



SFSG LOCATION: 2023 FULTON ST EAST, GRAND RAPIDS
 MAILING ADDRESS: PO BOX 140761, GRAND RAPIDS MI 49514
 EMAIL: SAINTFRANCISSCULPTUREGARDEN@GMAIL.COM

•BOARD MEMBERS•

PRESIDENT
Tom Heitz

SECRETARY
Matt Carlson

TREASURER
Sue Ellen Carlson, CPA

Jay England	Gary Szotko
Terri Mulligan	Max Gibbs
Lauretta Simpson	John Gruizenga
Heather Kubiak	Rev. Karsten Voskuil
Dr. Mindy Hills	

FACILITATOR
Mic Carlson
miccarlson.com

OFFICE MANAGER | SOCIAL MEDIA
Susan Evangelista

•FRIENDS & ASSOCIATES•

Aaron Mead
Greg Metz
Bill Schmiedicke
Jack and Rita Kirkwood

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Francis Sculpture Garden is a Michigan-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace through artistic endeavors in the spirit of St. Francis. Although inspired by St. Francis, SFSG is a non-denominational organization and respects all faiths and spirituality and is open to all who visit.

SHARED MISSION

In a recent communication from our partners, the Dominican Sisters, they expressed a number of ministries that coincide with what is being done at the garden:

“Preaching is...

CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE & CARING FOR THE EARTH

Rising to Pope Francis’ challenge in ‘Laudato Sí,’ Sisters are collaborating to increase our city’s tree canopy and transform our Marywood campus with thousands more native plants and grasses. Together with Associates, students, and countless volunteers, we are caring for God’s gift of creation in new and expanded ways.

23 AND BEYOND

A year-in-review message from SFSG President, Dr. Patrick Bishop



There’s a beautiful story of St. Francis on his deathbed. In his final words, he tells his faithful companions not to try to duplicate his work. He said, “I have come to do what I was meant to do; go and do what you are meant to do.” I’ve always loved this message because I find it completely liberating. It removes the “shoulds” of trying to imitate St. Francis (or any other wisdom teacher). Of course, we can follow his example, but our purpose is our own; never to be duplicated.

My friends, as I reflect on this message, I’m nearing the end of my term as SFSG’s president. It resonates with me that I’ve done what I’ve come to do. In two short years, SFSG has been completely rebranded and restructured. We added the book nook, built the new pedestrian bridge, and recently signed a 30-year lease with the Dominican Sisters. None of this happens without the help and support of many people, including donors, volunteers, and a dedicated board of professionals. All of you have my thanks and gratitude.

Moving forward, I’m pleased to announce Tom Heitz as the next president for the Saint Francis Sculpture Garden. Tom has a generous heart, a passion for our mission, and a deep connection with the Dominican Sisters. I’m confident he will do a great job leading the garden to new levels of stewardship.

In parting, let me encourage you to visit the garden and reflect on the final words of St. Francis, “go and do what you are meant to do.” As he taught and modeled, we are called to become channels of peace; each in our unique and individual way. For me, I affectionately call it being “Patrick-flavored God” (or God-flavored Patrick, if you prefer). Think about it; the ego no longer has to be in charge if your aim is to be a conduit of love. Try the phrase for yourself. Insert your name and see how it feels. Maybe you’ll find it to be liberating as well.

In loving kindness,

Patrick

INVITING SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION & COMPANIONSHIP

Through the programs, retreats, and formation offered at Dominican Center, Sisters partner with exemplary spiritual voices in our midst, engaging participants in a faith-forming, spirit-strengthening, soul-stirring journey of learning and exploring together.”

In conjunction with a shared vision with the Dominican Sisters regarding “CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE & CARING FOR THE EARTH,” and as environmental stewards of the land entrusted through a 30 year easement, SFSG will entertain input from interested parties in skillfully crafting future walking paths and sites that are harmonious with the promotion of a healthy and sustainable forest setting. In doing so, SFSG will consider seeking a historic designation of “Old Growth Forest” for this natural setting.

SAINT FRANCIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

VISIT SFSG AT 2023 FULTON STREET EAST, GRAND RAPIDS

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY, 2024

BLESSINGS

The year 2023 was a banner year. The Saint Francis Sculpture Garden was blessed on many fronts. As in most years, we saw good crowds of people at our summer solstice event and at our blessing of the animals. For the first time in our history, we had a tour bus from Ohio schedule a stop at the Garden (how is it that we are still a mystery to folks in West Michigan but they know us in Ohio?!!) Our facilitator, Mic Carlson, was able to meet with the group and give them a guided tour of the Garden.

Our “first ever” Fools Fest was not only a success, but it was a lot of fun also. Our golf outing was the biggest and best event we have had. However, it was not the number of participants that made this event one of a kind but the fact that we had our first ever hole-in-one winner for the \$1,000 prize provided by Scully Statewide Moving!

In recognition of nearly \$1 million of investment on their campus, the Dominican Sisters signed a formal agreement of a



Patrick, Mic and Susan, and the Dominican leadership team at the signing of the 30-year easement

30 year easement with our nonprofit that ensures our continued development and maintenance of the Garden. And, finally, after many years of planning and realizing the generosity of our friends, we were able to construct the bridge over the creek, connecting the current garden to the future development on the west side. It has truly been a year of many blessings.



SAINT FRANCIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

PO Box 140761
Grand Rapids, MI 49514

Phone: (616) 443-0376
Web: SaintFrancisSculptureGarden.org
Email: saintfrancissculpturegarden@gmail.com



Remember when you said,
“I might give next year!”

Well, HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We hope you will include SFSG in your giving plans this year!

Two Easy Ways to Donate!

1. Mail a check in the enclosed envelope
2. Send donation online at: SaintFrancisSculptureGarden.org

SAINT FRANCIS IS A WINNER

Friday, September 15, 2023, marked the triumphant success of our fifth annual Saint Francis Sculpture Garden Golf Outing! Bathed in sunshine at the picturesque Scott Lake Golf Course, the day was brimming with camaraderie as teams passionately competed for the coveted Oscar—or more accurately, the uniquely crafted trophy by Mic Carlson featuring a barefoot Francis wielding a golf club. The desire for an original Mic sculpture became a shared sentiment among participants.

Adding a new layer of excitement, the day featured a sponsored cornhole toss by Schnitz Deli at the 6th hole.

The event reached a historic milestone with our first hole-in-one this year! Kelly Sturcz, achieving this feat on the challenging par 3 at the 4th hole, earned well-deserved congratulations and pride from all, plus a \$1,000 prize donated by Scully Statewide Moving. The joyous moment was captured for posterity, immortalizing Kelly's achievement.

At the 4th hole, golfers indulged in delectable smoked kielbasa courtesy of Gary Szotko from Lewandoski's Market, posing for lighthearted photos skillfully taken by Susan Evangelista, with Michael Buck orchestrating the camera setup. The infectious enthusiasm generated amusing and unconventional team photos, becoming a cherished part of the day's festivities. The day's fun culminated in the remarkable achievement of raising over \$20,000, crucial for sustaining our garden throughout the year.

This extraordinary day would not have been possible without the generous support of our major donor, Pat Scully of Scully Statewide Moving, and other local companies that sponsored valuable auction items. Special gratitude goes to dinner and cart sponsors, including Lewandoski's Market, Town and Country Carpet, The Mitten Brewing, Compucraft, Inc., Grand Rapids Popcorn, Dominican Sisters, Exalta Health, Patrick Bishop, Todd Wittlinger, North Kent Golf Course, Rita Kirkwood, and Max and Jan Gibbs.

Heartfelt appreciation extends to tee-sign sponsors, auction contributors from various local companies, Alliance Beverage, and Nawara Brothers, who generously provided a refrigerator stocked with beer from Founders. The dinner, raffle, and auction, masterfully orchestrated by the charismatic Tony Gates, were dynamic and thoroughly enjoyed by all the winners.

The distinguished top foursome of the day—Steve Krueger, Jake Dougherty, Tyler Haaksma, and Kyle Balkema—claimed victory with a score of 57, earning the coveted Mic Carlson bronze sculpture trophy and basking in well-deserved elation.

To our cherished golfers, who form the core of this joyous and memorable day, a resounding thank you! Special appreciation also goes to the helpful and smiling team at Scott Lake Golf Course and all the dedicated helpers who contributed to the success of the event. Bless you all!



Above: The distinguished top foursome of the day—Steve Krueger, Jake Dougherty, Tyler Haaksma, and Kyle Balkema—claimed victory with a score of 57, earning the coveted Mic Carlson bronze sculpture trophy and basking in well-deserved elation.



Photography by M-buck Studio



SAVE the DATE

Friday
September
13
2024

Next Year's
SFSG Golf Outing

Spaces fill so sign up as soon as registration opens in early summer.

TEE SIGNS

AIR TECHNIQUES
APPLIED INNOVATION
ARSULOWICZ BROTHERS MORTUARY
BOB'S BAR
CONSTRUCTION STAFFING SOLUTIONS
ERHARDT CONSTRUCTION CO.
F. DAVID BARNEY CLOTHIERS
FENCE CONSULTANTS
FRITZ WAHFIELD CONSTRUCTION
MAX AND JAN GIBBS
GR HOME TEAM JODI SMITH
GRAND RAPIDS POPCORN
HAPPYDOG CONSULTING & TRAINING
CAROL HENNESSY
HOLLAND LITHO

JOE AND STEPHANIE HORAK
JOHN BALL ZOO
JACK LENSINK
KIDDER PLUMBING
OWEN AMES KIMBALL
LAKE INSURANCE
MICHAEL LIQUIGLI
COBY AND NANCY MARTIN
THE MITTEN
TERRI AND LARRY MULLIGAN
MWS AUTO SALES
NAWARA BROTHERS HOME STORE
NORTH KENT GOLF COURSE
NOVO CHIROPRACTIC
PARADIGM DESIGN

PATTEN MONUMENT COMPANY
PERDUE LAW GROUP
PULASKI DAY COMMITTEE
WILLIAM ROERSMA
ROYFUND
SCHNITZ DELI
SEEQUINN INC.
SICILIANO'S MARKET
WILLIAM SIEH
SQUEAKY CLEAN
ST. ADALBERT'S AID SOCIETY
STANTEC
SUCCESS FINANCIAL GROUP
THAT POLISH GUY
TOWN & COUNTRY CARPET

KARSTEN VOSKUIL
AND IZZY RHODES
THE WELL BEING FOUNDATION
WEST MICHIGAN
GLASS COATING
TODD AND MELISSA
WITTLINGER
WRITE OFFICE

GOLF DONATIONS

MICHAEL BUCK
COMPUCRAFT
CROP MARKS PRINTING
DOMINICAN SISTERS
FLEET LEASING
FULTON FAMILY DENTISTRY
DR. SABRINA WADOOD
JACK AND RITA KIRKWOOD
LEWANDOSKI'S MARKET
ED POSTMA
PUTT PUTT'S BAR
SCULLY STATEWIDE MOVING
MARY JO WALKER
WEST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY BANK

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

FOOLS FEST 2023 - ENTERTAINMENT EVENT/FOOD/COMEDY

April Fools Day is usually a day filled with anticipation about who might play a prank on you, but we decided to take it up a notch by organizing a whimsical party featuring talented comedians who had the entire crowd in stitches! David Dyer, a master of inducing giggles and explosive laughter, had our gathering of over 100 delightful people in fits of merriment. Opening the show with an unpredictable act that undoubtedly pleased the audience, Adam Degi showcased his comedic prowess.



Fools Fest audience

own unique twist, were both harmonious and entertaining. Serving as the evening's emcee, Tony Gates, a local radio personality and legend, contributed his own brand of wit to the stage.

The celebration was made even more delightful thanks to our generous sponsors and friends who treated us to a Polish culinary delight, complete with delicious desserts to savor after the laughter-filled festivities.

- Pat Scully of Scully Statewide Moving
- Max and Jan Gibbs
- Dr. Patrick and Paula Bishop
- Lewandowski Market...Kielbasa
- Busia's Catering...Golabki and MeatBalls
- Bostwick Bakery...Bread
- Donna and Mando Vela....Sour Kraut and Potato Casserole
- Schnitz Deli....desserts
- Sound and Lights by Tim Dickman
- And a special shout out to our kitchen angels Eddie Sypniewski, Baldy Rapolowski and Alvin Kershner and Paula Earles. Could not have done it without you!!!

Adding musical charm to the evening was none other than Dennie Middleton, a longstanding entertainer known for his comedic brilliance on the keyboard. His renditions of well-known classics, infused with his

Thank you to all who came and enjoyed our first annual Fools Fest 2023! Next Fools Fest will be Saturday, April 20, 2024.

YEAR-END REVIEW - IN PICTURES



Summer Solstice Musicians
Rick Reuther Mike Lutley



Summer Solstice Gathering



Blessing of the Animals



Spring clean up and mulching
Jay and Evan England

UPCOMING EVENTS

FOOLS FEST..... April 20, 2024
 (US TOURS) A BUS TOUR OF
 35-40 PEOPLE FROM OUT OF STATE May 10, 2024
 SUMMER SOLSTICE June 20, 2024
 SFGS GOLF OUTING September 13, 2024
 BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS TBD

SAINT FRANCIS SCULPTURE GARDEN
 LOCATION: 2023 FULTON STREET EAST, GRAND RAPIDS
 MAILING ADDRESS: PO BOX 140761, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49514
 EMAIL: SAINTFRANCISSCULPTUREGARDEN@GMAIL.COM



US Tours Group of 50 People from Springfield, Ohio

A MAJOR MILESTONE

After many years of planning and fund raising, the Saint Francis Sculpture Garden realized its largest project to date. At a cost of over \$150,000, the bridge over the stream has been completed. After a ribbon cutting with donors and friends, construction proceeded quickly under the supervision of architect Greg Metz, and Erhardt Construction manager Aaron Mead. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on November 11 to the delight of all who made this dream possible. It now provides a gateway to additional acreage on the west side of the creek for the extension of this oasis of peace!



A MAJOR CHALLENGE

A major challenge still exists for the bridge project, and that is securing the \$75,000 of funding for what may well be the largest and most significant sculpture in the Garden. Plans call for a sculpture of St. Francis and St. Dominic commemorating their meeting and also celebrating the Garden's development through the partnership with the Dominican Sisters. It will be installed with benches in the bump out in the middle of the bridge.



Sketch for proposed bronze Sculpture of Francis and Dominic on the bump-out.

Sister Megan McElroy, O.P. commented at a Garden presentation in 2022, "... the meeting of St. Francis and St. Dominic. There is a question of if and how the two met, but both religious traditions hold that they did. From the Dominican perspective, it is said that Dominic had a dream about Francis the night before they encountered one another. They were both in Rome seeking approbation of their respective Orders and happened upon each other in

the Lateran Basilica church. One hagiographical source wrote of the meeting, "Encountering Francis in the church, Dominic recognized him as the one he had seen during the night. He ran up and tenderly embraced him with a kiss, saying, 'You are my comrade and will run together with me; let us stand together, and no adversary will prevail against us.' He recounted to Francis his vision; and from that time on they became but one heart and one mind in God."

The gift of the friendship of Francis and Dominic is one of light – for the church, for the world, for each other, and for others. Their friendship has continued to this day with their respective brothers in Rome who make it a practice to visit each other's convents on the two saints feast days. As they encountered one another, the light of

the Son – Jesus – shone brightly that day, and like the rays of the sun (that great celestial star), its rays continue to reflect upon us, calling us to that same witness of friendship, a witness that is sorely lacking in our world today. May the sun-touched gift of our friendships, our relationships, be a sign of hope, of love, of light in our day as the friendship of Dominic and Francis was in their day..."

WAYS TO GIVE

\$150k	\$75k	\$35k	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$100/\$250
Cappella nel bosco	Bridge Sculpture	Cappella sculpture	Cappella pews	Garden bench	Bricks and pavers

There will also be eight more commemorative garden sites and sculptures on the west side of the creek depicting the life of Saint Francis. If interested, contact SFSG facilitator, Mic Carlson at saintfrancissculpturegarden@gmail.com.



Donations can also be mailed in the attached envelope. All donations are tax-deductible.

There are also many volunteer opportunities to support our mission:

- Garden maintenance
- Master gardeners
- Motivational speakers
- Experienced fundraisers
- Carpenters
- Builders
- Social media gurus
- Kind-hearted lovers of Saint Francis

The real bridge to the future of the Saint Francis Sculpture Garden comes from people like you. People who walk the trails, rest on benches, enjoying nature, seeking peace, and finding ways to live in love. Thank you for breathing life into our work. We're excited about our future and invite you to be part of it however you're able.

THE FUTURE

The future vision for the Saint Francis Sculpture Garden is to complete the development across the bridge on the west side of the creek. Plans and research suggest that there could be room for a meandering safe path with numerous sculpture sites. Additionally, we plan to look at the possibility of dedicating a space for a "cappella nel bosco" (an "open air" chapel in the woods). This area would not require any physical structure, but rather have the natural setting of trees and shrubs form the "chapel." It would be the main meeting area for groups to use for any type of gathering, ie weddings, musical presentations, prayer services, etc. A large, cleared area would be totally accessible with natural "chapel pews" and a major sculpture. As was the case for the rest of the Garden, we look to and encourage the participation and generosity of the community in the realization of this vision.



Concept drawing for west side development. East side pathway completed.

SFSG WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT, TOM HEITZ



As I reflect on my life and how God lead me on my journey to the St. Francis Sculpture Garden, it truly began at my birth. Being the eighth child of a strong Catholic home, that same year, my oldest sister entered the Dominican order at Marywood as Sr. Janet Marie Heitz. My life was truly grounded by Dominican life, mass, and then dinners on Sundays, being educated by Dominicans for eighteen years through my graduate studies at Aquinas College, working for the sisters at the House of Studies on Aquinas College Campus during my college years and the Melodies blessing us with their singing at our marriage. During the last few years of my sister's life, our family would spend time with Sr. Janet, walking the Sculpture grounds.

I was introduced to Mic Carlson over 20 years ago when I was a board member of a nonprofit that represented adults with developmental disabilities, Guardian Angel Homes. Mic, with his involvement as an artist and benefactor for that organization, helped change the lives of those individuals that were underserved in our community.

Shortly after Sr. Janet's passing, by chance, or I believe, God's divine intervention, Mic, his brother Matt, my wife Pam and I ran into each other, in Newago of all places. Mic shared the future vision of the Garden's expansion and the continued partnership with the Dominicans. It became very clear to me that my mother, father, and Sr. Janet were praying for me to further His mission between these two holy organizations by becoming a board member.

When I was recently approached to consider the SFSG Board President, I felt very strong emotions of the Dominicans' relationships that have been threads in the fabric of my life. I am truly honored and blessed to accept the position of President of the Board of St. Francis Sculpture Garden. I look forward to continuing the great work that Patrick, the Board, the Dominican sisters and many contributors and volunteers have sustained in this beautiful contemplative garden.