

PRESS RELEASE

From National Wildlife Federation & First Congregational United Church of Christ

Local Church Receives Wildlife Award

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF), America's largest wildlife conservation and education organization, is pleased to recognize that First Congregational United Church of Christ, Watertown, Wisconsin has successfully created a Certified Wildlife Habitat through its Garden for Wildlife program. NWF celebrates the efforts of First Congregational UCC to create a garden space that improves habitat for birds, butterflies, frogs, and other wildlife by providing essential elements needed by all wildlife, such as natural food sources, clean water, cover, and places to raise young. Over the last 40 years over 200,00 wildlife gardeners have joined NWF's Garden for Wildlife Movement and helped to restore wildlife habitat right in their own yards and neighborhoods thus creating community-based landscapes into wildlife sanctuaries. This certification also places First Congregational United Church of Christ as part of the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge which is a national effort to restore critical habitat for pollinators.

First Congregational Church sits on a grassy knoll on Highway 16 by-pass. They have been at this location since 1993. In the last 20 years, they have faithfully improved the land by adding a large wildflower garden that incorporates the use of native plants and grasses. Bluebird houses have been placed in the garden. They also have many plants throughout their gardens that provide berries, nectar, sap, twigs and pollen. It has been a continuous effort to plant multiple deciduous trees and evergreens around the property. Many of these have been donated as Memorials or Honorariums for members of the church. They also have provided through rock piles and a large snag tree, a home to many wildlife creatures.

NWF's Garden for Wildlife program promotes responsible gardening by encouraging planting with native species like milkweed and discouraging chemical pesticide use. First Congregational is honored to receive this national certification to recognize the work and effort of their church volunteers who spend many hours each week maintaining the gardens and the lawn. As Jan Sanders, church volunteer and Jefferson County Master Gardener Volunteer stated, "Something you care about is never hard work!"

First Congregational United Church of Christ invites the Watertown community to come and visit their gardens. Feel free to spend some time sitting in the garden meditating on the beauty that God has created for us. On July 13, 2015, First Congregational celebrated 170 years as a progressive church in the Watertown community. They are an Open and Affirming Church and Welcome All.