First Time Ever Experiences
by Ken Leinbach, Executive Director

The Urban Ecology Center is a place of “firsts” for many in our community. Some of our younger students see Lake Michigan for the very first time while walking on the sandy beach during one of our Summer Camps. Families have had their very first time ice skating on a cold day in Washington Park. Last winter we had visitors from Nepal who enjoyed their first sled ride down the hill in Riverside Park. A big perk that comes from working at the Urban Ecology Center is being part of those “firsts” – those times of wonder in the outdoors.

This fall I was reminded of the special “firsts” I’ve been privy to at the Center when I had one of my own. It didn’t occur in the city, but the feeling of wonder and connection in nature is universal – no matter where you are.

I’ve been on many wilderness expeditions, but for me this trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness offered two very special “firsts.” After receiving the invite one “first” was expected, the other was a complete and profound surprise.

My first “first” was using a genuine birch bark canoe as a utility boat. It was light, cut the water well and had a joy to handle. It was only 175 years ago that birch bark canoes graced the waters of the Milwaukee, the Menomonee and the Kinnickinnic rivers. They are beautiful boats that had been in use as the primary river transportation in these parts for thousands of years. I’ve seen them in museums and I think I may have touched one once, but never did I dream of actually using one. That is until I received the email inviting me on this trip.

The cool thing is that we didn’t just “try it out” for half an hour on calm waters. It was a full day of paddling navigating through the Boundary Waters. It was a lot of fun and the feeling of being on a birch bark canoe was quite exhilarating.

The Intersection of Ecology and Art
by Beth Heller, Senior Director of Education and Strategic Planning

“I realized I truly wanted to study ecology – a seed that was planted during my time at [the Urban Ecology Center] but took a few years to sprout.”

This is the opening line of an email from a former High School Outdoor Leader, Robby Friedlen, to Riverside Park Branch Manager, Jamie Ferschinger. He was eager to share the reason behind his decision to shift his research studies to “the intersection of ecology – through the lens of permaculture – and the arts.” As a High School Outdoor Leader in 2009, Robby spent a portion of his summer working with internationally known artist Roy Staab. With the assistance of Robby and his high school colleagues, Staab used nettles growing along the river to create 100 foot-long natural cables that were draped over branches of tall trees to create a massive, suspended, swaying sculpture.

A Frog In The Bucket by Cynthia Brinich Langlois

Branch Highlights

RIVERSIDE PARK
Looking for a place to use the cross-country skis you borrow from the Urban Ecology Center? This winter we will be leaving some of the trails in the arboretum un-plowed to provide a ski trail for you to enjoy.

WASHINGTON PARK
Winter is here and soon the Washington Park lagoon will be open for ice skating! Contributing members can borrow our skates for free as a part of our Equipment Lending benefit. We follow Milwaukee County Park standards to ensure that it is thick enough for skating. Become a member today and get out on the ice!

MENOMONEE VALLEY
Art in the Valley is in full swing! We had an amazing response to our call for artists to display in our gallery space so we are going to have two shows this year. Keep an eye on our website for an announcement of the artists! The first show will begin in February; see page 9 for details of the opening reception.
It was 5pm on a late fall, Friday evening and I was enjoying a cup of hot chocolate at the Menomonee Valley branch’s reception desk. A group of our regular youth visitors were running around the building as it was too dark outside to explore Three Bridges Park and they were having too much fun to go home. It was a quiet evening, perfect for kids to just hang out and be themselves in our safe community center. I couldn’t see anybody around, but I could hear little feet moving fast.

Suddenly a little one appeared, “Mister Jaime, I can hide under … your table?” I answered “Absolutely! And here, use my sweater to cover you. That way it’s harder to find you.”

“Thank you, Mister Jaime,” he replied.

One minute later, I heard a big “aahhhh” and “Sofia, I see you,” followed it. The next 30 seconds were full of continuous yelling and running. Meanwhile, the little kid hiding under the table listened quietly, feeling very secure in his possibility of winning.

The kid who was “it” came to my desk near the little one’s hiding place. He was very excited about the game and was doing a really great job. He had found almost everyone! The rule was that the last kid to be found was the winner and was the next one to be “it,” so the stakes were high! He took a quick look under my table and left. I smiled. Two minutes later, a couple of kids were found and the game was over. My little hider had won!

To me, this moment is what the Urban Ecology Center is about. Playing Hide and Seek in a safe place is a memory commonly passed down and told to children by children. In this same way, we want to create experiences that are talked about and taught from child to child, becoming living memories inside of them all.

The Menomonee Valley branch, like the little kid under my desk, is hidden, like a precious stone that has to be found, but once it’s found — it’s a winner. It’s a place for fun, excitement, learning and unity. A place where generations and generations of visitors, Young Scientists and volunteers can enjoy and share with each other and their loved ones. And most importantly, it’s a place where they can come back, a place where they are always welcome and at home.

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**Thank You to Our Contributing Members**

Many thanks to the local foundations, corporations and individuals who have donated to the Center. The complete list of contributing members who have given within the last two months can be found on our website at [www.urbanecologycenter.org/thankyoulist](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org/thankyoulist).

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**Credits:**

The Urban Ecology Center Newsletter is created and distributed through a team effort by the following people: Carijean Buhk, Matthew Gnas, Judy Krause, Jeff McAvoy and Pat Mueller.

Contributing writers: Jaime Cano, Laurel Cutright, Beth Heller and Ken Leinbach.

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**Wish List.** Below are some items we need for our three branches. Visit urbanecologycenter.org/wishlist for an expanded list.

**Riverside Park**
- Anabat detector
- Blenders
- HD quality video camera
- GoPro camera
- Log splitter
- Matched set of heavy bottom, stainless steel cookware (Pots, pans, skillets)
- Terry cotton towels (new or used)
- Trimble Juno GPS
- Spray bottles

**Washington Park**
- 8ft folding tables
- Bicycle air pump (stand-up)
- Chopping knives
- Large crock pots or nescos with lids (3)
- Large, 2-handled pots with lids (3)
- Lego/blocks/K’Nex building toys
- Podium
- Wooden high chairs

**Menomonee Valley**
- Digital camera
- Field/trail cameras (3)
- GPS units
- LED flashlights (3)
- Lightweight folding tables (2)
- Musical instruments
- Terry cloth rags
- Yoga mats (20)
SEE FOR YOURSELF! (No really, see what’s happened with your support)

THANK YOU for helping make great things POSSUMble

You’ve donated over $99,830 to our Fall Fund Drive! (total as of 12/16/15)

On Giving Tuesday our staff donated $3041 and asked you to meet or beat that amount. In response you generously gave $5,002 in one day!

A huge thanks to the 277 donors who have given or pledged during this drive! (total as of 12/16/15)

Your support helps youth and adults explore, learn, grow, work and play outdoors. Together we’re making a positive change, neighborhood by neighborhood.

It’s not too late to help. Please visit urbanecologycenter.org and donate today.
Recently I brought a group of third graders to Washington Park to study ecosystems. The main idea of the class was to learn how living and non-living things interact in different habitats. I've come to love this class because it provides space and time for students to simply be in those places.

We started our class in the Lloyd Street Prairie, a restoration project started in Washington Park in 2010. Each student was asked to observe plants, animals and other features of the prairie and record their descriptions on a worksheet. They quickly realized that there was no rush to complete the sheet, they had ample time to explore. I could see them relax into being outside, free of micromanagement. They began to look closely at their surroundings, noticing the grass growing over their heads, faded autumn flowers and seeds of all shapes. They delighted in releasing fluffy milkweed seeds and closely examining slow-moving milkweed beetles. One student spotted the gigantic, speckled leaf of a prairie dock. He asked permission to touch it, to which I replied, “Of course!” When he felt the unexpectedly sand-papery texture, his eyes lit up and he exclaimed, “Woah!”

Students collected data using air and soil thermometers and used anemometers to measure wind speed. Along with this data and their observations, the students were also asked to record how they felt in the ecosystem. It really struck me that most of their answers were “calm” and “peaceful.”

We moved on to the woodlands area, filled with recently planted shrubs as well as towering oak trees. The students delved in deep and found berries, leaves of all shapes, ants, squirrel homes and even tiny snail shells. One girl found a fuzzy pink and white gall on the underside of an oak leaf. This lead to a discussion of the life cycle of the oak leaf gall wasp, which lays eggs in the bud of the tree and tricks the tree into forming a protective layer of tissue around its larvae. She asked if she could bring it back to school for her science class, and when I agreed she said, “This is SO COOL!”

As a child I was fortunate to have many hours to independently explore outdoors. I navigated easily through well-worn deer trails, knew the shape of each climbing tree on our land and witnessed the daily shift through seasonal patterns. This is undoubtedly a major reason that I became both an environmentalist and an environmental educator. As an adult, I get to spend several hours teaching outside in Washington Park, but I also love to walk, bike, canoe and relax in the park on my own time. I've learned to appreciate the many beautiful things I never expected to find in Milwaukee: morning fog drifting across the lagoon, the heron that stands sentinel on the shoreline, the autumn changes sweeping through the leaves of maple, beech and locust trees. It's this freedom in and appreciation of the outdoors that I hope to impart to the students.

Every day the educators at the Urban Ecology Center try to model our deep appreciation and sense of stewardship for the students. By allowing them the time for discovery excitement, and self-directed learning, we hope to help them form feelings of engagement with the natural world. Every day I remind students that the Urban Ecology Center is here for them, and that these parks are theirs to explore and to care for.
A festival for the lil’ ones! Children ages 5 and under accompanied by an adult can enjoy a morning of fun including a craft, hike and puppets show, and still get home in time for their afternoon nap. Registration required. Please register all children.
For children ages 5 and younger accompanied by an adult $5 (Nonmembers: $7)

Join the fun for a second season of snow-scaping and help build a city of snow structures. All ages are invited to spend the afternoon building our Snow City, replete with sky scraping snow castles and a kingdom of snow folk. We need all hands on deck to prepare for Snowtopia so bring yourself, your friends and your family to see what this epic and magical event is all about! Warm up with hot chocolate around a fire. This event is dependent on snow conditions. For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

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**RIVERSIDE PARK**

WHO0 is in the forest? Join us for Owl Prowls during the months of January and February. We will be offering Owl Prowls for both adults and families. Also, learn about Tree Anatomy and Physiology in a series with our Forester Caitlin Reinartz.

Be sure to save the date for the Local Farmer Open House on March 12th.

— Jamie Ferschinger, Branch Manager - Riverside Park

**WASHINGTON PARK**

Winterfest is here again! Join us on Saturday, January 23rd to celebrate winter with great activities for everyone. Enjoy a sled dog demonstration, ice skating, sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, arts and crafts! Warm up with free food and beverages. But the fun doesn’t end there! Join us for a Candlelight Ski and Snowshoe or try something new at Beginning Cross-country Skiing or Snowshoeing for Beginners.

— Terry Evans, Branch Manager - Washington Park

**MENOMONEE VALLEY**

We are definitely not hibernating this winter! We have many different ways for you to get out and enjoy the winter weather — whether you like skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding, or just enjoying a cup of hot cocoa! We're particularly excited to be offering several opportunities to enjoy Music Under Glass – by Snowshoe! And don’t forget to join us as we create our very own Snowtopia in Three Bridges Park!

— Glenna Holstein, Branch Manager - Menomonee Valley

This events guide gives you a “snapshot” view of the programs and events happening at the Urban Ecology Center’s three branches. Full descriptions and details can be found on our website at [www.urbanecologycenter.org/calendar](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org/calendar)
Family Cooking Classes

National Day of Service Family Soup Making
Take this all-ages, hands on class and help someone in need. We'll make two vegetarian soups, eat some for lunch and deliver a batch to a local meal program. Children under 10 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required by Jan 15th.

(RP) Mon., Jan. 18 | 9:30 - 11AM
For adults and kids | Individuals: $12, (Nonmembers: $18) Families: $22 (Nonmembers: $34)

Winter Quick Breads
In this all-ages, hands on class we will prepare non-yeasted quick breads (including gluten-free varieties). Bring a container. Children under 10 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Register by Jan 19th.

(RP) Fri., Jan. 22 | 9:30 - 11AM
For adults and kids | Individuals: $12, (Nonmembers: $18) Families: $22 (Nonmembers: $34)

Korean-Mexican Fusion Cooking Class
Explore the flavors of Korea and Mexico through this interactive cooking demonstration. Learn how to make Kimchi Quesadillas, Fusion Style Tacos and more! Register by January 27th.

(MV) Sat., Jan. 30 | 2 - 3:30PM
For families | Free for Young Scientist Club members (Nonmembers: $5)

Too Good To Be True Dessert
In this all-ages, hands on class we'll put a healthy spin on sweets like brownies, chocolate chip cookies and vanilla cupcakes. Children under 10 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Register by February 12th.

(RP) Feb., 2 | 9:30 - 11AM
For kids and adults | Individuals: $12, (Nonmembers: $18) Families: $22 (Nonmembers: $34)

Little Explorers: Friday Morning Playgroup
Explore with us! Our activities are specifically designed to engage the senses of kids ages 4 and under.

(MV) Fri., Jan. 8 & Feb. 12 | 11AM - noon
For children ages 4 and younger | Free - donations appreciated

Saturday Preschool Series: Winter Fun
Bring your youngster, ages 3-5 years old and enjoy a mix of seasonal indoor and outdoor play, songs, stories and crafts. Dress for the outdoors.

(RP) Sat., Jan. 9 | 10 - 11:30AM
For children ages 3-5 accompanied by an adult | Adults: $5 (Nonmembers: $7) Children: $3 (Nonmembers: $5)

Family Astronomy in the Park
The early darkness of winter means we can stargaze before bed time! Come learn the science of the solar system and search for the stars and planets we can see from our own backyards.

(WP) Wed., Jan. 13 | 6 - 8PM
For adults and accompanied children | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9) Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

Let’s Build a Snow Shelter!
Learn how you can build a simple snow shelter at home — just like the one we have at Winterfest! Dress in warm, waterproof layers.

(WP) Sat., Jan. 16 | 10 - 11:30AM
For everyone | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9) Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

Owl Prowl for Families
A wintry forest just after dark is the perfect place to look and listen for our nocturnal friends, the owls. Bundle up and outdoor play, songs, stories and crafts. Dress for the outdoors.

(RP) Tue., Jan. 26 & Feb. 23 | 6 - 7:30PM
For families | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9) Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $6)

Origami Workshop
In this free workshop you will learn how to make a fox, cat and more.

(MV) Sat., Jan. 30 | 10 - 11AM
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

Martial Arts
Hosted by Above the Clouds
Martial arts training teaches kids and teens respect and self-confidence. No experience needed! Register at abovevecloudsmilwaukee.com or at the door.

(MV) Every Wed. starting Jan. 27 | 5:30 - 6:30PM
For youth ages 9-15 | Free - donations appreciated

Snakes in Winter
Ever wonder where snakes go in the winter? The answer might surprise you! Help solve the mystery of the disappearing snakes. You’ll also get to meet our resident Bullsnake.

(MV) Tue., Feb. 9 | 4 - 6PM
For children ages 5-12 | Free - donations appreciated

Valentine’s Day Crafting
Be eco-friendly this Valentine’s Day. Stop in between 9am-4pm to create your own cards and decorations for friends and loved ones.

(MV) Sat., Feb. 13 | Drop in between 9AM - 4PM
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

Nature Rangers
Create research projects and more! Sign up for either the Monday or Tuesday session. Fee covers all sessions in January and February.

(RP) Every Mon. or every Tue. | 4 - 5:30PM
For children ages 5 and older | $10 (Nonmember: $15)

Matrix Math Club
Learn the symbols, secrets and codes hidden in math.

(MV) Every Tue. & Thu., Jan. 5 | 3 - 4PM
For children aged 5-12 | Free - donations appreciated

EcoArt Wednesdays
Join us for nature inspired recycled arts and crafts.

(MV) Every Wed. | 4 - 5:30PM
For families with children age 12 and younger | Free for Young Scientist Club members (Nonmembers: $5 per child)

Young Scientists Club
Every day is a new adventure.

(WP) Every Tue. | 4 - 6PM and Every Sat. | 1 - 4PM
For ages 7-12 | $10 annual membership

Fire Time in the Rooftop Tipi
Drop in and enjoy the warmth and light of the fire in our rooftop tipi.

(RP) Sat., Jan. 2 | 10AM - 3PM
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

Animal Feeding
Help feed our resident animals.

(WP) (WP) & (MV) Every Sat. | 1PM
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

Homeschool Series
Mini Inquiries
Conduct mini inquiries to learn about different ways winter changes our parks. We'll help shape the inquiries for each session but the topic is up to you!

(RP) Tue., Jan. 19 | 1 - 3PM
(MV) Tue., Feb. 2 | 1 - 3PM
(WP) Tue., Feb. 16 | 1 - 3PM
For children ages 5 and older | $7 (Nonmember: $10)

3 WAYS TO REGISTER:
1 ONLINE:
www.urbanecologycenter.org
2 BY PHONE:
(414) 964-8505
3 IN PERSON: Just stop by!

(RP) Riverside Park
1500 E. Park Pl.

(WP) Washington Park
1859 N. 40th St.

(MV) Menomonee Valley
3700 W. Pierce St.

= Accessible for persons with disabilities
Please call 2 weeks ahead of time
Eco-Travel: Maine       Tree Anatomy and Physiology Series
Eco-travel: Sail Maine Information Session
Larn how you can spend four nights aboard a two-masted schooner sailing the coast of Maine! Trip is from May 30 to June 5, 2016 (see page 9 for details).
(RP) Thu., Jan. 28 | 5:30 - 6:30PM
For adults | Free - donations appreciated

Session 1: Tree Anatomy
(HP) Mon., Jan. 4 | 5 - 7PM
Session 2: Photosynthesis And Respiration
(HP) Mon., Jan. 11 | 5 - 7PM
Session 3: Plant Hormones
(HP) Mon., Jan. 18 | 5 - 7PM
Session 4: Dormancy, Senescence, and Death
(HP) Mon., Jan. 25 | 5 - 7PM
For adults | $7 per class (Nonmembers: $10 per class)
Volunteers: $5 per class

Volunteers Opportunities
Volunteer Orientation
Come find out how you can contribute your time and talents to the Center.
(RP) Sat., Jan. 9 | 10:30AM - noon
(RP) Wed., Jan. 20 | 5:30 - 7PM
(RP) Sat., Feb. 13 | 10:30AM - noon
(RP) Fri., Feb. 19 | 3 - 4:30PM
(RP) Mon., Feb. 29 | 5:30 - 7PM
(WP) Sat., Jan. 16 | 10:30 - 11:30AM
(WP) Tue., Jan. 26 | 5 - 6PM
(WP) Tue., Feb. 9 | 5 - 6PM
(WP) Sat., Feb. 27 | 10:30 - 11:30AM
(MV) Wed., Jan. 6 | 5:30 - 7PM
(MV) Tue., Jan. 19 | 5:30 - 7PM
(MV) Sat., Feb. 6 | 10:30AM - noon
(MV) Tue., Feb. 23 | 5:30 - 7PM
For adults and teens | Free - donations appreciated

Fixin’ Facilities
Help with anything from building and painting, to repair and upkeep projects.
(RP) Every Wed. | 3 - 5PM
For adults, families and teens | Free - donations appreciated

Youth Project Squad
Work on various projects while learning new skills from our staff.
(MV) Sat., Jan. 9, Feb. 6 | noon - 2PM
(MV) Thurs., Feb. 18 | 4 - 6PM
For families and teens | Free - donations appreciated

Weekly volunteer opportunities
Find these weekly events on our website
ROOT (Restore Our Outdoor Treasures)
Volunteer Papermaking
Volunteer Park Ranger Crew

The Art and Science of Massage
Learn the art and science behind giving a good, full body massage. Partners are required. Please register by February 12th at 5pm.
(RP) Sun., Feb. 14 | 2 - 4PM
For adults | $20 per couple (Nonmembers: $30 per couple)

Fishing for Dinner Series
Learn basic fishing skills and where to find fishable waters. A chef will show you how to prepare your catch. We’ll begin with indoor sessions to prepare you for ice fishing and spring open water outings. Gear provided.
(WP) Wed., Jan. 27 & Feb. 3 & 10 | 6 - 9PM
For adults | Free - donations appreciated

Birding like a Pro:
eBird and the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas 2
Learn the basics of eBird, the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas and how you can get involved in Wisconsin’s largest Citizen Science project ever.
(RP) Thu., Feb. 4 | 5:30 - 6:30PM
For adults | $5 (Nonmembers: $10)

Ojibwe Language Study Group
(RP) Every Mon. | 6 - 8PM

Community Vegan Potluck
(RP) Tues., Jan. 5 & Feb. 2 | 6:30 - 8PM

Photo Club
(RP) Thurs., Jan. 7 & Feb. 4 | 6:30 - 9PM
350.org General Meeting
(RP) Tues. Jan. 12 & Feb. 9 | 7 - 8:30PM
Friends of Real Food: Potluck Dinner and Program
(RP) Wed., Jan. 13 | 6 - 8PM
Good Food Book Club
(RP) Thu., Feb. 11 | 7 - 8PM

Faith and Ecology
(RP) Tues., Jan. 19 & Feb. 16 | 7 - 8:30PM

Urban Echo Poets
(RP) Thurs., Jan. 14 & Feb. 11 | 7 - 8:30PM

Urban Stargazers
(RP) Thurs., Jan. 14 & Feb. 11 | 7 - 8:30PM

Transition Milwaukee:
All City Hub Meeting
(RP) Mon., Jan. 25 & Feb. 22 | 6:30 - 8:30PM

Early Morning Birdwalks
(MV) Every Tue. | 8am
(WP) Every Wed. | 8am
(RP) Every Thu. | 8am
**Sledding the Slopes of Menomonee Valley**
Join us for an evening of sledding through Three Bridges Park. We’ll warm up with hot chocolate too. If there is no snow, we will hike.

(MV) Thu., Jan. 14 & Feb. 4 | 4 - 6PM
(MV) Tue., Jan. 26 & Feb. 16 | 4 - 6PM
For families and teens | Free - donations appreciated

**Candlelight Ski and Snowshoe**
Spend a wintery night skiing and snowshoeing in Washington Park by candlelight! All skill levels welcome and equipment is provided. Please register by February 15th.

(WP) Wed., Feb. 17 | 7 - 9PM
For adults and accompanied youth | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9)
Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Winter Camping Crash Course**
Winter camping can be a beautiful and memorable experience, but it does take a bit of know-how. Learn basic winter camping skills and get ready to jump headfirst into winter!

(RP) Sun., Feb. 21 | 1:30 - 3PM
For adults | $5 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Snowshoeing**

**Beginning**

**Snowshoeing for Beginners**
For thousands of years, snowshoeing has been an important form of travel and recreation in cold-weather climates. Join us to learn the basics of this classic sport. Equipment provided. Make sure to dress in layers and wear waterproof footwear.

(MV) Sat., Jan. 16 | 10 - 11:30AM
(MV) Sat., Jan. 30 | 10 - 11:30AM
(MV) Sat., Feb. 13 | 10 - 11:30AM
(MV) Sat., Feb. 27 | 10 - 11:30AM

For adults and accompanied children | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9)
Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Multi-level**

**Music Under Glass — by Snowshoe!**
Come on a snowshoeing adventure through Three Bridges Park as we head to the Mitchell Park Domes for a Music Under Glass concert! Snowshoes, admission to the Domes and transportation back to our Menomonee Valley branch included. Have fun with friends, new and old! (If there’s no snow, we’ll hike.)
(MV) Thu., Jan. 28, Feb. 11 & 25 | 5 - 9PM
For adults and teens | $15 (Nonmembers: $20)

**Beginning**

**Cross-Country Skiing**

**Beginning Cross-Country Skiing for Adults**
Enjoy a twilight cross-country ski lesson and learn basic techniques that will get you out exploring this winter. All equipment provided. Registration is required by January 24th.

(RP) Mon., Jan. 4 | 5 - 7PM
For adults and teens | $10 (Nonmembers: $15)

**Beginning Cross-country Skiing for Kids**
Time to get your children excited for winter! Bring them to this workshop designed just for kids. Kids and families will learn basic cross-country skiing skills, then explore with us. Make sure to bundle up. We’ll provide the gear.

(RP) Mon., Jan. 18 | 4 - 6PM
(RP) Mon., Feb. 15 | 4 - 6PM
For families and kids ages 6 and older | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9)
Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Intermediate**

**Intermediate Cross-country Skiing Expedition to Brown Deer Park**
Come with us for a snowy ski adventure in Brown Deer Park! Practice your cross-country skiing skills and learn how to navigate hills. Equipment and transportation from Riverside Park provided. Registration is required at least two days prior to the program.

(RP) Sat., Jan. 16 & Feb. 20 | 9:30AM - 12:30PM
For adults | $15 (Nonmembers: $20)

**Advanced**

**Advanced Cross-Country Skiing Expedition to Lapham Peak**
Come with us for a snowy ski adventure at Lapham Peak! We will hone our skills on a trail with steep hills and sharp turns. Equipment and transportation from Washington Park provided. Registration is required at least two days prior to the program.

(WP) Sat., Feb. 20 | 9:30AM - 12:30PM
For adults | $15 (Nonmembers: $20)

**Night Skiing in Three Bridges Park**
Up for an after-dark adventure? Beginners and experts alike — join us as we hit the slopes at night. Dress in layers and we’ll provide the gear. Enjoy hot chocolate to end the night.

(MV) Wed., Jan. 6 Feb. 5 & 19 | 6 - 8PM
For adults and accompanied children | Adults: $6 (Nonmembers: $9)
Children: $4 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Basic Cross-country Ski Maintenance**
In this hands-on class, we will cover the basics of how to properly care for cross-country skis including the science and art of applying kick and glide wax. Learn how to use irons, brushes and wax for best ski care.

(RP) Sat., Jan. 9 & Feb. 13 | 10 - 11AM
(RP) Tues., Jan. 19 & Feb. 16 | 6:30 - 7:30PM
For adults and teens | $5 (Nonmembers: $7)

**Girl Scouts: Cross-Country Skiing at Menomonee Valley**
Getting outside in winter is exciting! Experience the thousand-year-old sport of cross country skiing as we explore Three Bridges Park. Please visit www.gswise.org to register.

(MV) Sat., Jan. 16 Feb. 20 | 9AM - noon
(MV) Sat., Jan. 16 or Feb. 20 | 1 - 4PM
For Juniors and Cadettes, grades 4-8 | Please visit www.gswise.org to register.

**Ski Outing to Lapham Peak’s Candlelight Ski**
Join us for an evening of cross-country skiing, cider and a bonfire at Lapham Peak. We’ll do the driving and provide skis, boots and poles for this fun winter adventure! Registration is required by January 29th at 5pm.

(RP) Sat., Jan. 30 | 5 - 10PM
For adults | $20 (Nonmembers: $25)

Sign up for our spontaneous “Snow and Go” email list to enjoy active winter fun! Send an email to “Snow and Go” in the subject line to fsullivan@urbanecologycenter.org
“The experience of working with [Staab] has stuck with me through all these years ... I just wanted to let you know that my experience working at the UEC in high school has turned out to be more formative than I could have possibly imagined at the time, and has truly set me on my current course through life,” wrote Robby.

Painters, sculptors, printers, photographers, graphic designers and many more visual artists are an important part of our mission. Their works help deepen our understanding of nature and the world around us. Science and art together can tell the story of an ecosystem, which is why we incorporate art into some of our Neighborhood Environmental Education Project classes and Summer Camps. In addition, each branch displays art that was an integral part of its opening — a giant mural in Washington Park’s classroom by Eriks Johnson, a series of murals at Riverside in the slide, camouflage room and room dividers by Kitty Dyble Thompson and a large mosaic by Leann Wooten and community members at the Menomonee Valley. Robby’s story reminded me how important all of those works are.

While the experience of working with Staab was a unique one, the opportunity to learn through art continues at the Center. As our current Art Committee Chair, Nancy Aten, shared, “It has been my hope to have the art program be more than just ‘art on the wall’ — yes, art for appreciating nature and giving insight — but also art as a tool for teaching ecology, a conduit for understanding ecology, and a collaborator in studying ecology.”

The Art Committee strives to not only provide venues for artists, but opportunities for community participation in the creation process. For example, last summer Plein Air artists painted in the Menomonee Valley, encouraged onlookers to ask questions about Plein Air techniques and showed their work in our Menomonee Valley branch gallery. We thank Nancy and the members of the Committee — Sally Dubackm Barbara Manger, Juan Lopez, Kristin Gjerdset and Jamie Bruchman for their dedication to the Center.

This winter as snow brightens our short days, tree trunks show off their reds, browns, greys and greens, I encourage you to explore outdoors and then stop in to each of our Centers for to warm up in the presence of this amazing art. On January 14th, an art opening for Cynthia Brinich-Langlois and Ken Vonderberg will be in the Riverside Park community room gallery and on February 11th the Menomonee Valley’s gallery will highlight a collection of local artists’ work.

Perhaps an experience with ecology and art at the Center could change your life, too. Why not come see for yourself? 😊

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**Upcoming Art Openings**

**Wood and Stone:**
Cynthia Brinich-Langlois and Ken Vonderberg
Enjoy the work of Cynthia Brinich-Langlois and Ken Vonderberg. Cynthia’s work is a series of lithographic prints depicting a journey through changing environments. Ken Vonderberg uses pyrography, a wood burning process, to portray a wild landscape. His work calls attention to the beauty of nature as motivation for its protection and enjoyment.

**Opening reception:**
Riverside Park
Thursday, January 14, 5 - 7pm
Artists speak at 6pm
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

**Menomonee Valley Art Opening Reception**

Take a fresh view of the world at an art show in the Menomonee Valley. Shows feature locally produced, nature-related artwork. Visit urbanecologycenter.org/art for details.

**Opening reception:**
Menomonee Valley
Thursday, February 11, 5 - 7pm
Artists speak at 6pm
For everyone | Free - donations appreciated

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**Save the Date!**

**14th Annual Local Farmer Open House**

The best way to get farm fresh veggies aside from growing your own! Meet local farmers and learn how you can buy directly from a farmer through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Whether you are new to CSAs or have been subscribing for years, this event is for you. Attend workshops and stay for lunch! Food available to purchase.

**Riverside Park | Saturday, March 12 | 11AM - 3PM | Free!**
water in the sun, but we used it and abused it for six amazing full weather days way up north in the Boundary Waters, a million acre wilderness area near the Canadian border.

The gorgeous 14-foot birch bark canoe was made just last year by my friend Robin Wood of England, his daughter JoJo and Jarrod Dahl who lives on the Bad River reservation near Ashland, Wisconsin. Starting with only an axe and a knife, Jarrod, Robin and JoJo, located the perfect tree, stripped its bark, cut it and bent it into the general shape of a boat, lashing its ends together with the root of a spruce tree. They cut down a cedar tree and crafted gunnels to lash to the boat’s edge, then covered with bear grease/spruce pitch – “indigenous duct tape,” as Jarrod calls it.

Once, while canoeing with the fully loaded boat, Robin hit a submerged rock … hard. We all cringed, but amazingly the bark held up with hardly a scratch, as good as Kevlar! My mindset shifted. Birch bark, in the hand, feels like paper so I guess I expected them to be fragile boats. But the rock did no damage to the bark, however the black pitch around one of the seams cracked off. At the end of the next portage Jarrod and Robin repaired the seam using some bear grease/spruce pitch they had brought and within ten minutes we were ready to get back on the water good as new. No wonder they were the boat of choice for so many thousands of years!

The second “first” caught me by surprise.

I’m not sure why, but at one point on the trip we all stopped paddling, kind of like a pause in a group conversation when everyone stops talking. We were in perfectly still, glass-like water. Robin was in his birch bark canoe. Nick, Robin’s friend and I were in a redwood sea kayak which I designed and built some 20 years ago. Jarrod sat with his paddle on the gunnels of his old wood and canvas 16-footer. All of us sat perfectly still. The silence hit us all at the same moment. There was not a breath of wind. The leaves had already fallen. The migratory birds had long since flown south. Animals were all hunkered down in preparation for the winter. We were the last canoeists of the season. There was no sound. I really mean it. Not one single sound.

I’ve been around the sun some 52 times now and I honestly cannot recall another time when I consciously experienced complete silence. It was oddly almost deafening and heavy at first. We got lost in it. Our ears were listening with so much intensity but nothing came back. Our minds wanted to hear something, anything, but there was no vibration to receive. It was a spontaneous spell that lasted maybe 20 minutes until eventually one of us shifted and we all began to smile and then quietly began to paddle again.

Here in Milwaukee, we provide first time experiences every day. I am so grateful for the “firsts” I get to witness. I am even more grateful for you. Your support is what makes our mission at the Urban Ecology Center happen. Every day that support provides students, families and adults new experiences in nature. Thank you!

So, what will you try for the first time this year?

Note: To see a travel log and pictures from this trip, visit Robin’s blog at http://tinyurl.com/birch-bark-canoe.

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What better way to explore the world than by one of the cleanest renewable energy sources we have: wind? Join the Urban Ecology Center for four nights aboard the Lewis R. French, a two-masted schooner built in 1871 that is the oldest continuously operating vessel in the United States! We will island-hop through Penobscot Bay looking for seals, dolphins, puffins and whales. Participants can help sail the boat, jump in the ocean and partake in a beachside lobster bake. For information contact Tim Vargo, tvargo@urbanecologycenter.org or come to our Riverside Park branch on Thursday, January 28th at 5:30 for an information session and slide show!
This newsletter is a publication of the Urban Ecology Center, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Thanks to the generous annual contributions of 215 foundations, corporations and organizations, 3300 members and many in-kind donors the Center provides safe parks and programs for over 300,000 people per year.

To make a contribution, please see below for the easy to use form, visit our website at www.urbanecologycenter.org or call the Center at (414) 964-8505.

The Urban Ecology Center fosters ecological understanding as inspiration for change, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Our Environmental Community Centers:

• Provide outdoor science education for urban youth.
• Protect and use public natural areas, making them safe, accessible and vibrant.
• Preserve and enhance these natural areas and their surrounding waters.
• Promote community by offering resources that support learning, volunteerism, stewardship, recreation, and camaraderie.
• Practice and model environmentally responsible behaviors.

By making your gift, you become a contributing member of the Center. Your support provides learning opportunities for thousands of urban youth each year and allows you to enjoy contributing membership benefits at all three of our branches.

Choose a Contributing Member Level:

☐ Student - benefits one college student . . . . . . . . . $30
☐ Individual - member plus one guest . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $35
☐ Family - two adults, and all children or grandchildren under 18 in a household plus one guest. . . . . . . . . . . $45
☐ Other - contributions above $45 receive family level benefits and can help us:  
  provide a membership for a family in need ($90)  
  provide a Summer Camp scholarship ($200)  
  restore urban land with native plants ($500)  
  Please enter an amount . . . . . . . . . $_____________

Give a gift membership:  
Gift memberships are a great way to connect your friends and family to the natural world.

Recipient Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Email

Occasion  Deliver by

☐ Student  ☐ Individual $35  ☐ Family $45

Send the announcement card to:  ☐ Me  ☐ Gift Recipient  ☐ Card picked up

Total   $________________________

Everyone is welcome! Thanks to generous donors we are able to offer need-based scholarships for memberships. For more information and to apply, please contact our Membership Staff at (414) 964-8505 or drop into one of our Centers and speak with our Visitor Services staff.

My gift is ☐ in honor of or ☐ in memory of

☐ My employer (list below) has a matching gift program

☐ I would like information about estate and planned giving

Please return this form to: Urban Ecology Center, 1500 E. Park Place, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

Did you know you can become a contributing member securely online? Visit urbanecologycenter.org and click “Join.”
IN THIS ISSUE

FIRST TIME EVER EXPERIENCES
by Ken Leinbach
The Urban Ecology Center is a place of “firsts” for many in our community.

THE INTERSECTION OF ECOLOGY AND ART
by Beth Heller
Science and art together can tell the story of an ecosystem ...

HIDE AND SEEK
by Jaime Cano
... we want to create experiences that are talked about and taught from child to child, becoming living memories inside of them all.

FREEDOM AND DISCOVERY IN CLASS
by Laurel Cutright
Every day the educators at the Urban Ecology Center try to model our deep appreciation and sense of stewardship for the students.

SEE FOR YOURSELF! (NO REALLY, SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED WITH YOUR SUPPORT)

THANK YOU for helping make great things POSSUMble

You’ve donated over $99,830 to our Fall Fund Drive! (total as of 12/16/15)