



No. 26  
Winter 2010

# Positive News™

US Edition

from around the world

www.positivenewsus.org

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This paper is  
**FREE!**  
And your contribution  
is positively helpful.

## New Zealand on Top of the World *Peaceful Nation Leads the Way*



### Top 10 Peaceful Nations

1	New Zealand
2	Denmark
3	Norway
4	Iceland
5	Austria
6	Sweden
7	Japan
8	Canada
9	Finland
10	Slovenia
-----	
35	Britain
83	USA

New Zealand's Waitemata Harbour, in Auckland. In Maori, 'Wai te Mataa' means the 'sea of sparkling waters'.

© Gareth Eyres / exposure.co.nz

Looking for a peaceful life? Then New Zealand is officially the best place to be, according to 09' *Global Peace Index*. Out of 144 countries surveyed, it topped the table as the most peaceful on Earth.

Founded by Steve Killelea, the *Global Peace Index* has won the support of distinguished individuals such as the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Sir Richard Branson.

Every year, a panel of international experts award points around 25 indicators, such as a country's sum total of internal conflicts, its respect for human rights, degrees of

democracy, transparency and education. New Zealand ranked first due to a number of factors, such as its low level of violent crime, amicable foreign policy, restrictions on weapons and low level of military expenditure.

"Because they work better with others, peaceful nations can constructively solve some of our most pressing economic, social and environmental problems," said Clyde McConaghy, who co-produced the Index. "Indeed, peace is the prerequisite to helping solve major challenges, such as food and water scarcity, decreasing biodiversity

and climate change."

New Zealand's reputation and its firm anti-nuclear stance were also highlighted at the opening of the 'World March for Peace'. The country's capital, Wellington, hosted the launch, before the procession set off through 90 countries.

"We chose New Zealand as the starting point because they were the very first country to grant women the right to vote, to legally ban nuclear weapons and the first and only nation to officially establish a Minister for Disarmament," says Rafael de la Rubia, World Without Wars founder and spokesperson for the March.

The country's achievements have also led to other accolades this year. Recently, New Zealand-born campaigner Alyn Ware was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, also called the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'. Judges announced that he had won in recognition of his 25 year-long tireless dedication to the pursuit of peace.

A director of the Peace Foundation, in Wellington, Alyn believes that if New Zealand can make itself nuclear-free so quickly, other countries could follow suit just as easily. His recently drafted treaty on the abolition of nuclear weapons for the UN is being circulated by Sec-

retary-General Ban Ki-moon.

A former primary school teacher, Alyn says that solving playground squabbles prepared him for a life in international peace relations. "Some people are shout-in-the-street types. I'm the softly-softly type. When I'm with children, I try and sit down with them and not lecture them. The same approach applies for politicians and congressman," he said.

Contact: The Global Peace Index  
[www.visionofhumanity.org](http://www.visionofhumanity.org)  
Story courtesy of [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com)  
reprinted from Positive News UK

### Why Positive News?

- It brings hope
- Exemplifies solutions
- Inspires to action
- Connects with those who create positive change

We envision a world in which people treat each other with respect and kindness, where we consider the Earth to be our home to care for and to enjoy ... and we see that this world is in the process of emerging! **Positive News** is a reflection of this widespread movement and tells its powerful stories.



### Wired to Wonder

by Todd Kashdan

Want to live a more meaningful life? Start by asking questions.

Our brains are hardwired for worry—and there's good reason why. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors had to keep an eye out for danger at every turn: If I eat those plants, will I get sick? Is that man with 18-inch biceps who smells of charred human flesh a threat to me?

Yet it was only when our ancestors ventured off beyond the boundaries of what was known that they could add to their knowledge and skills. They had to

discover absolutely everything for themselves. In other words, they had to be curious.

Indeed, cutting-edge research from neuroscience suggests that while we may be worriers, we're also wired for worry's neglected, underappreciated neural twin: curiosity. This research suggests that our curiosity and threat-detection systems have evolved over millennia, working together to ensure that we make optimal decisions in an unpredictable world.

Continued on Page 8

Another World is Possible! • Spread the Word • Let's Make it Happen



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# A New Generation Shifts into Gear

by Sean Dagan Wood

*"I think we live in a really exciting moment. We have the opportunity to do fantastic things - because we have to. How often do we see people flourish in such a way because there's a need for it to happen?"*

— Emma Biermann

LONDON, UK - There is a shift taking place. Against the odds, climate change is being treated by an increasing amount of people as something that can be turned into a positive opportunity.

This became visible when hundreds of young adults from across the country, converged in London this autumn for Power Shift '09. The aim was: "To connect young people and inspire and equip them to organize in their local communities, raising the youth voice on climate change," explained Amy Mount, the event's media coordinator.

The event culminated with a 'flash-mob dance'. Waves of young people suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, to perform a co-ordinated routine. With a public display of solidarity and celebration, they injected a note of creativity and passion into the climate change debate.

"Doing the dances was amazing," said participant, Rosie Sullivan. "You've got to have fun together and celebrate the fact that we are alive and live in a beautiful world, right now. It's not completely dysfunctional."

The Power Shift weekend was run by UK Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC), which was set up by co-directors Emma Biermann and Casper ter Kuile. Emma, age 23, is concerned about the emerging impacts of climate change, such as potential mass displacements of people. She learned of the effects of forced migration through her mother, a war refugee from Cambodia: "She came over as a result of conflict in 1975. She couldn't speak English, her medical qualifications were not recognised and she lost all her family. If we create that type of situation for many more people, through man-made climate change,



© Robert vanWaarden www.vanwaardenphoto.com

Youth performing a flash-mob dance

that's just not cool."

Power Shift was set up to mobilise young people and empowerment was its foundation. "We're the moral reminder," said Emma. "We're prepared, co-ordinated, have all the technology we need and hold a vision for a world that is going to be much healthier."

The central tool put forward was the power of stories. Based on the techniques of Marshall Ganz, who designed the grassroots campaign that led Barack Obama to victory, workshops helped participants share their 'Stories of Self': personal accounts of how they came to be concerned about climate change.

Diversity was vital to the Power Shift agenda. "UKYCC is centred on being inclusive," Emma explained. "I think that, as the defining issue of our generation, climate change

is very much over-arching. You don't have to be a 'greenie' to care, because it's about our jobs and future income and the welfare of our families and friends."

Speaking to the event's audi-

of tremendous possibility. As Ashok Sinha from the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition shared: "We can be the generation that grasps the opportunity that no generation has had before - to create a better future."

When the four days came to an end, the UK's new youth climate movement dispersed from the capital, energised and

confident. "I feel positive about what we can achieve in the world," Rosie Sullivan said. "I'm filled with this great feeling of joy, that we have an opportunity to make changes happen, which we've all been waiting for."

Contact: [www.ukycc.org](http://www.ukycc.org)  
[www.think2050.org](http://www.think2050.org)

Story from Positive News UK

"You've got to have fun together and celebrate the fact that we are alive and live in a beautiful world, right now."

ence, Kofi Hope, founder of Black Youth Coalition Against Violence, put it eloquently: "We are all connected to one struggle: to build proper relationships between human beings and proper relationships between us and our environment."

A strong feeling of hope arose as the weekend progressed. The event highlighted that, due to the urgency of the climate crisis, now is a time

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That is the spirit in which *Positive News* is offered. Thank You for your readership.



at the last minute...



**Compassion**

WASHINGTON D.C. - Leaders from around the world, gathered on Nov 12 to unveil the Charter for Compassion. The Charter is a single document, endorsed by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu among others. It was founded by author Karen Armstrong and crafted by people from all walks of life, nationalities and beliefs with the intent to unify, inspire and bring compassion back into the heart of society.

Compassion is the principled determination to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, and is often referred to as the Golden Rule - a tenet that is central to all major religions. [charterforcompassion.org](http://charterforcompassion.org)

**Marriages Grow like Trees**

JAVA - Couples in the Garut district of western Java provide 10 trees to the local authorities in order to be considered legally married.

With lack of funding severely hampering reforestation efforts, the local government has devised this innovative way to reach the central government's goal of planting one million trees. Indonesia's vast tracts of tropical forests have been reduced by clearing for agriculture and by illegal logging.

"The Garut government wants to encourage couples getting married to support a national reforestation program, given budget limitations," says District Secretary Wibowo.

**Green Economy Going Strong**

Despite the recession, the green economy is outperforming the rest of the global economy, according to two new reports. New energy investment in renewable sources in 2008 surpassed worldwide investment in fossil fuel power for the first time, says a report released by the UN in June.

In the US, green jobs grew more than twice as fast as the overall job market between 1998 and 2007, and the green economy has experienced fewer setbacks than the economy as a whole, according to data by the Pew Charitable Trusts. *Source: YES! Magazine.*

**Harnessing the Power of Salt**

NORWAY - After wind, sun, currents and tides, a company is preparing to make clean electricity by harnessing another natural phenomenon, the energy-unleashing encounter of freshwater and seawater. This November, Norway unveiled the world's first prototype of an osmotic power plant on the banks of the Oslo fjord. Osmotic energy is based on the principle that nature is constantly seeking balance, and plays on the different concentration levels of liquids. *Source: Environmental News Network.*

**HONK! FEST Takes to the Streets**

by Ruth Robertson

BOSTON, MA - It's been called a festival that combines the excitement of New Year's Eve, Mardi Gras, spring break and the Fourth of July, all in one big three day event. Young folks and oldsters in the greater Boston area look forward to HONK! Fest every October. This past autumn heard the loudest HONK! Fest yet, when 25 bands arrived to beat their drums, blow their trumpets and have an outrageously good time.

HONK! Fest, which those in the know just call HONK!, features bands with names as colorful as the music makers that perform in it, like Yellow Hat Band, Pink Puffers and Rude Mechanical Orchestra.

The festival celebrates community and encourages people to take to the streets. HONK! time of year finds entire Boston neighborhoods enveloped in brass bound sounds, from Chinatown to college front lawns. Everywhere the bands go, people become part of the show as they join in to clap along, dance, and sing, as they take over parks and public spaces.

Fans are proud to create what they view as democracy in action. "It's free, no internet required. When you are able to gather some friends or come out of your house or apartment and into the street with a brass band it is a powerful thing", explained one brass band fan.

Another festival regular said it is not just a musical event, but a people watching event. She has the



Honk Fest participants honking away.

©Allison Mowrer

most fun watching the little kids in the crowd. When the music is all around, unamplified, but loud and booming, it becomes a sonic action that moves people to dance. While some small kids stand still and absorb the excitement others are moved to find their own body rhythm and let loose with some amazing moves.

HONK! is a festival of street bands from around the US and increasingly around the world. It is a place for articulating ideas about who we are, where we live, and a place to ask important questions about how we live. For example, one participant asked, why don't we reclaim the thoroughfares as places where people can get together and have fun, places that are free and

open? One of the debates that HONK! fans want to consider is just that: what is acceptable in public spaces? Traffic and construction noise are considered acceptable but if someone sits in front of a store with a guitar that person risks arrest. HONK! folks say, that's not right!

A Honker's ultimate goal is to have fun, to be part of a natural collective and to promote ownership of culture. Honkers know first hand that music inspires people, and that their performances serve to create emotional connection - a connection that can take a big step toward effecting social change.

Contact: Honk Fest  
[www.honkfest.org](http://www.honkfest.org)

**Positive News Student Internship is a Hit!**

by Lauren Frederick

ITHACA, NY - The *Positive News* Student Internship is a way for students to have some fun after school, as well as to teach them the nuts and bolts of starting a newspaper. This year we are pleased to work with five enthusiastic interns - three from Ithaca High School and two from Ithaca College.



Lauren (left), the program coordinator, with Ingrid and Adel from Ithaca High School.

Students dedicate several hours a week to learn about *Positive News* production and brainstorm ways to enrich the paper. They write articles, distribute the paper, learn ways to fundraise, and come up with excellent ideas.

Here is what they say:

"I got involved planning on entering college next year as a journalism major, I could see no better way to combine my interests while gaining experience in a field I plan to work in." ~Anna Zerilli Skipper



Margaret and Megan, our college interns.

"I wanted to be published and write more articles." ~Adel Dauletgarava

"I wanted to find out how a paper works... I can see all aspects of it and get to be published. It's a wonderful experience." ~Ingrid Sydenstricker

"I tend to dive into anything that sounds appealing if it has to do with sustainability, especially the environment... of course PN isn't all about the environment but it also encompasses the social/economic justice aspect of sustainability." ~Margaret Keating

"I chose to be interested in *Positive News* initially because I wanted to get involved with an organization outside of Ithaca College. I also really admire the mission of PN, for having inspiring articles about events/organizations that don't get much attention in mainstream media." ~Megan Kelly

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at the last minute...



**Nigeria Phases Out Gas Flaring**

In a long-overdue victory for communities, the Nigerian government has pledged to phase out gas flaring at oil wells, a procedure that contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and human health problems.

Every year, oil corporations in Nigeria - the biggest petroleum producer in Africa and the eighth largest in the world - burn off some 24 billion cubic meters of natural gas vented during oil pumping. If the gas were harnessed, it could power a good portion of Africa for a year. Halting the flaring will eliminate millions of tons of carbon dioxide emitted during the process.

Nigerian officials say they will bring the practice to a complete halt by 2011. *Source: Environmental News Network*

**Out of Our Genes**

In what environmentalists are hailing as an important victory for consumers and farmers, a majority of European Union (EU) nations have refused to order Austria and Hungary to allow the planting of genetically modified corn.

The European Commission, the executive branch of the EU, has repeatedly sought to overturn laws that ban the cultivation of GM crops. In sharp defiance of the Commission, 21 of the 27 EU nations voted this year to let stand the Austrian and Hungarian prohibitions on GM crops. *Source: Earth Island Journal*

**Quebec Sets Eco Goals**

The Canadian province of Quebec announced in November its aim to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, the same target as that set by the European Union.

"It is a very ambitious target for the government, given that 48 percent of Quebec's total energy currently comes from renewable energy sources," Quebec Premier Jean Charest said in a statement. Much of Quebec's power comes from massive hydroelectric projects.

Quebec is a member of the Western Climate Initiative, a group of four Canadian provinces and seven western U.S. states, which is working on implementing a carbon cap and trade system in North America by 2012. *Source: Environmental News Network*

**Tobacco Pays the Price**

A Florida jury has ordered tobacco giant Philip Morris to pay almost \$300 million in damages to a former smoker, the largest fine ever levied against a nicotine company. The case of Cindy Naugle, 61, who quit smoking but developed severe emphysema, is one of 4,000 similar claims pending in federal court.



© Indy

Anna Halprin's Planetary Dance performed at the American Dance Festival in North Carolina.

## Dance for.. Life!

by Heather Crawford

Do you like to dance, even if it feels like you have two left feet? Have you ever experienced that dance high? If you answered yes, you already have an inkling of the beneficial nature of dance, and how dance may lead to positive social and environmental change.

Anna Halprin's revolutionary life work has helped redefine dance, shining light on its potential, and making it accessible to us all. This radical reshaping of dance that began in the 1950's, took it from the exclusive ranks of performing art to the universal context of a healing art. "I have an enduring love for dance and its power to teach, inspire, heal and transform," says Anna. "I've spent a lifetime of passion and devotion probing the nature of dance and asking why it is so important as a life force."

Anna has led "Circle the Earth," a community dance ritual incorporating issues facing communities around the world. Her "Planetary Dance: A Prayer for Peace" between peoples and the earth was staged in Berlin at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the treaty to end World War II, and involved over 400 participants. Through her illuminating work exploring the beauty of the aging body and its relationship to

nature, she has recently produced an award-winning video called "Returning Home". As she puts it, "Aging is like enlightenment at gunpoint". Now in her eighties, she continues to get the most out of life – still performing, traveling and teaching with fervor. "I continue to believe in the shining potential set forth by all of this work, in its evolution from rebellion to expansion to community to healing and back again to the natural world", she says.

Among many other lifetime achievements, Anna founded the Tamalpa Institute in Marin County, California with her daughter, Daria Halprin, in 1978. The institute is a non-profit organization that provides one of the most renowned movement-based healing arts programs in the world. Its guiding purpose is to explore and respond to the question of how the expressive arts might contribute to a more embodied, creative, and participatory world in which art as a healing force is fostered. She says of this work, "I believe if more of us could contact the natural world in a directly experiential way, this would alter the way we treat our environment, ourselves, and one another." Now, how's that for an excuse to dance?

Contact:  
Annahalprin.org  
Tamalpa.org

## The Yes Men Roll Out SurvivaBalls

by Ruth Robertson

"SurvivaBalls are an advanced new technology that will keep corporate managers safe even when climate change makes life as we know it impossible". With this humorous introduction, a 6 foot diameter giant grub suit was unveiled and the SurvivaBall made its US West Coast debut.

While forward thinking people the world over are making life style changes to reduce carbon emissions, some major corporations just can't seem to get on board with legislation designed protect the planet. That's where the "Yes Men" and their SurvivaBalls are helping to make a point.

The Yes Men are a New York-based political action team specializing in guerilla theater to poke fun at corporations by dramatizing some of the unbelievable things they say and do.

In San Francisco, Chevron got some special attention from the Yes Men and environmental activists from Global Exchange. Antonia Juhasz of Global Exchange's 'Chevron Action' program calls the giant oil company one of the "largest single corporate contributors to climate change on the planet", and points out that it is the largest industrial polluter in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Yes Men answered the call of the environmental justice group, packed up their SurvivaBalls and shipped them west to California.

Chevron is the focus of a world-wide corporate resistance campaign. That serious campaign took a humorous turn when Yes Man Andy Bichlbaum attended

the West Coast premiere of the movie, "The Yes Men Fix the World", a documentary that follows Andy and his buddy Mike as they put up phony websites, print fake business cards, and pose as representatives from large corporations.

In a fabulous street theater action, activists in SurvivaBalls and others dressed as climate change-denying business executives and led the entire movie audience out of the city's historic Roxie Theater and onto the streets. Demonstrators inside the giant suits, followed by hundreds of movie-goers made their way to the nearest Chevron gas station, stopped traffic and created an eye popping event.

Unbeknownst to the casual observer, the guerilla action was carefully orchestrated with the complete understanding of the gas station's owner, who himself is unhappy with Chevron's lack of concern for climate change. The biggest surprise though was when the city's police arrived to calm the scene, started laughing, then helped out by holding traffic so the procession could make it's way safely through the city's busy Mission district.

Larry Bogad, one of the protest participants and a professor at the University of California in nearby Davis said later, "The rich will definitely need something like SurvivaBall to survive the result of what they're doing." The theatrical protest helped expand a growing awareness that when citizens organize and change the rules of the game, big corporations have to listen!

Contact: [www.theyesmen.org](http://www.theyesmen.org)



Photo by Steve Rhodes.

SurvivaBall at the San Francisco action.



Participants at the Gift Economy Circle share a bite to eat.

## The Fairfax Village Network Sidesteps Money

by Ara Rosenthal

What if our current economic systems were to let us down or the dollar's value fade? For Fairfax Village Network co-founder, Mark Kahn, this is already happening, since the economic crash in 2008. Mark is one of many taking part in Fairfax's Gift Economy Circle, which practices diverting energy from traditional economic structures, to create their own personalized sharing of resources.

Weekly Gift Economy Circles begin with a shared meal. Gifts are presented as cards written out

with offerings such as gardening help, eco-dentistry advice, or massage. It's like Christmas as participants dive into the pile of gift cards at the center of the circle.

"It kind of teaches you to become more and more pure in your emotion," says circle leader Alpha Lo. "Learn to give from a really pure place, from a place of joy."

The gift-giving concept used by the circle is a fundamental basis for the existence of the Fairfax Village Network. The network is a volunteer-based credit system aiming mainly to "connect up people in Fairfax in a way that each person can have basic life

needs met while playing their most fulfilling role," explains Matthew Edwards, one of the dozen or so co-founders.

The connecting happens electronically as well as at the Village Network's hub in downtown Fairfax. There is a bulletin board with postings of wants and offerings, an internet terminal with online directory, as well as various events and gatherings. The weekly Gift Economy Circles are one such ongoing gathering.

The Fairfax Village Network lets community find one another

Continued on Page 8



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# Singing at the Threshold

by Jennifer Rego

INVERNESS, CA - As Susan Miller, the chaplain and two others softly sang to the fragile form covered with a blanket in the Marin General Hospital's ICU, she noticed the ragged lines on the monitor change from their erratic pattern to a smooth, gentle rhythm. It was then that Susan realized the healing power and intention of their music had reached deeply into this woman and touched her even as she lay in a final coma.

Susan is an active member of the Threshold Choir, a non-profit, non-religious group with over 2500 mostly female members. Founded by Kate Munger, and now in its tenth year, it is not your typical choir and members do not perform for audiences in the traditional sense.

Comprised of various regional choirs spread across the country, and a few internationally, members sing in groups of two or three at the bedsides of the sick and dying. All the choirs sing the same repertoire of songs, about half of which are original rounds written by the women in the group. A sacred tradition dating back to medieval times, the songs are sung to heal, sooth and ease the passing from this life to the next.

"Yesterday I sang for a young woman who was close to death from cancer." Kate recalled. "She wasn't communicating, but I could see her relaxing while we sang. It was almost more for her parents who could finally feel some break in the relentless and excruciating part of it; that someone really cared and filled the room with love."

There are currently 100 choirs; 76 fully active, 23 in start up, and the 100th choir is in the process of



© Joanne Clapp Fullagar and Joan Chu

Members of Threshold Choir at their national gathering at Bishop's Ranch in Healdsburg, CA.

being signed up. Kate has dedicated the past ten years of her life to the choir singing for those in need and supporting other regional choirs.

It is also a community of women who provide remarkable support and healing for one another. The

experience with the choir taught Susan how to "just be there and be present for her mother and family with great consciousness" when her mother was passing away and as she sang to her, easing her transition into the next life.

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## Welcome to Commonweal



The picturesque Commonweal Institute overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Positive News talks with Michael Lerner, the co-founder of Commonweal.

**Positive News:** What is Commonweal?

**Michael Lerner:** Commonweal is a center devoted to personal and planetary healing. That's one language. Or you can call it a health and environmental research institute. You can also call it a "think-and-do tank for social entrepreneurs." Commonweal has ten major programs including: the Cancer Health Program for cancer patients, the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness for health professionals, and the Commonweal Garden and Regenerative Design Institute, which is an extraordinary global center for permaculture work.

Also, the Collaborative on Health and the Environment is a free service for over 3000 partners around the world concerned with the environment and health. And the Bio-monitoring Resource Center is involved with the World Health Organization in testing mother's breast milk for the presence of toxins. We've helped at-risk young people for 30 years through the Juvenile Justice Program. The Ocean Policy Program has reshaped California ocean policy and protects endangered marine species. Finally, our newest project is The New School at Commonweal, a collaborative learning experiment at the intersection of ecology, culture and the inner life. Most New School programs are free, too.

**PN:** How would you inspire people to have a sense of hope?

**ML:** I am inspired by Vaclav Havel, who spent years in a Communist prison before he became a head of the Czech Republic. Optimism, he once said, is the belief that everything is going to go right. Hope, he said, by contrast, is a deep orientation of the human soul that can be held in the darkest of times. I love that - "hope is a deep orientation of the human soul that can be held in the darkest of times." I can't be an optimist about the fate of the Earth and humanity, but I can choose to be hopeful about it. To me, living with cynicism and despair is not an interesting way to live. We may or may not win the fight for a just and sustainable world. But I want



Michael with puppy joy - Raffi and Leo.

to go to my maker knowing which side I was on.

The young people coming to train at the Commonweal Garden are filled with hope. I'm so inspired every time I see them. I grew up in the 60's and was the hippy assistant professor of political science at Yale. I feel the new generations coming into the Commonweal Garden are in some sense the ones that those of us who grew up in the 60's and 70's have been waiting for.

**PN:** Michael, what brings you joy?

**ML:** My wife Sharyle and I, together with Susan Braun, Commonweal's wonderful Executive Director, have two Havanese puppies named Raffi and Leo. We wake up each morning and go to sleep each night in the presence of puppy joy.

"We are rediscovering very ancient understandings of healing. The essence of ancient shamanic traditions was to safeguard the human soul."

**PN:** What do you see as the future of healing?

**ML:** We are rediscovering very ancient understandings of healing. The essence of ancient shamanic traditions was to safeguard the human soul. I think healing takes place at the intersections of wisdom, compassion, and will. Compassion without wisdom is blind. Wisdom without compassion is cold - it doesn't have a heart. Wisdom and compassion without the will to serve life is sterile. "By their fruits shall you know them." The heart of healing is being rediscovered in individual, community and planetary consciousness. Our health and the health of the earth cannot be separated. The future is in our hands, right now.

**PN:** Life lessons learned from Commonweal:

**ML:** That kindness is the greatest solvent. If we are kind because we see the light in each other, that is even better. If people have a policy of kindness towards each other even if they disagree, they can build up trust towards one another. This way all of us can feel held in a community based on kindness and trust.

Commonweal is located in West Marin, California.  
Contact: www.commonweal.org  
Tel: 415.868.0970



# Giving Nature Legal Rights

*Mari Margil, the Associate Director of The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, speaks on behalf of Nature's rights to exist. The presentation was held at Bioneers Conference in California this October:*

"The community environmental legal defense fund was founded in 1995 to help communities protect the natural environment by stopping new incinerators, factory hog farms, and other projects.

We helped communities appeal to their state environmental agencies to stop them, but what we found was that the very agencies we looked to for help, were instead handing out permits to corporations to build those incinerators and factory farms. We helped hundreds of communities appeal these corporate permits, but even when we won, we lost. Because the corporations would either re-write the law, or exhaust communities with permit application after permit application, until they could site their project.

What our experience showed us was that our system of environmental laws and regulations don't actually protect the environment. At best, they merely slow the rate of its destruction. After several years, we stopped doing that work. We weren't

direct harm from logging, or the pollution of a river. Meaning you have to prove that destruction of the environment somehow directly injures you. And then damages are awarded to you and not the ecosystem that's been destroyed.

At the conclusion of the school, the Blaine supervisors asked us to help them draft a set of ordinances that would ban longwall coal mining while declaring that ecosystems have rights within Blaine township. Passed unanimously by the supervisors in 2006, the ordinances do three things:

First, in support of the ban on mining, the ordinances declare 'that the Department of Environmental Protection's enabling of mining corporations has not been the exception in this state and nation, but a normal governmental practice.'

Second, the ordinances establish that ecosystems – including wetlands, rivers, and streams – possess 'inalienable and fundamental rights to exist and flourish within the township of Blaine.' And that the people of Blaine have the ability to defend the rights of ecosystems without having to prove standing, and that damages are to be measured by harm caused to the ecosystem itself.

Third, the ordinances strip corporations of something called 'corporate constitutional rights'. Corporations, declared by the courts to be persons under the law, enjoy 1st amendment free speech rights, 5th amendment rights to due process, and 14th amendment rights to equal protection.

At the Blaine Democracy School, the supervisors asked us why corporate constitutional rights matter. Our answer was that they matter because corporations are able to wield these rights against you, against communities and laws that seek to protect the environment.

In many ways, what the people of Blaine were doing was flipping the law on its head – so instead of the law protecting the rights of property and commerce, they were using the law to protect the rights of people, communities, and nature.

And as expected, last fall two coal corporations sued Blaine township to overturn their ordinances. They're arguing that the community doesn't have the legal authority to ban mining, and that the ordinances violate their corporate constitutional rights.

Instead of backing down or counting on the courts to save them, the people of Blaine have decided instead to up the ante. They drafted a home rule municipal charter incorporating the Rights of Ecosystems and stripping corporations of constitutional rights. The charter constitutionalizes the ordinances, and, if adopted, it will become the nation's first local sustainability constitution.

We're now working with communities from Maine to California, from Virginia to Spokane, Washington. The people in the communities we work with recognize that the structure of law was never intended to protect the environment, but instead to regulate its exploitation, and that they must write new structures of law – maybe writing their own constitutions – to replace it. These are not people who call themselves activists, or for that matter environmentalists. But they recognize that in order to change the existing structure of law a movement for nature's rights is necessary. It is time we heard their voices and joined their cause.

The Lorax asked, 'Who speaks for the trees?'



Blaine, Pennsylvania where Nature has legal rights.

The people of Ecuador, Blaine, Barnstead, Nottingham, and a dozen other communities have answered, 'We do.'

And now I ask all of You. Will you speak for the trees? For if not you, then who? And if not now, then when? **Thank you."**

Contact: The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund  
www.celdf.org  
Tel: 717.709.0457



Mari Margil

The ordinances establish that ecosystems—including wetlands, rivers, and streams—possess "inalienable and fundamental rights to exist and flourish within the township of Blaine."

helping anyone protect anything.

Our work has now fundamentally changed and over the past few years, we've had a chance to work with folks like Michael Vacca, a

construction worker from Western Pennsylvania, who wanted to protect his community from coal mining. Like Jack O'Neill, a Vietnam veteran and selectboard member from Barnstead, New Hampshire, working to stop the privatization of his community's water. Like Alberto Acosta, former president of the constitutional assembly of Ecuador, who'd seen his country ravaged by multinational oil corporations.

In 2006 our phone rang with a call from Michael Vacca. He lives in the tiny, rural township of Blaine in Western Pennsylvania deep in the heart of coal country. Over the past two decades, communities across Western Pennsylvania have been devastated by something called longwall coal mining. Mining corporations drive their longwall machines underground, ripping out massive panels of coal over two miles long. When the coal is gone, the land above is unsupported and caves in. Houses, roads, schools, farmland fall into the mine. Rivers and streams run dry.

Michael wanted to stop the mining. As vice chair of Blaine's planning commission, he wanted to see if he could use local zoning laws to block the mining. But instead he'd found himself stuck inside a box – the same box that thousands of communities across the country have found themselves stuck in – in which the law doesn't give them the legal authority to say "no."

That first call with Michael lasted two hours, and at the end he invited us to hold a Democracy School in Blaine. The Democracy Schools are three-day workshops at which we help communities examine how our structure of law works, and for whom.

All three elected Blaine supervisors were at the democracy school. Darlene Dutton, one of the supervisors, asked us why it seemed that a mining corporation – in this case, Penn Ridge Coal headquartered nearly a thousand miles away in Tulsa, Oklahoma – was able to decide what happened in Blaine, rather than the people who actually live there? She then asked us why the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, was actually giving coal corporations the legal authority to mine, when the devastating impacts from the mining couldn't have been more clear?

In response to Darlene's questions, we talked about how our environmental laws work – how they're based on the idea that nature is property. Meaning our environmental regulatory laws merely regulate the rate at which nature is used.

Scott Weiss, chairman of the Blaine supervisors, then asked us about something called "standing" – the legal requirement that you need to prove you have "standing" in order to go to court to protect nature – meaning you've experienced some

## A+ for Democracy School

At the most fundamental level, the weekend-long Democracy Schools address: why democratic self-governance is impossible when corporations wield constitutional rights to deny people's rights, and how we are able to rectify these wrongs.

Democracy Schools were created by the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) and Richard Grossman, co-founder of the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy. The schools were launched at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 2003. Currently, there are more than twenty locations, including sites in California, Texas, North Carolina, Oregon, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, Virginia, the District of Columbia, Ohio, Michigan, Vermont and Alaska.

Democracy School teaches a paradigm shift, a dramatic new way of looking at our role as citizens in a democracy, and how to assert our inalienable rights as a sovereign people. Attendees explore the limits of conventional regulatory organizing and learn how to "reframe" single issues to confront the rights used by corporations to deny the rights of communities, people, and the earth. Lectures cover the history of people's movements and corporate power, and the dramatic recent organizing in Pennsylvania by communities confronting agribusiness, sewage sludge, and quarry corporations.

The most common reason for holding a Democracy School is when a corporation wants to put a harmful operation in a community for its own profit and to the detriment of the residents. School provides tools for communities to bypass the regulatory system and to learn to create powerful change on the basis of our constitutional and inalienable rights as citizens in a democracy.

Democracy School can also be a vital component of public education where we can learn essential US history never taught in schools, and see how these lessons may be applied to further democracy.

To find out more or to learn how to hold a Democracy School in your area contact:  
Stacey Schmader at CELDF  
Tel: 717.709.0457  
www.celdf.org



A Democracy School held in Maine.



# Wired to Wonder

*Continued from Front Page*

As a result, we find intense, lasting fulfillment in seeking new knowledge, new experiences, and in embracing uncertainty. Choosing to explore the unknown rather than avoid it is key to a rich, meaningful life.

Arguably, curious explorers were at a



competitive advantage over their less daring peers. Their new skills would have been more attractive to their clan and, in turn, would have led to greater access to food, water, tools, and sexual partners. With more resources, a greater number of curious explorers survived, and with access to plenty of sexual partners, their traits became more common with each generation.

If natural selection did favor the curious, then we should see deeply ingrained markers in our modern day brains—evidence of a hardwired system that would cause us to eagerly anticipate rewards and reinforce our curious impulses.

Modern technology allows us to witness how our brains are archeological maps of our shared human history. And sure enough, brain science sheds light on the origins of our curious nature.

Consider the most commonly discussed and misunderstood chemical in the brain linked to happiness—dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that carries information from one nerve ending to another, preparing our body for action.

Brain regions housing the largest collection of dopamine receptors are often referred to as pleasure centers. Research suggests that these brain sites light up when we enjoy rewards—when we eat chocolate, laugh, or answer questions correctly. However, if dopamine is crucial to seeking rewards, the same brain sites should light up when we eagerly anticipate those rewards, not just when we receive them. In other words, is the seeking and anticipation—the feeling of curiosity—enough to activate these areas of the brain? Is curiosity a reward in and of itself?

In study after study, scientists, including

Brian Knutson of Stanford University and Gregory Berns of Emory University, have found that the striatum referred to as pleasure centers lit up like an inferno of activity when people didn't know exactly what was going to happen next, when they were on the verge of solving their mystery and hoped to be rewarded. It was more active then, in fact, than when people received their reward and had their curiosity satisfied. When curious and exploring, we often get the best of both worlds: The anticipatory excitement of seeking new rewards and the fulfillment of consuming them.

Brain research also shows that curiosity is not just a neutral process. Our feelings come along for the ride. Sometimes we feel an exciting sense of wonder on our curious adventures - imagine hiking next to an inactive volcano at sunrise. This means that we also experience a surge of opiates in the

brain. Opiates are the neurotransmitters most central to enjoying basic pleasures in life, and they're activated by positive experiences con-



taining some degree of curiosity and exploration: a parent listening to their child enthusiastically describing a field trip, a teenager losing herself in dance, a child immersed in a captivating movie.

Also, keep in mind that most positive experiences are ephemeral, so transitory that



they do little more than give us a jolt of goodwill. For a positive experience to last, we need to transfer information into our memory banks. We need to be profoundly aware of it so that it stands out among the backdrop of other stimuli clamoring for our attention. Why do we only remember some of what we encounter and explore? Why do we remem-

and experiences are transferred into long-term memory.

When the circuitry in the hippocampus is active, we can do more than simply recall a positive memory. We can remember vivid contextual details surrounding the event. When and where did it take place? Who else might have been around? What were we thinking and feeling at the time? How did things appear? By retaining these rich details, we can better savor moments, learn from them, and expand our identity or sense of self.

The greatest advantage of curiosity is that when we spend time and energy with the new, we can increase the shape, size, and number of neurons in our brain and the connections between them. Facts and experiences are synthesized into a web, paving the way for greater intelligence and wisdom—a phenomenon documented thoroughly in Norman Doidge's book *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*. We become more efficient when making future decisions. We become better at seeing connections between seemingly disparate ideas, boosting our capacity for creativity. It is the neurological equivalent of personal growth.

New pathways in the brain are inevitable when you seek out new information and experiences and integrate them into the previously known. Research by Kirk R. Daffner, a neurologist at Harvard Medical School, and others are even discovering that acting on our curiosity reverses some of the inevitable cognitive decline in old age, and buffers against some of the cruel degenerative brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

Thankfully, curiosity is not a fixed characteristic. It's a strength we can develop and wield on the path to a more fulfilling life.

*Story from Greater Good Magazine.*

For more information, please visit: [www.greatergoodmag.org](http://www.greatergoodmag.org).

## Fairfax Village Network Sidesteps Money

*Continued from Page 4*

in an expansive online directory that currently includes 219 users. Members can express needs and offer service and trades. The directory lists a wide range of skills,

from counseling, to haircuts, to electrical work. "Somebody in the network was able to borrow a juicer," says co-founder, Heather Crawford. "She in return gave me a massage, something I wouldn't be able to afford otherwise." On another occasion Heather helped

someone organize a garage.

Mark feels his quality of life has benefited tremendously from the Village Network. He shares, "We're putting together a model here that will allow us to have an alternative when the dollar becomes unmanageable."

Gifts given may be recorded as a credit, known as Fairfax Stars or Hours, which encourages balancing out the giving with the receiving over time.

"The network has many of the same benefits as a local currency system including the circulating of

goods and services more rapidly and more locally," says Matthew, "but it's different in that all transactions in the network are in the spirit of a gift."

Contact: [villagenetworks.org/fairfax](http://villagenetworks.org/fairfax)  
The Gift Economy Circles meet every Tuesday at the Circle Center gathering space [www.circlecenter.com](http://www.circlecenter.com)



# The Theory of Fun Works!

by Ruth Robertson

SWEDEN - Faced with a choice of walking up stairs or taking the escalator, which would you choose? Although a natural inclination to conserve energy would make most people chose the escalator, an experiment in Sweden proved that the "fun" factor can actually change human behavior so that people made the healthier choice.

The experiment was a challenging one. The testers would try to get the majority of commuters leaving a subway station to walk up stairs rather than use an escalator situated right next to it. Their solution after much thought and some truly technical creativity

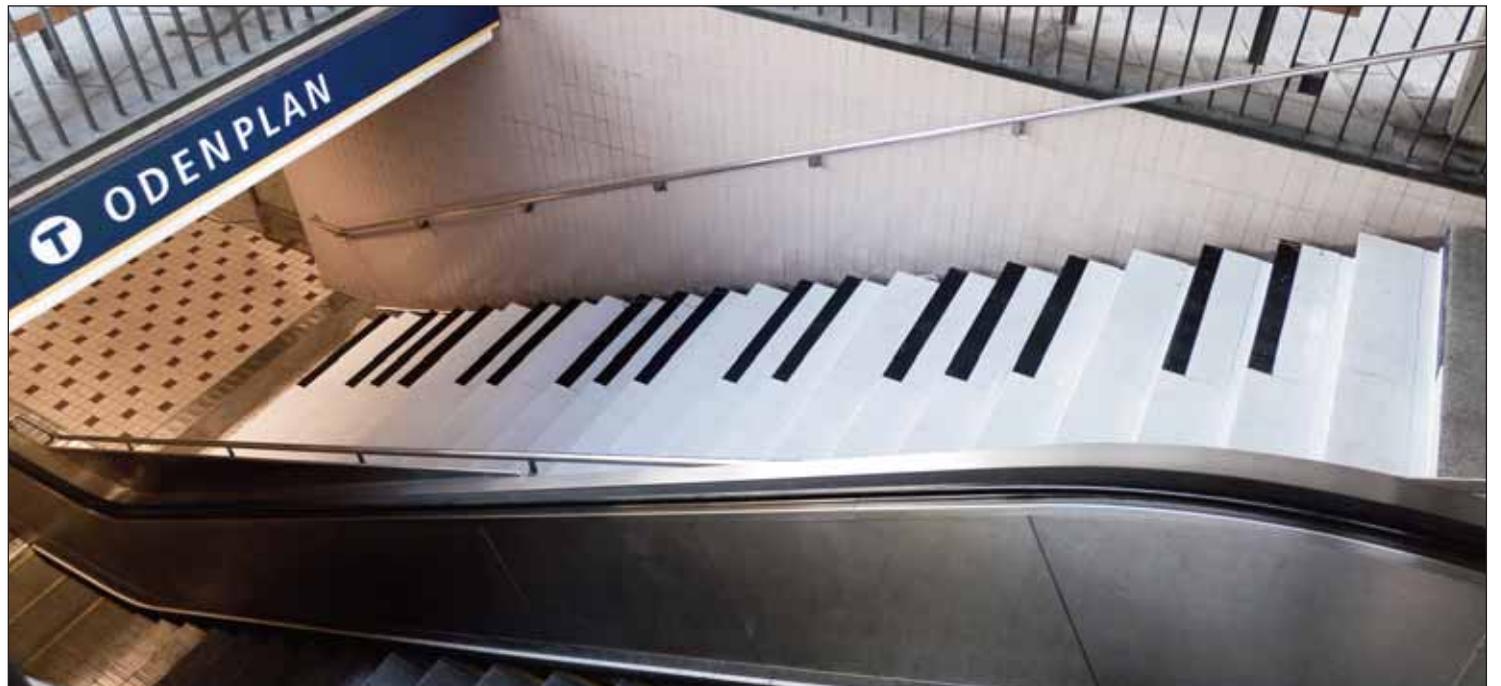


Photo by thefuntheory.org

The piano stairs at a Swedish subway station.



Bottle recycling arcade game.

was to turn the stair steps into keys on a giant, functional public piano. The result? Sixty-six percent more people chose the stairs over the escalator, creating a lot of music as they did!

In a second test engineers used sound effects to make a casual stroll through a park into an Alice-in-Wonderland-like experience. Pedestrians received the positive reinforcement of cartoon sounds when they tossed their rubbish into 'the deepest trash can in the world.' Video of the experiment shows people calling others over to test out the kooky noises emitted when park goers did the right thing by getting rid of their rubbish right way.

It has long been proven that positive rewards can get both humans and animals to change their behaviors, but these experiments showed that fun is a powerful enticement that can create change. After a widely viewed

video of Swedes lured to a bottle recycling arcade game went viral, the testers opened up the website "The Fun Theory" to contestants from around the world.

Several contestants wrote in to the site that one human behavior they desperately want to change is getting pet owners to clean up after their animals in public spaces. One woman writes that while she is happy about the joy that pets bring, "they can soil the parks and streets with their poo and some people don't pick it up." She calls her invention the "Poo-Transformer". In her cleverly dreamed up machine, the pet owner places a baggie of pet poo into a tray, presses a red button and receives a dog biscuit in return. (A possible side benefit--the pets might also catch on to the social experiment and "perform" for treats!)

Another contributor to the site states that

his pet peeve is people who don't give up their seats to senior citizens in buses. He shares his idea for what he calls the Elder Shake! button, a device the bus driver can activate to make all the seats shake just a bit to remind folks they should give away their seat to an older person. Others like the idea of using speech activation technology to thank people for good habits like turning off lights before leaving a room.

In the spirit of inviting people to create fun solutions to social, environmental, and health issues, the Fun Theory folks posted the best ideas on their site. Visit it, get inspired it, and make change with FUN!

To view videos turning some of these ideas into action visit: [www.thefuntheory.org](http://www.thefuntheory.org)

# Solar Punch Take to the Road

by Francesca Sandwell

'We can change the future / We can change tomorrow / We can change the here and now...' are some of the lyrics from the song, Hydrolyzed, by Solar Punch – an environmentally conscious act powered exclusively by the sun.

Through their music, Solar Punch is spreading positive ideas about renewable energy, climate action and green issues. They are using relatively simple solar technology to charge up their small but powerful, portable amps, which can be packed away into a couple of suitcases. This gives them the freedom to take their message off the beaten track and reach thousands of people.

The band has just returned from a tour of India, with the 'India Youth Climate Network'. They travelled from small villages in rural and remote areas, to cities, schools and campuses, performing their music and carrying out solar demonstrations.

"From our perspective, the project was very well received everywhere we went," declared guitarist James Dean Conklin. "The oddity of seeing these goofy white kids

from America with their little solar panels playing enviro-rock, seemed to make a lot of people happy. We made an effort to learn a few Bollywood songs and I tried my best to memorise lyrics in Hindi. The crowds went wild when we played songs in their language."

Solar Punch's next major goal is a project in Pakistan for 2010. "It's in the earliest stages of planning right now but the momentum is huge," said James. "We aim to use

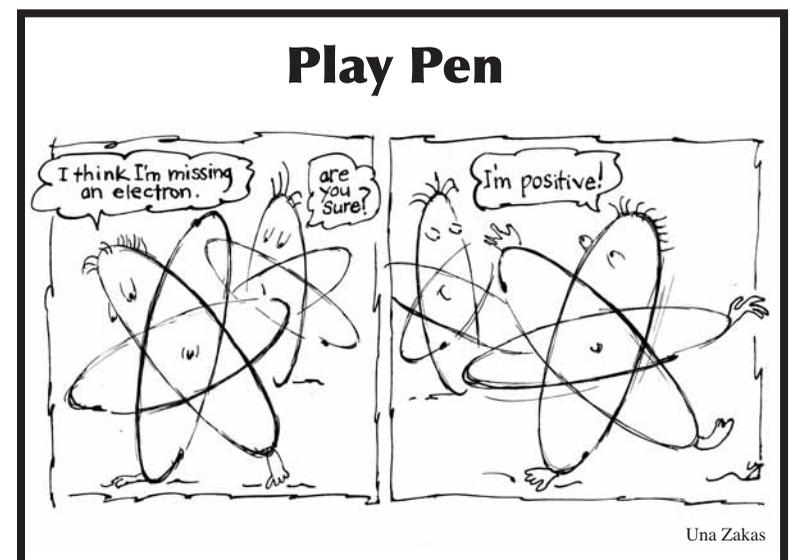
a modified message that will embrace aspects of reconciliation between Indians and Pakistanis, as well as the solar, environmental mission we've already developed. We are also hoping to alleviate some of the electricity access issues in some outlying areas, by bringing home-made solar ovens and other solar innovations to share."

Contact: [www.solarpunch.org](http://www.solarpunch.org)  
Story from Positive News UK



© Mohan Das

Solar Punch with members of the India Climate Road Tour.



Una Zakas



# Welcoming Soul to Our Schools

by Rachael Kessler

It is our first of several “senior honoring ceremonies,” designed to celebrate each graduating senior—not just the few who have shown outstanding achievement in academics or athletics. A vase filled with flowers sits in the center.

The first circle of chairs holds 25 students and the teachers who will address them.

In the chairs behind them are parents and other faculty.

After a welcome by the school principal, teachers go one at a time to the center of the circle, select a unique flower from the vase, and stand before a surprised and curious student. One teacher begins: “I have watched you grow this last year and become strong like the sturdy stalk of this giant iris. When you came into my class, I could tell that you were used to being one of the clowns. Yet, when it came time to share our stories, you took the first risk. You inspired all of us with the courage of your vulnerability. I want to honor you for the warmth you brought to each of us and the initiative and courage you’ve shown. I respect you as a leader and value you as a friend.”

The young man beams. His father, behind him, looks stunned. This is his younger son—the cutup, the disappointment after the academic achiever who went before him, the one who has brought his father too many times to the disciplinary dean’s office. After listening to one of the most respected teachers in the school describe the outstanding gifts of character this boy has demonstrated in his final year of high school, the father’s face is soft, tears glistening. He places his hands on his son’s broad shoulders. One squeeze tells the boy that his father has heard, that he sees him in a new light. In the father’s eyes looms a

key question: What went right?

The answer: At the heart of every adolescent experience is an exquisite opening to spirit—an awakening of energy when larger questions of meaning and purpose, of ultimate beginnings and endings, begin to press with both an urgency and a loneliness much too powerful to be dismissed as “hormones.”

What went right is that this young man found experiences that nourished his spiritual development. This secular school created a place for his soul, and he flourished.

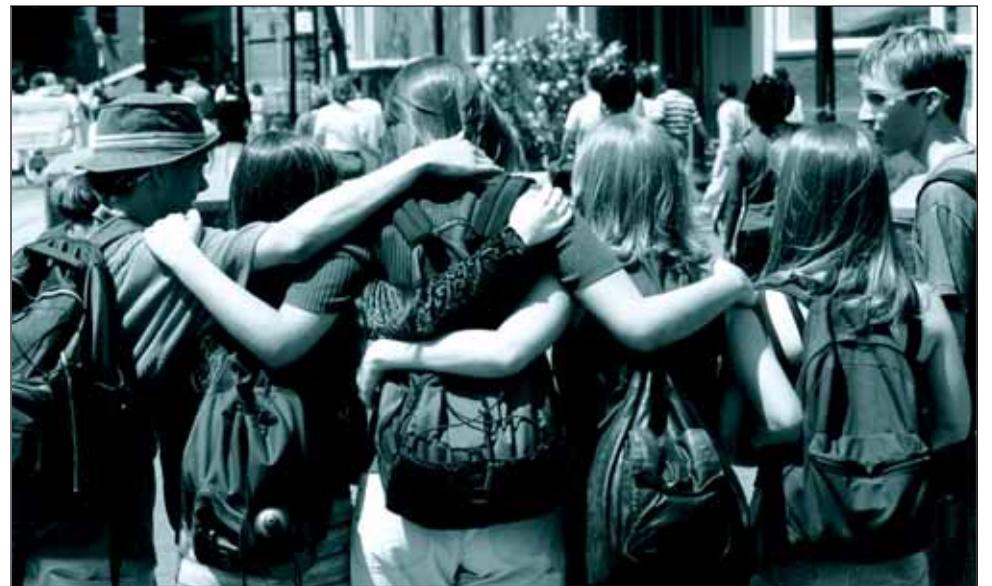
This curriculum of

the heart is a response to the mysteries of our young: Their usually unspoken questions and concerns are at its center.

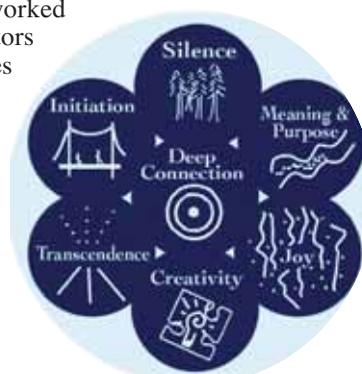
Since 1985, I have worked with teams of educators throughout the United States in both private and public schools to create curricula, methodology, and teacher development that can feed the awakening spirit of young people as part of school life. Now called PassageWorks, this approach is a systematic set of principles and practices for working with children and adolescents that integrates heart, spirit, and community with strong academics.

PassageWorks has been a pioneer in recognizing and responding to two vital needs now demonstrated in a growing body of research as essential to students’ resilience and future success: one, supporting students during critical transition years, and two, personalizing schools—creating small learning communities within each

Inviting joy into the classroom supports the growth of positive emotions that mitigate the forces of cynicism and despair...



©Stockbyte Photography/VEER



**Above:**  
The “Seven Gateways” map a set of yearnings that students describe or demonstrate, whether or not they have a religious tradition or other beliefs about the nature of spirituality.

school that protect all children from falling through the cracks.

Beyond social and emotional learning, this model includes a depth dimension students have long referred to as “spiritual.” In the 1980s, I couldn’t explain this; after all, we were not practicing or even discussing religion. But after many years of seeing the impact of the model on students in diverse settings—public and private, urban, rural and small town—I came to understand what students have felt since the beginning of the program.

When soul enters the classroom, masks drop away. Students dare to share the joy and talents they once feared would provoke jealousy in even their best friends.

We can invite students to experience the

exultation that comes with appreciating or creating art and music, encountering the majesty of nature, feeling or witnessing the power and grace of the human body in athletics and dance, and experiencing or observing the brilliance of the human mind. Inviting joy into the classroom supports the growth of positive emotions that mitigate the forces of cynicism and despair and promote resilience throughout life.

The spontaneous burst of respect and openness for “the other”—even those whom a student thought they could never stand—is an essential catalyst in the heart and mind that makes peace and justice a possibility. Young people discover the compassion that makes humans want to alleviate the suffering of others. They experience choice and change as possible—in themselves, the community, and society at large.

Contact: PassageWorks  
www.passageworks.org  
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Tel: 303.247.0156

## Lens for Change

by Francesca Sandwell

Intrepid journalist, photographer, peace campaigner, national representative and spokesperson are all words that describe Mahmoud Jabari.

The 18 year-old, who lives in Hebron in the Westbank, was inspired to become a reporter when he heard the news about courageous Arabic cameraman, Mazen Dana, killed while filming in Baghdad.

Mahmoud was just 13 years old when his opinions, research and photographs of the conflict were first published. “I was always thinking about the other side but I only met them through my daily interaction with the army,” he explains. “It led me to ask lots of questions: Aren’t they just ordinary people? and Why can’t we talk to each other? So, I created a magazine in my school to address issues on both sides.” The idea

gained attention from his peers and many were eager to get involved.

While serving as Mayor for Children in his hometown, Mahmoud established an official group to empower teenagers in his area. A local newspaper gave them their own page and this became a vital outlet for expressing their views.

Recognising their efforts, a local NGO awarded the group funds to offer media training from professional journalists and photographers. With this support, Young Reporters Across Borders was born. Now, they are working to create a small media centre with professional equipment to continue the publication of their work.

Mahmoud’s peace activities have not just been confined to the media. In 2007, he attended a Seeds of Peace camp in the US where, for the first time, he met Israeli people face to face. “This

was a real motivation to continue the mission of understanding that I had started,” he recalls. “At Seeds of Peace I was made Peace Ambassador. It was the beginning of a bigger quest.”

Not surprisingly, Mahmoud was quickly recognised as a Global Teen Leader, for his extraordinary work towards helping to create a safer, more peaceful society.

“Being a leader made me understand that our responsibility as peace activists is not just locally in our communities but globally,” he says. “We have to work hard to create a better life in this world. It can only come from international collaboration and open-mindedness towards other nations and cultures.”

Contact: Young Reporters Across Borders  
www.lensforchange.weebly.com  
Jabari.mahmoud@yahoo.com

Story from Positive News UK



Mahmoud Jabari in action.

© Hazem Bader



# The Day Books Came Alive

by Adel Davletgaraeva

ITHACA, NY – On Nov 14, from early morning on, kids walked through the doors of Boynton Middle School to be a part of a fairytale. The place was filled with smiles of children reading and having fun with their families.

Student volunteers from Ithaca High School roamed the halls wearing costumes of main characters from popular kids' books. There were Bears and even Miss Piggy with a small book 'I like Me'!

Every year since 1997 Family Reading Partnership arranges the Book Fest, a valuable event to show how children's favorite stories can come to life. The partnership is a community organization that promotes early literacy. It is a locally grown coalition of

individuals businesses, schools, libraries and other organizations which promote family reading practices in the community. The main goal of Book Fest is to experience the pleasure of reading books.

Charlotte Bruce, a volunteer coordinator at the event said: " This Book Fest is a great opportunity for young kids to see the characters of their favorite books. It also prepares them to read." A four-year-old Alex confirmed with "I like books!".

The Book Fest is an opportunity to encourage kids to believe in books and to show how easily inspiration can come from them.

Contact: Family Reading Partnership  
[www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org)  
Tel: 607.277.8602

This article was written by one of our Positive News Student Interns.



Photo by Adel Davletgaraeva

Story book characters come to life.



© Christer Söderberg

Ulrika Lindström, Victoria Nilsson, Alexandra Söderberg

## Wearing is Caring

STOCKHOLM, Sweden - *Wearing is Caring* is the slogan of a new T-shirt project, set up by three 20 year-olds. The campaign supports 'Replanting a Rainforest', a scheme which plants and cares for indigenous trees in the Minas Gerais and São Paulo regions of Brazil.

Alexandra Söderberg, Emelie Ivert and Victoria Nilsson have signed up as Rainforest Ambassadors, a growing network of students from all over Europe. "We want to plant trees; lots and lots of trees!" Alexandra explains.

The idea is simple: people sponsor 25 square metres of dedicated land for 50 dollars and receive a T-shirt in return. Between 10 and 15 trees are then planted to help restore an area's biodiversity. "We wanted our T-shirts to be trendy but also be a tool to help increase awareness," Victoria says. "The wearer can send out a clear message about what they stand for."

All the ambassadors are encouraged to take business into their own hands. This

reduces administrative and operational costs for the 'Replanting a Rainforest' project. They are also invited to visit the organic coffee and banana plantation, 186 miles from São Paulo, where 700 acres are ready for planting. Here, they can learn about organic farming, agroforestry, native tree planting, sustainable change and community building.

The Open World Foundation coordinates the scheme. Established in 2007, it promotes transformational change by creating spaces for discussion, reflection and tangible action. "Besides planting trees, the aim is to create a model of sustainability," says founding chair, Christer Söderberg. "By creating places where people can spend time reflecting on their role in society, we can find solutions to the challenges we face as a global community."

Contact: Open World Foundation  
[www.replantingarainforest.org](http://www.replantingarainforest.org)  
Story from Positive News UK

# Choosing to See the Invisible

## Local Youth Takes Worldwide Issues into Their Own Hands

by Ingrid Sydenstricker

ITHACA, NY - For the past 20 years, the people of Uganda have seen a devastating civil war led by Joseph Kony and his rebel army, ninety percent made up of children. There has been little done to end the destruction and to protect the children. But there is hope. There is Invisible Children.

A lively group of about 50 students at Ithaca High School (IHS) is ready to help, by creating their own club, a branch of Invisible Children, a NGO started just a few years ago by young friends who too, wanted to bring change.

By educating the worldwide population through film and lectures, working with politicians to arrest Kony and reestablish government in Uganda, and most notably by rescuing children soldiers and giving them the proper housing, education, and support they need, change is coming to the once un-

seen and ignored.

"We are individuals part of a generation eager for change and willing to pursue it" and "We work to transform apathy into activism," states the website of Invisible Children, embodying the goal of the organization.

The club in Ithaca which is in its second year, started by Justin Landsman, a sophomore at IHS, who was inspired by his camp counselor's involvement with Invisible Children. For Justin, this has been a "great, great accomplishment".

The club is currently doing major fundraising, including a sports tournament, a diner, corporate sponsorship, a book drive, a recycling drive, a walk-a-thon, the ever-so-popular bake sales, and more. The money will mostly go towards building infrastructure and helping Ithaca's sister school, Sir Samuel Baker Secondary School in Uganda - an all student run school.

Carson Jordan, a student at IHS



Photo by Erin Rieger

Members of Invisible Children in Ithaca, NY say 'Cheese' for change.

and a club member commented on her involvement, "I feel proud and I'm doing something for a good cause." Alissa Pure, another member, expressed that "[it] feels really good to be a part of it and to know

that you're helping".

And they are helping. And will continue to do so, as the club continues to grow and the youth continues to take worldwide issues into their own hands to bring change.

Contact Invisible Children  
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This article was written by one of our Positive News Student Interns.



In a world preoccupied with violence and fear, where are the images of peace? To have a culture of peace, we need to have a place to make peace. The Dayton International Peace Museum has exhibits, activities, a peace resource center, and children's programs dedicated to the rich and often overlooked history of peace and nonviolence.

Located in downtown Dayton, Ohio, the Peace Museum is housed in a beautiful, historic 3-story mansion with gallery space and Peace Store.

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# What Does Love Mean?

**A group of professional people posed this question to a group of four to eight-year-olds. The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think.**

When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth. ~Billy (4)

Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other. ~Karl (5)

When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love. ~Rebecca (8)

Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen. ~Bobby (7)

Love is when my mummy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK. ~Danny (7)

If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate. ~Nikka (6)

Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day. ~Mary Ann (4)

When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you. ~Karen (7)

You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget. ~Jessica (8)



## I Told the US Government to Start Trusting Us

**Positive News is pleased to continue its alliance with Peace X Peace – a global network where women connect through the internet to promote sustainable peace. In this issue we present Suraya Pakzad, a recent recipient of the Peace X Peace Voice of Peace Award.**

by Suraya Pakzad

AFGHANISTAN - In 1996 when the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, we waited for the international community to rescue us. Surely they would not let this tyranny stand. I waited, but soon I decided that no help was coming. Believing that half the population could not be ignored, I set to work and founded my organization, the Voice of Women.

We started by educating girls. Soon I realized that the mothers needed help too. Today we have a wide range of programs. Our work with women in jail and children in conflict with the law aims to establish the rights of the abused. If we do not educate women today, and work to advance their rights, we cannot expect a peaceful future.

In addition to our other programs, Voice of Women runs a shelter for girls and women who have no place to go: girls who have run away from forced marriages, women who have been trafficked or escaped from traffickers, widows, wives who have been abused. We provide them with literacy and income-generating activities. We also have a shelter for addicted women and their children. Across Afghanistan, 100,000 women are addicted to opium or other drugs. My hope is to have one women's shelter and one addiction clinic in each of our 34 provinces.

When I was in Washington, DC with Peace X Peace in 2006, I visited some Congressional offices. When the Members of Congress asked me about the drug problem I told them they could do several things to give farmers alternatives to growing poppies. We have abundant crops of apples and grapes and other fruits in some regions of Afghanistan, but the US government was importing fruit from Chile and New Zealand for its personnel instead of buying them from Afghan farmers, because they did not trust the farmers. I

told them they had to start trusting us.

The international community was also giving out wheat for free and putting the local wheat growers out of business. When small farmers have no alternative, they rent their land to bigger landholders who grow opium poppies.

Fortunately, poppy production was down last year. The international community is listening to us, and in some places, alternatives are taking hold. Saffron is one excellent example. It grows in poor soil, just as the poppies do. In five years, I hope to see zero poppy cultivation – maybe just a small amount for medicine. I hope to see Afghanistan become a helping hand in the world community, not just a receiving hand.

Contact: Peace X Peace  
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info@peacexpeace.org  
Tel: 202.684.3550



Suraya comments on the recent Presidential decision to increase US military presence in Afghanistan:

*Increasing troops and military is not the solution. But we can't leave Afghanistan in this condition. Because of the strategy we had implemented, now Taliban became bigger. I like the idea of a dialogue, talking with the people who are fighting.*

*Talk with them - we don't have [as] much strong Taliban in Afghanistan as we have anti-government elements. If we could provide some kind of program to have a kind of forgiveness process that brings them and the government position, but not the same peace negotiation, which is going on today behind the curtains.*

## Change is Possible among Inmates

by Jen Sotolongo

Imagine 48 grown men, sitting in a circle, crying and holding hands – at a prison. This was the scene after inmates at the Southside Regional Jail in Emporia, Virginia learned of the death of an infant son of a fellow inmate. These men were all participants in Community Model in Corrections®.

Community Model in Corrections is an offender-helping-offender program created by Penny Patton, LPC and Morgan Moss, LPC at the Southside Regional Jail. Patton and Moss founded the Center for Therapeutic Justice in 1999. As Co-Directors, they develop and supervise programs in institutions, drug courts and at probation agencies and are considered the national authorities on social model program in correctional settings. The Center for Therapeutic Justice, LLC is the sole implementer of the program and was incorporated in 2001.

Although there is currently only one active program, the team hopes to expand. "We would like to see this nationwide, in all jails and prisons in the next 10 years," said Margaret Browne, Business Manager for the Center for Therapeutic Justice. "We see it as an opening to a solution to the current prison/jail crisis of growing jail populations, failed correctional practices and exploding costs."

The program is a 24/7 recovery program that is completely

voluntary among the inmates. Participants are responsible for facilitating and mentoring their classes and group sessions. "We facilitate the classes ourselves. It's a different energy level," says one participant. "It's easier to be with because it's not 'us against them' thing." The model enhances safe and orderly operation of a correctional facility and this is illustrated by the fact that among program participants, zero incidents occurred in the past year.

The model establishes structure and a schedule for the inmates and allows them to recognize that when they fail, they need to learn why and determine a solution to avoid repeated failure. Disputes are left to the participants to solve on their own and they can vote another member out of the group whom they feel is creating a negative affect within the community.

Most of all, participants learn self respect and respect for their neighbors which is crucial to a lifestyle change once they have served their time. Participants also support each other in overcoming their fears. One inmate wrote, "We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming chain reaction of pain and panic."

The program demonstrated that participants take criticism better from their peers than from professional counselors typical in most facilities in the country.

Continued on Page 15



Sufi Muslims have long been known to have a deep reverence for nature.

## Islam's Green Initiative

The UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), in working with the UN, recently hosted 200 representatives from nine major world religions spanning over 60 different religious organizations.

Baha'i, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs, and Taoists all gathered at London's Windsor Castle with a united environmental agenda.

In an era of religious divide, concern for the environment brought together ancient faith groups to discuss a modern solution. And with Islam at the forefront of today's news, Muslim leaders showed Islam's ability to adapt and meet new needs.

Under the newfound coalition for eco-commitment and a Muslim Seven Year Plan, Medina — Islam's second most important city after Mecca — is to serve as a model green city. Medina, "The City of the Prophet", is a strategic starting point to launch a green campaign in neighboring territories.

The Seven Year Plan was presented by the Sheikh Ali Goma'a, Egypt's Grand Mufti, who has already introduced the plan into his own city of Dar al Iftaa. Some key initiatives of the Seven Year Plan include: integrating eco-awareness into Islamic education, constructing a "green mosque" and introducing this model for other Islamic buildings worldwide, as well as creating several green model cities.

The ultimate goal here, as with other faith groups, is to radically redefine faith-based relationships with the environment. While the "green" movement might still seem as a secular front by a number of conservative groups, these religions with a following in the billions will be able to bring much needed attention and authority to an issue that has predated our recognition of it.

Faith groups also realize the inherent relationship they have with the environment. Islam's Sufi Muslims have long been known to have a deep reverence for nature.

With 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide, the Seven Year Plan not only paves the way for increased interfaith cooperation and increased dialogue, but will also have a considerable environmental impact. With faith as the new foundation of a green movement, critical eco-issues have a new audience and a new life force that has the potential to quickly propel the issue forward — providing not only increased awareness but effective and long lasting solutions to a growing number of environmental concerns.

Contact: ARC  
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info@arcworld.org  
Story from *Green Prophet*

## Power Up Gambia

"A dream come true," was how Kebba Badgie, the hospital's chief executive, described the new solar panels that stand outside his medical centre.

The hospital, which is in The Gambia, once received only eight hours of power a day but now has a reliable source of electricity. It enables doctors, nurses and midwives to perform operations at night, refrigerate blood, keep vaccines cool and sterilise



© Olga Davidge

The new 96 solar panel array.



© Ken Koh

Kathryn working in the outpatient clinic with Nurse Hassan.

their equipment properly.

The Gambian healthcare system currently struggles to meet the needs of its 1.6 million people, who are served by just five hospitals. With the solar installation, the number of patients arriving for treatment from all over the country at this one hospital has multiplied dramatically. Its new credibility has also led to more donations of medical equipment.

All this was made possible by Kathryn Hall, a 23-year-old medical student from Pennsylvania who set up 'Power Up Gambia,' an organisation to empower local people.

In 2006, Kathryn volunteered at the hospital and was shocked to learn that they received a limited daily amount of power. At weekends, the lights went off at 2pm. "Reliable electricity is something I take for granted," she said. "To say that my

experience in The Gambia was life-changing is not overstating the case."

Solar panels were the natural solution because of the ideal weather conditions in the country and their reliability and inexpensive cost to maintain. A local contractor installed the components and will remain close at hand to repair the system if needed.

The panels, which work beautifully, are also a local attraction. Every morning, when the sun rises, they rotate towards the light — drawing quite an audience. Tracking the path of the sun allows the system to generate 14.5 kilowatts, which was more than the team thought they would produce.

After working for two years to raise the necessary funds, Kathryn's untiring dedication was rewarded with a day of celebration, when the solar panels were officially handed over to the village. A special performance by Jola warriors and a heartfelt speech by Kebba Badgie, all added to the significance of her accomplishments. Leaders of the surrounding villages crowded into the tiny building that houses the solar batteries, to witness Kathryn switch the panels on.

'Power Up Gambia' has now decided to expand its efforts to help the satellite clinics of the Sulayman Junkung General Hospital, in Bwiam. "This installation marks a very important step forward for healthcare in the country," announced Kathryn. "My hope is that this project will help serve as a model for all other solar energy initiatives."

Contact: Power Up Gambia,  
www.powerupgambia.org  
info@powerupgambia.org  
Story from *Positive News UK*

## Cool, Green and Termite Tested

by Sarah Wilkinson

ZIMBABWE - One of the most ingenious architects of his time, Mick Pearce is renowned for the design of inexpensive, energy efficient, low maintenance dwellings in tune with their social and economic environments.

Through the science of Biomimicry, he looks to nature for answers, using tried and tested processes to build 'cool green structures'. One of Mick's most notable works is the Eastgate Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe, an award-winning shopping and office block, known as the Anthill.

The building is modeled on the self-cooling nests of African termites. Some of nature's most accomplished architects,

they create the tallest structures on Earth — relative to their size. Furthermore, they can maintain the temperature inside the colony at 31 degrees Celsius (88°F), even when the outdoor temperature can fluctuate between zero and 42 degrees (32 -108°F).

They achieve this by digging a sort of 'breeze-catcher' at the base of the nest. The air is cooled by chambers carved out of the wet mud, which forces the heat to flow out through an upper flue. "It's an air conditioning system that works without a power station," Mick says. "They use the sun and the wind instead."

Working with Arup, designers of the Sydney Opera House and Beijing's bird's nest stadium, Mick embedded a similar air-change system into the design

of the Anthill. Large fans suck in fresh air at the base of the building, blow it upstairs through chambers under the floors and send it to the rooms through vents.

During cold nights, warm air is blown through the building seven times an hour. By day, cool air is dispersed instead. As a result, the centre uses only 10 per cent of the energy normally required and with no need for fuel-based ventilation; it has saved the owners 3.5 million dollars.

Contact:  
Michael Pearce Design Inc  
www.designinc.com.au  
Story from *Positive News UK*

© Bryony Schwan / asknature.org  
Right, the Eastgate Centre,  
Zimbabwe





# Feeding Demons for Healing

by Mary Gilliland and Lee Riddell

*"I feel we are in desperate need of a new paradigm that inspires us to stop fighting against ourselves and each other. I would like to see a world in which people no longer think that the best alternative is to destroy whatever opposes them."* Tsultrim Allione

ITHACA, NY - "Compassion for oneself, especially for the wounded or painful parts of oneself, increases our kindness towards others," says a member of the Ithaca Tara Mandala satellite sangha.

In the 1970's, Tsultrim Allione, then a Buddhist nun living in the Himalayas, envisioned a western retreat center. In 1993 she founded Tara Mandala to embody that vision. Tara is a female Buddha of compassion who represents both profound meditative experience and active engagement in the world. The mandala is a symbol of the awakened

psyche. Together they are a metaphor for experiencing the world through the eyes of compassion.

Based on a practice taught by an eleventh-century Tibetan woman, Lama Tsultrim Allione developed a 5-step process called *Feeding Your Demons*, for dealing with negative emotions, fears, illness and self-defeating patterns. "Ancient wisdom for resolving inner conflict," this in-depth exploration uncovers the parts of ourselves that have been split off, disowned and that we battle against. Instead of running away from them, we are taught to face those sides of ourselves, to find out what they need, to embody them, and to see them, and to then see allies to empower us to become whole again.

Meeting weekly since Autumn Equinox 2007, Ithaca Tara Mandala satellite sangha, incorporates *Feeding Your Demons* as one of their regular practices. Although it can be done individually, most often the group forms pairs. One partner reads the prompts

and takes notes, while the other identifies and works with a personal demon. A participant might work with an inner demon such as fear, depression, inflated ego, or another form of emotional turmoil or mental anguish. Physical pain can also be faced, and fed. Or the focus might be an outer demon—a problem at the workplace, or a family pattern, or one of society's collective demons: prejudice or hostility. One participant has found that "this is a very effective way to combine Buddhist principles with psychological insight."

Buddhist teachings say that every being has been our mother in the past; that we change society by changing ourselves; that ethical conduct and altruism are the foundation of our lives; and that the journey of life is that of self awareness, of realizing your true self, of touching the essence of who we are. Developing this inner wisdom is central to the training taught at Tara Mandala.

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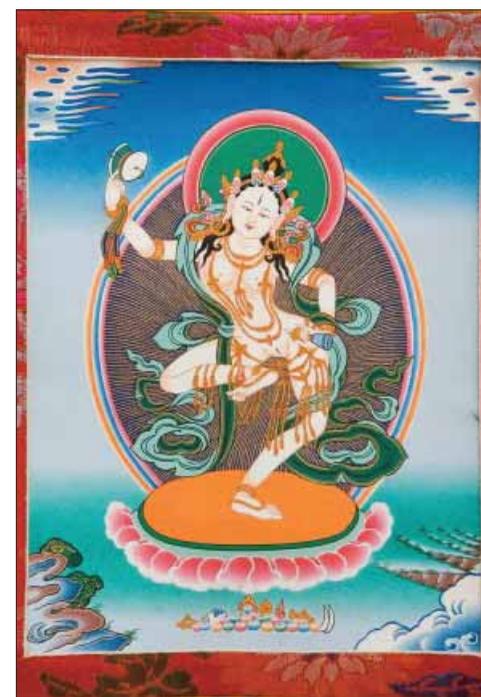


Image of Machig Labdron, an 11th century yogini at Tara Mandala.

## Hospital Workers Support Each Other

by John Hamilton

BOSTON, MA - Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), a teaching hospital of Harvard University, has long been a place dedicated to healing.

Now the hospital is practicing that healing spirit and expertise on itself. Because of the economy, it faced a \$20 million 'boo-boo' in its budget for the second half of 2009. Initial plans called for layoffs of 600 people from the 6,200 staff.

Paul Levy, who runs the hospital, put the issues to the staff and asked for suggestions. The response was overwhelming. Thousands of workers attended town meetings, and thousands more flooded the executive office with emails. While the suggestions covered a wide range, the central message was clear: find ways so people can keep their jobs.

Staff, including management, volunteered to temporarily halt employer match of pension plans; withhold 3 percent pay raises, except for the lowest pay grades, which would still receive them; and many other cost-saving strategies. Top management agreed to \$1.4 million in pay reductions.

The number of necessary layoffs dropped dramatically, from over 600 to about 150, many of which will be met through attrition. As Paul notes in an email to the entire staff, "This is a major victory and will mean a lot to more than 450 families who would otherwise lose their income from BIDMC. We will do this at the same time we provide earnings protection to our 900 lowest wage workers. As you will see, this does come at a higher cost to the rest of us, but you have all made clear to me that this is consistent with our community's values and expectations. Thank you in advance for your generosity of spirit."

## Making Pennies Count

A one-man mission to promote education in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan

by Sarah Wilkinson

After an attempt in 1993 to climb K2, the world's second highest mountain in the Karakoram range, an exhausted, lost climber stumbled into the desolate reaches of north Pakistan. Alone and delirious, without food or water, Greg Mortenson, from Minnesota, came across a tiny mountain community, where locals nursed him back to health. Their compassion saved his life.

Nearing recovery, he observed all the village children, kneeling on the frosty ground, scratching their lessons into the dirt with sticks. The settlement was so poor, they could not afford a teacher so, when it was time for Greg to leave, he vowed to repay their kindness and build them a school. From that promise, grew one of the most incredible humanitarian campaigns of our time.

To raise money, Greg wrote letters to 580 celebrities and indi-

viduals. His only reply was a 100 dollar cheque from an American journalist, Tom Brokaw. Then, a group of school children donated £380 in pennies. The idea gained support from other students and gathered momentum. To date, over 3,000 schools and organisations around the world have taken part in the project's fundraising.

Through the Central Asia Institute, Greg has helped more than 33,000 children from Pakistan and Afghanistan. By replacing guns with pencils and bringing education to the remotest regions, he has provided not only hope to thousands of youngsters but is living proof that one passionately dedicated person truly can change the world.

Greg is now the co-author of *Three Cups of Tea*. The title comes from an old proverb that states: 'The first time you share tea, you are a stranger. The second time, you become an honoured guest and by the third, you are family.'

The book recounts Greg's unforgettable adventure, how he gained the trust of village leaders and played a critical role during this time in history.

Now 51, Greg has established over 80 schools, enrolled salaried teachers, built bridges, roads, water systems and health centres – an amazing accomplishment in a place where westerners are not always welcomed with open arms. In pursuit of his goal, he has survived a kidnapping, and death threats. To thank him for his efforts, Pakistan's President recently awarded him with the country's greatest accolade, the 'Star of Pakistan' and this year, he has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack says about Greg: "For over 15 years, he has devoted his life to promoting peace and improving education... I am honoured to have known him. He is a living hero and his dedication to peace is truly changing the world."

Contact:  
www.gregmortenson.com  
Tel: 406.585.7841  
Story from Positive News UK

### Continued from Page 13 Change is Possible among Inmates

"Contrary to the average public awareness, most jails and prisons are sorely lacking in programming for inmates, in spite of the high cost of incarceration," said Margaret. Community Model in Corrections costs a quarter of the amount of standard programs, due mainly to the fact that a licensed counselor is not required.

Currently, the majority of incarcerated people have been arrested several times, on account of the fact that they did not receive proper rehabilitative training during their stay in prison. The Community Model significantly reduces the recidivism rate, the rate at which prisoners return to prison.

Program participants wrote letters to President Obama, sharing their personal stories and asking for a reform to the current rehabilitation system in jails and prisons. It is their hope that they can serve as ambassadors to promote the need for change in the system that can ultimately create a change in society.

Contact:  
Center for Therapeutic Justice  
centerforjustice@aol.com  
www.therapeuticjustice.com  
To learn more about the program watch this inspiring video at 38.119.100.163/Video/



Greg Mortenson with school children in Afghanistan.

© Central Asia Institute



## Gaza Gets Electricity

by Megan Kelly

Comet-ME, an organization whose ultimate mission is to implement sustainable development in the Middle East, actively works to “facilitate social and economic empowerment” in some of the poorest and most marginalized Palestinian communities.

By supplying the required materials for, and installation of renewable energy sources, the organization has brought electricity to numerous communities; all of which had never before enjoyed such a luxury. Project activists collaborate with communities first by conversing with committee members to define energy needs, then by educating local people on how to maintain the already installed energy systems. Comet-ME has found the perfect balance between human and environmental rights and illustrates the benefits of this balance one underprivileged community at a time.

One example of the transformations that Comet-ME has made is the recent construction of a 1kW Wind Turbine in a rural community near Gaza. Together with the local community, skilled workers assembled and erected a wind turbine. Now, night illumination – essential for children to study and for adults to complete household tasks, and refrigeration – essential for storing perishable produce and maintaining health in a place where the temperature can reach up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit, is possible.

Those involved in the project additionally believe that “illumination... and refrigeration increase the potential for generating revenue and reducing chronic poverty”. Comet-ME hopes that this Palestinian community’s first experience with electricity will allow people to be more self-sufficient and economically prosperous. Jazi Nawaji comments on her new lighting. “Now there is light at night so the kids can study and do their homework. Previously we relied on diesel generators or gas lamps for lighting which were expensive and polluting.”

Through joining people of all different backgrounds together in a common cause – that of honest and productive development – the people of Comet-ME hope to assist in bridging the gaps between Israeli and local Palestinian communities. The project illustrates that with enthusiasm and a positive perspective, we can all set environmental and social progress into motion.

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info@comet-me.org

This article was written by one of our Positive News Student Interns.

## Flying the World on Impulse

by Sarah Wilkinson

SWITZERLAND - A revolutionary solar aircraft, designed to fly continuously without fuel, even at night, has just been unveiled by two renowned adventurers.

Bertrand Piccard, who set a world record with the first non-stop round-the-world balloon flight and André Borschberg, an engineer and pilot, will make history by flying a piloted, solar-powered craft right round the world. “Yesterday it was just a dream. Tomorrow it’ll be an ambassador of renewable energy,” Bertrand declared.

The Solar Impulse HB-SIA, which has the look of a glider, can fly up to 27,000 feet and cruise at 45 miles per hour. Six years of work, calculations, simulations, tests and the dedication of a 70-person team were needed to complete this totally unprecedented project.

Although the HB-SIA is as light as an average car, it has a 63-metre wingspan – the same as a Boeing 747. Over 12,000 solar cells mounted onto the wing, will run four electric motors. These charge the aircraft’s batteries during the day, which in turn, power it to fly through the night.

The Solar Impulse should make its first test flights by the end of 2009, while a complete night time flight is planned for 2010. The results will be used to develop a second aircraft. Scheduled for 2012, it will circumnavigate the



© Solar Impulse / Claudio Leonardi

### Solar Impulse HB-SIA prototype

world in five stages, each lasting for several days and requiring the pilots to swap. “The plane could do it non-stop theoretically but not the pilot,” Bertrand told the BBC.

“In a world dominated by fossil fuels and given the urgent need to find sustainable solutions, the project sets out to demonstrate the potential of renewable energies and to promote their use,” says Bertrand. “The pioneer-

ing spirit, which enabled us to conquer space in the 20th century, should today enable us to find solutions to reduce our dependence on oil, not by reducing mobility or personal comfort but by creating dreams, hope and enthusiasm.”

Contact: Solar Impulse,  
www.solarimpulse.com  
Story from Positive News UK

## Algae Plants to Power Venice

by Eva Pratesi

Algae is plentiful, homegrown and could help clean up the environment,

while also powering our cities. The idea of turning it into a fuel has become a reality. Italy recently announced a plan to harvest the prolific seaweed that lines the

canals of Venice and transform it into emissions-free energy.

An algae-fuelled power plant will be the very first facility of its kind in Italy. It could be operative

in two years time and produce 40 megawatts of electricity, equivalent to half the energy required by the entire city centre of Venice.

Two varieties of the algae, ‘Sargassum muticum’ and ‘Undaria pinnatifida’, are brought in by ships coming from Japan and the Sargassi sea. It grows over the seaport of Venice, causing problems for gondolas and ferryboats. Now however, it could be turned into a resource.

The plant will be cultivated in laboratories and placed into cylinders, where water, carbon dioxide and sunshine will trigger the process of photosynthesis. The resulting biomass will then be treated further to produce a fuel that will turn turbines. The carbon dioxide produced in the process is fed back to the algae, resulting in zero emissions.

“Venice could represent the beginning of a global revolution of energy and renewable resources,” says Paolo Costa, the president of Venice’s port authority. “Our goals are to achieve energetic self-sufficiency for the port, while reducing carbon dioxide emissions, including the ones produced by the docked ships.”

The idea to turn canal algae into inexpensive, green power will open great possibilities for zero emission energy production. Venice could represent the first step of a real innovative evolution.

Story from Positive News UK  
first published in EcoWorldly /  
GO Media



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### A summer's day in Venice



# The Victory of the Commons

*Economist Elinor Ostrom proves that people can—and do—work together well to manage commonly-held resources.*

by Jay Walljasper

The biggest roadblock standing in the way of many people's recognition of the importance of the commons came tumbling down when Indiana University professor Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Prize for Economics.

Over many decades, Elinor has documented how various communities manage common resources—grazing lands, forests, irrigation waters, fisheries—equitably and sustainably over the long term. The Nobel Committee's recognition of her work effectively debunks popular theories about the Tragedy of the Commons, which hold that private property is the only effective method to prevent finite resources from being ruined or depleted.

Awarding the world's most prestigious economics prize to a scholar who champions cooperative behavior greatly boosts the legitimacy of the commons as a framework for solving our social and environmental problems. Elinor's work also challenges the current economic orthodoxy that there are few, if any, alternatives to privatization and markets in generating wealth and human well being.

The Tragedy of the Commons refers to a scenario in which commonly held land is inevitably degraded because everyone in a community is allowed to graze livestock there. This parable was popularized by wildlife biologist Garrett Hardin in the late 1960s, and was embraced as a principle by the emerging environmental movement. But Elinor's research refutes this abstract concept with the real life experience from places like Nepal, Kenya and Guatemala.

"When local users of a forest have a long-term perspective, they are more likely to monitor each other's use of the land, developing rules for behavior," she cites as an example. "It is an area that standard market theory does not touch."

Garrett Hardin himself later revised his own view, noting that what he described was actually the Tragedy of the Unmanaged Commons. "What we have ignored is what citizens can do and the importance of real involvement."

Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz, also a Nobel winner, commented, "Conservatives used the Tragedy of the Commons to argue for property rights, and that efficiency was achieved as people were thrown off the commons... What Elinor has demonstrated is the existence of social control mechanisms that regulate the use of the commons without having to resort to property



**Women of the Olkiramatian Group Ranch in Kenya. The 10,000 ranch members are known for their successful common-land practices which attract increasing interest from pastoralists and conservationists alike.**

rights."

The Nobel Committee's choice of Elinor is significant considering that many winners of the prize since it was initiated in 1968 have been zealous advocates of unrestricted markets, such as Milton Friedman, whose selection helped fuel the rise of market theory as the be-all, end-all of economics since the 1980s. Policies based upon this narrow worldview sparked the rise of corporate power and the diminishment of government's role in protecting the commons.

While right-wing thinkers scoffed at the possibility of resources being shared in a way that maintains the common good, arguing that private property is the only practical strategy to prevent this tragedy, Elinor's scholarship shows otherwise

"What we have ignored is what citizens can do and the importance of real involvement of the people involved," she explains.

A classic example of this is an acequia, a centuries-old tradition of a cooperative irrigation in New Mexico and Colorado where the small flow of water for agriculture is allocated by the community as a whole through a democratic process.

Elinor is the first woman to be awarded the economics prize, which



**Common grazing land in Wales.**

some observers say helps explain her emphasis on the role of people's relationships in our economic arrangements rather than the focus on individualized market choices expounded by many male winners of the Nobel.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that Elinor was not trained as an economist, but as a political scientist—a factor that may be even more useful in explaining her outside-the-box approach to economics.

Yale economist Robert Schiller, quoted in the New York Times, welcomed the merging of the two fields. "Economics has become too isolated and stuck on the view that markets are efficient and self-regulating. It has derailed

our thinking."

Elinor Ostrom has always been explicit in recognizing the importance of the commons—she helped found the International Association for the Study of the Commons, also based at Indiana University—and her selection as a Nobel Laureate marks an early milestone in the emergence of a commons-based society. Her works shows that our social, environmental and personal advancement depends on the vitality of the commons.

*Content from 'Learn as You Go', the Fall 09 issue of YES! Magazine.*  
[www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org)

## Bank Gets Blasted

SUFFOLK COUNTY, NY - ruthless foreclosures. Judge Jeffrey Spinner called a mortgage bank's actions 'harsh, repugnant, shocking and repulsive', and wiped out \$525,000 in mortgage payments the bank demanded from Diane and Greg Horoski, a Long Island couple. The bank received \$814.2 million from taxpayers, yet has a long record of



Even as the couple were struggling with unexpected medical bills, the bank repeatedly refused to discuss repayment terms. The judge ruled that because of its 'inequitable and unconscionable' behavior, the bank should be 'sanctioned' to prevent further abuse.



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# Re-enacting One of Humanity's Legendary Voyages

*'The incredible story of the exploration of the Pacific begins 4,000 years ago, 3,500 years before Europeans even thought to head south, when the ancestors of the Pacific looked towards a never-ending horizon and launched the world's first sea-going craft into the greatest ocean on Earth. Their journeys and settlements were accomplished with great skill and inconceivable bravery: it is the Pacific story.'*

—Auckland Museum

One of the world's greatest migrations is to be re-enacted next year, using ancient seafaring skills and a fleet of handmade traditional ca-

noes, designed to accommodate heavy loads of migrating families, contain eight bunks and storage space. Although identical in construction, each canoe will be finished with the individual carvings, colours and motifs belonging to the Hawaiian island it is going to.

A keen supporter of the re-enactment is Rawiri Patene. Best known for his role in the movie *Whale Rider*, he has helped generate funding to make the voyage a reality. The project's manager, Maori New Zealander, Te Aturangi Nepia-Clamp, believes it will build Polynesian pride and identity, by highlighting the epic achievements of his ancestors – skilled seafarers who crossed an ocean that fills a quarter of the globe.

"They made these canoes watertight, with inadequate timber, using stone tools to drill and caulk them. They lashed



© Auckland Museum

Above: A replica of the Vaka Moana voyaging canoe

"...they went on to make these incredible journeys, thousands of years before Europeans were even confident to go out of the sight of land."

noes, known as Vakas.

Six vessels, each with a crew of 16, will set sail for Hawaii, departing from six islands in French Polynesia. Relying on the sun, stars, knowledge of sea swells and winds to steer their course, they will have to navigate 2,500 miles of Pacific Ocean. The aim is not only to recreate history but to regenerate the ancestral traditions and legendary voyaging skills that date back thousands of years.

The 72 foot-long, double-hulled canoes are currently being built in New Zealand, in traditional Tūamotu Islands-style, with twin masts and exquisitely hand-carved 32-foot steering paddles. The two



them together with coconut fibre rope," he explains. "Then, they went on to make these incredible journeys, thousands of years before Europeans were even confident to go out of the sight of land."

Until recent times, historians wrongly believed that the Polynesians had spread through the Pacific by accident, scattered by unfavourable winds. The Polynesian Voyaging Society was set up to revive the ancient sea skills as tangible proof of their ancestors' nautical abilities. They regard their historic canoes as symbols of an exploring, pioneering heritage.

Te Aturangi is also keen to see young islanders continue to learn the skills lost in this age of air travel

and has already witnessed the deep pride created by the revival of voyaging in Hawaii. "We went into a classroom in Molokai. The ceiling was decked out with the constellations and all the kids could name any star that was there," he says. "They were proud of their ancestors and they knew the way-finding skills that they used. It's a great booster for any indigenous culture."

Contact:  
Cook Islands Voyaging Society  
[www.voyaging.co.ck](http://www.voyaging.co.ck)

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