacas will be starring in a video for Racine Unified School District first-graders as part of a virtual Growing Healthy program this spring. They will be helping the children learn about the parts of our digestive system and what is similar or different to an alpaca's digestive system.

For example, both humans and alpacas have a stomach, but alpacas have three parts to their stomach where we have only one. After food enters into their stomach, alpacas will bring some of it back up and chew it again. Aren't you glad we don't do that?!

We now have a total of eight guinea fowl free-ranging on the farm. Five of them hatched this summer. It is tricky to figure out if a guinea is a male or female. One way is by the different sounds the two sexes make. Females make a noise that sounds like, "buck-wheat, buck-wheat." Because of this we think we have seven males and just one female. As we learned during Eco-J Trivia Night, that's one *confusion* of guinea fowl!



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What's Inside: Meet Our New Executive Director, A Successful Fall Festival Week, Godspeed, Sister Rejane & Much More!



Olie the Goat
2012 – 2020

In Remembrance

With sad hearts we share that our beloved goat Olie passed away on November 4 after complications with a tumor and CAE, a terminal neurological condition. His exuberant and mischievous personality brought joy to many children, visitors, volunteers and staff over the years. Olie is survived by two female goats, April Rose and Patty Kay.

We share this remembrance prayer by Rabbi Barry H. Block:

As we remember Olie, may we love each other more dearly. May we care for all Your creatures, for every living thing, as we cared for Olie. May Olie's memory bless our lives with love and caring forever. Amen.

Vet bills for Olie, April Rose and Patty Kay have come close to \$1,000 over the past three months. It was determined that April Rose also has CAE which causes severe arthritis. She is on an anti-inflammatory medication to make her more comfortable.

Both Patty Kay and April Rose were born in 2014 – Patty Kay was born on St. Patrick's Day and April Rose was born in April. They are taking the loss well and are getting extra attention from staff.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to the Eco-Justice Center are suggested.

Eco-Justice Center Wish List:

Farm & Fleet / Klema Feed Gift Cards, Postage Stamps, Office Paper, Needle-nose Pliers, Wire Cutters, Tin Snips (for small hands)