

center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

WINTER 2011

EARTH ALMANAC



BREAD BAKING

a ministry of
School Sisters of Notre Dame

Earth Education



center for
Earth Spirituality & Rural Ministry

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STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE

ORGANICALLY YOURS— LISA COONS, CENTER COORDINATOR



THE CENTER for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry has launched a sustainability series designed to encourage, inform and inspire us toward using a fairer share of the world's resources.

Moving toward sustainability in our lives requires a change in thinking, feeling and a change in actions. In some ways, the first change may be the hardest. Our annual fall Earth Conference held November 2010, explored the change of heart and mind required to bring about a transformation

in our world. That theme is echoed in our sustainability series beginning this winter.

Monthly "re-skilling" workshops teach us skills we would have/could have/should have learned had we been paying attention or had someone bothered to teach us some of the basic skills of living and providing for some of our own needs. We learn how to make our own non-toxic cleaning products, how to bake bread; make cheese and preserve summer's bounty for eating all year long. We gain valuable lessons on local food production in gardening workshops and by expending some sweat in our own gardens large and small. We begin the process of learning the ancient art of bartering and sharing when we gather for a "Swap Meet" to swap our stuff or just give it away!

For more in-depth study, we offer a Green Book Club with a new book discussed each month. We share information and inspiration at our monthly movie night (complete with organic butter-topped popcorn!) where we watch some of the most recent,

most powerful documentaries. And, to put some of our new thinking into real-world action, we sponsor "re-skilling" workshops to teach some of the skills nearly lost to a couple of generations.

We are attending conferences, workshops and classes to share and learn more ourselves; we are educating legislators at all levels; we are working in the community to connect Earth's issues with real people's lives, our lives. We are joining in solidarity with the ancient people of the planet and folks all around the globe today as we celebrate Earth's cycles and rhythms with each seasonal transition such as the Winter Solstice Celebration here on Good Counsel Hill.

We invite you to join us and plug in wherever you see yourself fitting. In the work of building community around sustainability we all have a place!

Organically yours,
LISA
lcoons@ssndmankato.org

MEET OUR NEW INTERN...

HI! MY NAME IS KARI JANSEN.

I will be doing an internship with the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry. I will be graduating this spring from Minnesota State University Mankato with a B.S. in Gender and Women's Studies with minors in Creative Writing and Art Studio as well as a Non-Profit Leadership Certificate. It was in one of those courses where I met Lisa Coons and had first heard about this organization. Last spring I came up to the hill for the first time when my mom was doing a Healthy Legacy presentation in the barn. I was immediately impressed with the work that the Center for Earth Spirituality does - the community gardens, the educational workshops, and the love for the Earth and environment. After that presentation, Lisa suggested that I could contact her about an



internship. Ever since then I have had this place on my mind and was very happy to receive an internship with The Center for Earth Spirituality. I look forward to all that I will be learning as my internship progresses this semester. ✨



SEEKING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

to help create ecological solidarity with all creation ranks high as a priority for the SSND Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (CESRM). Because of this commitment, we collaborate with a number of organizations to call ourselves and public institutions to sustainable practices regarding many aspect of our lives, such as land, food, energy, etc.

In this article I want to highlight some of CESRM's collaboration with the Land Stewardship Project (LSP). SSND has long supported LSP particularly because its mission reflects the values of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and our long history with rural communities who have thrived on agriculture. We continue to support LSP mainly through CESRM and the SSND Earth Committee. Both CESRM and the Earth Committee rely on LSP for directions in advocacy because of its mission, expertise of staff and credibility in the state and our nation.

LSP's mission is "to foster an ethic of Stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities." It accomplishes this through its board membership

in many states, its staff located in three areas: Lewiston, Montevideo and Minneapolis, Minnesota, and its programs, such as Policy, Local Food, and Farm Beginnings.

In the past months, we made ourselves aware of a campaign by LSP and about 14 other sustainable state organizations to challenge the University of Minnesota when it initially cancelled the showing of the film *Troubled Waters*. After many members of these organizations communicated to the President of the University that there was a conflict of interest in this decision, the University showed the film. In doing this, the University made it clear that this film, which is about agriculture and water quality, is scientifically accurate and balanced, contrary to what University officials claimed when they first tried to justify canceling its public release.

Meanwhile, LSP invited its members to continue contacting the President to ask for the resignation of Karen Himle, Vice President of University Relations who made the cancellation call. Himle is closely connected to corporate ag interests: her husband is John Himle, former director of the Agri-Growth Council, a corporate agriculture lobbying group, and he is currently director of Himle Horner, a public relations firm that does work for the Agri-Growth Council. Eventually Himle apologized for her decision.

Furthermore, because the University continued to be pressured, LSP was able to convince the Dean of Agriculture, Allen Levin, to meet regularly with farmers and sustainable agriculture

groups and their members to explore how the University can better support family farms and sustainable agricultural ventures. This is a big step because the University has often thrown more of its support to corporate agriculture. We joined with LSP and others asking for more balance of support because family farms and new organic ventures provide great economic opportunities that create viable rural communities. The University is a Land Grant institution and it should be offering balanced services and research for all in the agriculture business.

If you want to know more about our advocacy priority contact CESRM soon and join us in this important endeavor. *

UPCOMING EVENTS

GREEN BOOK CLUB – FEBRUARY!

- *Less is More: Embracing Simplicity for a Healthy Planet, a Caring Economy and Lasting Happiness*

Transitioning toward using less brings more - more sustainability, more justice, more satisfaction but it requires us to think and move in a different direction.

- Join us February 23rd at 6 p.m. for a lively discussion. (RSVP attendance, please)

For more information or to RSVP contact Lisa at 507-389-4272
lcoons@ssndmankato.org.

MARCH!

- *Diet for a Hot Planet* by Anna Lappe.

REFLECTIONS ON CESRM - 15 YEARS

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 15TH anniversary of the presence of the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry in Mankato. While much has been done in those years, we know there is much to be done still and we will continue to be a source of information, resources, inspiration and celebration as we all seek a better life on this planet together.

Below, one of the Founding Mothers of the Center offers her reflection on some of what has unfolded.

The Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry is a response to dreams. SSNDs whose roots are in rural Minnesota and those who served the people in the small towns and communities dreamt of a new way for SSND to again be present. Sisters Mary Tacheny and Kathleen Storms were commissioned by the province to put flesh on dreams and to find out what the folks were asking for. The Center grew out of a year of dialogue with locals from

Pipestone to Rollingstone and from the Iowa border north to Minneapolis and St. Paul.

We also listened to farmers who were questioning and living into their own dreams. Questions from them spurred us on even more: what are you doing to take care of this land? What gift of land could be shared with others? Why do sisters care about what they eat?

These questions and others shaped the threefold goal of CESRM since 1994:

- To uncover a spirituality that reconnected us to Earth through education and practice
- To offer services to rural parishes that would allow them to find a connection between faith and food; between creation and farming
- To collaborate with organizations that honor a deep connection to Earth, Moral Eating and Sustainable Living



Center Co-founders, Sisters Mary Tacheny and Kathleen Storms

All these years later...the gardens thrive; organizations still depend on SSND support for systemic and policy change; the land has become healthy again and there is a growing ownership of green living.

As one of the founding mothers, I am so pleased with the growth we have witnessed, the commitments that have born fruit and the blessing this land, Good Counsel Hill, has been. I couldn't be prouder!

Kathleen Storms, SSND

THANK YOU

WE HAVE MANY PEOPLE TO THANK for their generous donations of time, talents and thoughtfulness toward our work. Whether it was working in the gardens, in the resource library or on an event or conference, we are grateful for how the following people have expanded and enriched our work!

Jim and Kay Ackil • Monika Antonell • Becky Bates • Deborah Bauer • Pam Becker • Peter Bieren • Drea Brown • Karen Chou • Chris Christie • Anika Cristwell • Dee Czech • Michelle Determan • Kathleen Felt • Ben H. • Kay Helms • Lalande Hennen, SSND • Esther Hoffmann • Kelly Holland • Jim Homan • Ruth Jackson • Paulissa Jirik, SSND • Rita Jirik, SSND • Rose Anthony Krebs, SSND • Doug and Lyn Kruckeberg • Scott Kudelka • Barb Lamson • Patricia Linehan • Judy Luebke • Jean Lundquist • Christal Lustig • Heather Moore • Zach Mullin • Annie Nawrocki • Craig Nett • Dorothy Olinger, SSND • Paul Prew • Helen Robeck, SSND • Lynn Rozen • Patti Ruskey • Lindsay Solheid • Jordan Strachan • Mary Tacheny, SSND • Heidi Thompson • Jennefer and Andy Timmerman-Brown • Barb Traxler • Jim Vonderharr • Jeanne Wingenter, SSND • Terry Wolff • Riverbend 4-H • St. John's Catholic Church Spirit of Service Campers

In-Kind Donations: Drummer's Garden Center • Greenwald's Greenhouse • Minnesota Green, a program of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society • Shelly's Greenhouse, Madelia

STAFF:

Lisa Coons,
Co-Director

Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND
Co-Director

ADVISORY BOARD:

Monika Antonelli, Deborah Bauer, Scott Kudelka, Barb Lamson, Christal Lustig, Paul Prew, Lynn Rozen, Jeanne Wingenter, SSND

WINTER MUSINGS...

BY LISA COONS, CENTER CO-DIRECTOR



† Sister Catherinette Zweber, photographer

WHEN GIVEN SPACE the long, dark days of winter seem to lend themselves to the deep dreams and yearnings of our interior lives. Some analogies between the rhythms and cycles of our planet and us might reveal themselves given the chance. Mindful of the land buried beneath the deep snows of this season, we might reflect on what is buried deep within us. What is dormant like seeds scattered in the garden last fall waiting for the right time to begin growth? What is growing imperceptibly within us that perhaps mirrors the terminal buds on trees that daily swell toward a spring burst of growth? What is alive and well and ready to harvest in our lives right now as with the winter greens I harvested from my garden a couple of weeks ago - though not without a rather comic search to find them in the transformed winter landscape? And, as winter winds and storms clear out the dead growth on trees, what needs pruning in our lives?

I love the changing routine from season to season and winter has its own gifts. I love this quiet deeply resonant time of year. I love the coolness of our family home in the early mornings of winter. I cherish snuggling a newly awakened child on my lap with a hot

mug within reach and the sun beginning to just lighten the sky. I love the simple winter foods I've discovered – the roots, the grains and the food preserved from last summer's abundance. I love the skeletal outline of the trees revealed in stark lines against white sky – and the excitement of seeing a hawk in flight or sitting watchful in a nearby tree top. In so many ways, the lesson of winter for us might be the realization that less really is more.

Perhaps this is revealed to us when we find we are grateful for a winter storm that keeps everyone home, providing us a break from our usual hectic lives. Ample storms this winter have provided multiple opportunities to embrace a less is more approach to living on the planet. Less travel, less activity, less shopping, less consuming gives us room for more – more time, more balance, more reflection, more connection. It's a self-reinforcing system. Once we have more of these other things, we want more of it and we suddenly see our need for things acquired through shopping dramatically lessened. Ah, and winter is a great time to allow this to take root in our lives. ❄

COMMUNITY GARDEN UPDATE...

IT IS IN THESE WINTER MONTHS that we begin to plan the layout and shape of what will unfold in the Community Gardens this year. Like the dormant seeds awaiting spring warmth to unfurl themselves, so too our dreams of what these gardens will be. We dream of how to connect children to this land, to the food grown and to the planet's abundance. We dream of programs, workshops and resources that will empower gardeners all over to dig deeper and grow together. We dream of how to end the nightmare of hunger in our community and how to share more food with the growing number of hungry people in our community. We dream of how we will best spend the grant money awarded to us from the Pepsi Refresh Project to launch our "Give People a Can and They'll Eat for a Day, Teach Them to Can and They'll Eat for a Year" Project. Not surprisingly, our dreams are big and thankfully, we have more hands than ever joining us this year with our Advisory Board, interns and volunteers!

A special thank you to long-time community gardener Anika Cristwell and Advisory Board member, Lynn Rozen who recognize that the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry is moving our communities forward, indeed! Anika wrote two grant applications to the Pepsi Refresh project. The first grant awarded last fall will allow us to replace and repair tools for the Community Garden. "It feels great to feast on organic food you've grown yourself. The Garden empowers me to live with dignity," wrote Cristwell, in the grant application.

With the second grant, we will launch a new canning and food preservation equipment lending library this year. Stay tuned as we develop that program! ❄

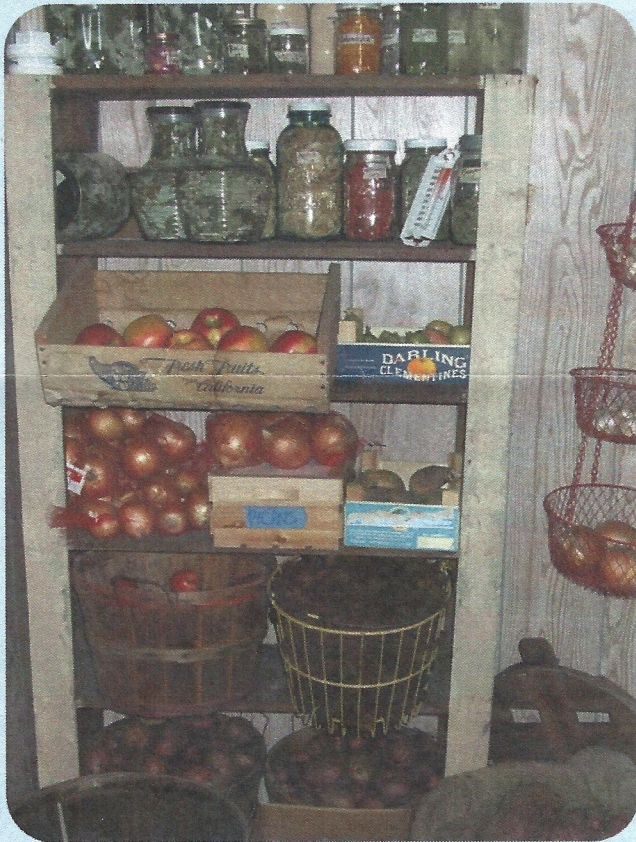
RECIPES:

REAL FOOD for REAL PEOPLE

Why is it so many of us think the time spent in the drive thru lane is less stressful than putting a few ingredients together to feed ourselves? We offer recipes that have several benefits. They're made from real food not UFOs (Unidentified Food-like Objects). They're good for you and good for the planet. You lighten your carbon footprint when you cook at home because your meal requires less energy, less water and less land than processed foods shipped from far away. Opt for local frozen vegetables when "fresh" might mean flown in from a far-off continent. These recipes are nutritious since they're made with simple ingredients and they're delicious, too!

STIR-FRY FOR THE PEOPLE Time: 30 minutes

If you are planning to serve this over rice, put the rice to cooking first as it can take awhile. Brown rice takes



longer to cook than white rice. Make extra rice so you have a cup or two left to make the next recipe!

The secret to stir fry is to work with a HOT skillet. The foods should sizzle. If you lose your sizzle, turn up the heat!

- 2 T. vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped finely
- 1 T. minced fresh ginger
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 pound broccoli (tip: some cultures consider the stem a delicacy. If you are using fresh, peel the thick outer skin and chop the stem into rounds or thin sticks)
- 8 oz. of mushrooms, sliced

8 oz. of protein (meat or tofu or nuts like peanuts or cashews)

2 T. soy sauce

A smidge of black pepper or a large pinch of red pepper flakes depending on your level of heat tolerance!

In a large skillet over medium high heat add some olive oil, some of the garlic and the tofu or meat and cook for 3-5 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside. Heat more olive oil and when it's hot, add the onion, broccoli, mushrooms, garlic and ginger. Cook for 3-5 minutes, sprinkle with a smidge of salt and add 1 cup water. Stir and cook until all the liquid evaporates, another minute or two. Return protein to pan, add soy sauce, pepper and a little more water. Raise heat to high and cook until you've had a chance to scrape all the stuck stuff from the pan. Serve alone or over rice.

You can substitute any vegetable for the broccoli and mushrooms in this recipe. Try green beans, cabbage is delicious, peas, carrots, spinach, kale or other greens.

FRIED RICE FOR THE PEOPLE Time: 15 minutes

2 T. vegetable oil

½ cup chopped onion

2 cloves garlic, minced

A couple of handfuls of whatever vegetables you have on hand – peas, thinly sliced carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, corn – whatever! (I go for color appeal here)

1-2 cups leftover cooked rice

One egg, beaten

1-2 tsp. seasoning – try curry powder, Chinese five-spice, or just throw in some ginger and soy sauce and call it done.

Heat oil over medium high heat in a heavy skillet and sauté onions, garlic and vegetables until tender. Add rice and spice and stir until heated through (a couple of minutes). Make a hole in the center of the rice and vegetables and add a tablespoon of oil, heat and add the beaten egg. Cook the egg until done. It will mix into the other stuff and this is good. Just keep stirring until it's dry looking at which point it's done. Enjoy! *