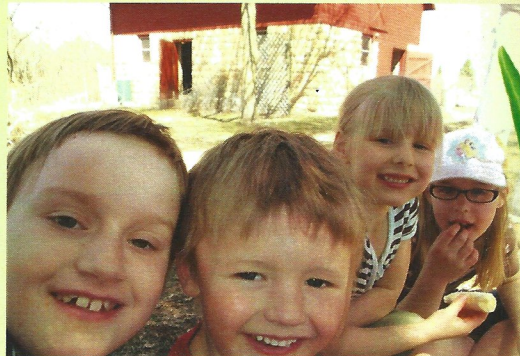


center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

SPRING 2015

EARTH ALMANAC



School Sisters of Notre Dame
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STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE

Organically Yours



I've been surprised by the animals here on the Hill many times this season. They have certainly been active of late. A few weeks ago a bald eagle was flying back and forth above the woods outside our office windows, the next day a red fox was trotting down the road, stopped to look around and then popped into the woods. A week later, it was a herd of deer moving through the woods after a beautiful snow. And, early this morning, there were 5 tom turkeys practicing their collaborative spring mating routine outside my windows. They were so excited about their dance together that their heads were a vivid blue, their necks and wattles a brilliant red. Set against the iridescent brown feathers of their puffed up bodies and wide-spread feathers, this display was mesmerizing and fascinating!

In our efforts at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry to strengthen connections and create hope, I find encouragement from the natural world around me. Whether it's the bald eagle against a winter-blue sky or the lowly earth worm awakening the spring garden, the animals are here and remind me that we humans are not the only and most important member of the Earth family. We are all connected and emerge from the same elemental materials and indeed are indebted to each other. We each have our gifts to express in this Earthly existence. While one of my skills might be growing food, for instance, I am only able to do this with the gift of the billions of soil microbes enriching the soil and making that a possibility for me. Humans wouldn't exist long without the soil microbes expressing their unique soil microbe-ness. I guess I am feeling a large amount of gratitude for all the members of the Earth family, their place in the web of life and humility about human contributions to this web.

Emerging from the deep dark of winter to the lengthening spring days and the increased activity of our animal kin, I see a building energy for Earth care and connectedness. We have dedicated and passionate participants in our "Choices for Sustainability" discussion course who come together weekly to share their stories and aspirations and grow together. The ReSkilling Festival was a testament to collaboration and the community response was astounding! People came out of the woodwork to share and learn skills together on Spring Equinox. Our gardens are again being filled with people who want to grow, eat and share good food. And, I am gathering with young folks weekly in our community to prepare and serve a delicious community meal from rescued food – impacting our collective carbon foot print while addressing hunger in our area. I see cynicism lessen. I see despair disappear. I see hope grow as we connect with each other in all of these venues. I see us creating a better future together.



Organically yours,
~ Lisa

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Important Re-look at challenged Environmental Reviews

by Kathleen Mary Kiemen SSND Co-Director of CESRM

Maybe an environmental review topic doesn't excite you? However, if you lived near a proposed 8,850 cow dairy operation in Stevens County MN, such a review would probably rank as a priority to you and your neighbors. For example, wouldn't you want to know as they do, what is the cumulative impact of large feedlots? Is the owner of this operation following environmental standards regarding hydrogen sulfide gas given off by manure lagoons, sulfide that can harm your health? **CESRM feels that such a review might rank as a priority for any of us too, who claim concern for the health of soil, water and air in any part of our state, country and world. We applaud the environmental review policy of our state.**

Environmental review pertains to only large industry projects and its purpose is to, up front before any damage can happen, evaluate if a project meets environmental standards set by policy and to receive input from citizens who may be effected by the project.

We highlight the importance of environmental review because industries and some citizens attack this practice as unnecessary, to strict and too costly. More particularly in this 2015 legislative session, new attacks are happening by legislators and industry, and this being done without input from concerned citizens deeply affected by the industry.

Examples:

- The new MN house Mining and Outdoor Recreation Committee held a hearing on the industry of frac sand mining. At first, only industry representatives were invited to speak with this committee. Fortunately, several other public agencies, such as Land Stewardship Project, found out that citizens concerned about frac sand mining dangers were not invited. Calls went out from LSP members and our own CESRM Action Alert

membership to contact the chair about this concern. Even with these calls, and no promise of another session, the chair allowed only 15 minutes within this almost two hour hearing for citizen reply. I joined members of LSP and concerned citizens from such areas as Winona, Wabasha, and Mankato to make our presence and disappointment visible at this hearing.

- In the fall the Senate Rural Task Force met and one member challenged MN Pollution Control Agency's ruling by the Citizens Board of this agency on their order for a full-blown environmental impact statement for an 8,850 cow dairy farm operation in Stevens County. Even more, as LSP writes: "one task force member, Sen. Julie Rosen, in comparing a 320 acre farm of one member of the MPCA Citizens' Board who raises crops and beef, to this mega-dairy, said: 'That's not real ag. This is real ag.'"
- "DNR halts pines-to potatoes conversion in central MN." (*Star Tribune Feb.8, 2015*) This Agency, with many area citizens, were getting "alarmed by rapid deforestation in this ecologically sensitive swath of central MN." The agency ordered an environmental review to see how this deforestation and the overuse of water to nourish the potatoes might be a danger to the local aquifer and residents wells.

In each of these situations, citizens called for environmental reviews and they need to continue to have this right. In each case we need to have policies that help us sustain soil, water and air.

What do you know about environmental reviews and their purpose in our great state of MN? If you aren't sure what response you could give to this question, you are probably not alone. Hoping to shed more light on the

history, purpose, process and positive impact of environmental reviews, John Marty, chair of the State Senate Environment and Energy Committee, arranged a hearing on January 29 for members of this committee. To this hearing, he also invited interested citizens both as presenters and observers.



I was among the group gathered and felt much enriched by presentations from representative of the Environmental Quality Board, (EQB), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Grant Merritt, executive director of the MPCA from 1971-75, and citizen's perspective from: James Kanne, dairy farmer from Reville County; Kathy DeBur, farming family from Stevens County; and Doug Peterson, president of Minnesota Farmers Union. You can view this hearing by going to the state legislation web site State Senate Environment and Energy Committee section. Speakers highlighted the importance of citizens involvement in these reviews.

Many of us will probably never be involved in seeking or doing an environmental review. However, I suggest that knowing how they work for us and for all our kin can make us proud that Minnesota has departments and policies that provide guidelines to help industry in frac sand mining, transportation proposals, park systems, etc., avoid being destructive to land, water, air, and healthy communities. **CESRM will continue to join with other organizations and citizens to support environmental reviews and help guard against anyone weakening them. We hope you will too.**

Introducing:

Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry's Sponsorship Program

Through outreach programs such as the community gardens, re-skilling classes, and the annual Earth Conference CESRM touches the lives of hundreds of people right here in the greater Mankato area. You can become an integral part of the work CESRM is doing in your community by becoming a CESRM sponsor. Every donation large or small will make a difference.

Donations made through the CESRM Sponsorship Program will go to CESRM's general budget fund. Examples of where your money may be spent are listed below.

Become a CESRM Sponsor today!

Fill out the form below and return it to us in the envelope provided. Checks can be written to CESRM.



Photo © Erica Idso-Weisz



Photo © Kate Morgan



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CUT ALONG LINE

Donation Pledge Card - Return Today!

\$25 COMPOSTER

- One Durable Metal Watering Can
- Seeds for the Sprouts Gardening Class

\$50 MULCHER

- One Durable Shovel
- Tool Repairs

\$100 PLANTER

- Two New Wheelbarrows
- Four Scholarships to Gardening Classes

\$250 WEEDER

- Three Truckloads of Organic Compost
- Event Promotion and Publicity

\$500 POLLINATOR

- Instructor for Summer Kids' Classes
- Newsletter Printing and Mailing

\$1000 HARVESTER

- Instructors for Sustainable Living Classes
- Earth Conference and Workshop Expenses

Name

Address

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Phone

Volunteer Opportunities With CESRM

CESRM is always looking for enthusiastic, dependable volunteers who believe in our work. Join a team of positive people who care about the future of our earth and want to work for change. Add to your resume and make new friends in the process!

Webmaster/Technology Expertise

Our website needs a serious makeover. We are looking for the perfect geek to design and code a simple, easily navigable website for CESRM. Help us get our message out. Hours are flexible, but would entail a time commitment at the beginning of the project.

Seasonal Garden Maintenance

Love to garden? We are always looking for volunteers to help maintain the kids peace garden, help elderly gardeners prep their gardens in the spring, help mentor new gardeners, and harvest for homeless shelter in the fall. Hours are flexible and vary with the demands of the season.

Event Planning Committees

Enjoy our events? Help make them happen. Duties include brainstorming, planning, and implementing.

Contact:

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Early garden.



Spring gardeners.

An Expression of Gratitude for the Opportunity to Volunteer

By Lynn Rozen



I began gardening on the hill thirteen years ago. I was new to Mankato and in need of a place to land. The diversity of people here struck me immediately.

Everywhere I felt a sense of kindness and friendliness from people. I was grateful to find a place in Mankato where I felt a sense of belonging.

The garden is a peaceful paradise. I love the calm I feel digging in the rich, dark dirt. I love to watch the change of the seasons from the first hopeful shoots of

green, to the monarch migration, to the frantic gathering before the last frost.

Season after season my involvement became deeper. I began helping to harvest for the food shelf. I took on the Kid's Peace Garden project, designing and maintaining a beautiful space for children and families to enjoy, explore, and learn. Now I am a member of the CESRM Advisory Committee, helping to plan events and sculpt the vision of CESRM for the future.

I feel privileged to be able to share my talents with CESRM. I greatly appreciate the friendships I have made. I am truly grateful to have the opportunity to volunteer here. Thank you, CESRM.

Learn more about how YOU can get involved in the work of the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry! Contact us at 507-389-4272 or e-mail lcoons@ssndcp.org.



Spiritual Ecology, The Cry of the Earth

essays edited by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

Daily news is full of degrading Earth stories. Frightening global weather events and destructive human greed show us ecosystems in serious trouble and people suffering untold disruptions in their lives. How can we respond? Thoughtful urgent responses come from *Spiritual Ecology, the Cry of the Earth* edited by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee. Each voice in this collection of essays reminds us that we have separated ourselves from the sacred nature of our mother, Earth. They also warn us we are at "tipping point" and need to act now to our plundering human impact.

Thich Nhat Hanh insists that "mindfulness is at the heart of awakening. If we awaken to our true situation, there will be a change in our collective consciousness." Rumi echoes this in his advice,

*"Sit, be still, and listen
for you are drunk,
and we are at the edge of the roof."*

Thomas Berry challenges us to see in wonder as the first peoples did at this natural world. For these earliest peoples, the visible world, the cosmic world and the human world were one community. In stern Berry language he lays bare the sharp contrast between this indigenous culture and our exploitative actions. Indigenous voices show us this world of wonder from many traditions in this book: *Egypt, Persia, India, Greece, the Americas, a Zen teacher, a Hindu scholar*. Franciscan Richard Rohr gives us the Christian view of the world.

The future for Berry? "The planet Earth is a one-time project. There is no real second chance." Because we have so messed up Earth, it cannot proceed on its own, he maintains. We must be involved in its future. Berry's, guiding belief: "the universe is the supreme manifestation of the sacred."

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Brian Swimme and Sister Miriam MacGillis further develop Berry's theme that Earth and humans have a common evolutionary heritage. Only when we see this commonality can we begin to "appreciate the need for a sustainable human presence on the planet." John Stanley and David Loy make it clear that "the global crisis is also the defining spiritual crisis of the human species." Miriam MacGillis feels the deep pain of the devastation. What could people do to reclaim the sacred? "More deeply than anything, we want our lives to matter. And to matter, we need to be making a contribution towards the whole."

Thich Nhat Hanh's answer to what we need to do to save our world: "...hear within us the sounds of the Earth crying." Anyone who reads these essays will hear within the cry of the Earth.

Mary M. Tacheny, SSND

Thank You

Our work is deeply enriched through the volunteer support and financial gifts made by others. We have many people to thank for their generous donations of time, talents and resources toward our work. We are grateful for how the following people and organizations have enabled and expanded our work over the past several months. Your gifts make a difference!

Jim Ackil
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Mary Tacheny, SSND
Jane Thibault
Jim and Kathryn Vonderharr
Jeanne Wingenter, SSND
Drummer's Garden Center
410 Project Art Gallery

Real Food For Real People

Because we know you want to eat fresher, better food that is grown close to home, these recipes feature early spring veggies available locally. Cheers!

Spring Dilled Carrot and Snow Pea Salad

3 carrots, thinly sliced or grated
Snow or snap peas, thinly sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
½ T dill
⅓ c. water

⅓ c. vinegar (rice or apple cider)
1 T honey
¼ tsp. salt
A little black pepper

Stir together carrots, peas, garlic and dill. Whisk together water, vinegar and honey. Pour over veggies and let sit at least ½ hour. Substitute other veggies as they come into season, beets, greens, or baby bok choy.

Creamy Springy Vegetable Soup

Fresh spring asparagus and spinach from the garden are the ideal way to enjoy this hearty soup, but it's great any time of year! Potatoes, rice, and carrots round out this creamy favorite.

Ingredients:

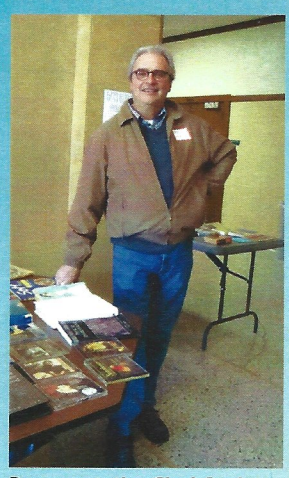
¼ cup butter
1 onion, chopped
2 quarts water
3 large potatoes, chopped
2 large carrots, chopped

1 bunch asparagus, cut into 1 inch pieces
⅓ cup uncooked long-grain white rice (opt.)
1 teaspoon salt
½ pound fresh spinach
1 cup heavy cream
A few shakes of black pepper

Directions:

1. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in the onion and cook until tender.
2. Pour water into the pot. Mix in potatoes, carrots, asparagus, and rice. Season with salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer 30 minutes, until vegetables and rice are tender.
3. Stir spinach and heavy cream into the soup mixture, and continue cooking about 5 minutes before serving.

Welcome To The Re-Skilling Festival!



Representative Clark Jonhson at the Re-Skilling fest.



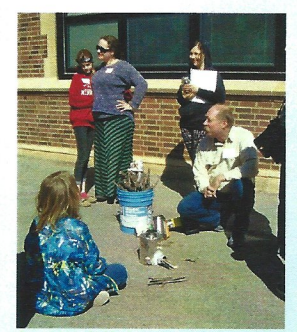
Chickens.



Kids learning tools.



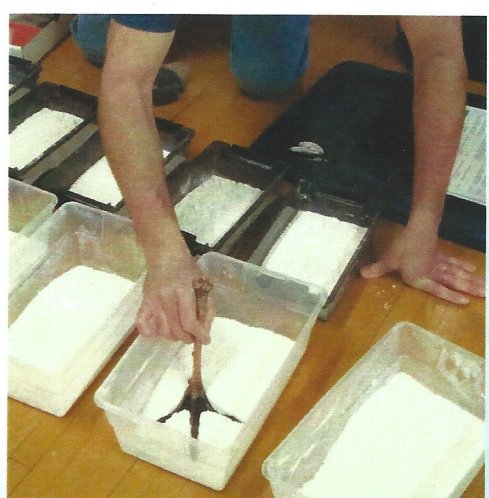
Garden hoop house.



Rocket stoves.



Kids UN plugged.



Animal tracks.



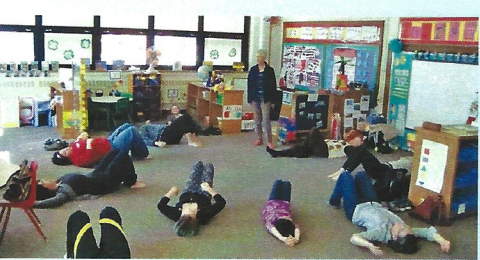
Knots for fun and function.



Bike maintenance.



Learning to ferment.



Relaxing self-care.



Spinning.



Building raised beds.