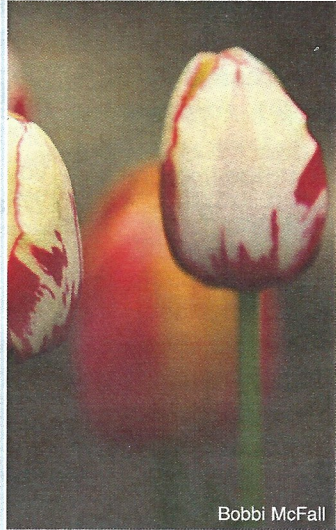


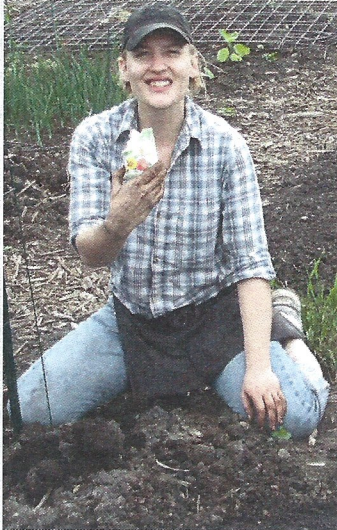
*center for*  
Earth Spirituality  
& Rural Ministry

SPRING 2011

# EARTH ALMANAC



Bobbi McFall



a ministry of  
**School Sisters of Notre Dame**

*Earth Education*

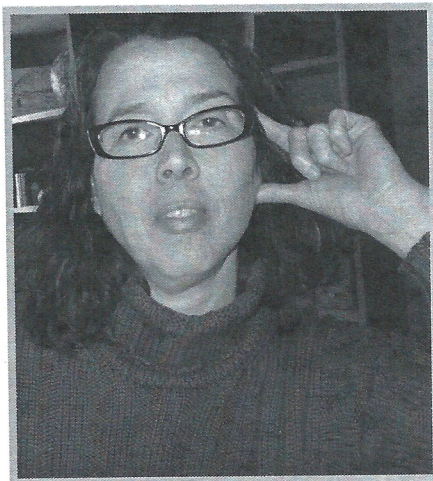


*center for*  
Earth Spirituality & Rural Ministry

170 Good Counsel Drive, Mankato, MN 56001  
507-389-4272  
lcoons@ssndmankato.org

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE





**OH, THE IRREPRESSIBLE LIFE** force of spring! We're surrounded by new growth emerging, pushing through mud, last fall's forgotten leaves and reaching for the warmth of the ever increasing strength of the sun. The birds are wild! Zooming from tree to tree, singing and frolicking, the birds are awakened to a new season of life and we, too, begin to feel the energy in us building. Children running down sun-warmed sidewalks and muddy backyards in bare feet,

coats thrown aside – skipping along with the sheer joy of being alive. After the bone-chilling winds of winter, the gentle southern breezes are welcome relief as we turn our faces to the warmth of the sun, closing our eyes and soaking it all up. The daylight grows longer and longer and our own sense of time begins to change. All of our senses awaken to this newness.

The sights and sounds of spring are astonishing in their contrast to the monochromatic landscape of winter from which we emerge each spring. Every year, I admit, I am surprised, overjoyed and even, at times, overwhelmed at this life force. I can't seem to get my hands in the dirt soon enough and yet I'm not quite ready to give up the quiet calm of winter. As spring days feature a balance in light and dark, we seek balance in our lives, too. Our creativity begins to stretch toward new growth just as new shoots begin their journey up and out of the soil. We shed our protective winter gear and our protective

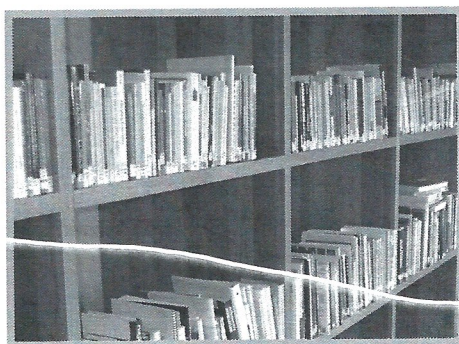
winter homes and we walk the neighborhood again perhaps even strolling – so unlike our winter pace to and from the house. Soon enough we will be seeking shade instead of sun but for now in these spring days, the sun calls us to step outside, perhaps to step outside our areas of comfort and into something new. Spring is a wonderful time to look inward. What beckons you this season? What are you growing toward these days? What roots are you sending out to anchor you?

We look forward to new projects, new endeavors and new connections with you each spring here at the Center for Earth Spirituality. You can follow us on the web at [www.ssndmankato.org/earth](http://www.ssndmankato.org/earth) or on Facebook. \*

Happy springtime to you!

Organically yours—  
**LISA**  
[lcoons@ssndmankato.org](mailto:lcoons@ssndmankato.org)

## RESOURCE LIBRARY



CESRM Resource Library

**WE HAVE A RESOURCE LIBRARY** chock full of great books on sustainability, gardening, earth spirituality and many DVDs – **all available to check-out!**

If you can't get to the library during day time hours but want to browse our books and DVDs, we have **NEW HOURS** Tuesday and Thursday evenings 4 p.m.-7 p.m.

We are located on the campus of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Come to the stop sign at the top of Good Counsel Hill, turn right and park. Enter under the large white and blue canopy, go upstairs to the main desk and let them know you are here for the Center's library. They'll direct you from there. We have comfy chairs for relaxing with a cup of tea while you're here.

### SOME OF OUR NEWER TITLES:

***Edible Wild Plants***

by John Kallas

***Take Back Your Time***

by John de Graff, ed.

***A Nation of Farmers***

by Sharon Astyk and Aaron Newton

***Food and Faith***

by Michael Schut

***Radical Homemakers***

by Shannon Hayes

***Farmer Jane***

by Temra Costa

***Unbowed***

by Wangari Maathai

***Root Cellaring***

by Mike and Nancy Bubel

***Food Not Lawns***

by H.C. Flores

***Toolbox for Sustainable City***

***Living*** by Kellogg and Pettigrew

***Depletion and Abundance:***

***Life on the New Homefront***

by Sharon Astyk

***Backyard Homestead***

by Carleen Madigan

### DVDs

Farming Forward

Collapse

Dirt! The Movie

The Story of Stuff

*And many more!* \*



# STEPS TO ADVOCACY: TAKE TWO

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN, SSND, CENTER CO-DIRECTOR



**ONE OFTEN UNKNOWN** aspect of our work at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry

(CESRM) is advocacy. Advocacy can be described as an act of speaking or writing in support of someone or something, or to promote, endorse, champion someone(s), or a cause. But before we delve further into this reflection, I share a comic strip from the Peanut's Gang. This strip involves Snoopy and Linus and it has four frames. In the first frame we see Linus coming to Snoopy, who is perched very comfortably on his doghouse roof. Linus looks very distressed and says while looking ahead and pointing: "That cat has my blanket!" Second Frame: Snoopy looks in the direction that Linus is pointing and thinks: "That is a BIG CAT!" Third frame: Linus looking very trustingly and hopeful at Snoopy, asks: "How are we going to get the blanket back?" Last Frame: Snoopy look at the reader and thinks: "WE?"

The reader realizes that Snoopy understands the importance of the blanket to Linus, but the big cat scares his involvement to help him. This time advocacy for or with Linus is seemingly questioned. We may chuckle about this comic strip, and maybe at the same time know Snoopy's feelings and hesitation as our own.

I offer this comic strip as a way to begin a reflection on advocacy and our willingness to be a part of it. Our members are among those who believe in our solidarity with all. Because we strive to understand that all species are connected in the web of life, we desire to support that life, have compassion for all, and with our resources of time talent and material goods seek justice where we can. Therefore advocacy on behalf of our companions in this Earth Community is essential to who we are.

There are many ways to be an advocate, but I find this description helpful. It is the "two steps" description. The idea of this description is that normally, we need two feet to walk or get somewhere. So it is with advocacy.

**One step of advocacy is to provide direct and basic need. Examples of this are many:**

- Offering a service for or with other human beings such as: volunteering at a food shelf to supply meals; supporting a child by being a great foster parent; assisting a dependent elder with cleaning, financial expertise; sandbagging to prevent flooding in one's community.
- Sustaining species, such as: keeping chemicals off of lawns and water supply, gardening in a sustainable way, composting, eating more foods that are grown locally, membership in a CSA or Food Coop.

Direct service is extremely important because it helps provide a basic need right now, a need that requires immediate results.

**The other step of advocacy is action to promote systemic change that will benefit our community for the long term. Examples of this could be:**

- Collaborating with others to promote affordable housing or reform in immigration laws,
- Contacting legislators to support bills that promote sustainable land practices.
- Boycotting companies who have unfair labor or environmental practices thereby calling them to better ethical standards.

**For many of us this step of advocacy is the most challenging.**

The concern or issue is huge and seems too overwhelming to confront. We are less likely to see instant results of our efforts. We need to deal respectfully with others who disagree with our goals or have different values. To be most effective, we need to take time to educate ourselves about the issue or cause of our advocacy and find ways to collaborate with others to promote them. In the short term, we don't always win, so we need persistence, courage, faithfulness and lots of humor to continue the effort.

We of CESRM want to take both steps. We strive to highlight and

continued on next page



strengthen our opportunity to join others in systemic change.

As one-way to do this, we want to provide an email network in which, when an action is needed to promote sustainability, we can inform our members who would like to participate. Most probably the action would be to contact local, state or national leaders about a bill that is pending or a rally or letter writing organized to promote the action needed. At the most, we would send out such an email 2-3 times a month, and the email would include only important information to help one understand the position being taken. We would rely on reliable organizations for that information, such as these: Land Stewardship Project, Fresh Energy, Friends of the Mississippi, CURE (Clean Up the River Environment), The Institute for Ag and Trade Policy and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The more of us who can participate in such a network, the more impact we can create. Will you join us? If so, please send your email address to Kathleen Mary Kiemen at [kkiemenssnd@yahoo.com](mailto:kkiemenssnd@yahoo.com).

There are many "BIG CATS" in our community that oppose or frustrate sustainable practices. They may seem scary to deal with. However with support among ourselves, we can challenge them! Here is one way:

BE ON THE CESRM  
ADVOCACY NETWORK.

CONTACT  
me soon.

## UPCOMING SPRING EVENTS

### ■ RE-SKILLING WORKSHOP –

**"Healthy Lawns: Grow a Beautiful Chemical-Free Lawn"**

**Wednesday, April 20th, 6 p.m.**

**Presented by Mara Natrakul**

from the Mankato Healthy Lawns Team.

Lawn workshop held in the historic Red Barn atop Good Counsel Hill. Sliding scale fee suggested \$10-\$20. (*more if you can, less if you can't.*)

### ■ GREEN BOOK CLUB –

***The Town that Food Saved:***

***How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food*** by Ben Hewitt

**Wednesday, April 27th at 6 p.m.**

Ultimately about hope, this smart and humorous book explores the complexities of today's food movement. If you care about food, local economies, sustainable agriculture and revitalizing community, you should read this book!

Join us for a lively discussion. (*RSVP attendance, please*)

**For more information or to RSVP** contact

Lisa at 507-389-4272 [lcoons@ssndmankato.org](mailto:lcoons@ssndmankato.org).

## OUR SUSTAINABLE GARDEN SERIES

*Suggested donation for workshops \$10-\$20*

*(more if you can, less if you can't.)*

*Garden workshops held in the historic Red Barn atop Good Counsel Hill.*

### ■ "RAIN GARDENS: GOOD FOR YOU, GOOD FOR THE EARTH,"

**Saturday, April 30th, 10 a.m.-11a.m.**

Join us as we welcome local engineer and rain garden enthusiast Chantill Kahler-Royer.

Easy to maintain and beautiful to look at, rain gardens, generally planted with native plants, are areas where storm water is captured and allowed to infiltrate into the ground. These specialized gardens serve to minimize negative impacts from excess runoff into lakes and streams. This workshop is for anyone who cares about water quality in Minnesota!

### ■ "THE NO WORK, NO WEED, NO WATER GARDEN,"

**Saturday, May 7th, 10 a.m.-a.m.**

Whether you are new to gardening or well-seasoned, this workshop offers something for you. We'll discuss easy strategies to save you time, money and effort in the garden.

### ■ "VERTICAL GARDENING"

**Thursday, May 12, 6 p.m.**

**Presented by Master Gardener Barb Lamson.**

Save space and work in your garden by growing up instead of out! We will discuss a variety of options for vertical frames that are inexpensive and easy to put together as well as the great advantages of growing vegetables vertically.



# FOOD PRESERVATION TOOL LIBRARY UPDATE

BY LISA COONS, CENTER CO-DIRECTOR

## ONE OF THE WAYS WE'RE INSPIRING FOLKS

to use a fairer share of Earth's resources is through our educational Re-skilling workshops are proving truly transformational.

Re-skilling is a term borrowed from the Transition Movement that strives to ease the transition away from fossil fuels and into a life where using a fairer share of Earth's resources is the goal.

One of these skills is basic food preservation – canning, freezing and dehydration of foods to eat when those foods aren't readily available. One of our Board members assisted in writing and securing a grant so we might stock a food preservation tool library. (Tool libraries are like regular books and magazine libraries except tools are checked out by users.) Over the past few months we've purchased water bath canners, pressure canners, dehydrators, sauce makers, piters, peelers, jar lifters, books and a lot more. We have all the equipment a person needs for preserving the harvest during the height of the season! Bringing local food to our tables year round empowers us to eat better and to eat cheaper (the cost of your own canned organic pasta sauce is no where what you pay in the stores!).

And it empowers us to be part of the reworking of a food system based on increasingly costly inputs in the way of chemical fertilizers, transportation and carbon footprint. Stocking up on abundant local foods for winter eating enables us to lesson our carbon footprints and to cut back on greenhouse gases emitted at every stage of the food system. Eating from our own "foodshed" (think: watershed) allows us to vastly reduce fossil fuels needed to plant, spray, harvest, ship, refrigerate, process, package and deliver foods from across the country or across the globe. This all adds up



to better health for us, for our families, for our communities and for our planet.

Mindful of using fewer resources, our tool library users will be able to harvest the sun's power directly when they opt to use, in addition to the high efficiency electric equipment we've purchased), a solar dehydrator or a solar oven. Both

these tools are amazingly simple to use and will be part of our tool library.

All these tool resources will be available to our 130 community garden families as well as anyone else in the community. Information about how to check out equipment will be published soon. \*

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

We have many people to thank for their generous donations of time, talents and thoughtfulness toward our work. We are grateful for how the following people and organizations have expanded and enriched our work over the past several months.

LaDonna Anderson  
Anika Cristwell  
Linda Engstrom  
Mary Feist  
Melissa Martensen

Jeanne Myron  
Mara Natrakul  
Dorothy Olinger, SSND  
Becky Rossow  
Heidi Thompson

True Value Hardware



# REAL RECIPES:

## REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE

Spring is the season of endless salads – especially if you grow your own. The variety of color, texture and taste is amazing! And don't forget to add some wild edibles to your salads. Baby dandelion greens (harvest before the plant flowers), lambs quarters leaves (also known as wild spinach) or purslane harvested from an unsprayed area are surprisingly delicious!

Nothing can ruin the experience of a sweet, delicate salad gathered fresh from the garden than a heavy dressing. Instead try a light dressing made from simple ingredients. Here are two easy recipes to get your taste buds excited!



### HERB VINAIGRETTE DRESSING

The stand-by at our house, it's better than anything coming out of a bottle!

- ½ c. olive or vegetable oil
- 1/3 c. cider, red wine or balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp. basil
- ¼ tsp. thyme
- ¼ tsp. oregano
- ½ tsp. dill
- 1 clove garlic finely minced or pressed
- ½ tsp salt
- A few cranks of pepper or a generous pinch

Dump all the ingredients in a jar, put on the lid and shake. Note: the herbs amounts assume dried but if you have fresh herbs in the garden, use those (double the amount) instead! When stored in the fridge, the olive oil will harden so will need a few minutes to reliquify before using. This doesn't affect flavor or quality.

### POPPY SEED DRESSING

- 2/3 c. sugar (1/3 c., if you opt to use honey)
- ¾ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- 1/3 c. cider vinegar
- ½ tsp. green onion or red onion (red onion gives it a beautiful pink hue)
- 1 c. canola oil
- 1 ½ tsp. poppy seeds

Put all ingredients in blender except the oil. Very slowly blend oil in until all is mixed.

Toss spring salad greens (spinach, lettuce, baby greens, dandelion greens or lambs quarters



leaves) with ½ cup green onions or garlic chives. Cut up fresh strawberries and mushrooms and arrange on top. Pour dressing over the top and enjoy!

Recipe contributor Joan Osborne notes, "This dressing is very good over any fruit, lettuce, spinach, nuts, craisins..." I can imagine it over a pasta salad or used to jazz up potato salad. \*

### STAFF:

Lisa Coons, Co-Director

Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND, Co-Director

#### Center Advisory Board:

Monika Antonelli

Deborah Bauer

Scott Kudelka

Barb Lamson

Christal Lustig

Paul Prew

Lynn Rozen

Jeanne Wingenter, SSND