Honeybees are considered the world’s most important pollinator of food crops, making them one of Prairiewoods’ favorite living things of 2019! In the last fiscal year (July 2018–June 2019), we began actively tending two hives and are now consciously collecting honey. Read on to learn more about the Year of the Honeybee!

During the 2019 fiscal year, Prairiewoods welcomed published poet Carol Tyx as our newest artist in residence. In this role, she facilitates programming (including a celebration of the life of Mary Oliver) and shares her deeply moving poetry with our guests. In return, she receives three weeks of lodging and meals at Prairiewoods to hone her craft. Carol says, “Prairiewoods is a space that invites your inner being to emerge. And that’s just what I need as a poet. These gifts of time and space call forth my creativity. I spend much of my time wandering the land with my notebook in hand open to what sparks my attention.”

Prairiewoods’ programming focuses on three primary topics: spirituality, ecology and holistic health, although ecological practices are woven through everything we do! We seek opportunities to foster an exchange of gifts and encourage co-creation in our program offerings. One example is the weekly spiritual program Seeing IS Believing: Visio Divina. Lois Ocenosak, who had been a weekly participant, has taken over as facilitator, leading the group in a contemplative practice of praying the scriptures while viewing art. Lois says, “I always feel spiritually refreshed after attending or facilitating Prairiewoods programs.”

The hive

1,816 nights spent in Guest House & 2 solar-powered Hermitages

1,989 spiritual direction & holistic services (such as massage, reflexology & healing touch) provided

The honeycomb

- spiritual programming 56%
- holistic programming 38%
- ecological programming 6%

3,383 people attended 387 Prairiewoods programs & retreats

4,195 people attended 487 events hosted in meeting spaces at Prairiewoods
Mary Kopecky began journeying with a spiritual director five years ago when her sister died to help her “walk through some tough life questions.” She says, “I felt such peace and transformation at Prairiewoods that I knew I wanted to keep transforming and to be more deeply involved to give back something of what I have gained.” She began to volunteer a few months later, weaving stunning willow art pieces, like the one that graces the prayer circle. She also uses flowers harvested from our grounds to create table centerpieces before every retreat and major event!

In spring of 2018, beekeeper Tom Hart built and began tending the two beehives located outside the Green Prairie Garden, our extensive vegetable garden co-tended by Prairiewoods and Metro Catholic Outreach. Tom is a hobby beekeeper who is interested in “the promotion of sound beekeeping practices in diverse ecosystems.” He loves that the hives at Prairiewoods are in an urban area and appreciates the “on-site appreciation for bees.” (We think they’re just bee-utiful!) In the summer of 2019, these amazing bees created about four gallons of honey—enough to be used by Tom and shared with the public through our Gift Shop!

Mary Kopecky began journeying with a spiritual director five years ago when her sister died to help her “walk through some tough life questions.” She says, “I felt such peace and transformation at Prairiewoods that I knew I wanted to keep transforming and to be more deeply involved to give back something of what I have gained.” She began to volunteer a few months later, weaving stunning willow art pieces, like the one that graces the prayer circle. She also uses flowers harvested from our grounds to create table centerpieces before every retreat and major event!

In spring of 2018, beekeeper Tom Hart built and began tending the two beehives located outside the Green Prairie Garden, our extensive vegetable garden co-tended by Prairiewoods and Metro Catholic Outreach. Tom is a hobby beekeeper who is interested in “the promotion of sound beekeeping practices in diverse ecosystems.” He loves that the hives at Prairiewoods are in an urban area and appreciates the “on-site appreciation for bees.” (We think they’re just bee-utiful!) In the summer of 2019, these amazing bees created about four gallons of honey—enough to be used by Tom and shared with the public through our Gift Shop!

The Prairiewoods staff understands the importance of cross-pollination! During the 2019 fiscal year, our staff served on the boards of a variety of area nonprofits. Here are a few examples of the give and take:

- Joann Gehling, FSPA, (pictured with Clint Tedt-Ball) actively supported Matthew 25 since its inception in 2006.
- Jenifer Hanson served on the Inter-Religious Council of Linn County and chaired the Nonprofit Advisary Committee at Greater CR Community Foundation.
- Andi Lewis was president of Iowa Interfaith Power & Light.
- Angie Pierce Jennings served as co-chair of the Marion Arts Council.
- Emelia Sautter was president of I-Renew.
- Laura Weber joined the board of Backyard Abundance.

Thank you for being part of the buzz at Prairiewoods! For a complete list of donors, visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate.
Dear friends of Prairiewoods:

Prairiewoods is a place where wildlife flourishes and where our human spirits are renewed as we experience the Divine present with us. But you already know that!

What you may not know is that we are at a critical juncture in our story. Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) have made the commitment to preserve nearly all of the 70 acres of this sacred space in its current undeveloped beauty by placing the land in a conservation easement with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. We celebrated the signing of the easement agreement with a lovely event on St. Francis Day, Oct. 4, 2019. What a joyful moment that was for all who love Prairiewoods!

Now that we know the land is protected for the future, our focus is turning toward the protection of Prairiewoods, the ecospirituality center that calls this 70 acres home. FSPA, whose annual subsidy has supported Prairiewoods and all of our programming for more than twenty years, has challenged us to move toward establishing our financial independence. To this end, FSPA has pledged to match every fundraised dollar (whether a donation for operations, a response to this annual appeal or funds earmarked for special projects) for three years! While the donations may be for any fund, FSPA places their matching funds directly into our endowment—thereby ensuring Prairiewoods’ financial sustainability well into the future. Last year, the first year of the match, brought an additional $78,677 to the Prairiewoods endowment!

In a very tangible and direct way, your end-of-the-year gift to Prairiewoods will help to preserve the many offerings that make Prairiewoods such a special experience—a place of peace and transformation—right here among these beautiful and protected prairies and woods. Your gift helps the black-eyed Susans and the bees, Grandmother Oak and the engaging deer.

On behalf of everyone here at Prairiewoods, please accept our gratitude for your ongoing support and willingness to be pollinators for burgeoning growth and abundance at Prairiewoods. We hope you’ll enjoy reading our annual report for the 2019 fiscal year and learning all the buzz!

Peace and all good,

Jenifer A. Hanson, Director

Enclosed is my gift of: _____$500 _____$250 _____$100 _____$75 _____$50 _____$25 _____Other (please specify)

Please use my gift for: _____Endowment fund _____General operations (wherever it is needed most)

I would like to make this gift: In memory of __________________________ In honor of __________________________

Please detach this bottom section of the letter and return it with your donation.

Checks can be made payable to Prairiewoods. Thank you for your generous support!
Highlights from the Last Fiscal Year  
(July 2018–June 2019)

July 2018: Celebrated 22 years of being a place of peace and transformation with a variety of summer retreats, including ones that helped us focus on our relationships with all creatures, our kinship with trees and our ancestral wisdom.

Aug. 2018: Completed renovations on the Center (including new windows, flooring and paint) to make it more welcoming and hospitable, and completely renovated the Gift Shop to be more open and welcoming.

Aug. 2018: Continued working with Backyard Abundance to create the Garden of Eat’n—edible landscaping that surrounds the Center and provides nourishment to human and non-human visitors alike!

Sept. 2018: Launched the eleventh annual Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL) retreat that lasts nine months.


Oct. 2018: Celebrated one year of our hugely popular Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!) meal series with themed lunches made from scratch by our chefs in Prairiewoods’ no-waste kitchen.

Nov. 2018: Provided meaningful gift-giving options and promoted diversity and beauty at our annual Holiday Bazaar.

Nov. 2018: Expressed gratitude during a Fall Garden Potluck for the Green Prairie Garden, the extensive vegetable garden co-tended by Prairiewoods and Metro Catholic Outreach (MCO) that feeds our guests and those in need through MCO’s food pantry.

Jan. 2019: Launched 2019 with the announcement of 16 spiritual retreats, monthly Saturday Soul-Stretches and the second Prairiewoods Sabbatical program for month-long spiritual deepening.

Jan. 2019: Stood with those attending the Women’s March on Washington with our own Woman to Women: Stories of Transformation in which we shared women’s wisdom, rooted in sisterhood, story and connection.

March 2019: Closed out our first year of painting rock mandalas, having taught 302 people the meditative art process.

April 2019: Welcomed Charles Eisenstein, Bayo Akomolafe and Sara Thomsen to our annual Spirituality in the 21st Century event with 220 people in attendance, as well as a pre-event retreat that celebrated “The Grace of Decomposition.”

May 2019: Hit the one-year mark for working with Unity Point Hospice to offer free monthly Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Groups to help those grieving a death to express their feelings through art.

May 2019: Commemorated Mental Health Month by showcasing a stirring series of charcoal drawings by our friend Kathy Schumacher of her grandmother’s journey through the Iowa Asylum for the Insane in Independence in the 1940s.


Name(s) __________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________________________

City __________________________ State __________ Zip __________

Phone _______________________________ Email ________________________________

Thank you for your generosity!  
Your personal information is confidential and will not be shared or sold.

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center is sponsored by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), a not-for-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. All donations will be matched by FSPA. Your business or workplace also may offer matching grants.