

# Contributors

**Thomas Berry** was a cultural historian and ecotheologian who was born in Greensboro, NC, and returned there at the age of 80 for the last 14 years of his life. It was during this time that Thomas served as the mentor for the Center For Education, Imagination and the Natural World. For over twenty years, Thomas directed the Riverdale Center of Religious Research while he chaired the History of Religions program at Fordham University in New York City. He served as President of the American Teilhard Association from 1975-1987. His books include *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future*, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-first Century* and *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth*.

**Sandy Bisdee** is the Director of Children's Programs at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World. She completed her Montessori International (AMI) Teaching Certificate in 1979 and brings over thirty years of experience as an educator of young children to her work at the Center. A gifted storyteller and musician, Sandy has engaged in a deep study of Native American perspectives. She has studied with the Choreocosmos School of Cosmic and Sacred Dance and has completed both The Inner Life of the Child in Nature program at CEINW and the North Carolina Environmental Education Certification Program.

**Marti Canipe** is currently a PhD student studying Science Education at the University of Arizona. She holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of North Carolina and studied zoology and freshwater ecology at the University of New Hampshire. In her career as an educator, she has spent thirteen years teaching middle school science. During the 2009-2010 school year she served as an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow at the National Science Foundation. Marti has also served on the Board of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World. The natural world has been a lifelong passion for her; beginning with childhood days spent in the woods and creeks of North Carolina and continuing in the open spaces of the American Southwest.

**Trish Corbett** has been a Montessori teacher in the Winston-Salem, NC area, co-learning with children ages 2 1/2 to 6 years old. Her journey to teaching took many twists and turns for she originally graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting. After working in the business arena for almost twenty years, she re-careered to support a desire to follow in her children's footsteps and fully experience and reside in the world of wonder and awe as envisioned by Maria Montessori. Her daily intention is to remember and respond to the cosmic invitation to be present, be aware, and be open.

**Cathy Simon Cord** has been a certified Montessori teacher of three to six-year-old children since 1990. She first came to the Wilmington, Delaware, Montessori School as a parent in 1983 and has worked there for the past twenty-six years, except for an interlude in Goteburg, Sweden from 2004-2006, where Cathy taught in an international school 4-year-old class. Married for thirty-three years, Cathy has three wonderful children of her own. After being inspired by her work at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, Cathy became a certified Delaware Naturalist in 2010.

**Corie Davis** is an early childhood care and education professional who has worked in both rural and urban settings in direct services, professional development, family support programming and quality improvement initiatives. She has a love of art and the natural world which she would one day like to fully integrate into her work with young children and their families.

**Alina Gabitov** was a sixth grade student at B'Nai Shalom Day School in Greensboro, NC when she visited the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World and wrote the piece included here. She graduated from B'Nai Shalom's eighth grade in 2009 and is a high honor roll student at Grimsley High School in Greensboro. Alina is an accomplished cellist who plays with the Mallarmé Youth Chamber Orchestra in Chapel Hill, NC.

**Jo Anne Kraus** has lived and worked in New York City and environs since 1968, but her love of the natural world was fostered in her rural Virginia and Indiana childhood homes. She holds an M.A. in Medieval Literature and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from CUNY and has taught ages pre-school through college. Ten years ago she developed and

ran a literature-based literacy program in transitional housing facilities in the North West Bronx, working with children, parents, and teachers to promote a love of reading. There she began taking the children outdoors for nature explorations in city parks. Currently she teaches remedial reading at Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem during the school year and worked for the past six years as the Nature-Garden Specialist at A.C.T. Day Camp, situated at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

**Andrew Levitt** holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. In his career life, he has worked with silence and words. He performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years. He then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC, where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a clown doctor in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital. He lives in Greensboro, NC with his wife, Peggy. In his neighborhood, he is known as the man who walks a big white dog.

**Richard Lewis** is a teacher and writer—and the founder of the Touchstone Center for Children in New York City. Begun in 1969, the Center's major focus has been to explore the imagination, and its relation to the natural world, as a source of learning and expression, for both children and adults. Richard's essays on the imaginative and poetic life of childhood have appeared in journals such as *Young Children*, *Elementary English*, *Childhood Education*, *Parabola* and *Orion*, and were collected in his book *Living By Wonder: The Imaginative Life of Childhood*. His recent books include: *Sea Tale*, illustrated by Gigi Alvaré, *Shaking the Grass for Dew: Poems by Richard Lewis*; *Each Sky Has Its Words*, illustrated by Gigi Alvaré; *The Bird of Imagining*, illustrated by children from New York City public schools; *CAVE: An Evocation of the Beginnings of Art*, illustrated by Elizabeth Crawford; *A Tree Lives*, illustrated by Noah Baen, *In the Space of the Sky*, illustrated by Debra Frasier, *From the Sleep of Waters*, illustrated by Susan Joy Share, and *Taking Flight, Standing Still: Teaching Toward Imaginative and Poetic Understanding*—a gathering of essays and reflections which have appeared in *Encounter*, *Teaching Artist Journal* and *Paths of Learning*.

**Marie Nordgren** is the founder, director and a teacher at The Children's Garden Preschool, a nature and play based early childhood program. Her

training is in Waldorf early childhood education from Sunbridge College. Most recently she has been participating in The Inner Life of the Child in Nature program at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World and studying with the Choreocosmos School of Cosmic and Sacred Dance. Her three grown daughters and husband of 31 years, Carl, are also a never-ending source of new learning experiences.

**Lisa Marie Peloquin** holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Duke University. She has applied her sociological training and bilingual skills in work with Latino immigrants and migrants in North Carolina, adults diagnosed with mental retardation and mental illness, and alternative health care centers. Entitled “Vibrant Weave: ‘Holistic Healing’ and the Embodiment of Community in a Southern Mill Town,” her dissertation explored how contemporary healing practices and green lifestyles serve as a valuable lens through which we may re-think the nature of culture, power, and the self. As a university professor, Lisa taught courses on women and gender studies, contemporary social theory and embodiment. She has also pursued independent studies in Ayurveda and yoga. Lisa presently serves on the Board of Directors for The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World.

**Colette Segalla** is a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute. From a depth-psychological perspective, her dissertation investigates how spirituality contributes to the development of a sense of self in children. Before returning to graduate school, Colette was an AMI certified Montessori teacher in a lower elementary classroom of six to nine year old children. She has also explored the work of Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf education as part of her interest in children and spirituality. The work of Steiner and Montessori has contributed to her current Jungian-based exploration of children’s spirituality and how a relationship with the natural world contributes to the child’s spiritual development.

**Randy Senzig** has taught science for 33 years in North Carolina and Florida public schools. He holds a NC Science Teaching License as well as being a NC Certified Environmental Educator. Randy is a NCSU Kenan Fellow, the 2010 *Unsung Heroes’* Teacher of the Year, the 2009 Wake County Soil and Water Conservation District Environmental Educator of the Year, the 2006 NC Environmental Educator of the Year and NCSTA District Science Teacher of the Year. He was selected twice as his high school’s Teacher of the Year. Randy is a Leopold Education

Program facilitator and has received many grants to promote outdoor education. He was the co-director of NCSU Summer Environmental Camp. His article, "A Letter from a Teacher of Young Women," was published in *The Ecozoic Reader*. His website, *Birds in the Schoolyard*, promotes outdoor education. Randy wrote the Wake County Environmental Science Curriculum and has most recently co-authored a CORES program to restore mutually enhancing relationships between middle and high school students and the Earth. He has studied at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, pursued graduate studies in Conservation Biology at Florida International University and earned a Masters in Education at the University of North Florida.

**Neetu Singh** loves to be in nature and backpacking in the mountains. He is an educator at The Valley School in Bangalore, India, where he facilitates inquiry into right education with children and adults. He is concerned with education to bring a new culture of awakening intelligence and flowering in goodness.

**John Shackelton** has been an educator for thirty-four years. His twenty-two years of teaching experience have included lower elementary, middle and high school, and college; he has served as head of three alternative schools, most recently Rainbow Mountain Children's School in Asheville, N.C. John is semi-retired and currently teaches as a part-time adjunct at AB-Tech Community College in Asheville. He is on the board of an alternative school which emphasizes learning in the natural world, Mountain Sun Community School in Brevard, N.C. He also does educator training workshops focused on teaching as a sacred work. He has one published novel, *The Lowly Papers*, a story of Appalachia, and is currently finishing a non-fiction work, *The Pedagogical Imperative: Rethinking Education for a Healthy Planetary Future*.

**Lisa Tate** is a Montessori teacher and Head of School at Montessori Farm School in Hillsborough, NC. She has spent more than 20 years teaching Montessori, running summer camps, teaching adults the Montessori method and raising children. Lisa lives on a farm in Efland, NC, with her husband, horses, cows and various other animals. She enjoys hiking the forest around her home, spending time with her family and animals and gardening.

**Carolyn Toben** is the founder of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World. She has taught in public and private schools and colleges with an emphasis on alternative and interdisciplinary education and served for 18 years as a seminar leader at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and at the Center for Advancement and Renewal of Educators in San Francisco. Her article, "Teacher Renewal: Pilgrims and Passages" was published in the *Holistic Education Review*. Carolyn has pursued post-graduate studies at the Jung Institute in Switzerland, The Institute of Creation Centered Spirituality in Chicago, the Guild for Psychological Studies in San Francisco and the School of Spirituality Psychology. She is currently working on a book that comes out of her companionship with Thomas Berry in his last ten years entitled: *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry*.

**Jessica Towle** is a graduate of Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona. She has walked a path of eco-consciousness that has brought her into relation with Genesis Farm, Pickard's Mountain Eco Institute and Plant walker Frank Cook. Jessica worked as an intern at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, where she served as a master gardener, earth guide and camp counselor. She studied natural building and permaculture in Argentina. Most recently, Jessica has served on the board of Plants and Healers International and has been a home school teacher using the Waldorf method. She is grateful for the many ways the earth has shown its magic and taught us how to live, and for the many guides who have inspired her along her journey.

**Marnie Weigel** is a potter in Greensboro, NC. She shares her life with her loving husband, Fred Weigel, their wonderful dogs and cats, friends, and family. She received a Bachelor Degree in Environmental Science with a minor in visual arts from Warren Wilson College in the Swannanoa Valley in Western North Carolina in 1995. Her love for making pots began in this beautiful mountain valley. After receiving an Associates Degree in Professional Crafts at Haywood Community College in 2000, she was able to realize her dream of making pots as a profession. Marnie enjoys biking, camping, yoga, and walking Violet in Fisher Park.

**Anthony Weston** teaches philosophy and environmental studies at Elon University. He is the author of over ten books including *Back to Earth: Tomorrow's Environmentalism*, *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy*, *How to Re-imagine the World: A Pocket Guide for Practical Visionaries* and *The Incomplete Eco-Philosopher: Essays from the Edges of Environmental Ethics*.

**Peggy Whalen-Levitt** is Director of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World. She holds a Ph.D. in Language in Education from the University of Pennsylvania, where she co-created a graduate Course of Study in Childhood Imagination. She has written widely on aesthetic communication in childhood and is the editor of *Chrysalis*, the Center newsletter. Peggy coordinates the Center's national program for educators, "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice" and compiles a monograph for each two-year program. She has pursued studies in phenomenology and contemplative practice with The School of Spiritual Psychology and the Choreocosmos School of Cosmic and Sacred Dance.

**West Willmore-Dickinson** has been teaching 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Rainbow Mountain Children's School in Asheville, North Carolina for 3 years. Prior to joining the Rainbow Community, West worked as a naturalist and environmental educator for 4 years in various parts of the country. She received an Environmental Educator certificate from the Teton Science School in Jackson, Wyoming and her teacher licensure from Montana State University. West is currently working on her M.Ed thesis and is in her first year of Waldorf teacher training. The nature experiences and mentors West had while studying Natural Resources and Environmental Science at her undergraduate college, Sewanee, led her on this life-long journey with the natural world. West continues to strengthen her own relationship to nature through rock climbing, backpacking, nature journaling and naturalizing.

**Katherine Ziff** is an elementary school counselor and an exhibiting artist. She was born by the ocean in Jacksonville, N.C., raised in the piedmont area of the state in Winston-Salem, and since 1998 has lived with her husband Matthew and son Benjamin in Athens, Ohio. She holds a doctorate in counselor education and is the author of *Asylum on the Hill: History of a Healing Landscape*.