

Circle Sanctuary

Annual Report: Samhain 2013 - 2014



www.circlesanctuary.org

A Letter from Selena Fox

Dear Friends,

Forty years ago at Samhain time, Circle was born. In a meditative vision, I had the name, *Circle*, come to me, along with a symbol, a circle containing twelve circles around a central circle, and the idea of having a center that would bring together and serve those who honored Nature in sacred ways.

Circle, now also known as Circle Sanctuary, emerged as a small group of us began meeting together in a rented townhouse in south Madison, Wisconsin. The following year, we moved to a rented farmhouse near Sun Prairie where we expanded our work to include publishing, organizing public events, creating & sharing ritual music, doing weekly radio broadcasting, & working with land in sacred ways. In 1978, we incorporated as a non-profit religious organization in Wisconsin, and in 1980 received 501(c)(3) federal church status.

After moving to two other rented locations, we found land near Barneveld, began purchasing it and moved our headquarters there in 1983. In 1995, we paid off the land and began Circle Cemetery. We also established a website and began providing online networking and information, and helped birth the emerging academic field of Pagan Studies. Over the past five years, we also began sharing information via social media, and soon after that configured our website to work on mobile devices as well as home computers.

From our start at Samhain 1974, we have grown from a fledgling group of a half dozen people in Wisconsin to a Pagan church now serving thousands throughout the nation and in more than fifty other countries around the world. Circle has evolved to be many things – a place, a people, an institution – and an essential key to this development is our volunteers.

Circle Sanctuary has been privileged to work with many talented and dedicated volunteers over the years volunteers weeding the vegetable garden that once grew on the green around the Maypole volunteers remodeling the barn into a beautiful Temple and office place ... volunteers engaged in Pagan rights work through our Lady Liberty League ... volunteers working together to make festivals happen ... volunteers contributing to CIRCLE Magazine volunteers doing mailings ... volunteers doing ecological restoration at our Nature preserve ... volunteers caring for children who have now grown to volunteer their own time as well.

A list of all of the people who have volunteered their time, contributed their creativity and/or donated tools, supplies, and money would fill a publication many times the length of this year's Annual Report ... so instead of naming individuals, I express this heartfelt thanks to each and all!

In so many ways, Circle is the union of the energy of our Community, the wisdom of the Sacred Land, and the spark of the Divine. This Samhain, as we look back on forty years, I feel so blessed to be part of what has grown to be a magnificent, hard-working, creative Circle Sanctuary Community.

Blessed Be,
Selena Fox
Senior Minister & Executive Director
Circle Sanctuary

Published by Circle Sanctuary
www.circlesanctuary.org



"Circle is the union of the energy of our Community, the wisdom of the Sacred Land, and the spark of the Divine."

Featured Program: Volunteerism at Circle Sanctuary

This special 40th Anniversary edition of Circle Sanctuary's annual report is dedicated to volunteers, without whom Circle Sanctuary could not function! From festivals to funerals, from internet radio to hands-on prairie restoration, volunteers are involved in every aspect of Circle Sanctuary's operations and programs. This report endeavors to spotlight just a few of the many projects that volunteers worked on for Circle Sanctuary this year.

Volunteers at Circle Sanctuary's Events

Our events and festivals are the wheel that carries Circle Sanctuary through the year. There are nine festival times at Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve: the eight traditional Pagan holidays of Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Welcome Spring (Spring Equinox), Beltane, Welcome Summer (Summer Solstice), Green Spirit (Lughnasadh), and Welcome Fall (Fall Equinox) plus Earth Day.

Circle Sanctuary festivals would be impossible without the dedication of dozens of volunteers. Most festivals are coordinated by volunteers, who work with our volunteer Events Manager, Sharon, for months ahead of time to prepare.

Circle Sanctuary Festivals

This year we were pleased to welcome five new volunteers to the joys of coordinating a Circle Sanctuary festival. Jessica worked with Blodie to create a merry Yule festival, Minerva and Messina helped us welcome back the light at Imbolc, James helped call

in long-awaited warmer weather at Welcome Spring, and Colleen got us dancing at a joyous Welcome Fall. While each of these volunteers was a veteran of other Circle Sanctuary programs, this was their first time coordinating a festival and they rose to the challenge. Other 2014 returning volunteer festival coordinators included Jenn and Bo at Beltane, Cheri at Earth Day, and Bob and Georgette at Samhain.

But even the most talented of festival coordinators can't do it alone! Once all the plans are laid, a huge team of volunteers is needed to make each event a success. Our amazing set-up crews show up days ahead of time to prepare for the community, and they remain after other participants have left. Others serve during the

event itself, making sure every aspect of the festival runs smoothly - from Cheri and Ken taking on the stinky-but-critical task of keeping the toilets sanitary to Brooke and Kristol creating fun, educational programming for kids - to name only a few of the many volunteers who made our festivals this year fun for all!

Chronicler's Note:

This Annual Report includes just a very small sampling of volunteer efforts at Circle Sanctuary this year. I've also included a few names and pictures as examples of the many ways volunteer contribute.

A full accounting with all the names of everyone who volunteered their time and talents for Circle Sanctuary would be far beyond the scope of what I can record here.

To ALL of the volunteers who have contributed to Circle Sanctuary's efforts this year - we give thanks! We absolutely couldn't have done it without you.

-Florence





Perhaps no volunteers at our events work harder than our “Kitchen Witches,” who prepare the delicious food that nourishes our community and accommodates a variety of diets. This year saw an expansion of the Kitchen Witch program: Sharon worked hard to train nearly a dozen eager new volunteers in the complicated methods needed to staff the kitchen and feed everyone.

Other Circle Sanctuary Events

In addition to the seasonal festivals, Circle Sanctuary hosts monthly Full Moon Circles on weekday evenings. During the past year we welcomed over one hundred individuals to our Full Moon circles, so it was critical that we had a dedicated team of volunteers helping out! Sacred Fire Circles continue to be all volunteer led.

Volunteers are also making it possible for Circle Sanctuary to expand our other events. Our public Winter Solstice Pageant at the First Unitarian Society in nearby Madison, Wisconsin features the talent of many volunteer performers, and many more volunteers help ‘backstage’ to bring this fun event to the Madison community.

In October we also were excited to invite musicians Sharon Knight and her partner, Winter, to Circle Sanctuary land for a special ‘house’ concert, which was also staffed by a great team of volunteers. This next year, we look forward to working with a growing corps of volunteers to develop new and innovative events.

Pagan Spirit Gathering

Circle Sanctuary’s largest event, Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG), grew this year with over 1,000 people coming together to celebrate the Summer Solstice in ‘Heart and Harmony.’ To create a festival of that size and scale, we need a volunteer crew like no other!

The PSG volunteer work begins before there is ever a stake hammered into the ground or a workshift coordinated. Sharon, who serves as PSG Manager, directs over eighty volunteers who make extensive plans ahead of time. This year we moved PSG further into the digital era with a new online registration system built by Circle’s tireless webmaster and constant volunteer, Bob. Former Circle Sanctuary staff member Evelyn also returned this year to help with PSG registrations, and along with LeeAnn ably ran the PSG Info Center. Chip returned as our volunteer PSG special issues coordinator. This year, we were pleased to welcome long-time PSG merchant and first-time merchant coordinator Anji, who did a fantastic job creating PSG’s largest ever merchant town square.

Four days before the gate opens, the first members of the PSG setup crew arrive at Stonehouse Farm, in Illinois. Together, they labor to prepare the space for the rest of us – from erecting the tents that will soon become sacred community spaces to setting up and stocking the first aid and safety stations that will keep

us healthy and secure throughout the week. Merchant booths are measured, signs are pounded into hard earth, and the bonfire circle is lovingly tended. When the gates are open, the lucky first car is greeted by a phalanx of smiling volunteers, clipboard in hand, waving people in with shouts of 'Welcome Home!'

Without volunteers there would be no PSG. Volunteer coordinators carefully shepherd every aspect of the gathering. In turn, their work is made possible because each member of the PSG community offers up four hours of their time in work shifts. Everyone contributes: as heralds shouting the day's news on their routes, as greeters at the gate, attendants lighting the evening torches or the candles of the Labyrinth and at dozens of other critical tasks. PSG isn't a Pagan theme park – where all the inner workings are carefully hidden from the audience – instead, it is an event created by the community and for the community.

The many profound rituals at PSG are also created by community members, who invite anyone who feels called to be a part of the magic. This year the newly-created enCHANTment camp lifted their voices to create a beautiful PSG main ritual that connected everyone with this year's theme. Volunteerism is what keeps the heart of PSG beating strong.

Volunteers at Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve and Center

When the tents are folded and put away from the festivals, work still continues at Circle Sanctuary. Our office works hard, with just three full time staff people, Selena, Florence and Blodie, tasked with doing the work of an organization that is so many things to many people. Therefore, volunteer assistance to the office is not just greatly appreciated, it truly magnifies our efforts and allows Circle Sanctuary as a whole to accomplish so very much more.

Office, Administration and Communications

This year we were particularly glad to welcome two new volunteers to Circle's weekly operations. Ashleigh volunteers one day a week at Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve. Her hard work at a multitude of tasks large and small has been a real asset to the office. Also this spring, Circle Sanctuary's social media profile got a major boost as James, a professional social media consultant, took on Circle Sanctuary as a pro bono client. Thanks to the many hours of work he contributes each week, Circle Sanctuary has been able to connect with a growing audience online.



Bob, in addition to being a Circle Sanctuary Minister, is essentially the fourth staff person at the Circle Office. Bob's technical skill keeps Circle Sanctuary's office running: from our website, to our event registration, to every email we send and receive. In addition to implementing the new PSG registration system, in 2014 Bob spearheaded the new storage unit project.

Others have donated many days of work helping us keep up with mailings, fill orders, fill paperwork and otherwise keep the place in good working order. Some volunteers like Nyx, Dawnwalker and Steve, have been able to contribute time around Circle Sanctuary's festivals. Others, like Heather and Cloris, have stepped up on their days off, at Sanctuary work days, or on other weekends. In addition Dennis, Circle Sanctuary's former office manager, continues to contribute his time and expertise to both the office and *Circle Magazine*.

The office staff are so very grateful to the many people who have volunteered their skills in Circle Sanctuary's office this year!

Buildings and Grounds

Circle Sanctuary's buildings and grounds depend on the love and labor of volunteers. This past year,

volunteers organized several major repair and upgrade projects to improve the buildings and grounds that we use for festivals year round.

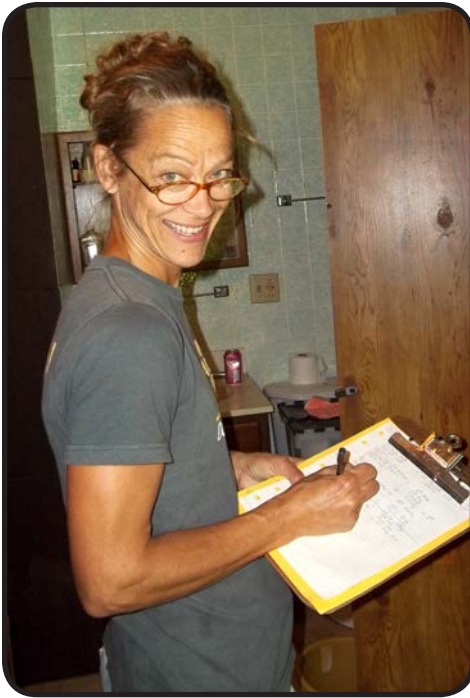
At our Spring volunteer workday, a crew of capable volunteers including Brad, Nick, Leo, Bo, Mary and David made badly-needed repairs to our Temple barn, replacing beams and making the floor of our exterior barn 'lounge' accessible once again. These volunteers contributed not only their time but their technical expertise, and several donated the supplies that made these repairs possible. Reclaiming the lounge as useful community space has been an ongoing project, and major strides were made this year.

Volunteers led by Blodie have also worked hard to give our buildings a 'facelift' with new coats of paint, as well as repairs in the summer kitchen and barn lounge, and a new baby-changing station in the laundry room.

Creating Dry Sacred Space

Brad and other volunteers, including Brad's two kids Rhianna and Blake, also worked hard to make improvements to the drainage around our frequently-used Meadowvale and Maypole areas. Over the years, overgrown willow groves and other weeds had clogged





the path that water takes off of our hill and down to the creek, creating periodic bogs where we need to have festival space. This spring, Bob, Reed and others worked hard to clear away the brush and open up that hillside, and Brad and others worked to re-dig trenches to direct water into the culvert and to the creek. Volunteers including Brad and Nick rented heavy equipment to remove the old culvert and replace it with a new one that will allow the water to flow free and clear.

Maintaining our facilities is an ongoing process that relies on volunteers. Dennis, Bob and Reed continue to mow and tend to the grassy areas we use for festivals. As a result of all of these efforts by many volunteers, Circle Sanctuary's facilities are better than ever.

Creating Habitat for Humans, Bats and Birds

One challenge has been coexisting peacefully with the other creatures that like to use our barn. A large colony of big brown bats has made their home in the roof of the barn for years. All bat species are currently protected in Wisconsin, particularly as the invasive white-nose syndrome decimates their populations. The bats are a beloved part of the Circle Sanctuary ecology: we appreciate how they keep the mosquito population at Circle Sanctuary to a minimum, and enjoy watching them circle over our heads at twilight - but we have not enjoyed constantly cleaning up after them!

This year Brad, one of our stalwart volunteers, decided that something had to be done. Working with others he designed and built a ceiling system for the barn lounge made out of cleanable tarps. The tarps allow the bats to come and go as they will from their roosts in the rafters, and also keep our community space cleaner.

To help us better understand our resident bat population and to contribute to bat research statewide, Mandie volunteered to conduct a number of bat surveys, using advanced equipment to detect the echolocation calls of individual bats and chart them on a GPS map. An exciting bat tour with this equipment was included in our Green Spirit Festival.

Also this year, Circle Sanctuary continued our participation in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. Volunteers Kerry and Reed joined Florence for a long day of bird-watching, adding eight new warbler species to Circle Sanctuary's bird list, which now has 98 species!

Nature Preserve Stewardship

More strides were made this year in improving the habitats at Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve. In the past few years, volunteers, headed by Reed and Bob, have worked to implement the Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve plan. The focus of those efforts is to create a diversity of habitat so as many species of native plants and animals can thrive.

Careful use of controlled fire is one of the most effective tools we have for restoring native habitats. This year, volunteers at our spring Sanctuary Work weekend and Tuesday evening 'Land Stewardship' volunteer nights took advantage of windows of good weather to conduct controlled burns on a record number of acres. We expanded burn areas to include the full prairie field, down to the edge of the Transformation Ridge wood, and hillsides on the far side of the Stream of Consciousness. Following this year's burns, we were delighted to see many prairie species spread to new parts of the land.



Circle Sanctuary events use a great deal of firewood, and Mary, Joe, Bill and other volunteers helped prune and harvest sick or overgrown trees this year. Volunteers also continued to clear away invasive thorns and brush, creating new habitats that were quickly adopted by the deer, rabbits and birds that call Circle Sanctuary home.

This October thirteen students from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point joined our volunteers at our Autumn Sanctuary Volunteer Workday. With their help we cleared new areas and made room for a major expansion of our prairie and oak savanna habitats.

Volunteer labor is key for the health of our sacred land. Humans past and present have damaged the land by repressing fires, introducing invasive species, and interrupting habitats. Without tending, that damage will accumulate, gradually making even 'wild' places into inhospitable tangles of thorns. While much more needs to be done, our nature preserve volunteers deserve considerable credit for the great work they've already accomplished.

New Storage Space

We were also thrilled to accept the donation of a new storage unit, which was installed behind the barn this summer. Circle Sanctuary, PSG and Circle Magazine all have a great deal of inventory, supplies and equipment that needs safe, watertight storage. Last year, an anonymous donor pledged to get Circle a new storage unit or 'pod.' For over a year we worked to get ready for

that addition. Volunteers labored to prepare land for the storage unit during workdays. We needed to add fill dirt to create a large enough space for the pod, so we harvested earth and stones from the nearby hill -- in the process creating new, flat camping space. This land was reseeded by volunteers, and was soon adopted by campers at Green Spirit and Welcome Fall.

Once the new 'pod' was in place, we needed to create shelves to make it into useful storage space. The shelves were an all-volunteer project, sourced, bought, and built by many volunteers. At our Autumn work weekend, we began to stock the new pod with items that had been previously stored in the barn lounge.

This project is just one example of how a single, generous donation can combine with volunteer labor to create tremendous positive change for Circle Sanctuary!

Donors' Gifts Make Progress Possible

In addition to the labor of volunteers, all the work that was done this year was made possible by the generosity of donors. Volunteers donated not only time but equipment, and several donors gave significant gifts that helped our land restoration efforts including a new brush-cutter and a brush torch.

Donations were also used to fund the purchase of appropriate seed to repopulate Circle Sanctuary's grasslands and prairies. We are very grateful for these timely and useful gifts!

Volunteers Nationwide

Not all volunteering happens at Circle Sanctuary land or events. Many of our most dedicated volunteers work to represent Circle Sanctuary and accomplish Circle programs in communities around the country. From representing Circle at events like Pagan Pride Days to working on Circle Sanctuary's educational programs, volunteers and ministers are expanding Circle Sanctuary's impact nationwide.

Circle Sanctuary Ministries

Circle Ministers are a special kind of volunteer. This team of spiritual leaders have declared their vocation to serve both the community and the Divine. And serve they do: ministering at universities, in prisons, on military bases, in hospitals, and to local Pagan communities across the United States and beyond.

Circle Ministers help Pagans connect to the Divine through festivals, rituals and by creating liturgy. They also contribute to religious education and academic Pagan studies. Others bring healing to our community through spiritual counseling, health institution ministries, and end-of-life care. Ministers are also a critical part of Circle's outreach to the wider world, creating interfaith connections, advocating for religious freedom and marriage equality, and more!

And their numbers are growing! This year the Circle Ministry Training Program, coordinated by Circle Minister and volunteer Dawnwalker, expanded to include sixteen minister-in-training candidates. As part of their education they volunteer in their own communities, and Circle Sanctuary programs.

Circle Radio

This year saw an expansion of Circle's free online educational offerings via internet radio. Every week, Pagans around the world tune into Circle Craft Study with Selena Fox and to Circle Talk Radio for ideas, inspiration and connection. These shows are made possible by the work of volunteers including Circle Sanctuary Ministers David and Jeanet, Minister-in-Training Debra, and Gabe who work with Selena to produce and distribute the weekly shows. Our shows are hosted by the Pagans Tonight Radio Network, and we thank them for their support.

Pagan Pride Days

The Pagan community continues to grow worldwide, and Circle Sanctuary is delighted to be a part Pagan events in Wisconsin and around the country. This year Circle Sanctuary was pleased to have a presence at many Pagan Pride Day events and other celebrations. These events themselves are volunteer-led efforts, and we're proud to support them. Circle Sanctuary brought



a booth to Northern Illinois Proud to be Pagan Day, Chicago Area Pagan Pride Day, Fox Valley/Green Bay Pagan Pride Day, and Madison Area Pagan Pride Day. Selena was also the keynote presenter at South Carolina Upstate Pagan Pride Day. Finally, Selena was also the keynote speaker at the Covenant of the Goddess's Merry Meet gathering in Atlanta and Circle had a booth there.

At all of these events, our staff were assisted by an amazing team of community volunteers who helped us set up, staff our table, and inform people about Circle Sanctuary and all the work that we do.

Circle Magazine

Circle Magazine, our quarterly publication, is created for the community and by the community. While Florence acts as our staff editor, her work would not be possible without efforts of so many others. Every article, poem and beautiful work of art in each issue of the magazine was donated by amazingly talented and generous artists and authors.

Additionally, Florence relies on a fantastic team of volunteer editors who help her prepare submitted works for publication which this year included Barb, Aaron, Minerva, and Megan. Former volunteer

editor Georgette has offered generous support and consultations, and Bob has created and manages the new electronic distribution system.

This year's issues included topics on Family and Tradition, Our Sacred Environment, Healing and Wellness, and Forms of Divinity, and none of those could have been created without the creativity and hard work of many volunteers.

Lady Liberty League

The Lady Liberty League (LLL) is one of Circle Sanctuary's best-known programs, but few of the many people who come to LLL for help realize that it is largely volunteer-staffed and directed. This year, Minerva, LLL's volunteer case manager, worked closely with Selena on a wide variety of requests for help, from employment discrimination situations to discriminatory use of prayer at public meetings.

When the situation requires it, LLL calls on skilled volunteers around the country with expertise in the law, social work, media relations and more.

Circle Sanctuary gives thanks to ALL of our volunteers, past and present, near and far!



***Inspired yet? If you are already a volunteer - THANK YOU!
If you have not yet volunteered with Circle Sanctuary we invite you to join us.
For more information visit www.circlesanctuary.org/volunteer.
Together we are creating a better world for our community and for the circle
of Nature of which we are all a part!***

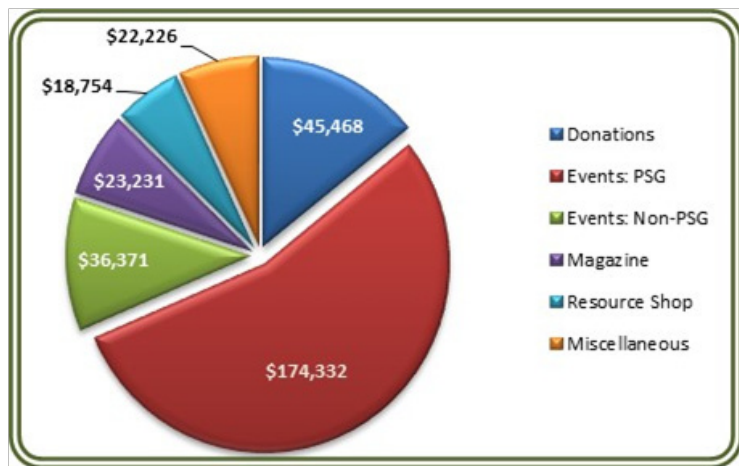
Circle Sanctuary, Inc. 2013 Financial Summary*

Income

The majority of Circle Sanctuary's income in 2013 came from three sources: **Donations** (14%), **Contributions** (14%) related to CIRCLE Magazine and the Resource Shop, and **Event Registrations** (66%).

Pagan Spirit Gathering and other Circle events brought in nearly **19%** more than in 2012, and donations increased by nearly **19%**.

In 2013, Circle Sanctuary brought in a total of **\$320,382**, which is an increase of **6.6%** over 2012.



Expenses

In 2013, Circle spent a total of **\$320,093**, which is an increase of **13.8%** over 2012 -- leaving a surplus of **\$289**. As has been true for many years, **Circle Sanctuary carries no debt**.

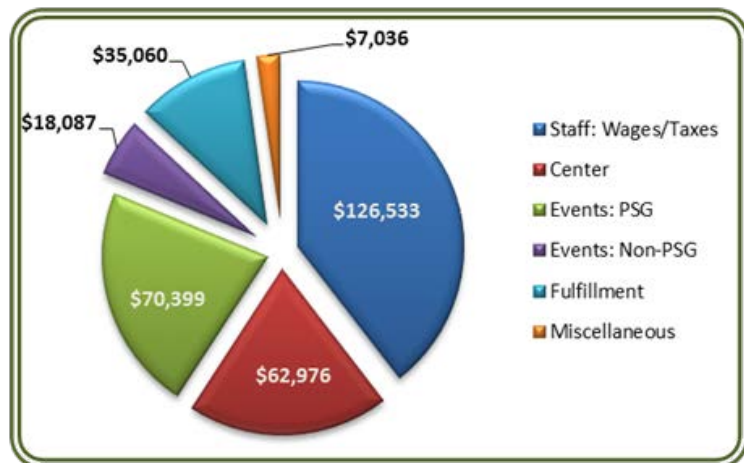
Most of Circle's expenses went into four areas:

Fulfillment (11%): 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 (28%): expenses of running festivals and other events organized by Circle Sanctuary, including PSG.

Staff (40%): Wages, taxes and benefits associated with the five staff members employed in 2013. Staffing costs increased substantially in 2013 with the shift to three full-time staff members.



Noteworthy Figures

Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) is Circle Sanctuary's largest single revenue source, providing **54%** of revenue.

CIRCLE Magazine published 4 issues in 2014 at a loss of **\$7,005**. Owing to delayed publication in prior years, subscription renewals did not keep pace with the additional costs of producing all four scheduled issues – as well as large increases in mailing costs. We anticipate better results in 2014 with the new price structure and aggressive efforts to win back lapsed subscribers, find new ones, and expand our digital distribution efforts.

Not included in the 2013 expense figures is **\$7,757** spent to replace the barn furnace and install central air conditioning. This money was raised in prior years through targeted donations, and was held in fund reserve.

Donations increased by **19%**, driven by expanded and refined solicitation strategies. However, donation income is still dwarfed by income from events and other Circle endeavors.

Credit Card Merchant Fees cost Circle **\$7,165** in 2013. The proportion of our income that comes through credit cards and PayPal has risen steadily, and in early 2014 we implemented a change to processing all credit cards through PayPal at a better processing fee.

If one considers only Staff and Center expenses, Circle requires **\$532/day** to finance operations at current levels. By contrast, **Donations** came in at a rate of **\$125/day**. Circle is still dependent on a “fee for service” model, where events like PSG are critical ways of funding year-round operations.

***Q.** Why are these financial figures from January to December 2013, when this report covers Samhain 2013 to Samhain 2014? **A.** Circle's *spiritual* year starts and ends at Samhain, but its financials are based on the traditional *calendar* year, so these are the most complete yearly financials at the point this report was published. To keep the community up-to-date, the previous year's financial summary is also presented to the community in June at every Pagan Spirit Gathering.

Celebrating 40 Years of Community, Spirit, and Magic

