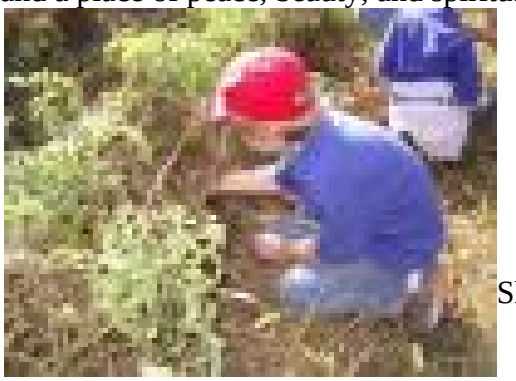
NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

Shepherd's Corner Ecology Center: Careful stewards of God's creation

Rich Heffern | Jan. 7, 2011 Eco Catholic

Shepherd's Corner, an ecology ministry in Blacklick, Ohio, is a ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Its director Dominican Sr. Diane Kozlowski introduces Shepherd's Corner and its work.

Shepherd?s Corner is an ecology ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Peace located in Blacklick, Ohio. The 160 acres of land provide a natural oasis in the midst of recent development. The land?s diverse range of habitats offers a haven for wildlife and native flora and a place of peace, beauty, and spiritual refreshment for humans. Our vision statement expresses our hopes:  Shepherd?s Corner Ecology Center is a small corner of creation seeking to recreate the land?s wholeness by rediscovering the life-giving harmony between the people and the land. Here, people of all backgrounds can learn to reconnect with the natural environment, themselves, one another, and the Creator who made them all.

The ministry began in 1992 when three of the Dominican Sisters (then the Congregation St. Mary of the Springs) moved into a farmhouse on the site. They began with a study Ask the Land to give voice to the land to tell its story and express its potential. From these beginnings, Shepherd?s Corner has grown into a center that in caring for land, life, and spirit, models and teaches eco-justice by providing agricultural, educational, and spiritual opportunities.

Our chemical-free, naturally grown gardens provide fresh produce for market, for food pantries, and for visitors to Shepherd?s Corner. Our animals include bees, sheep, a guard llama, chickens, and turkeys. We have a non-slaughter policy. Our animals provide honey, wool, eggs, and of course manure for the gardens and are a valuable asset in our education programs.

Elementary age students participate in education which includes animals, plants, soil, compost, bees, wetlands, stream quality, orienteering, weaving, and clay. Young people can also learn the Universe Story, walk the labyrinth while reflecting on the elements of creation, and walk our meditation trails. Middle school and high school youth participate in service and have the opportunity to learn about care of creation from the scriptures, our Catholic tradition, or diverse religious traditions. Adults attend regularly scheduled programs: labyrinth walks, the meditation trail, pottery, fiber arts, and study groups.

Our turf labyrinth was built in 1997 and is a half mile walk from the

entrance to the center. It has paths of three feet wide between berms filled with grasses, wildflowers, and perennials. We offer monthly public walks, select open days for individuals, and opportunities for those using our barn to walk the labyrinth.

The first half of our meditation trail was opened in the summer of 2009 and the second half in 2010. With labor and funding from Capitol Square Rotary and high school students, 13 reflective stations were designed and constructed. Each station has a theme with factual information about the land, quotes for reflection, and suggested questions or activities. The concluding station is the Web of Life, a large spider web structure that reminds one of the interconnectedness of all life.

Once a year we hold a 5K fundraiser, Farm Fresh 5K. This all-terrain run/walk takes participant alongside organic gardens, across meadow trails, and through wooded paths as they support the preservation of these landscapes.

Shepherd?s Corner ministry began in an old farmhouse and then moved to a trailer on the site. In 2005, a 100+ year old barn was donated, moved, rebuilt, and renovated to provide office and program space. Many groups use the space for meetings and retreat opportunities. The groups also enjoy the beauty and gifts of the land.

We are a small staff that at times includes AmeriCorps or Dominican Volunteers. We value the work of our many adult volunteers and high school students who come individually or on work days with school or youth groups.

The Dominican Sisters of Peace sponsor three other ecology centers: Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock, Kansas, Crown Point Ecology Center in Bath, Ohio, and Crystal Spring Earth Learning Center in Plainville, Massachusetts. The sisters see the land as an appropriate ?pulpit? for preaching God?s Word. Caring for creation helps one connect with the primary revelation of the Divine. Through work in ecology and spirituality, the sisters seek ways to support a new understanding of being careful stewards of God?s Creation, our Earth home.

Visit our website at www.shepherdscorner.org to learn more.
-- Sr. Diane Kozlowski, OP

Source URL (retrieved on *10/21/2016 - 19:41*): https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/shepherds-corner-ecology-center-careful-stewards-gods-creation