

# Whole Thinking Journal

STORIES AND SEEDS FROM 2006

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CENTER FOR WHOLE COMMUNITIES

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## Seizing Our Moments of Obligation

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Peter Forbes

When we think about the future of our communities and the future of the land, there are some questions we must ask ourselves.

*What is your vision for a whole community? And from what love or pain or longing does this vision arise? How can we be more courageous and in-service to this vision? What is the role of spirituality in our visioning? What do we share enough to build upon, and what are we willing to give up in order to include new allies? What are we afraid of saying?*

This year, Center for Whole Communities awarded fellowships to 106 individuals from 28 states, Mexico and Canada to participate in the Whole Thinking Retreats. We also conducted eight Vision and Values Workshops, from Boston to Bellingham, for the benefit of leaders with their organizations and coalitions. We convened a powerful working summit of diverse environmental and social leaders at the Penn Center in South Carolina to answer the question, “What is a whole community and how do we get there?”

Today, there are 350 change-agents from 290 organizations who have been trained intensively in our theories of change. But our most important measure of success is the degree to which these leaders have broken down assumptions and changed the motivating questions of their lives. Our job is to replace the power of assumptions with the power of inquiry. We are a bridge between diverse groups, and we take on many of the issues that in the past have created divides: the roles of

race, class and privilege within the movement; the positive and negative impacts of specialization; and the necessity to think and act beyond narrow definitions of success. Our work transcends organizational and leadership development to help those who are working toward environmental and social change more effectively contribute toward a tolerant and generous culture in this country.

This publication shares annually with our alumni, funders and friends the seeds that were planted throughout the year for new ways to lead. For our funders, this is a way of showing you the products of your investment in our work. For our alumni, these pages are a way to remember and reconnect with your experience of this work. We hope they will remind you of the conversations and thoughts you had and reveal to you some that you may have missed. For the larger community, this is one step we take to share and build upon the learning that takes place during our forums.

We gathered the themes of this journal from our notes of the retreats, workshops, summits, and storytelling sessions, as well as from correspondence with alumni throughout the year. We have tried to produce as complete and inclusive a view as possible. Nevertheless, we ask your forgiveness for offering what we acknowledge can only be a limited personal perspective on these gatherings.

### A Word About Our Retreats and Workshops

In this time of shifting ideals and fractious debate, we see the imperative of taking the time to hear one another's stories, and to understand the true emotional depths of feeling about environmental and social causes as represented across generations. We see the need to come together in a different way.

The Whole Thinking Retreats have become a home for the respectful re-invention of the environmental movement. We teach a practice of conservation in which people matter, and in which a relationship between people and the land is essential. At Knoll Farm, we explore the power of the land, and the power of our land activism, to heal the dividedness in our lives: the separation between races, between rich and poor, between young and old, between people and nature. We help individuals find and express values that might guide the movement



toward nurturing a truly healthy American culture and a more compelling and authentic story about people and the land. Together we seek a new practice of land restoration that is tolerant, connects the whole landscape, thinks out of the box, and is courageous about addressing the larger issues of the day.

At the Vision and Values Workshops, we aim to inspire action, not demand it. We help participants find the common courage to tell stories that reflect our real values. We open leaders to the generative power of the land and the power of

their own stories. And we share new tools that help groups collaborate, innovate, and respond to the diversity of people and politics in America.

Our theory of change is simple: dedicated people, when given the time to fully consider a problem, will always come up with a more inclusive, lasting and effective response than their previous strategies and tactics have suggested. Based on this theory, we help people and organizations look beyond their boundaries to see and respond to problems with deeper wisdom and effectiveness.

### Living in an Age of Consequence

Repeatedly this year, we heard from participants in all our programs of their deep sense of responsibility to speak about this time as an age of great environmental consequence. But how do we speak of these beliefs in ways that more effectively reach the hearts and minds of our neighbors?

The people of India who have been trying to protect the Narmada River have a saying: "You can wake someone who is asleep, but you cannot wake someone who is pretending to be asleep."

Our alumni seek to wake the people who are afraid or pretending to be asleep. And we can best do that through empathy, not objectivity alone. We wake people through telling positive stories of living in a different way.

This critical moment in time is bigger than the environmental movement. This is our coming-of-age moment, the moment when, as Mary Evelyn Tucker writes, we seek the means to "walk the ridge between the evident destruction and the emerging creativity of our times," holding the tension between the two.

Holding the tension between forces is never easy or straightforward. Holding the tension asks that we focus on process as much as on product, that we focus on the needs of people in order to address the needs of nature, that we recognize multiple stories and never just one. But doing so results in a response that is more complex, more real, more believable. Today, we need the capacity to feel both alarm and fascination, both atonement and celebration.

We are the story we tell ourselves. As Wendell Berry says, "The significance of the work we do is determined by our understanding of the story in which we are taking part." Center for Whole Communities' retreats and workshops are designed to enable participants to see the big picture of their lives and their leadership and to think and act beyond simple rhetoric and assumptions.

There are times when things are clear and times when they're murky, and our participants are learning how to hold the tension and complexity of these cloudier moments.

Though business schools and spin doctors urge us to make elevator pitches and bumper sticker pronouncements, it may not be possible, at first, to express our newly found moral voice in thirty seconds or less. The leaders we serve are searching for the time and space, beyond conventional strategy sessions on messaging, to find within themselves an authentic vision for the future.

We cannot work toward a future until we can see that future in our mind's eye. Those who can paint those pictures of the future through story are our prophets. Each of us has the capacity to be a prophet.

To find an authentic moral voice requires some serious debunking of dominant stories surrounding cultural icons from Charles Darwin to Adam Smith. The dominant story around Darwin emphasizes survival of the fittest, yet he originally told the story of health and adaptability, not competition, as sources of survival. And Adam Smith didn't write solely about the values of self-interest and uncontrolled markets; he also wrote about how greed must be held in check by the moral sentiments of human attachment and common decency. Knowing the full stories offered by both Adam Smith and Charles Darwin allows us to see the possibilities in adapting, collaborating, and creating a new story about America.

### Spirit, Vision and Values

Participants in our programs are constantly exploring the role that human spirit plays in forming a vision for their work.

What do we have faith in today? The answers from our alumni come quickly: mutual respect and humility, honesty and love, justice and fairness, integrity, wholeness, voice, courage, transparency, equality, service and self-determination. Our alumni have faith in humanity, in self, in cultural competency and understanding, and in the land itself. They have faith in healing through connection and neighborliness, and in the power of seeking common ground. Our alumni are held together by these values.

And, yet, few of these words and belief systems are reflected directly in the speeches, annual reports, or newsletters of the incoming participants of our programs. Why is this? As one leader put it, "I wish for the courage to give ourselves permission to speak of these values." We try very hard to create the space where that courage can emerge.

Many leaders are reluctant to lead with their values. Some fear the fundamentalism that leading with values implies. They don't appreciate the way values have been used by others, so they abandon speaking of them altogether.

Others point out that the primary force in our American lives—capitalism—has a role to play in keeping us from our

values. Comfort can keep us from living our values. Money—who has it and who wants it—keeps us from living our values. Privilege keeps us from living our values. Addictions to personal achievement keep us from living our values. Personal and organizational investments in the existing systems keep us from leading with our values. As one participant asked her group, "Does an over-abundant, over-stuffed society have the courage to do anything meaningful?"

There are many among our alumni who speak for the other side of this divided nation. As one participant said, "When your belly is not full you don't likely share many of these values. Violence is more common, competition is more likely and unavoidable."

**"I've been a scientist for 25 years but now I'm pulling together people to talk about community and economy."**

—2006 participant

Others fear that they won't be taken seriously if they express what matters most to them. Speaking publicly about what matters most often takes one "off mission" and requires "opening up your heart and being vulnerable." Our alumni come to see that forces as powerful as our faith have been diminished to the point of being considered "soft." One participant put it this way: "Leading with your values is akin to a prizefighter leading with his jaw."

But our heroes have always been those willing to take a punch and get back up. From Dr. King to Rachel Carson, Arundhati Roy to Wendell Berry, our heroes have always been clear about what they have faith in and what matters most to them. They have always led with their chins.

We teach that identifying what we have faith in and naming our values is a never-ending process, just like fairness. Values cannot be stated once every five years in a strategic plan. Values can not be checked off alongside a mission statement, and should not be confused for strategies and tactics. Values get tested and reformed every day through our actions. We teach the power that comes from naming what you love and having that sense of confidence to speak and act of your values.

Doing so is the only way to find that we have a moral voice. A moral voice is the voice that speaks directly across jargon, across messaging, spin, and even words themselves to reach beyond the 5 percent of Americans who are members of environmental groups to the 95 percent of Americans who care for the land and for communities but would never *call* themselves environmentalists.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the term “beloved communities” to describe his own dream where black children and white children might be judged by the quality of their characters and not the color of their skin. Without the skills and courage to speak of our values, we’ll never find our own moral voice; we’ll never prove our capacity to make an “I Have a Dream” speech for the beloved communities we seek to create through our work.

## Race, Power and Privilege

Each season, we seek a deeper understanding of the ways race, power and privilege affect whole communities. The widening racial and socio-economic divides of our country are intertwined with the story of the environmental movement, and of a disconnected society. We teach that if our alumni are not explicitly, intentionally building bridges, then they are probably creating divides. Diverse retreat groups and honest, direct dialogue on race, power and privilege in the environmental movement have become the foundations of our curriculum.

Race, power and the land are a critical combination of forces for the environmental movement to grapple with. Some of our white participants hold shame for having taken power in the past and, frankly, a few deny the problem and hide behind their privilege. Participants also include people of color who are tired of educating others and simply trying to build a new place for themselves on the land and in history. Others are white people



who recognize the flaws in their own personal story of land, race and privilege and are trying to reconcile those flaws with the good work they are trying to do. And others yet are people of color who are enraged at being denied power because of race, who are fed up with the disconnection in a well-meaning environmental movement that is often blind to its own role on these issues. How do we bridge these divides?

We are not an organization that leads dismantling racism trainings; as a majority-white-led organization in a very white state, we recognize our limitations in experience and credibility. Our modest contribution is to get the truth on the table, to treat every one fairly, and make it possible to hear one another’s stories. Through creating the safe harbor where people of diverse races and privilege can see what they share in common, we begin to transform denial, anger and shame into more positive forces for change.

Translating denial, anger and shame into awareness, hope and intention is our goal. Denial, anger and shame are easily fed, but our appetites for awareness, hope and intention grow within us given the chance, especially when fed by insight and compassion.

From insight and compassion does come enduring change. One very honest participant in our program said, *“I do have the tools to be more culturally competent, but I have chosen in the past not to use them.”*

We want to help ourselves and our alumni become more and more comfortable with diversity of all kinds. We want this because we know it to be healthy for all of us, just as a diverse forest is a healthy forest, but also because diversity directly confronts a dominant society that encourages both sameness *and* separation. We hope to advance *unity and diversity* by setting the table for everyone and respecting the diversity of what comes: our stories, our histories, and our beliefs.

A whole community is built upon a *moral landscape* where people are treated fairly and where other species of life are respected. A moral landscape creates a moral culture. Conversely, a landscape conserved or protected without intention toward equity can never really create a civil society. This work asks us to consider, “Is my relationship or my organization’s relationship to the land fair to others? And if not, what can I personally do about it?”

A world filled with lines and divisions only leads to fragmentation—the senses of alienation, disconnection and domination that contribute to our culture of fear and violence. This culture of fear is our greatest barrier to fostering whole communities, and is a force deeply affected by our relationship to the land and to one another. Conservation organizations control significant resources—land, dollars, political power—and their choices can heighten or diminish this culture of fear. The conservation of land can tear down the walls between people or it can make those walls higher.

Some of the most important work that can be done is to create the safe harbors where different people can have honest and sustained dialogue with one another, where people can ask reciprocal questions. *Why do I need you and why do you need me? Why does the health of the land and people need us working together?*

## Whole Thinking

A primary objective of our work is to practice “whole thinking,” which we define as acting from and for the whole. As an effort to defeat the fragmentation in our lives, whole thinking asks participants to re-examine the problems they are addressing and the leverage points they are using. Each group is given the time and the safe space to re-imagine the scale of the challenges facing their work. The result is often a shift from narrowly-directed to broader, more systemic tools.

Whole thinking reminds us to start at the beginning. As one participant this year put it, *“Because we haven’t learned how to be tolerant of ourselves, we don’t know how to be tolerant to grizzly bears. So I go back and forth with where to apply the tolerance. Most of my career I decided that I can best protect species because people take too much time, and now I understand that a country that treats its people badly will always treat its creatures, its land and its water badly as well.”*

Whole thinking is the commitment to re-think problems in the context of the larger systems in which they exist, and to see the total as more than the sum of the parts. This act of seeing things freshly helps us to recognize where our actions over years may have created deep grooves that are now hard to climb out of. Every person and every organization has these grooves; in the best cases they’ve become our core competencies, but in other cases they are the cultures and practices that make us tired, tiresome, self-serving, and brittle.

When people and organizations practice whole thinking, they refocus first on their vision for the future. In examining the big picture and our role in it, our attention shifts naturally from *how* we do our work to *why* we do it. And when we focus our attention on the values we hold for the world, we see our tools in a more critical light, we realize the time of the lone wolf is over, and we recognize that our success is dependent on the success of others.

## Meeting the Scale of the Problem

Our alumni are working at a great range of scales, from mobilizing progressive movements for change, to protecting the health of 64,000 square-mile watersheds, to helping to feed 500 families from a 1/4-acre garden in Harlem. How big does one’s work need to be? What do we share enough to build upon? How do we best encourage our work to support one another? Are we meeting the scale of the problem?

At Center for Whole Communities, we nurture the courage to see how big the problem is, and we also recognize that we need informed, aware, courageous leaders at every scale of the problem. Every election year, we see great evidence of the power of people working at different scales toward a common

vision of success—and when it comes down to it, control of the House or the Senate is often dependent on local races.

We teach groundedness: as humans we can only be in one place at one time. No matter what that place is, we ask our alumni to commit to it, to ground themselves where they are and to do the best job they can. We are told constantly that there is little time left, and yet we teach that there is just enough time as long as we start today. We try to transform anxiety and fear into what is right action for each of us.



## Defining What’s at Stake:

Our capacity to find the right scale, to lead with our values, and to contribute to a strong vision for what the future can hold, rests in large part on how we sense and define the problems of the day. Participants in our program are asked to think beyond their daily work to discover the root causes and conditions of our culture. From them, we heard the following:

- The ethos of consumption: a world where consumption is valued over production
- The excessive appetite of the American culture. More is better, and there’s never enough. The “momentum of never enough”
- “There’s nowhere for my people to get fresh food”
- The current, pervasive absence of connectedness to the land
- We don’t speak to one another anymore
- A whole generation of kids who have no connection to the land
- The death of the human experience. We don’t know what it means to be human anymore in the true sense of knowing what is it to be one species connected to the whole
- The absence of a national effort to connect people of color to the land
- The culture of fear...we have more prisoners in this country than farmers.

Our participants speak of the divides that exist today between rich and poor, whites and people of color, urban and rural, conservatives and liberals, consumption and production, and the fact that these real divides *create the assumption of further divides*.

As much as we need to know what's real, we also need to know what's not real. We need constantly to challenge our assumptions about Others and see them as Us.

All people have their own "habit energy" that contributes to each of us seeing the world the way we experienced it originally. Ecologists refer to this problem as "shifting base-lines," where our sense of what is healthy grows more diminished over time. For example, a young scientist tends to view the health of a river as it was when she began her scientific career and thus limits her imagination for what is possible. Soon, we accept disease, or the lack of health, as the acceptable base-line: just the way things are.

The great work is to re-set the base-line with a higher expectation for what constitutes health, of a river, an organization, a movement, a society. The transformative power of our collective work is its ability to help us break free of the dominant messages of our culture. Despite all the investments in our old ways of doing things, we are capable of creating a transition culture, a fabric of relationships between people and places that can take the place of the old culture that is dying. Making these changes often requires us to leave the comfort of our past tools and successes and direct our resources toward new ways

**"These are the hard questions because they're personal, they're real, and they make me vulnerable. Trying to respond has created in me the most powerful growth I have ever felt."**

—2006 participant

of thinking. Nothing is harder to do, nor requires more courage. It requires the courage to know we cannot do it alone, the courage to confess our own personal connections to these problems, the courage to talk about the difficult issues of race and privilege, the courage to resist business as usual, and the courage to speak of a different American dream.

### Generative Power of the Land

The most profound teacher at the Whole Thinking Retreats is the land itself, which we experience through food, sun, rain, wind, fire and stars. We talk about how the lessons of the land are critical to finding wholeness within ourselves and our communities, as aptly described by this urban gardener who told her group: *"I'm helping people to move beyond their circumstances of life by re-connecting them to the land."*

For many of our alumni the chance to connect with a mountainside and to harvest their own food is a powerful reminder that the answers we need are not in books; they're in



**"I've worked hard all my life but I can see now that we've done the easy things. How do we now do the really difficult things?"**

—2006 participant

being human on the land. Our human experience of the land opens our minds and our hearts to a different kind of wisdom that's inside each of us. Each week at Knoll Farm, we see this in all the groups. *"In that black soil are so many answers for us all."* And a group of strangers from very different professional, racial, economic and educational backgrounds finding common ground is a powerful reminder that *"all we need is already at hand."*

Many people, of course, have histories which do not allow them to feel positive connections to land—and just as many have no opportunities to have a connection to land at all. In our definition of land, we mean urban spaces as well as rural, abused places as well as those that have been cared for or left alone. We talk about how, inherent in our relationship to land, wherever we find it, are basic human values such as health, relationship and fairness.

In our connection to land we also see something less intellectual, more physical, about the rewards of life itself. Much in our culture conditions us to seek external rewards of wealth, security, status. The rewards of a life lived in some relationship to the land bestow internal rewards of a rich vocabulary, more durable skills, and eyes that truly see.

### Power of Story

*"Don't call me what you call yourself. Listen first to my story."*

Story is a foundation of our programs because it is the way we cross the boundaries that separate us from one another. Story helps us express our most authentic selves and pulls us toward the person we most hope to be. As one participant this year put it, *"Learning to tell different stories about myself...letting the old story go...finding the new story about myself is an enormous source of strength."*

We come to understand that there are authentic and inauthentic stories in our culture. For example, it goes without saying that "Coke Adds Life" is an inauthentic story. Authentic stories come out of us when we are asked, "Tell me about your father," or, "Who are your teachers?" Or, "How did you come to accept your obligations in life?"

Authentic story is often about what we fear and love the most. And story includes proving our capacity to really listen and observe instead of trying to fit everyone into boxes.

Listening to people's stories creates the possibility for transformation, something we are privileged to observe and shepherd in every program that we run. One participant described the power of story this way, *"Hearing your story made me feel more responsible for finding and expressing the meaning in my own life."*

Story is a powerful means for helping our participants hear in others, and recognize in themselves, their own *moments of*



*obligation* when an idea or a vision struck them so powerfully and squarely in their heart that they knew they had to act. There is no more important gift to witness because it's the birth of right action. Every week this year, we witnessed these moments of obligation unfold: the decision to leave a comfortable job; the commitment to resolve an on-going conflict; the fear to take a new direction with our work melting away; the power filling in our chest to speak truth, with love, to power; the unbridled joy of realizing we have nothing to lose in investing all that we have.

We are fortunate to witness this emerging potential with each group we convene at Knoll Farm and around the country. And we hear back from many of you that when you convene people in your own organizations and communities, you are finding new ways to speak and listen, to invent and restore, to keep the conversation returning to what matters most.

We hope you will find some new stories and old memories in these pages, in the alumni essays and quotes that follow, and in the photographs many of you took while you were at Knoll Farm. We are grateful for the work you are all doing, which continues to be the energizing fire behind all we do here. Stay in touch.

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## Faith

Linda Poole

*“Faith, hope and love collectively are the source of creativity in the world. Reality comes from imagination. We create a new reality each time we transcend an imaginary old boundary. ... We can transcend boundaries we create only through love, and in learning to love those we consider our enemies, we re-create the world as a better place for all peoples.”*

—Fred Provenza

Are people a part of the natural world, or apart from it? What is the best use of the sparsely-peopled prairies, and who decides that question?

The prairies of Phillips County, Montana have been little changed by the Industrial Age. Species of plants and animals here today are nearly the same as those catalogued by Lewis and Clark 200 years ago. This immensity of grass and sky is a stronghold for pronghorn, mule deer, prairie dogs, burrowing owls, mountain plovers and a dozen more grassland bird species that are disappearing elsewhere.



For over a hundred years, ranching has been the foundation of local economy, culture and conservation here. Today, third and fourth generation ranchers care for the prairies with a land ethic that would delight Aldo Leopold. Rancher Kevin Koss says, “Of course we take care of the land, because the land takes care of us.”

Testimony to the health of this land, two of the world’s largest environmental groups, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and World Wildlife Fund, pinpointed this as the region most crucial for the future of northern prairie wildlife. Land is changing ownership: TNC bought the 60,000 acre

Matador Ranch as the anchor for community-based conservation, while the American Prairie Foundation is working toward a sweeping vision of thousands of wild bison roaming across millions of acres of uninterrupted prairie. National media have portrayed the situation as ranchers versus environmentalists, a war over the future of the plains. What is more important, culture or conservation?

For six years, I have worked for TNC in Phillips County. I see this community, and others, making far-reaching choices about how to relate to one another and the land. Ahead of us loom the end of oil, climate change, burgeoning human populations. Behind lie our roots, traditions, and history that can instruct. And between is the here and now, with all the makings of tragedy or triumph, either one likely, depending upon the wisdom and compassion of choices made and relationships built.

Phillips County is blessed with key components of lasting success: a committed workforce of site-savvy land stewards, abundant wildlife, an economic base of ranching that sustains biodiversity and a rich heritage, and the attention of environmental groups who could invest deeply into the area. But if we act from fear, such passion could easily turn dark, and degenerate into bitter attacks and desperate holding actions against one another which surely would fracture both land and community.

And so we make wise use of the pivot point where we stand now. Encouraged by mentors such as Fred Provenza, Courtney White and Bob Chadwick, our community is pioneering unlikely alliances to maintain our ranching heritage while building synergistic solutions for prairie conservation. We seek ways to turn the table so that conservation becomes an economic engine for the area, and we imagine future generations wondering, “Did ranchers save the prairie birds, or did birds save the ranchers?”

While we have yet to craft lasting solutions, I thrill with certainty that wisdom will arise as together we live the questions with integrity and attentiveness. With clear minds, compassionate hearts and the highest of principles, this community is setting out on a path toward a vibrant future we previously only hoped could be true.

*Linda Poole is Glaciated Plains Project Director at the The Nature Conservancy’s Matador Ranch.*

## Growing Power

Erika Allen

I began working with Growing Power to build community food systems in 2001 after Illinois's first food security summit, which I attended as a manager of a program that operated a food pantry and other emergency services for families. At the conference, I began to see the potential of intersecting food security programs with economic development and sustainable agriculture, and I saw the potential of impacting the lives of at-risk populations, youth and ex-offenders at the forefront of this vision.

My father, Will Allen, a farmer and the director of Growing Power, had already been working toward his vision for community food centers, places where people learn to grow, distribute and market healthy food in the community, for nearly a decade. Through his work, I began to learn about this community food movement and the impacts it could have on communities struggling for survival. While I was away at art school and graduate school in the 1990s, my father had created a working model of the community food system on a 2-acre farm in inner-city Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This center, built through collaboration and community vision, acts as a "closed loop" ecosystem, ranging from vermi-composting (composting with worms) to an aquaponics systems where tilapia fish thrive due to their symbiotic relationships with the plants that grow in the system, to food distribution, animal husbandry and now anaerobic digestion to produce methane gas for heat that recycles to grow more plants. All of these innovations serve as active demonstrations and training tools to teach community leaders at weekend trainings, tours and outreach. Youth are the heart of the operation, working in partnership with adult mentors and operating the country store that serves the community. Due to this infrastructure and the collective experience of our organization, we were able to develop models of how cities can grow food and foster opportunity in unconventional spaces ranging from asphalt lots to city parks.

Through these projects and others, and through my lens as a person of color working for a multicultural organization, we became profoundly aware that Growing Power was one of very few organizations with hands-on capacity and experience of operating a community food system, and whose leadership and staff reflect the diverse communities we serve and partner with. This brought forth the challenging question and the opportunity for change, "Why in a field that is focused on food security, ending hunger and representing the poor, are there so few people of color in positions of power and decision-making?"

Perhaps a way to address this and many other issues is to "own one's story." Being able to represent one's own community is part of the solution. Being able to inspire others to have the courage to begin growing food on empty lots or operate

small-scale family farms using sustainable practices, or to feel empowered to take on city hall for ownership of land and receive a fair share of the marketplace are all parts of this untold story. The history of food and race in the U.S. has its roots in the middle passage slave trade and plantation system, loss of land by native tribes and colonialism. Along with our



grassroots stories of survival and the current food movement, at Growing Power we are also making a link between slave labor and agriculture through our emerging dismantling racism work.

Coming to Knoll Farm was a profound privilege that represented a rite of passage for me. It was a signpost to the progress we are all making in connecting our movements, taking the time to broaden, and at the same time sharpen, our vision through a collective of inspired leaders. Owning one's story was a powerful topic of thought and discussion during my week at Knoll Farm that continues to add richness and texture to my visioning and work.

*Erika Allen is Projects Manager for Growing Power. It is a national nonprofit organization and land trust supporting people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities. Growing Power implements this mission by providing hands-on training, on-the-ground demonstration, outreach and technical assistance through the development of Community Food Systems that help people grow, process, market and distribute food in a sustainable manner.*

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## Resistance to Business as Usual

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Eric Stiles

My time at Knoll Farm was deeply transformative, personally and professionally. We heard the account of a minister saying that the “problem with environmental leaders is that we begin with strategies and tactics and never have the basic discussion of vision and values.” Visions and values transcend partisan politics, land deals, factions, alliances, and cultural divides. They create a place for exploring common ground outside of judgment.

Shared vision and values may manifest themselves in radically diverging outcomes but arise from the same “spiritual soil”. I heard first-hand how an urban social justice warrior comes from the same place as a champion for parks. Their views are born from the same belief in justice, equity and love. We are all striving to improve, add to or enrich the “whole community.” Access to quality homes, parks and jobs should be rights and not privileges.

As someone said during the retreat, we need to tell the world about “the good news.” Collectively, we need to offer our constituents, state and nation an alternate view to the tale of division, hurt and hatred. Our good news spanning from housing to environmental equity offers justice, enrichment, and growth. In short, we can offer a picture of the future that allows people to see themselves and cannot wait to “arrive.”

The process of reaching out beyond our individual, organizational or personal confines is both critical and at times deeply uncomfortable. Julian Agyeman and Kaylynn TwoTrees [yeast and meditation teacher, respectively, at Eric’s retreat] gave me language for this. First, Julian characterized the ability to effectively work across the divides of race, income, gender, and so on as “cultural competency.” That is, our visions and values may look and feel different across these divides, but if we take time to explore the “commons,” our achievements can and will be remarkable. Kaylynn described this process as “falling down and getting up.” In new and unfamiliar settings, we need to allow ourselves to stumble, learn and keep going.

As the father of two young children, I fully understand falling down and getting up.

Just as we must offer the world an alternate vision of “good news,” Peter and the remarkable staff at Center for Whole Communities provided retreat participants with a choice. We can pursue “business as usual” —making decisions, plans and enacting initiatives defined through myopic lenses, *or* we can consider the impact and possibilities for the wellness of the “whole community.” Habits are hard to change, but change begins with new vision, and my eyes are open in a new way.

Peter challenged us to articulate what we were taking home with us from the retreat. I left with deeply personal stories from, respect for and adventures with my colleagues. I came home with a badly carved hardwood spoon. Most of all, I left with a transformed awareness of my personal and professional visions and values. I departed with new awareness, like an acorn collected from the path up to the mountain yurt that was just beginning to crack open. Its roots can tap into deeply fertile soil and the oak can grow strong.

I have awakened to the shared vision and values I hold with so many others and can discuss while suspending judgment (try being from New Jersey and pulling this off), listening and growing professionally and personally in important and enriching ways.

I didn’t lose my passion for change or at times the need to aggressively pursue initiatives towards a more just and whole society. Instead, I found a more compassionate, inclusive and meaningful way to move forward without straying from my commitment to help shape a more just future. Finally, I must thank Michele Knapik and David Grant of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for their support and encouragement to attend the retreat.

*Eric Stiles is Vice President for Conservation and Stewardship at New Jersey Audubon Society.*



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## Alumni News

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**Ernie Atencio** of the Taos Land Trust won the national “Voice for the Land” award from The Wilderness Society (<http://taoslandtrust.org/Pages/voice.pdf>). Ernie has been involved in a collaboration among Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos Land Trust and Taos Valley Acequia Association called *De la Tierra a la Cosecha*, promoting profitable family farming and ranching and local food security, while helping sustain local lands and land-based culture.

**Scott Boettger** shares his news from Idaho: Wood River Land Trust has led the effort to create a Whole Communities group in Sun Valley that provides planning guidance that addresses community concerns with a regional perspective. Local member organizations include Wood River Land Trust, Advocates for Real Community Housing, Blaine Ketchum Housing Authority, Citizens for Smart Growth, the Environmental Resource Center, and Wood River Ride Share.

Newly elected New Hampshire Representative **David Borden** [Congratulations, David!] writes: “Dearly beloved fellow Vermonters, For reason known only to the gods, my district, which is 65 percent the other party, voted me in as state representative. Before Knoll Farm, I asked voters to tell me their concerns. Often drew a blank. After Knoll farm, I slowed way down to take time to listen to stories. Asked how long people had lived in the area, where they were from, what their maiden name was, etc. Tried to identify their ties to the land and the area, what they loved about the community. Also always got a resident of the neighborhood to go with me. You taught me the importance of all this. Now need to figure out how to change large numbers of minds using the wonderful way of Knoll Farm as my guide.”

**Gabriel Cumming** and **Carla Norwood** of Chapel Hill, NC were married on October 7, 2006. They spoke their vows on Carla’s family farm in Warren County, NC, and they are now working to turn that farm into an incubator of local ecological/social/economic transformation, drawing inspiration from Knoll Farm. They welcome input and visitors!

**Matt Daly** and his wife Cindy had their first child, Frank, on June 27th. When he’s not entertaining baby Frank this winter in snowy Jackson Hole, WY, Matt will be helping students write and perform slam poetry about their “ecological footprints.”

**Chris DeForest** of Spokane, WA and his wife had a baby boy, Robert Woodwell DeForest. Chris is taking some time off to

be with his wife and baby. He writes: “I’d like to credit Knoll Farm for giving me the setting and the freedom and the perspective to shed some responsibilities this past year, and take on fewer but more meaningful endeavors at work.” [And at home, bravo.]



**David Dion** from Waitsfield, VT is spearheading an interesting collaboration: The town’s economic development association, chamber of commerce, and regional planning district recently endorsed the idea of using Center For Whole Communities at Knoll Farm for a *Mad River Valley Vision 20/20* event. The objective will be to bring approximately 100 diverse Mad River Valley personalities together to begin a Mad River Valley master plan. The term Vision 20/20 is meant to connote what the Mad River Valley will look like in the year 2020 if we all had the benefit of 20/20 foresight.

**Steve Glazer** from White River Junction, VT writes: We held quest trainings in six states; and there are now quests in 14 states and three countries. This year *Questing: a Guide to Creating Community Treasure Hunts* was released as a paperback by the University Press of New England. For those of you who haven’t experienced a quest, it’s a powerful way to help people uncover and share their special places, natural & cultural heritage, and stories.

Alumnae **Krista Harness** of Montpelier, VT, **Jen Marlow** of Portland, OR, **Lisl Schoepflin** of Oakland, CA, and **Dahvi Wilson** of New Haven, CT, have been working with Flo Miller since September 2005 to plan a Next Generation Leadership Retreat at Knoll Farm for the summer of 2007. They are excited to offer Knoll Farm as a gathering place for emerging leaders in conservation and social justice.

**Joseph Kiefer** of Montpelier, VT writes: Food Works is in the early stages of a Capital Campaign to restore an 1836 farmstead and construct a new living traditions barn, solar greenhouse and bread oven. The Center supports the following programs: Foodbank Farm, Farm to Table, Food Education in Schools, Herbal Studies and Cultural Literacy.



**Jon Kohl** and his partner, Marisol are also growing deep roots on their land. They have joined with several other Costa Ricans to begin forming an ecovillage in Costa Rica called Querencia. His stay at Knoll Farm was an inspiration to their vision. As if he didn't have enough to do, Jon is currently working on his fourth spoon right now — spoon addicts take note!

**Bill Leahy** at Big Sur Land Trust shares that his group has moved into high gear incorporating the principles of the Center into their organization. He writes, "In October our board, staff and members of the community were treated to a couple of days of Whole Communities 101 [our Vision and Values Workshop], masterfully executed by Peter and Flo. Already, the board and staff have begun to speak confidently about the future of our organization. It is as if our work to date was somewhat mysterious and difficult to put words to. Now, all of a sudden, it is all too clear what our purpose is and where we need to go. In the next few weeks we will be taking what we have learned to define specifically what the vision and values of the trust should be as it relates to our community of Monterey County."

**Gil Livingston** will be the new president of the Vermont Land Trust starting in January '07, a change of leadership which marks a deeper organizational commitment to a set of "whole community" ethical principles. Peter and Gil continue to discuss how CWC and VLT can continue to support each other's work. CWC alumnus **John Roe**, formerly with The Nature Conservancy-VT, will replace Gil in his former role at VLT.

**Ron McAdow** of Concord, MA writes of a newspaper column called "Land Is Life," which you can read at [www.sudburyvalleytrustees.org](http://www.sudburyvalleytrustees.org). In addition to struggling to keep his bowl and spoon properly oiled, he has been busy writing a series of poems about the Missouri River and its people.

**Linda Mead** writes: In April of 2006, D&R Greenway opened the doors of the Johnson Education Center in a renovated c. 1900 barn located in Princeton, NJ. The center is designed as a conference facility, resource and networking center for those involved in land preservation and stewardship throughout the state. Through a partnership with Princeton University we offer conservation lectures to landowners and the public. Dr. Gerardo Ceballos of the University of Mexico recently spoke about D&R Greenway's sister land trust relationship with the Amigos de Calakmul.

**Curt Meine** of Prairie Du Sac, WI has been busy writing, speaking, teaching, and doing homegrown conservation work. The University of Wisconsin Press has now published *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* in paperback. He co-authored a feature article on the history of conservation biology for the journal *Conservation Biology*, and most recently wrote an essay on conservation and the urban-rural divide for Courtney White's Quivira Coalition Journal. But the highlight this year was a journey to the Cree Nation of Wemindji, on James Bay in Quebec, to compare and connect land ethic traditions.

**Kevin Peterson** writes: The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and *Northern Woodlands* magazine teamed up to publish *The Outside Story — Local Writers Explore the Nature of New Hampshire and Vermont* ([www.theoutsidestory.org](http://www.theoutsidestory.org)). The book is an anthology of essays on such ecological topics as acid rain and garter snake mating, native fish and exotic ladybugs, deeryards and deer hunting. Bill McKibben calls the book "the finest, and most timeless, almanac I've ever seen."

**Carmelo Ruiz** of San Juan, Puerto Rico has been keeping a heavy schedule of speaking engagements on the issues of biotechnology, globalization and ecology, as well as presenting his new book *Transgenic Ballad: Ecology, Globalization and the Clash of Paradigms* (so far available only in Spanish). Look for the English-language edition in 2007.

**Nancy Turkle** from Groton, MA writes of a community sustainability group in her town called Groton Local. They will be working on projects to localize their economy, food, (clean) energy, and transportation. They will be collaborating with Groton's land trust, the watershed association, the Grange, 4-H,

schools, the garden club, and other “locals.” She is using all of her tools and experiences from Knoll Farm retreats and workshops.

**Fred Tutman** of Upper Marlboro, MD recently held a watershed Summit for the Patuxent River. The event, which the Governor attended, was standing room only.

We heard from **Robin Underwood** of Huntersville, NC. Inspired by a week at Knoll Farm, she returned home and pulled together the land trust, community foundation and museum of culture & heritage to host a county-wide visioning luncheon. Innovative thinker and designer Bill McDonough will speak to the assembly of elected officials, governmental staff, environmental organizations, developers, Catawba Indians, and other citizens. On November 1, there were 137 diverse viewpoints packed under one roof!

Forest ecologist **Tom Wessels** of Putney, VT released a book last month, *The Myth of Progress: Toward a Sustainable Future*. Tom teaches at Antioch New England Graduate School. We are thrilled to announce that Tom will be joining the Center for Whole Communities board this January.

**Diana Winston** recently moved to Los Angeles to start a job as Director of Mindfulness Education at UCLA’s Mindful

Awareness Research Center out of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior [of which Helen’s father is the director, coincidentally]. You can find them at [www.marc.ucla.edu](http://www.marc.ucla.edu). She will be teaching mindfulness to UCLA, the general public, mental health professionals, community leaders, as well as children of all ages in and out of the school system. Congratulations to Diana on this huge new appointment!

“Because of the principles and practices I learned at Knoll Farm, I’m more attuned to reality and undercurrents, more open to new possibilities, and better able to respond from a place of balance and compassion. Oddly, I think a lot of this shift comes from learning to be more compassionate toward myself. Somehow, that opens up the space necessary for innovation and equanimity.”

–2006 retreat participant

### New Alumni Program – Apply for Small Grants!

This year we received generous funding from the Winifred Johnson Clive Foundation and the Johnson Family Foundation to expand the support we provide to our alumni. Toward that end, we will soon be offering:

- A brand new *small grants* program that will provide a handful of \$1,000 grants to alumni to support collaboration and storytelling. If you think you could use such seed money to document the stories of your work, start or maintain a collaboration with a community partner, or do any other kind of whole communities work, please *apply* by emailing Flo Miller (see below). We will need a brief description of your project, along with your answer to the following question: *What will you use the money for, and how will it help build a more whole community?* We will make decisions regarding the disbursement of the grants by March 15, 2007. Grantees will be asked either to write a brief report on their use of the grant or to submit the stories gathered through the project at the end of the year.
- A *quarterly e-newsletter* profiling innovative alumni projects, highlighting tools and resources to aid whole thinking and collaboration, and detailing upcoming Center for Whole Communities talks and workshops.
- Revamped *alumni pages* on our new website (coming soon), on which alumni can blog and upload photos.
- *Alumni gatherings* at such events as the Land Trust Alliance Rally, the Community Food Security Coalition and the Bioneers conference, where alumni can re-connect or meet each other and share stories of their whole communities work.

For questions or suggestions regarding our alumni program, please email Flo at [flo@wholecommunities.org](mailto:flo@wholecommunities.org).

## Alumni of 2006 Retreats



Kathy Abbott, Cambridge, MA  
 Julian Agyeman, Cambridge, MA  
 Erika Allen, Chicago, IL  
 Adrian Ayson, Woodstock, VT  
 Mollie Babize, Ashfield, MA  
 Leonard Barrett, Portland, OR  
 Joanna Bitter, Claremont, NH  
 J. Blaine Bonham, Jr, Philadelphia, PA  
 David Borden, New Castle, NH  
 Virginia Bowers, Portland, OR  
 Regan Brooks, Jamaica Plain, MA  
 Katherine Brown, Providence, RI  
 Rebecca Brown, Sugar Hill, NH  
 Tsilah Burman, Los Angeles, CA  
 Donald Campbell, Bennington, VT  
 David Carr, Jr., Charlottesville, VA  
 Patricia Cheeks, Charlottesville, VA  
 Jon Christensen, Palo Alto, CA  
 Susan Clark, Middlesex, VT  
 Ted Clement, Portsmouth, RI  
 George Cofer, Austin, TX  
 Johari Cole, Momence, IL  
 John Cook, Little Compton, RI  
 Elizabeth Courtney, Montpelier, VT  
 Gabriel Cumming, Durham, NC  
 Kevin Dahl, Tucson, AZ  
 David Dion, Waitsfield, VT  
 Suzanne Easton, Napa, CA  
 Robert Etgen, Queenstown, MD  
 Carolyn Finney, Natick, MA  
 April Ford, Los Angeles, CA  
 John Francis, Pt. Reyes Station, CA  
 Stef Frenzl, Everett, WA  
 Joy Garland, New York, NY  
 Steve Glazer, Thetford Center, VT  
 Kavitha Rao, Tivoli, NY  
 Veta Goler, Stone Mountain, GA

Antoinette Gomez, Kennett Square, PA  
 Hannah Gosnell, Corvallis, OR  
 Deb Habib, Orange, MA  
 Keenan Haley, Bethel, VT  
 John Halsey, Southampton, NY  
 Rob Hanson, South Pomfret, VT  
 Krista Harness, Montpelier, VT  
 Deborah Ohler Hinman, Acworth, NH  
 Julie Fall Hinman, West Hartford, VT  
 Lisa Hjelm, Sugar Hill, NH  
 Roy Hoagland, Midlothian, VA  
 Kathy Hooke, Vershire, VT  
 Jennifer Hopkins, Canterbury, NH  
 Dana Hudson, Middlesex, VT  
 Fran Hunt, Arlington, VA  
 Melanie Ingalls, Sharon, MA  
 Julie Isbill, Brunswick, ME  
 Jan-Willem Jansens, Santa Fe, NM  
 Wendy Johnson, Muir Beach, CA  
 Cynthia Jurs, Santa Fe, NM  
 Claudia Kern, Lyme, NH  
 Cheryl King Fischer, Montpelier, VT  
 Renee Kivikko, Scotts, MI  
 Matthew Kolan, Burlington, VT  
 William H. Leahy, Pacific Grove, CA  
 Paul LeVasseur, Putney, VT  
 Marcy Mahr, Kila, MT  
 Sally Mansur, Strafford, VT  
 Christina Marts, Tunbridge, VT  
 Ron McAdow, Concord, MA  
 Susannah McCandless, Vergennes, VT  
 Lelia Mellen, Thetford Center, VT  
 Deborah Mendelsohn, Duncan, AZ  
 Catherine Murray, Johnson City, TN  
 Gala Narezo, New York, NY  
 David D. Nelson, Afton, MN  
 Melissa Nelson, Mill Valley, CA

Sara O'Neal, Montgomery, AL  
 Susan Ornelas, Arcata, CA  
 Na'Taki Osborne, Atlanta, GA  
 Classie Parker, New York, NY  
 Audrey Peterman, Atlanta, GA  
 Frank Peterman, Atlanta, GA  
 Kevin Peterson, Lyme, NH  
 Sharon Plumb, Berlin, VT  
 Linda Poole, Dodson, MT  
 The Rev. Carla Pryne, Seattle, WA  
 Michael Quinn, White River Junction, VT  
 Kristin Rothballer, San Francisco, CA  
 Sarah Ruef-Lindquist, Camden, ME  
 Georgita Ruiz, Lomas Bezares, Mexico CP  
 Enrique Salmon, San Anselmo, CA  
 Scott Sanders, Bloomington, IN  
 Santikaro, Norwalk, WI  
 Miguel Santistevan, Taos, NM  
 Deborah Schoenbaum, San Rafael, CA  
 Doreen Schweizer, Lebanon, NH  
 William Shell, New Bedford, MA  
 Pete Sibley, Jackson, WY  
 Michelle K. Smith, Asheville, NC  
 David Sobel, Harrisville, NH  
 Eric Stiles, Bernardsville, NJ  
 James Sullivan, Halifax, NS  
 Jim Thorne, Media, PA  
 Louise M. Tritton, Haverford, PA  
 Fred Tutman, Upper Marlboro, MD  
 Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees, Ojai, CA  
 Robin Underwood, Huntersville, NC  
 Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey, Holyoke, MA  
 Erica Wheeler, Colrain, MA  
 Cyndy Whiteford, Afton, MN  
 Kenneth Wright, Fort Washington, MD



## Our Alumni Represent the Following Organizations

Acworth Conservation Commission, Alaska Rainforest Campaign, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust, Antioch New England Graduate School, Appalachian Mountain Club, Aquidneck Land Trust, Association of Vermont Recyclers, Barr Foundation, Baskahegan Company, Bay Area Open Space Council, Berens River First Nation, Big Sur Land Trust, Bioneers, Bradford Conservation Commission, Brandywine Conservancy, Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition, Building for the Minds—Gardens for the Soul, California Coastal Conservancy, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, Center for Environmental Science and Policy, Cherokee Forest Voices, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Colman Academy Charter Public School, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, Common Fire Foundation, Commonweal Conservancy, Community Food Security Coalition, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, Conservation de la Nature Canada, D&R Greenway Land Trust, District of Columbia Housing Choice Voucher Project, Dogwood Alliance, Earth Ministry, Earthworks Institute, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Eddy Foundation, Environmental Justice Solutions, Five Valleys Land Trust, Food Works, Friends of Flagstaff's Future, Friends of the Highline, Gathering Waters Conservancy, Georgia Conservancy, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Global Living Project, Green Impact Environmental Consulting, Greenfaith, Greenleaf Collaboration, Groton Conservation Trust, Groton Local, Growing Power, Highfields Farm, Hill Country Conservancy, Indigenous Community Enterprises, Inland Northwest Land Trust, Innovative Natural Resource Solutions LLC, Inside Passages, Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy, Institute for Social Ecology, International Crane Foundation, Intervale Foundation, Island Institute, Iyabo Farm, Jacoby Creek Land Trust, Just Food, Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation, Land Trust Alliance, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, Liberation Park, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Land Trust Network, Manhattan Land Trust/Five Star Garden, Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Marin Conservation Corps, Martha Jefferson Hospital, Mass. Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, Massachusetts Riverways Program, Mesa Land Trust, Middlebury College, Midwest Organic & Sustainable Ed. Service, Moosehead Region Futures Committee, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Mount Holyoke College, National Audubon Society, National Park Service, National Wildlife Federation, Native Seeds/SEARCH, Natural Lands Trust, Neighborhood Gardens Association, New Hampshire Audubon, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, \*New Jersey Audubon Society, New Mexico Acequia Association, New Mexico Farmers' Association, Northern Forest Alliance, Northern Forest Center, NPS Conservation Studies Institute, Open Space Protection Collaboration, Panta Rhea Foundation, Patuxent Riverkeeper, Peconic Land Trust, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Planet Walk, Pomfret School, Project Learning Tree, Puerto Rico Project on Biosafety, QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, Quivira

Coalition, River Fields, Inc., San Francisco Zen Center, Science and Environmental Health Network, Seacoast Land Trust, Seeds of Solidarity, Sharon Elementary School, Shelburne Farms, Snohomish County, Society for the Protection of N.H. Forests, Southern California Chaparral Field Institute, Southern Environmental Law Center, Southside Community Land Trust, Spelman College, State of Vermont, Stevens High School, Stone Circles, Strafford Conservation



Commission, Student Conservation Association, Stuyvesant Cove Park Association, Inc., Sudbury Valley Trustees, Sustainable Northwest, Sustainable Obtainable Solutions, Sycamore Land Trust, Tall Timbers Research Station, Taos Land Trust, Tapestry, Teton Sustainability Project, The City Repair Project, The Conservation Fund, The Cultural Conservancy, The Heron Group, LLC, The Kenian Group Diversity Consultants, The Nature Conservancy, The School for International Training, The Trustees of Reservations, The Wilderness Center, Inc., The Wilderness Society, The Yurt Foundation, Three Rivers Land Conservancy, True Nature Consulting, Trust for Public Land, Tufts University, Two Countries, One Forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UNC Chapel Hill, Union Trust, Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth, University of Arizona, University of Vermont, Upper Valley Region NH Charitable Foundation, Urban Ecology Institute, Valley Insight Meditation Society, Vermont Earth Institute, Vermont Family Forests, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Natural Resources Council, The Mountain School, Vinalhaven Land Trust, Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Vital Communities, Vox Biologica, VT Youth Conservation Corps, Walter Cudnohufsky and Association, Wellsley College, West Harlem Environmental Action, WildLaw, Wood River Land Trust, Woodbury College, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, York Land Trust, Zen Center of Los Angeles

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## Staff News

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Though we are still a small team, working in the farmhouse at Knoll Farm, there are significant changes and news to report from our staff this year. We said goodbye to **Cara Robeck** on November 17, with sorrow and great gratitude. She helped us incorporate the nonprofit, form our first board and organize our first programs. Luckily she won't be far away, but we will miss her!



Cara writes: After almost three years at Whole Communities, I am leaving to spend more time with my baby boy Callum. I will also be teaching environmental science, ethics, and economics courses for two of the Vermont State Colleges. It was an honor to be at Whole Communities in its early years and to meet so many of the amazing people who come through Knoll Farm. I am excited for the new challenges and opportunities I am taking on, but will miss the vibrant environment at the Center.

As Cara leaves, we are thrilled to welcome two new members to our staff:

**Adrian Ayson** joins us as our first Director of Operations. With many years working for environmental organizations large and small, Adrian was most recently Director of Education for Massachusetts Audubon and for the Vermont Institute of Natural Science.

Last summer, after graduating early from UVM and completing an internship at the Murie Center, **Libby McDonald** joined our summer retreat staff. We were delighted she accepted our offer to stay and work full-time in the office as our new Program Assistant.

In further staff news, **Flo Miller** was in California this fall, where she was happy to see many Whole Communities alumni at the Bioneers conference. She also spent two days with the Big Sur Land Trust's staff, board and community partners at a Vision and Values Workshop. She writes, "it was terrifically inspiring to see the land trust engage in such productive dialogue with members of the community they strive to serve."

**Chris Paterson** has also been traveling this fall. He writes: "It has been a year filled with meeting new people; hearing stories of relationship between land, place and community; and exploring how we can measure and describe the fuller impacts of our work and, in the process, engage in the restoration of wholeness in our lives and communities. Thank you to everyone who shared their time, stories and wisdom!"

**Peter** traveled extensively in the fall, seeing alumni in California, Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. Peter brought our theories of change to many hundreds by giving talks at the Child in Nature Conference, Growing Green Cities Conference, the National Land Trust Rally, the Quivira Coalition Annual Summit, and the Chesapeake Watershed Forum. **Helen** studied permaculture in California this fall, and also joined the board of the Northeast Organic Farmer's Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT). Together Peter and Helen had the great pleasure of making a personal trip to Alaska in December to see friends and alumni.

At **Knoll Farm**, we are taking advantage of an unusually mild fall — after a very wet and chilly summer (we no longer wonder what all this means!). Although we're all beginning to long for snow, the warm weather has allowed us to harvest many varieties of greens, leeks, carrots, herbs and Brussels sprouts from the gardens well into December. Our village started a Thanksgiving farmer's market tradition this year, as the local food movement continues to catch fire.

Speaking of food, **Jean Hamilton** and **Caleb Elder**, chefs of Center for Whole Communities, attended Terra Madre "the world meeting of food communities" organized by Slow Food in Turin, Italy, this October. Since then they have been traveling around Italy with the WWOOF (World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) program. Already, their travels have taken them from olive harvesting in Tuscany to kiwi harvesting near Rome. They'll continue to travel and work in Italy until the end of May, when they'll return for another summer season at Knoll Farm. They hope to share with everyone at CWC some of the traditional Italian recipes they're learning.

## National Programs Report

### Measures of Health

It has been an exciting and rewarding year for our work with Measures of Health. We have had the honor to engage with leaders from a wide variety of movements and organizations around such questions as, “What is a whole community?” and “How do our definitions and tools for measuring success help or hinder creating whole communities?” The Working

**“The [Vision and Values] workshop was inspiring, relevant and incredibly important to the future direction of our work.”**

—Participant Vision and Values workshop

Conference on Measures of Health at the Penn Center in South Carolina contributed both inspiration and a conceptual foundation for our subsequent work with many other people in producing version 5.0 of Measures of Health.

In our on-going effort to make Measures of Health more accessible to a wide variety of people and projects, we developed an online version of the tool. Along with video clips from the Penn Center Conference, this is now available at our new Measures of Health website: [www.measuresofhealth.net](http://www.measuresofhealth.net). Check it out and let us know what you think!

We are now embarking on a new adventure — working with a select number of conservation organizations to adopt Measures of Health as a primary component of their visioning, planning and evaluation processes. Over the coming year, we look forward to documenting the positive impacts Measures of Health has on the work of land conservation organizations, while continuing to receive feedback on the tool.



### Vision and Values Workshops

Through these two-and-a-half day workshops, we help conservation organizations around the country to think about future growth and success in the context of changing landscapes. Participants look beyond the natural landscape to the dramatic changes that have been taking place in our political, social, economic and demographic landscapes. Being more responsive to these issues will have a tremendous bearing on conservation success. Through dialogue focused on values and broad vision, the workshops help conservation groups learn how to become the force in American culture that they can and ought to be.

Recently we have conducted workshops for groups including the Big Sur Land Trust, Pennsylvania’s Natural Lands Trust, Land Trust Alliance members, and the Kulshan Community Land Trust. For more information about our Vision and Values program, contact Flo Miller at [flo@wholecommunities.org](mailto:flo@wholecommunities.org).

### Looking Forward to 2007:

We’re gearing up for our most ambitious year ever with a full schedule of retreats, workshops and forums around the country. Highlights include five Whole Thinking Retreats, a retreat for the grantees of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation,

**“What I like about Measures of Health is that it is value based and cross disciplinary and requires participants to think beyond their organizational missions and boundaries to evaluate the impact of their work.”**

—Marion Kane, Executive Director, Barr Foundation

a retreat to help the conservation community frame meaningful, practical response to global climate change, and a gathering of the “next generation” of leaders in the movement for whole communities.

In addition to these retreats, we will be conducting six to eight Vision and Values Workshops around the country, many of which will be open to our alumni and their colleagues.

We will also be working intensively with 15 land-based organizations to help them adopt Measures of Health and to become more effective social change organizations. This is our strategic effort to target change within the leadership of the conservation community as we prepare for a high visibility roll-out in 2007 of this new tool for describing the path to creating whole communities.

## Whole Communities Bookstore

### Just Released!

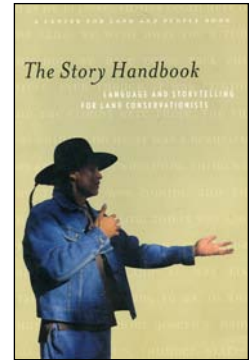
***What is a Whole Community: A Letter to Those Who Care for and Restore the Land***  
by Peter Forbes © 2006

In this new essay, written as a letter to the conservation movement, Peter Forbes asks those who love and care for the land to see that the world is changing and that conservationists risk being left behind. Every conservation organization in America today has both moral and strategic reasons to re-think why and for whom they are doing their work. Peter Forbes asks the conservation movement to rise to today's challenges with new approaches, new tools, and a new vision for success, and to look at these challenges as opportunities to see beyond the way things are; as a chance for re-invention." / \$12.95 (\$10/copy for 10 or more books)



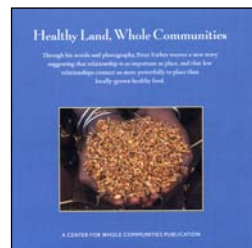
***The Story Handbook: Language and Storytelling for Conservationists***  
Edited by Helen Whybrow © 2002

In *The Story Handbook*, contributors Tim Ahern, William Cronon, John Elder, Peter Forbes, Barry Lopez, and Scott Russell Sanders help us think about the power of stories of people and place, and how those stories can advance the work of land conservation toward creating meaningful change in our culture. / \$14.95



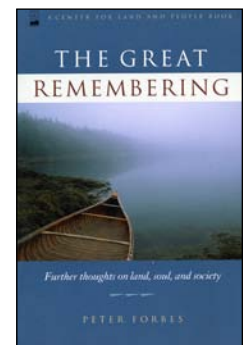
### *Healthy Land, Whole Communities*

This Whole Communities publication is part of an ongoing series showing the interconnections between all the ways we steward the land and the health and strength of our communities. The DVD features Peter Forbes' keynote address at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont's 2005 winter conference and includes beautiful photography and footage of Knoll Farm. / \$10.00



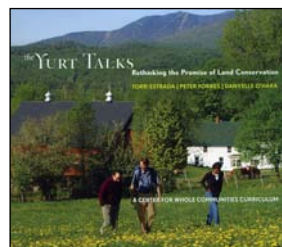
***The Great Remembering: Further Thoughts on Land, Soul, and Society***  
By Peter Forbes © 2001

*The Great Remembering* is an activist's exploration of what land means to our culture. In three chapters, "The Extinction of Experience," "Dissent and Defiance," and "Building a New Commons," the author traces the roots of our disconnection from place and from meaningful stories about our lives. / \$14.95



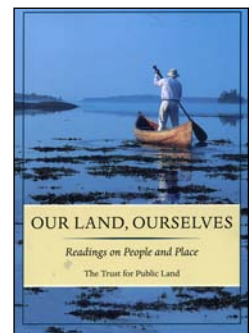
### ***The Yurt Talks: Rethinking the Promise of Land Conservation***

This 2-CD set features Peter Forbes, Torri Estrada and Danyelle O'Hara in discussion around the need to understand the power of land to us as individuals as a step toward understanding the power of land to our culture. This is the closest thing we have to reproducing the dialogues that happen in the mountain yurt during our Whole Thinking Retreats. / \$14.00



***Our Land, Ourselves: Readings on People and Place***  
By Peter Forbes © 1999

*Our Land, Ourselves* is a collection of diverse readings on the many themes of people and place — themes such as the protection of wilderness and the idea of the wild, the nature of home, the purpose of work, and the meaning of community. These voices suggest a new way of viewing land conservation as the process of building values and positively shaping human lives. / \$16.95



### ***Coming to Land in a Troubled World***

Essays by Peter Forbes, Kathleen Dean Moore and Scott Russell Sanders © 2003

In three powerful essays, three influential writers and thinkers—Scott Russell Sanders, Peter Forbes and Kathleen Dean Moore—provide new insights into the promise of land conservation in our present world. Through its deep examination of the value of land to our culture and our souls, *Coming to Land* gives us new approaches and new hope to work to heal the great divisions and losses we see around us each day. / \$16.95



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## With Thanks to our Funders

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the funders who have made it possible for us to hold tuition-free retreats at Knoll Farm and to run our national programs this year:

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and the more than 100 individuals who have donated generously to us this year.

“The “whole thinking” approach made me much more aware of the connection between environmental justice and land conservation. It gave me a greater awareness of who is *not* at the table when thinking about master planning for a community or a parcel of land. It continues to suggest what questions to ask, and challenges me to ask them. Where I had anticipated being challenged to change direction or focus in work, instead I find myself open to understand projects in a new light.”

—2006 retreat participant

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### Internships available at Center for Whole Communities

*Do you know of anyone who would love to spend a summer working on the land and being part of a dynamic learning community?* The work of our land crew is to assist growing and harvesting organic vegetables for the retreats; building trails in the forest; maintaining our campsites, solar bathhouse and forest yurt; helping to host visitors to the farm; providing kitchen staff support, and being a positive and energetic part of our community as a whole.

Qualifications include a passion for working outdoors, an interest in agriculture, whole foods, and environmental issues, and the ability to remain flexible and positive. Must be able to set priorities, work long hours and be a self-starter. For the right person this is the chance to be working outside in a beautiful, rewarding, and stimulating place. Please send inquiries to Helen@wholecommunities.org.



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## What It Comes Down To

If I could  
anchor myself  
here  
and go down  
deeper and deeper  
in this one  
place

a time would  
come, perhaps  
when I could  
penetrate  
even this unyielding  
indifferent earth,  
find here  
what remains  
unknown:

a name  
for the nameless  
absence  
we seek to fill

an end  
or point  
to our own long  
absence  
from home.

—Gary Holthaus,  
from *An Archaeology of Home*

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