



2022 NEWSLETTER

# EARTH ALMANAC



*Earth Education*

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION



170 GOOD COUNSEL DRIVE  
MANKATO, MN 56001-3138

SHARING COMMON GROUND, CULTIVATING CONNECTION

# ACTING IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

BY LAURA PETERSON, LEC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I was speaking to a friend the other day about the notion of transition - moving from one space to the next (physically, emotionally, socially, collectively). While some transitions are seamless, the big ones necessary to grow or advance are often long, uncomfortable, and challenging. They come with a healthy dose of uncertainty, grief, and, in some cases, fear but are powerful spaces for the birth of change.

Transition is needed to evolve and progress. It is required to grow new ideas, systems, and approaches. We are seeing unprecedented transition now on both macro and micro levels that call for us to dig deeper in examining ourselves, our communities, and our choices. The only way out is through; we are currently working through one of the most difficult times in an era.

I read once that the Universe has a way of giving you gentle messages in the hopes of your hearing, and when you either ignore or are not ready to hear the messages, it finally comes up, takes you square by the shoulders, and says, "I am not messing around. It is time to live up to your potential and use your gifts to reverberate good things into the world. The time is now."

We have always known that there is inequity in our communities. With inflation and rising costs of food, fuel, and housing, there is no longer a choice to do nothing. Action is needed.

We have always known that there is systemic racism and injustice that have created barriers for so many. There is no longer a choice to do nothing. Action is needed.

We have always known that our treatment of the planet will have lasting impacts not just on surrounding ecosystems but on our species' ability to continue to have a place on Earth. There is no longer a choice to do nothing. Action is needed.

We have always known that connection with ourselves, each other, the Earth, and something bigger than us can unite and heal. There is no longer a choice to do nothing. Action is needed.

Living Earth Center is a space for transformation to start through action. People engage with Living Earth Center because we have solutions for food insecurity, community Center, regeneration, and cultivating connections. These solutions are not just starting points but meaningful catalysts for change on both individual and collective levels.

When you support Living Earth Center, you are supporting ideas and initiatives that are working towards environmental and socially sustainable solutions that have power to reverberate good things into the world. To all who garden, volunteer, engage, and donate - thank you.

The time is now.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Becky Bates, President	Sabri Fair
Briana Baker, Vice President	Martin Jacaruso
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Jim Ackil	Mary Voight
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- Meetings scheduled for the 2nd Monday of every other month.
- Next Meeting: September 13
- Welcome to New Members: Jim Ackil, Sabri Fair, Laura Stastny, and Mary Voight
- Thank you to Members whose terms have ended during the past year: Jeanne Groebner, Melissa Martensen, Jason Mattick, Jim Vonderharr, and S. Jeanne Wingenter



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[www.livingearthcentermn.org](http://www.livingearthcentermn.org)

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507.389.4272

# BALANCING WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY

BY SABRINA MERCEDES, LEC VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Many have heard the term - "Circle of Life" and in my indigenous culture we take the Circle and use it as a tool. Depending on the specific culture or tribe, you can see evidence of lessons of the Circle of Life in many cultures. The information I am going to share is from my own experience. You may see or hear slightly different lessons depending on who is presenting the information. That is the beauty of our indigenous beliefs - we are all interconnected and can create our circles no matter our background.

I am speaking as a first generation indigenous Mexican American - and as a whole human who is deserving of the rights and opportunities as my fairer skinned relatives.

The lessons I learned from the circle is that we are all interconnected and each color in the medicine wheel represents our fellow human beings - the yellow skinned, the red skinned, the black skinned and the white skinned peoples. In some cultures, the circle is divided up and down and I was taught to make a small circle in the middle that represents me, myself. Drawing an X through the circle creates the four directions.

Each section represents a variety of things depending on the teacher - I was taught similar to the image provided with some slight difference.

Our life begins in the East, where the sun rises and this area represents the time of year of the Spring.

Next, we move into the South and Summertime and our adolescence.

After that we graduate into adulthood in the

West, a time of Autumn. Lastly, we move into the North, the time of Winter and Elderhood.

Each section also represents Mind, Body, Spirit and Emotional Health. I like to sometimes add Land health when I use this as a tool to measure what might be out of balance for me.

For years our land has been victim to atrocities, and it is connected to the social wellness as a community. We are still on a long path of reconciliation on the land of Mahkato.



We have to look outside ourselves and our ego to embrace the lessons of the circle.

It is uncomfortable, and that is how we grow.

If I use this as a tool for wellness, I might draw a big circle with a small one representing myself in the center. I divide the quadrants with an X in the middle, and instead of solid lines, use dotted lines to represent the flow and integration of each section.

Then, I would write in each section "Mind/Body/Spirit/Emotional." I would then list what I do for each area of wellness. Around the outside of the circle, I list the challenges in keeping my wellness balanced.

You can use this tool in so many endless ways. I've

used this tool with youth when I worked in the Healing Circle as a domestic violence advocate. I've used this tool when teaching others about boundaries, with the inner

circle representing your wants and needs, while listing your non-negotiables on the outside of the circle. We must find our balance to be our best selves, and looking where we can do better individually and together is part of advocacy.

When it comes to the pursuit of racial equity, I think of the lessons taught to me by my elders; the ideas of interconnectedness, balance, and accountability. We have to look outside ourselves and our ego to embrace the lessons of the circle. It is uncomfortable, and that is how we grow.



An Ojibwe, Wolf Clan elder shared with me that human beings were created last out of the fish, rivers, plantcestors, and animals because we need all of them, yet they do not need us. What a humbling truth it is when we can find balance in accountability and responsibility - being uncomfortable about this is part of reconciliation.

Be gentle, yet firm with yourself and others. If you want to see the change - be the change.

# SAVE THE DATE

For full listing of LEC classes, events, workshops, and registration details, please visit our event calendar at:  
[www.livingearthcentermn.org/news-events/event-calendar.html](http://www.livingearthcentermn.org/news-events/event-calendar.html)

**YOGA IN THE GARDEN**  
 THIRD THURSDAYS AT LIVING EARTH COMMUNITY GARDEN  
 6 -7:10PM  
*a.k.a. "Yoga with Yoda"*  
 featuring LEC's  
 Garden Mentor,  
 Lynn  
 "the Garden Yoda"  
 Rozen

CREATING  
 COMMON GROUND

SEPTEMBER 20

POETRY AND POTTERY

5:30 - 7PM




**HONORING BIODIVERSITY:**  
 REVIVING INTERCONNECTION

17TH ANNUAL  
**EARTH**  
 CONFERENCE  
 SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022




**WINTER  
 SOLSTICE  
 CELEBRATION**

DEC. 21ST



## GIVE TO GROW MANKATO

Through outreach and educational programs, Living Earth Center touches the lives of hundreds of people in the greater Mankato area. Your donations help ensure these programs continue to be affordable and accessible to all, regardless of income level.

We work locally to educate about the Earth issues you care about. We reconnect people to the natural world and their desire to do better. We reach kids, elders, and everyone in between. We provide a perspective on Earth care, climate issues, and community resilience that is unique and much needed. We work at the grassroots level for systemic change.

We invite you to help sponsor our work by donating today! Choose your level, and know whatever the amount, large or small, you will be aiding Living Earth Center and making a difference in our community.

If you are interested in becoming a legacy sponsor by putting Living Earth Center in your estate plan, please contact our Executive Director Laura Peterson at [lpeterson@livingearthcentermn.org](mailto:lpeterson@livingearthcentermn.org).



Donations to Living Earth Center's general budget fund help support:

- Community Garden Scholarships
- Programming for Underserved Youth
- Compost/Wood chips for Garden
- Educational Supplies/Seeds for Kid's and Teen Classes
- Special Tools for Dementia-Friendly Garden
- Instructor Fees for Classes/Workshops
- Meals and Entertainment for Community Gatherings and Solstice Celebrations
- Produce Donations to Community Partners

### HELP SUSTAIN SUSTAINABILITY!

Become a sustaining monthly donor: a convenient, budgeting-friendly way to make a lasting commitment to LEC's mission



### DONATION PLEDGE CARD RETURN TODAY!

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

LIVING EARTH CENTER  
 170 GOOD COUNSEL DR  
 MANKATO, MN 56001

DONATIONS MAY ALSO BE MADE ONLINE:

[www.livingearthcentermn.org](http://www.livingearthcentermn.org)

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT  
 LEC AND GIVE TO GROW  
 MANKATO!

\$1000    \$500    \$250

\$100    \$50    \$25

other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make this a monthly donation



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_



# TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE: THANK YOU

Living Earth Center could not operate without the donations of time, talent, and treasure from such a vibrant and generous community of supporters.

We extend our sincerest thanks to each and every one of you.

## **Sustaining Donors**

Kay & Jim Ackil  
Briana Baker  
Becky Bates & Jonathan Hardwick  
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Jolly & Chris Corley  
Melissa & Brian Martensen  
Laura Peterson  
Barb & Mark Traxler  
Kathryn & Jim Vonderharr  
Cory Wendt  
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## **Donors**

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Laurel Lee  
Audrey Lindenfelser  
Erika Lo  
Mankato Area Environmentalists  
Carol Marsala  
Maschka Riedy Ries & Frentz P.L.L.P.  
Harriet Mason  
Adam Massmann  
Jason Mattick  
Blair McLaughlin  
Amy & Jerry Miller  
Dave Mrotz  
Kelly Nance  
Mara Natrakul  
Hung Nguyen  
Betty Padilla  
Jane Parr  
Paulette Pass  
Liz Peltola  
Jeanne Polaschek  
Leigh Pomeroy  
Ann Quade  
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William Rishavy  
Lynn Rozen  
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Donald Schneider  
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Mary Tacheny  
Linda Tinsley  
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Monica Wagner  
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Joyce Welling-Prahn  
Anne Wildenborg  
Jeanne Wingenter  
Kathleen Wortel  
Ashley Wright  
Janet & Roger Wright  
Youwen Xu  
Theresa Zeman

## **Garden Volunteers**

Jim Ackil  
Albino Alil  
Mymique Baxter  
Greg Bloodgood  
Mary Bloodgood  
Victoria Burt-Heun  
Richard Cogley  
Darla Frost  
Bruno Gad  
Sandra Gibbs  
Deborah Kirby  
Doug Kruckeberg

Lyn Kruckeberg  
Lenah Langat  
Brianna Larson  
Scott Leonard  
Steven Losh  
John Love  
Adam Massmann  
Marty Meyer-Gad  
Michael Muchiri  
David Mukunza  
Jennifer Prybylla  
Darryl Schultz  
Pat Schultz  
Mary Wagner  
Mary Walker  
Metone Wamma  
Mary Wiese  
Rita Wollschlager  
Dorothy Zeller  
Theresa Zeman

## **Community Farm Volunteers**

Jim Ackil  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
Brynn Dinel  
Tate Dinel  
East High School  
Evan Ehmke  
Sabrina Ehmke  
Shafer Ehmke  
Ben Elston  
Steve Enderle  
First Presbyterian Church  
Mae Gagnon  
Becky Gresback  
Charlie Gresback  
Sophia Hoiseth

Brook Jacaal  
Lindsay Jacaruso  
Kato Public School AmeriCorps  
Scott Leonard  
Lyric Martensen  
Melissa Martensen  
Geoff Mork  
Nicole Neumann  
Karine Nordly  
Stephanie Sack  
Sheri Sander-Silva  
Jason Skinner  
Skinner Dental Group  
Vance Stuehrenberg  
Pam Westmem  
Sherryl Wolf  
YMCA Day Camp

## **Community Farm Advisory Board**

Jim Ackil  
Bill Carda  
Deisy DeLeon Esqueda  
Ann Ganey  
Nathan Hanel  
Carol Harder  
Elaine Hardwick  
Sarah McDonald  
Lynn Rozen  
Patti Ruskey  
Vance Stuehrenberg

## **Earth Conference Task Force**

Dee Czech  
Jeanne Groebner  
Lalande Hennen  
Amy Hunt  
Melissa Martensen  
Mary Tacheny

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT JOLLY CORLEY



*Jolly is a long-time supporter of LEC, serving as Vice President on the inaugural Board of Directors and signing up as one of our very first sustaining donors in 2019.*

I was introduced to the Hill by Lisa Coons and I immediately felt at home there. I grew up on a farm and being at the barn or walking through the Gardens was reminiscent of my childhood.

I choose to be a sustaining donor because I believe that having a place in the middle of Mankato that can connect us to Earth, to the food we

eat, and to each other is essential to our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Donating on a monthly basis is something actionable I can do that impacts my community in a positive way and ensures that the future generations will have a place that connects them to Earth in a meaningful way.

# GARDENER SPOTLIGHT

## MRCI GARDEN

LEC is excited to announce a new partnership for the 2022 gardening season with MRCI. Each week 15 MRCI clients, ages 21-58 will come to the Living Earth Center Community Garden to tend their group plot with the assistance of LEC Garden Manager Mal Murphy and Executive Director Laura Peterson.

We sat down with MRCI Day Support Specialist Melissa Enter to chat about this new community connection.

LEC: What activities are participants most looking forward to?

ME: Growing their own vegetables and learning how to cook with the vegetables they grow.

LEC: What drew you to the LEC Community Garden and what do you hope will be the outcome of our new partnership?

ME: I have worked with LEC in the past with my own personal garden. I like how it is organic and respectful of Earth and the wellbeing of the participants. It is made up of a diversified group of

people that is accepting of differences and willing to share their knowledge. It honors the abilities of everyone and finds a way to make it work for them.

Working with nature is calming and releases stress. There is learning in gardening - the science and wonder of plants, parts of plants, propagation, and how each plant has its own needs of water, soil, and adapting - much like people do. There is opportunity to explore new foods with the produce in the garden and people are more open to trying foods because we grew them ourselves.

LEC: How would you see the LEC/MRCI partnership growing into the future?

ME: MRCI really appreciates the opportunity to work with LEC and are looking forward to a continuing relationship with them. We would like to see it expand

with more clients becoming involved and being able to grow a larger variety of fruits and vegetables as we become more knowledgeable about gardening.



## 2021: A LOOK BACK



Beginning in March, LEC took over management of Blue Earth County Farm. With the help of volunteers we turned an empty field into a thriving growing space where food was grown for community partners such as FOCP Back Pack Food Program, ECHO Food Shelf, CADA House, and Partners for Affordable Housing.



People of all ages and abilities participated in our Art in the Garden Class, creating their own paintings inspired by the beauty of Good Counsel Hill and the LEC Community Garden.

Thanks in no small part to our amazing community, 2021 was another banner year for LEC!

Here are a few of the highlights:

- Just over 1600lbs of fresh organic produce, grown by LEC Staff and Volunteers was donated to our community partners.
- Our Community Garden was full with 111 gardeners and their families growing healthy food and quality relationships.
- Hosted 25 unique events and programs - from Virtual Open Mic Nights to our Common Ground Series.
- Partnered with MAC-V to host a Veteran's Garden Plot and with MNSU College of Allied Health and Nursing to host the Eng-AGE-ment, dementia friendly garden.
- Worked with youth from Mankato MYPlace and Headstart all summer long as they tended their plots from seeds to vegetables.
- Held a 10 week book circle where we discussed the book *All You Can Save*, engaging in deeper dialog about the climate crisis
- Partnered with LEC Poet Laureate Esther Hoffmann to host the Living Earth Word Share Winter Writing Workshop.



Local dancer and yoga teacher, Amanda Quam, held two Chakra Jam events in the Gardens. Participants could do yoga, dance, hula hoop, or just relax all to the sounds of live music. The events were free-will donation with proceeds going to LEC.



Over 80 participants attended our 16th Annual Earth Conference "The New Normal: Intentionally Designing Our Future." Here, Robert Blake, one of three presenters, addresses the virtual audience about our relationship with Earth.



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION - HOMESTEAD APARTMENTS

BY LAURA PETERSON, LEC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Living Earth Center is proud to partner with Homestead Apartments and Southwest Housing Partnership (SWHP) to build a new community garden space on the apartment complex site.

Living Earth Center will be providing consulting services in collaboration with SWHP staff and community members to design, implement and cultivate a community growing space over the next year. In early summer 2022, residents were surveyed to determine their level of interest, food security challenges, and ability to give time and energy. There was overwhelming support for a garden.

Growing spaces like this one are essential to addressing food insecurity issues while providing physical spaces for community engagement.

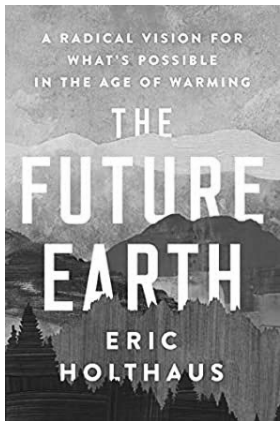
Building the garden on-site will begin in summer 2023. In the meantime, Living Earth Center will meet with residents to better understand how they want the space to be designed and implemented.



Homestead Apartments, located in Mankato near the intersection of Balcerzak Dr and Monks Ave, will be the sight of a new community garden designed and built in collaboration with LEC and Homestead Residents.

## BOOK REVIEW: THE FUTURE EARTH

BY AMY HUNT, LEC PROGRAM MANAGER



*The Future Earth*, written by St. Paul resident and meteorologist turned journalist Eric Holthaus, is the most hopeful and well-rounded book about climate change that I have read. He clearly lays out the issues facing us but spends most of the book creating solutions of what could be done decade by decade for the next 30 years.

The first quarter of the book is full of scary facts, such as our planet's carbon emissions were the highest in human history in 2019. He lays out the emergency and where we are headed if things don't change.

He doesn't diminish the real trauma that many of us feel and helps encourage building relationships with others to work for change and

process our collective grief together. Holthaus states, "Individual action is only useful when it helps bend society toward radical change. And the only way to create lasting change is to work towards a future in which everyone matters."

The ideas that he puts forth for radical change don't seem outlandish. They are doable, but they will take considerable effort and people working together to change the way they live. Changing the economic system and social changes need to work alongside environmental changes. We need a complete overhaul of the way we do everything if any changes are going to last.

The last part of the book offers processes and exercises to work through in groups to deal with grief, create community and imagine the future together. Changes don't seem as daunting when you are working on them with others, and it is always helpful to get confirmation that you aren't alone in your grief.

## JOIN THE FUN - VOLUNTEER WITH LEC!

Want to get involved with Living Earth Center?!? We would love to have you join our vibrant and dedicated team of volunteers! We have many opportunities to fit your interests/area of expertise.

- Want to work outside? Volunteer at the Farm!
- Want to help plan and coordinate events/classes/workshops? Join our Events Committee or Earth Conference Task Force!
- Have interest or experience in fundraising? Join our Development Committee!
- Want to take photographs at events or write articles for our monthly e-newsletter? Join our Communications Team!

Visit our website [www.livingearthcentermn.org](http://www.livingearthcentermn.org) or contact [info@livingearthcentermn.org](mailto:info@livingearthcentermn.org) for more information and volunteer opportunities.



## LOCAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Abbey Dickhudt (she/her) is from Mankato, MN and has been creating since she was a young kid - Always with various formats. Within her different projects, there are collages, paintings, woodblock prints, along with wooden bowls, cups, and plates.

In each of the ways Abbey creates, she is excited to try new things and see how daily images, thoughts, ideas can take different shapes according to the method of making. She is looking forward to exploring all different kinds of craft and learning from more teachers and makers!



## REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE

### Perfect Potluck Potato Salad *from Lynn Rozen, LEC Garden Mentor*

This is a versatile, seasonal, no mayo potato salad. Get creative! Change this potato salad for every potluck by adding vegetables and herbs from your garden in season. It's the additions that make it perfect!

Whisk together:

- 1/4 c olive oil
- 2 TB white balsamic or cider vinegar (or use your favorite)
- 2Tb-1/4 c dijon mustard to taste
- 1 or more cloves garlic, minced, to taste
- 1/2 t salt or more to taste
- 1/2 t pepper or more to taste
- optional sweetener: honey, maple syrup, agave 1/2 t -1 TB
- optional: 1-2TB lemon juice

Add:

- 1 medium thinly sliced onion (Vidalia or red excellent)
- 1 pound (about 4 large) cooked, cubed potatoes. (Cook your potatoes until just soft, about 9-12 minutes, and add to vinaigrette while still warm)

Test for salt and add at end if needed.

Serve room temp or chilled.

There are many delicious options for seasonal additions, listed below are just a few!

You could try:

- Chives, garlic scapes, dill, parsley, chopped celery, blanched peas, sliced snap or snow peas, blanched green beans, fresh tomato and basil, 2 c. shredded kale that has been first massaged with salt and 1Tb lemon juice, minced hot pepper, thin sliced red pepper, a bit of fresh thyme, or tarragon

