

The Local Cancer Community Update!

Together we Live with Cancer!

Sheboygan Cancer & Blood Specialists

Sheboygan Physicians Group




Survive, Thrive & Be Fit at the Christopher Farm & Gardens!

A Healing Place for Area Cancer Patients/Survivors! 2017 to Present (as of 5/20/25)

By Tim E. Renzelmann

The Christopher Farm & Gardens (CF&G) welcomed us for the first time on May 17, 2017 (see flyer right)!

For that first visit we combined “Steps to Survivorship” with a “Survivorship Through the Lens” photo outing that included a “People’s Choice Photo Contest”!

The beautiful photos taken that day (below) were a sign of a beautiful relationship that has developed over the years!

Survive, Thrive & Be Fit!
Steps to SURVIVORSHIP 
Through the Lens!™

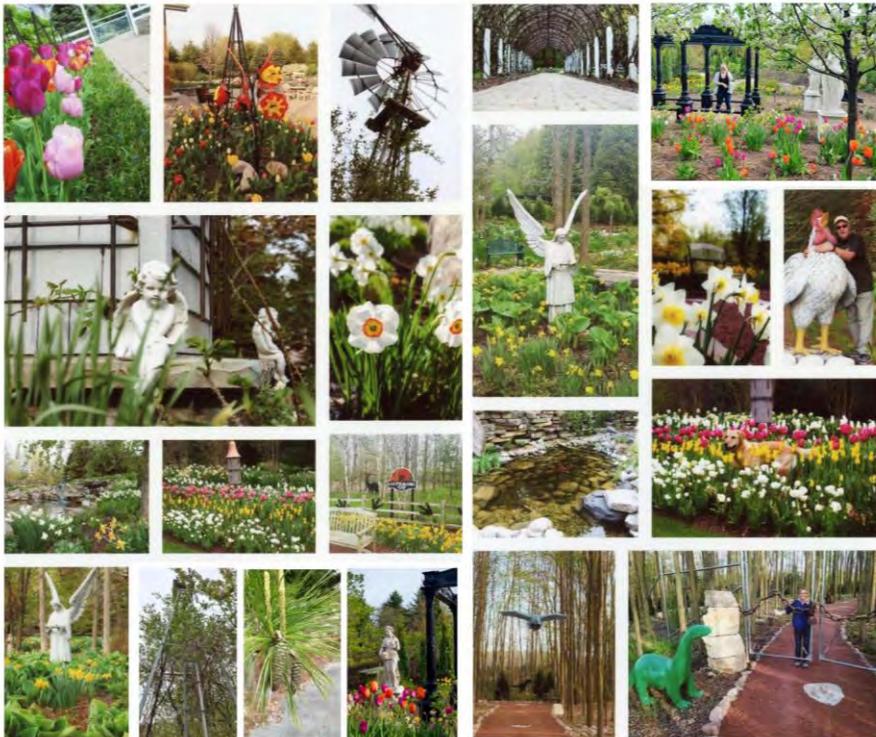
Wednesday May 17th 4PM to 7PM! At THE CHRISTOPHER FARM & GARDENS Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Put on a comfy pair of walking shoes for some “Steps to Survivorship”! Grab your camera or cell phone for a great “Survivorship Through the Lens” photo-taking opportunity! Or simply join us for a unique opportunity to visit this beautiful privately-owned property along the Lake Michigan shoreline!

- REGISTRATION FOR THIS EVENT IS REQUIRED!
- Open to cancer patients/survivors and a guest!

Please dress appropriately, wear comfortable shoes and be prepared to walk about 1.5 miles to tour the Christopher Farm & Gardens WISD Garden Tour, Sheboygan

To REGISTER:
Call 920.457.2223
By May 12th

That same year, the CF&G graciously invited us back two more times!

It was clear from the beginning that one of the favorite activities for visitors (along with taking photos) was something we appropriately refer to as “Wandering the Wonderful Gardens.”

The CF&G is a fun place to get lost... and many who visit for the first time have gotten lost! As Jay Christopher explains, that is actually by design:

"I grew up in a Midwestern city where the streets ran North and South, East and West in very straight lines. You could almost drive down the street or walk down the sidewalks with your eyes closed and not miss a step. It was like walking through a tunnel where all you could see was straight ahead of you. Nothing to take notice of on your right or your left.

"I remember one day early in the development of the farm gardens that I was working with our landscape architect, Kelly Bahrs, and attempting to chart a path across a new portion of the gardens. I said this is easy, just head in a straight line across the field. Kelley replied, "Hold it city boy, follow me." She headed forward for a few steps and then started walking off to the right and then circling to the left as she crossed the field. She said if you want visitors to enjoy the wonders of nature you need to slow walkers down and see what nature has to offer on all sides. So you will note that there are few straight paths in the gardens. You never know what is around the curve for your senses to enjoy." – Jay W. Christopher

We would be welcomed back about once every spring, summer, and fall and we were thrilled with every opportunity to visit!

When the pandemic hit in 2020 we found ourselves looking for the safety of outdoor activities during which we could socially distance ourselves and the CF&G graciously accommodated us. Between June of 2020 and December of 2021 (19 months) we enjoyed 21 group visits! Those visits, during that particularly difficult stretch in time, effectively demonstrated to us the healing ways of the Christopher Farms & Garden, an understanding that has continued to flourish in our many visits since!

Looking back at the eight plus years of Survive, Thrive & Be Fit at the Christopher Farm & Gardens, I (and I am confident I can speak on behalf of many others in our Local Cancer Community) have developed a profound sense of gratitude, a deep appreciation, and an immense admiration for Mr. Jay Christopher, the Christopher Farm & Gardens, and their entire amazing staff! My time there (our time there) has changed me (us) in ways I (we) never imagined and that is difficult to express!

"Words of gratitude are not enough! Christopher Farm and Garden, you are a blessing to so many people! You offer a magical place to experience healing on a person's cancer journey. The beautiful grounds and unique experiences give the mind and body a quiet time to forget about treatment, relax, and be blessed by the tranquility of the grounds. Thank you for being our survivor haven and friends. You are loved!" – Kathy (cancer survivor)

As they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." So please join me in this brief trip down Memory Lane featuring many photos and fabulous firsts! Then lets meet in the present at the next ST&BF at the CF&G outing! Watch the Local Cancer Community Update for details!

FIRST VISIT to the CF&G - May 17, 2017!



Photos from that very first visit!

FIRST DAIRYLAND EXPRESS TRAIN RIDE – June 11, 2018!



I'll admit it... I LOVE THE DAIRYLAND EXPRESS! And, based on the smiles on the faces of so many others (especially the adults), I am not alone! Who doesn't enjoy the chance to be a kid again?

From the CF&G website:

Dairyland Express!

All Aboard! The Dairyland Express first pulled into the farm in June 2010. The 16-inch gauge amusement park train powered by a Wisconsin gas engine has three cars to accommodate 18 adults or 36 children. Built in the 1950s, the train required more than a year of restoration beginning with a new engine and finishing with a green and gold paint job. The color scheme is in honor of the Green Bay Packers, of course, but also in remembrance of the Chicago and Northwestern railroad that once spanned from Chicago through Wisconsin. Mr. Christopher has wonderful memories of riding that train to visit his grandparents in Manitowish, Wisconsin. The track this train once ran on is one mile west of the Farm property.

Our FIRST ST&BF “Bonding Bonfire” at the CF&G – June 11, 2018



Another favorite activity our the casual “Bonding Bonfires,” often towards the end of a visit, that allows us to connect and chat while enjoying some hot dogs and snacks!



To date, we have enjoyed 32 “Bonding Bonfires” at various firepits located throughout the Gardens... and in every month of the year except January and March! Is it sad that I know that?



Cold winter days!



Cool evenings!



Warm Summer Days!



Any time is a good time for a Bonding Bonfire!

A BEACH BONFIRE!

On one occasion in 2021, we enjoyed a special Beach “Bonding Bonfire” that involved a “Swedish Fire Log”! Jay Christopher first learned about Swedish Fire Logs when some friends were visiting his property and brought one. After seeing a photo of one he almost immediately thought of our Survive, Thrive & Be Fit visits that occasionally include a bonfire! So, he thoughtfully had his staff prepare one for us!

“Thank you, Mr. Christopher and staff, for allowing us to enjoy your ‘little’ piece of paradise. Strolling through the gardens helps me find peace and relaxation every time I visit. I want to especially thank you for letting us give back by planting trees, picking daisies, and helping with the blue birds. I find it so rewarding that we get the chance to help keep the grounds beautiful.” – Sue (cancer survivor)



Some small kindling and a fire starter stick got the fire going (above). Embers from a growing fire drop into the cuts in the log to ignite the center (below)



Resulting in a perfect "weinie-roasting fire"!



We enjoyed one another's company around a unique fire amidst this peaceful setting until past sunset sharing stories! Life should always be this simple, this relaxing and this beautiful! And it often is at the Christopher Farm & Gardens!

We learned that this technique takes a little longer to get a fire started than the traditional manner... but, like so many other things in life... it is worth the wait!!!

FIRST National Cancer Survivors Day – June 2020!



The first local NCSD event took place in 1992 (photo above – provided by Mary Schueller) when Dr. Matthews opened his private practice in Sheboygan and it had been held every year since.

But in June of 2020 we were in the midst of the pandemic when “ALL TLC (Together we Live with Cancer) and ST&BF (Survive, Thrive & Be Fit) GROUP ACTIVITIES Have Been Suspended Due to COVID-19!”

We had to find a way to gather in small groups while keeping a safe distance... and there was no better place to do so in the healing environment of CF&G!



Admittedly, it was different! We couldn't even gather for a group photo... but we do have this!



Activities included a “Survivorship through the Lens” photo contest, Gentle Yoga for Cancer Survivors, and Steps to Survivorship (all activities that could be done together AND safely)! Right John Seaman?



NCS D - June 2021!



No... I didn't drive the train! They just let me pretend and pose for this photo!

NCS D - June 2022!

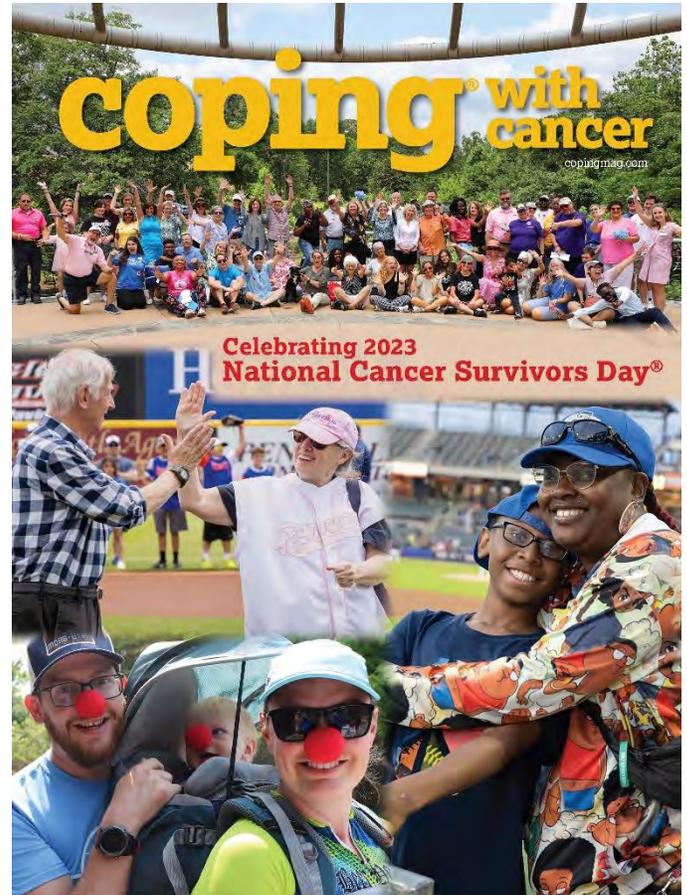


2022 – A little bit of rain didn't dampen the spirits, especially while surrounded by beautiful reminders of what the rain provides to us!

NCS D - June 2021!

Our NCS D events have made the Coping with Cancer magazine (main sponsor of the event) many times over the years. Most of those photos were submitted by Mary Schueller, retired oncology nurse who has attended more local NCS D events than any of us! But none of her photos ever made the cover of the magazine... until 2021,

when she submitted a photo of cancer survivor Rachel Darling and her family!!



ON THE COVER: Sheboygan, WI – Cancer survivor Rachel Darling (right) clowns around with her husband, Nate, and son, Otto, during the "Survive, Thrive & Be Fit" carnival at the Christopher Farm & Gardens, hosted by the Sheboygan County Cancer Care Fund.

NCSD - June 2024!



We continued with our "Carnival" theme for a second year!

NCSD - June 2024!

We hope you will join us on Sunday, June 1st of 2025 for National Cancer Survivor Day event with a new (and appropriate) theme: **Nature's Healing Ways!**

FIRST J. W. CHRISTOPHER TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM VISIT – March 24, 2021

I've learned to expect surprises whenever I visit the CF&G... and yet, I was simply amazed by this!

<https://www.christopherfarmandgardens.org/visit/points-of-interest/the-jay-w-christopher-transportation-collection/>



Jay Christopher (seated right) joined us and shared his many stories and passion, especially for railroad travel and dining!



LEFT: We may all have our favorite exhibits and these pieces from the Hindenberg disaster are mine!

Watch for our next visit, which will take place when the current museum expansion project is completed!

FIRST EARTH DAY RESTORATION PROJECT – April 27, 2021!

Like many of our activities at CF&G, I don't recall exactly how our Earth Day Restoration Projects got started. But I did find a flyer designed by Erika (CF&G) that read:

“Join us for a habitat restoration day by removing honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and other invasive plants followed by planting native shrubs and perennials in our Turkey Trot woodland area.”

The purpose of this annual activity is multi-faceted. Of course, it gives those of us who regularly visit the property an opportunity to give back, if even in a small way. It also allows us to experience the healing ways of nature, under the guidance of CF&G's expert staff. But, perhaps most importantly, it is an opportunity to make this world (at least a small piece of it) a better place!



PHOTO: CF&G staff demonstrate how to plant a bare root tree.

“The plan and vision for the Turkey Trot trail area is to reintroduce native plants, to recreate the ecosystem that once thrived there.” – Robyn (CF&G)

RESTORATION PROJECT – 2022!



PHOTOS: Top – “Many hands make for light work.” Bottom – Mike & Chris offer a bit of TLC to Mother Earth!



PHOTO: “Many hands make for light work!”



PHOTOS: TOP: "Many hands make for light work." Bottom: Collen & Jane don't mind getting their hands dirty!

PHOTOS - Top: Invasive Removal – "We did this!" Bottom: Sue & Eilleen hard at work!

RESTORATION PROJECT – 2023!

RESTORATION PROJECT – 2024!



PHOTO: Rob & Robyn (CF&G) explain the day's activities!

PHOTO: A group of survivors working and learning under the expert guidance of Rob from CF&G!



“For the restoration project on 4/24, we planted about 50 trees/shrubs. The species planted included: red pine, alder, chokeberry, fragrant sumacs, elderberry, St. John’s wort. The goal has been to replant the area with native species to promote diversity and provide a variety of native trees and shrubs as a visual/educational aid for environmental tours in the turkey trot area. We also spent time cleaning out the thatch and mulching our previously planted trees.” – Rob (CF&G)



PHOTO – Top: Linda & Mike, feeling good about doing good! Bottom: Nice job all!

RESTORATION PROJECT – 2025!



PHOTO: Rob (CF&G) shares his knowledge and expertise with project participants.



PHOTO: Maryellen takes great care to insure another planted tree has the best chance of growing big and strong!

“Many hands make for light work!” has become a bit of a mantra for many of our CF&G projects! Lend your two hands during our next project... and help us do LESS!!! 😊

FIRST DAISY DAYS – 2025!



Every June since 2021 we have worked to eliminate oxeye daisies. Contact Tim to be a part of future Daisy Days (“Many hands make for light work” also applies to Daisy Days)!



From the 2021 “Daisy Days” Flyer: Oxeye daisy may look pretty but they are highly invasive. For the past several years we have been working on invasive removal and native habitat restoration along Lake Michigan. The best, non-toxic, way to control the daisy spread is to hand pull. The more hands pulling the further we can get, as the sayings go, “many hands make light work” and “the more the merrier”! Come enjoy a beautiful day along the Lake and help us give Mother Nature a hand to create space for diverse native species to thrive!

Project Tweety B.I.R.D. - 2023!

From the Project Tweety B.I.R.D. flyer (NOTE: B.I.R.D. = Bluebird Investigation, Rejuvenation and Discovery)

Sheboygan County Cancer Care Fund’s Survive, Thrive & Be Fit Program launched this project in May 2023. The goal is to help rejuvenate the Bluebird population for the betterment of the environment.

There has been a substantial decline across the United States in the Bluebird population. Bluebirds are considered to be a rather delicate breed, and are known to be picky about their nesting habits. The nesting boxes were built and placed in appropriate habitats around the Christopher Farm & Gardens property using the guidelines recommended by the Bluebird Restoration Association (BRAA) and the North American Bluebird Society (NABS).



Planning. Special thanks to Tom Friedrichs (above, left) for his research, work, and contributions to this project.



Building. Special thanks to Cletus Leonhard for his woodworking expertise!



Observing.



Installing.



More Monitoring



Monitoring.



Welcoming bluebird eggs!!!



Watching the eggs hatch and the chicks grow!

"I am grateful to Mr. Christopher for sharing his piece of Heaven with all of us. Spending time in his gardens is always a pleasure and brings me great joy." – Leah (cancer survivor)



Throughout the process... we get to enjoy the sights, sounds, and surprises of the Christopher Farm & Gardens!

Contact Tim to get involved in Project Tweety B.I.R.D. 2025!

CF&G TOURS w/CF&G STAFF!

There is so much to see and so much to learn about this expansive property! Thanks to the CF&G staff for offering countless tours over the years!





SO MUCH MORE...

The CF&G is more than a place of beauty. It is a place for healing, a place of joy, a place of connection, and a place of fun!

GENTLE YOGA FOR CANCER SURVIVORS!



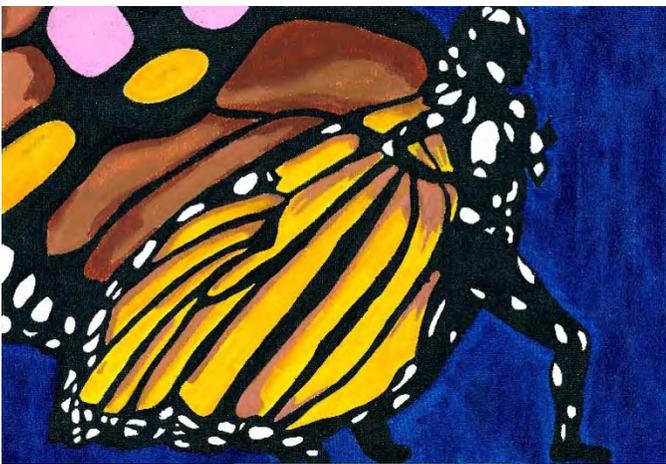
QIGONG FOR CANCER SURVIVORS!



CF&G LABYRINTH WALK!



VARIOUS NATURE ART PROJECTS!



GAME GATHERINGS!



"Any time that I have been able to visit Christopher Gardens, I am in awe of the beauty of the gardens. I also enjoy the comradery of fellow survivors. It is a true gift to be able to spend time in this magical place together." – Dione (cancer survivor)

SURVIVORS ON SNOWSHOES!



STOMP ROCKETS and Other SILLINESS TOGETHER



SOLAR ECLIPSE VIEWING!



"The Christopher Farm & Gardens is many things to many people! To me, it is a place to move my body, to learn about nature and this beautiful planet we inhabit, to connect with others along their unique journeys, to quiet and sooth my soul! In short, it is a place to heal my entire being: body, mind, heart & spirit! I'd love to know what the CF&G is to you?" – Tim (call me at 920.457.2223 or e-mail Tim at trenzelmann@physhealthnet.com)

KITE FLYING!



THE CHRISTOPHER FARM & GARDENS

Sheboygan, Wisconsin

<https://www.christopherfarmandgardens.org/>



Mission & Vision

The mission of The Christopher Farm & Gardens is to bring together horticulture, landscape design, education, and the arts to inspire and enlighten guests.

We are dedicated to providing a space for enjoyment, understanding, and conservation of native Wisconsin plants, trees, animals, and the Lake Michigan shoreline.

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| A. Farm House | D. Gazebos | G. Chicken Coop | I. Display Greenhouse | L. Motel Station | O. Motel Barn | R. Cornucopia |
| B. Potting Shed | E. Nature Center | H. Greenhouse & Conservatory | J. Landscape Barn | M. Tennis Pole Barn | P. RR Hand Car Shed | S. Dairyland Barn |
| C. Asian Tea House | F. Children's Barn | K. Train Depot | N. Sheboygan Shed | Q. Goldlocks Cabin | | |



- | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Garden Road Fruit Orchard | 7. Spruce Haven | 13. Grape Arbor | 19. Heritage Garden | 25. Rallyard Garden |
| 2. Bear Path | 8. Prayer Garden | 14. Pumpkin Patch | 20. Council Ring Garden | 26. De Vire Garden |
| 3. Labyrinth | 9. Cut Flower Garden | 15. Renaissance Rose Garden | 21. Painot Berry Patch | 27. Dairyland Bioswale |
| 4. Lake Michigan Prairie | 10. Humming Curves Golf Hole | 16. Conifer Specimen Garden | 22. Kaleid-o-scape Garden | 28. Ginkgo Sanctuary |
| 5. Children's Education Farm | 11. Asian Water Garden | 17. Amphitheater & Stage | 23. Jayrassic Park | 29. Pumpkin Hill |
| 6. Astilbe Path | 12. Kitchen Garden | 18. Peony Garden | 24. Acorn & Oak Leaf Preserve | 30. Hop Yard |
- Rev. 2024

UNLIMITED PHOTOS!



Thank you to Mr. Jay Christopher and his entire amazing staff for all you do for us!

**With Much Appreciation,
The Local Cancer Community!**