



Circle Sanctuary



2011 Annual Report

A Letter from Selena Fox



Dear friends,

Nearly every week I am asked the same question: "What is Circle Sanctuary?" I hear that question from participants at workshops around the country, from reporters over the phone, from ministers of other faiths, from participants at festivals. It's a simple question without a simple answer.

What is Circle Sanctuary?

Is it a place? An institution? A cause? A people? An idea?

Circle is all of these things and more.

Circle is a place – it is 200 acres of oak forest, restored prairie, meadow and wetland in southeast Wisconsin. On Circle's land there are buildings and spaces where gatherings are held year round, numerous shrines and sacred sites and a green cemetery.

Circle is an institution – it is a nonprofit (a.k.a. 501(c)3) organization which is recognized by State and Federal governments as having all the rights and responsibilities of a Church. Circle ordains ministers and coordinates spiritual and pastoral support for thousands of people internationally. Circle publishes media and helps to connect Pagans and other seekers in person, in print and online.

Circle is a cause – it is people across the country fighting to give Pagans and practitioners of Earth-based spiritualities all the rights and benefits that so many people take for granted – the right to be free from discrimination, access to spiritual counsel in times of trial, to raise one's children in one's faith, to have the government recognize and respect one's religious choices, to stand as equals with everyone else.

Circle is a community – it is a family who come together in events large and small, from tiny rituals under the Full Moon to the annual Pagan Spirit Gathering where almost a thousand people congregate. It's a fellowship of kindred spirits that transcends geography, connecting people locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Circle is an idea - it is the conviction that the Earth is a sacred space, and that those who acknowledge that, regardless of tradition, creed, or name, can come together to build something wonderful for the benefit of all. This is an idea that I helped birth in 1974 but since then it has grown and blossomed beyond anything I could have hoped for or imagined.

Thirty-seven years later Circle has become so many things to so many people. In the past year from Samhain 2010 to Samhain 2011 we've done so very much together. We migrated a larger-then-ever PSG to a new home. We expanded our services into special communities in hospices, hospitals, military bases and schools. We helped families and communities in crisis. We laid to rest the first body into the ground of our cemetery. This report is only a sampling of stories from those who make Circle what it is. A full account would take volumes.

I invite you to join with Circle, in whatever way is right for you, and help make this new year one where Circle – the place, the institution, the cause, the people, the idea – grows stronger and brighter then ever!

Selena Fox
High Priestess and Executive Director
Circle Sanctuary
Samhain, 2011

Creating Community at Pagan Spirit Gathering

The Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) is one of America's oldest and largest Nature Spirituality festivals. Since 1980, PSG has been bringing together hundreds of people from throughout the United States and other countries to create community, celebrate Summer Solstice, and commune with Nature in a sacred environment.

This past year PSG was held at Stonehouse Park, Illinois. The new space allowed even more people access to this unique community. As the cars drove down the gravel road, those already there shouted "welcome home" to friends and strangers alike. Over 975 people, ages three weeks old to 80+ came together to learn, celebrate, and create community.

Special guests, presenters, and facilitators included Ruth Barrett, Falcon River, Raven Grimassi, Stephanie Taylor-Grimassi, River Higginbotham, Rev. Don Lewis, Kathryn Hinds, Sparky T. Rabbit, Steven Posch, Jack Montgomery, Shauna Aura, Mark Mandrake, Billy Crow, Hawthorn, Jack Bengé, Rev.



"PSG is more than an event; PSG is a community."

Patrick McCollum, and Rev. Nora Cedarwind Young. Musical artists included Spiral Rhythm, Tuatha Dea, Arthur Hinds, Shibaten, Spell singer and Murphy's Midnight Rounders. In addition to presentations and concerts, over 100 workshops were presented on a huge variety of topics. PSG also contributes to training the next generation of Pagan leaders. More than thirty workshops were held in the Pagan Leadership series and were well attended.

PSG is more than an event; PSG is a community. Together, the community blessed new babies, celebrated handfastings and recommitment ceremonies, mourned the loss of those who have passed on, and provided both spiritual and financial help to members in need. PSG is volunteer-run and volunteer-based, with each participant giving his or her time and skills to provide the labor and services needed to make the festival community safe, comfortable, and fun for all.



The closing ritual by Alchemy Camp took place underneath a sky-spanning rainbow, a fitting tribute to a community who stood and celebrated together to create an unforgettable, magical week.



Providing End of Life Care and Remembrance

Circle Sanctuary and Circle Ministers have been on the forefront of creating systems and support for Pagan end-of-life care.

Circle Cemetery, established in 1995, is the first exclusively Green cemetery to be established in Wisconsin and one of the first in the United States. As with other Green or Conservation cemeteries, Circle Cemetery combines environmental preservation with placement of both cremated remains and full body burials.

Circle Cemetery is the final resting place for remains -- both cremated and natural full-body burials -- of practitioners of a variety of forms of Nature religion, plus those of other faiths and philosophies. Atop the wooded ridge of Circle Cemetery is Veterans Ridge, which includes US Department of Veterans Affairs issued gravestones marking the interred cremains of Wiccan/Pagan veterans.

This past year Circle Cemetery was honored to receive its first full-body burial. Folk singer-dancer Nancy Yugo died on April 8 and was buried on April 9 in a woodland portion of Circle's cemetery. Selena Fox conducted the ceremony accompanied by Nancy's husband Michael Kuharski, who was surrounded by their family and friends, as well as other members of Circle's community.

This and all future burials at Circle Cemetery are conducted according to environmentally friendly practices – the bodies must be unembalmed and in untreated wood coffins so that the remains may return to the Earth.



Circle Ministers have also chartered new ground in the care for Pagans passing out of this life as well as caring for those left behind. This year Circle Ministers were active in hospitals and hospices across the country and performed over many funerals and ceremonies of remembrance.

Caring for all of life's passages, and providing a community framework for remembering the dead and supporting survivors is a critical focus for Circle Sanctuary's ministers and community.

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Fighting for Religious Freedom

Freedom, liberty and religious tolerance are woven into the fabric of America's founding documents, yet even in 2011 there are still too many appalling cases where the civil liberties of Pagans are ignored or attacked.

Founded in 1985 by Selena Fox and others, Lady Liberty League (LLL) is the religious freedom and civil rights support organization sponsored by Circle Sanctuary. LLL provides information and networking assistance to individuals and organizations concerned with religious freedom issues pertaining to Wiccan ways, Paganism, and other forms of Nature religions.

Volunteer-run and volunteer-driven, LLL does not have attorneys or experts on staff, but recruits and organizes Pagans from across traditions to support members of our community suffering from discrimination. This support takes many forms, from coordinated magical workings, to testimony as expert witnesses in court cases, to advice on how to navigate the sensation-hungry news media.

This past year the Lady Liberty League mobilized to provide support in a difficult child custody case after it became clear that the family's Pagan religion was being used as justification to deny visitation. LLL case manager Nyx quickly worked to populate the witness list with Pagan leaders from many traditions including Circle Minister Paul Larson.

Known within the Pagan community as Chiron, Rev. Larson's triple expertise as a minister, a psychologist, and an attorney have proved invaluable to many LLL efforts. Thanks to the quick action of many Pagan leaders locally and nationally, the custody case was quickly resolved and the family was reunited.

In addition to child custody cases, Lady Liberty League has supported Pagans facing employment discrimination, threats and vandalism, harassment of children in school, and many other difficult situations.

Discrimination and intolerance are a direct result of the broader culture's ignorance of what Pagan beliefs and practices are really about. While Lady Liberty League reacts to ongoing situations, other Circle Sanctuary efforts proactively work to dispel ignorance and stop bigotry before it starts. Circle

has cultivated positive relationships with the media, so stories about Pagans are based on facts and not sensationalism. Circle Ministers actively engage in interfaith connection to cultivate allies in other religious communities. Circle also hosts events at Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve that are open to everyone, including non-Pagans interested in eco-spirituality.

Circle Sanctuary envisions a day when Pagans will be safe and welcomed everywhere as part of a rich community of faiths – but until that day Lady Liberty League will fight on.

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A Look Back: 2010 - 2011 Circle Highlights

Fall 2010

- Circle Minister Bob Paxton conducts the first annual Circle Financial Information Session as part of Circle's Samhain gathering.
- Circle participates in Interfaith Thanksgiving celebrations in Madison, Wisconsin and in Interfaith Awareness Week.
- Selena Fox speaks at Human Rights Day at the Wisconsin State Capitol Building.
- Circle Minister Patrick McCollum journeys to Thailand for interfaith connections.
- Veterans Day celebrated at Circle Cemetery's Veteran's Ridge.
- Operation Circle Care expands delivery of care packages to Pagan service members and their families.

Winter 2010/2011

- Circle hosts the largest-ever Winter Solstice pageant.
- Selena Fox and Patrick McCollum participate in the 7th Annual Conference on Current Pagan Studies.
- February Sacred Fire Circle held at Circle Sanctuary.
- Selena speaks at PantheaCon in San Jose, California.
- The first full-body burial is done at Circle Cemetery.
- Circle Sanctuary conducts online and international services for healing for the people and land of Japan after the tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster.

Spring 2011

- Circle hosts its largest ever Earth Day Celebration.
- Naming ceremony for the "Stream of Consciousness," the spring-fed stream on Circle land.
- Faerie Shrine re-dedication.
- Circle Sanctuary partners with the University of Wisconsin for an ancient Roman "living history"

weekend.

- Lady Liberty League conducts national media work in support of Carole Smith's job discrimination case.
- May Sacred Fire Circle held at Circle Sanctuary.
- Selena Fox speaks on religious accommodations to the Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Summer 2011

- Largest ever Pagan Spirit Gathering held at Stonehouse Park, Illinois.
- Two new Circle Ministers ordained at PSG.
- September Sacred Fire Circle held at Circle Sanctuary.
- Rev. Chiron presents "Contemporary American Paganism: A Survey of Beliefs and Practices" at the national convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC.
- Rev. Ana Blechschmidt and Selena Fox conduct the 9/11 Circle of Healing and Remembrance.
- Rev. Dawnwalker presents an invocation for the HHC, 35th Signal Brigade at Fort Gordon Army Base, Georgia.
- Rev. Jerrie Hilderbrand conducted training for Federal Bureau of Prison chaplains at the national training center in Colorado.
- Online survey on Circle Sanctuary's programs and priorities distributed – over 10,000 people from 48 states and 15 countries responded.

Fall 2011



Circle Sanctuary, Inc. 2010 Financial Summary

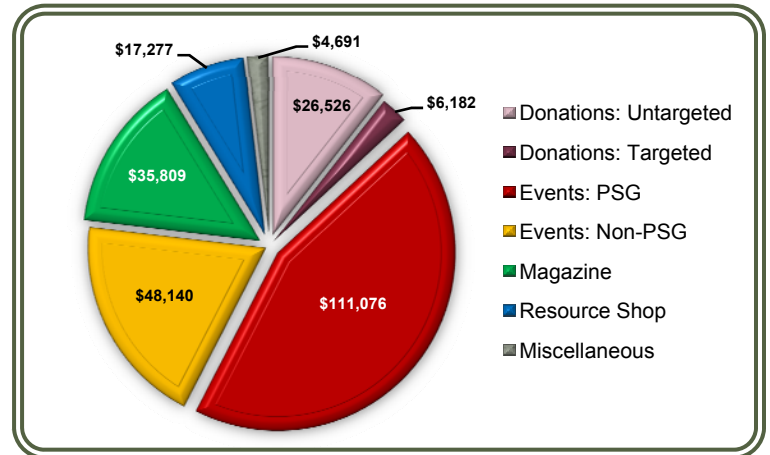
INCOME

The majority of Circle Sanctuary's income in 2010 came from three sources: **Donations** (13%), **Contributions** (21%) related to CIRCLE Magazine and the Resource Shop, and **Event Registrations** (64%).

In 2010, Circle Sanctuary brought in a total of **\$249,701.42**, which is an increase of **18.5%** over 2009.

Donations are divided into:

- **Untargeted**: funds given for general Circle use, and raffle/silent auction proceeds
- **Targeted**: funds given for specific purposes



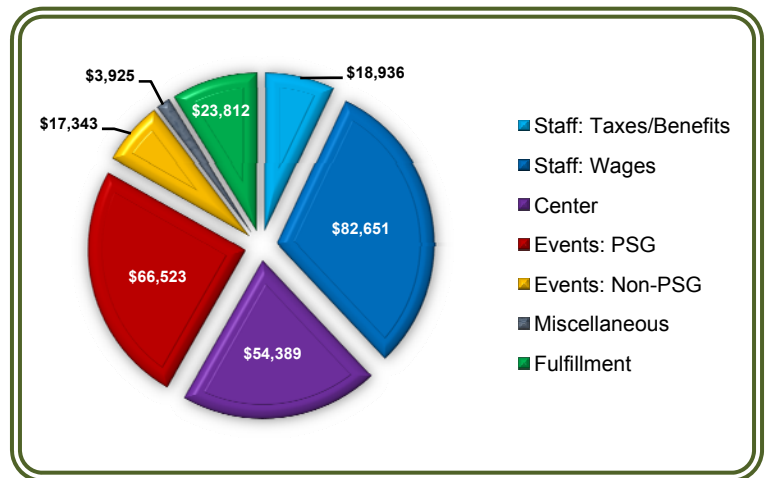
EXPENSES

In 2010, Circle spent a total of **\$267,579.42**, leaving a deficit of **\$17,878**. This was covered from cash reserves.

Circle Sanctuary presently carries no debt.

Most of Circle's expenses went into four areas:

- **Fulfillment** (9%): Stocking the Resource Shop and printing & mailing CIRCLE Magazine
- **Center** (20%): Day-to-day operation of Circle Sanctuary's office and facilities, including utilities, office supplies, equipment leases, bank & merchant fees, buildings & grounds maintenance, insurance and property taxes.
- **Events** (31%): expenses of running festivals and other events organized by Circle Sanctuary
- **Staff** (38%): Wages, taxes and benefits associated with the staff members employed in 2010.



NOTEWORTHY FIGURES

- **Pagan Spirit Gathering** (PSG) is Circle Sanctuary's largest single revenue source, providing 45.1% of revenue.
- **CIRCLE Magazine** published 2 issues in 2010 at a profit of \$17,556. Subscriptions are still declining, but a 2010 reorganization moved us back to quarterly publication. In 2011, we started online distribution for iPads, Kindles and other electronic readers.
- **Donations** increased **57%** in 2010 thanks to a new solicitation strategy. However, Circle Sanctuary's funding model is still a long way from being transformed from fee-for-service into a donation-based approach.
- Circle paid \$25,836 in **Payroll and Property Taxes** and \$6,534 for employees' **Health Insurance**.
- **Credit Card Merchant Fees** cost Circle \$6,358 in 2010. In early 2010, Circle moved to a lower cost payment processor and added PayPal as an option for the online store. However, the broader trend away from cash and checks continues to result in higher (but necessary) costs for merchant fees.
- If one considers only Staff and Center expenses, Circle requires **\$442/day** to finance operations at current levels.
- By contrast, **Donations** that aren't targeted for a specific purpose came in at a rate of **\$73/day**.

Celebrating 37 Years of Community, Spirit, and Magic

