

Chrysalis

Volume 4 Spring 2007

*Newsletter of
The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World
at
Timberlake Farm*

The recovery of Western civilization from its present addiction to use, as our primary relation to each other and to the world about us, must begin with the discovery of the world within, the world of the psyche as designated by the Greeks, a word translated by the term anima in the Latin world or by the term soul in the English world.

~ Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts*

Dear Reader,

When we set out to create The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World seven years ago, it was with a sense that we find ourselves at a crucial turning point in time.

Visionaries like Rachel Carson, with her publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962, and Thomas Berry, with his publication of *The Dream of the Earth* in 1988, pointed the way. While modern life moves toward its view of a technological future at a fast pace, the subtext bubbles to the surface: human beings have become estranged from the natural world – the Earth, in all its beauty, has been reduced to a collection of objects for human use on a massive scale – and, for the first time in history, the future of the earth itself rests in human hands.

The human community, it seems, has not anticipated the long-range consequences of a materialist and objectivist worldview. As Thomas Berry has pointed out, “the scientific presentation of the universe has achieved a certain dazzling success.”¹ Yet, this same dazzling scientific explanation of the world “has necessitated the setting aside, for a while, of the spiritual, visionary, intuitive, imaginative world in order to probe as deeply as possible into the visible, material, quantitative world, the measurable world, the world that could be expressed in the language of calculus.”²

When we began our work seven years ago, we knew it was time to invite the spiritual, visionary, intuitive and imaginative world back in. This intention is embodied in the name of our center: The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World. Through this name, we hoped to suggest that the imaginative capacities of the human being in relationship to the natural world must now be called into play – especially in the education of our children and young adults.

¹Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 5

²*Evening Thoughts*, p. 56



The Center for Education, Imagination
and the Natural World

STAFF

Carolyn Toben, Co-Director
Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Co-Director
Sandy Bisdee, Naturalist/Educator

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Scott Crews

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Don Wells, Chair	Dacia King
Marty Goldstein	Pat MacKenzie
David Henderson	Carolyn Toben
Lynne Jaffe	

Chrysalis is published twice yearly.
Copyright 2007, The Center for Education,
Imagination and the Natural World.
Wood Engraving by Ilya Schor

EDITOR: Peggy Whalen-Levitt
LAYOUT: Megan Royle
PRINTING: Arrowhead Graphics

By becoming a Friend of the Center, you
receive two copies of *Chrysalis* a year.
Please send a check in the amount of \$36 to:

The Center for Education, Imagination
and the Natural World
1501 Rock Creek Dairy Rd.
Whitsett, NC 27377
Tel.: (336) 449-0612
Fax.: (336) 449-0612
Email: beholdnature@aol.com
www.beholdnature.org

The Center for Education, Imagination
and the Natural World is a non-profit
organization recognized as tax-exempt
by the IRS under section 501(c)(3).

While our present-day consciousness focuses its attention primarily on the physical world, this consciousness must now be supplemented by a capacity "to develop an intimate sense of togetherness with the world around us."³ Earlier in the twentieth century, Rudolf Steiner referred to this capacity as "a mind warmed by a loving heart and stimulated by the soul's imaginative power."⁴

Both Berry and Steiner suggest that the life of the soul is central to the evolution of consciousness in our time. It is through the soul that we will develop a new capacity to sense the warm heartbeat of life, to become aware and conscious of our deeper relationship to a more-than-physical world.

In *Evening Thoughts*, Thomas Berry brings us back to this fuller picture of reality: "As we look up at the starry sky at night and as, in the morning, we see the landscape revealed as the sun dawns over the Earth – these experiences reveal a physical world but also a more profound world that cannot be bought with money, cannot be manufactured with technology, cannot be listed on the stock market, cannot be made in the chemical laboratory, cannot be reproduced with all our genetic engineering, cannot be sent by e-mail. These experiences require only that we follow the deepest feelings of the human soul."⁵

The well-being of the child and young adult, and the well-being of the natural world, now depend on our ability to nurture a soul attitude of loving attention between the child and the natural world.

Young children, of course, move readily into a bond of intimacy with the world around them. Thomas Berry offers a vivid picture of this connection: "Fulfillment . . . continues to find expression in our children running through the meadows, wading in the creeks, playing with animals, or simply sitting with utmost satisfaction in a backyard puddle experiencing the cooling delight of such an environment on a summer day. Such is the beginning of education, of aesthetic experience, of physical vigor, of acquaintance with the universe. Ultimately, it is the awakening of the universe to itself."⁶

³ Baruch Luke Urieli and Hans Muller-Wiedemann. *Learning to Experience the Etheric World: Empathy, the After-Image and a New Social Ethic*. London: Temple Lodge, 1998, p. 51.

⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Michaelmas and the Soul-Forces in Man*. Spring Valley, Anthroposophic Press, 1946, translator's note.

⁵ *Evening Thoughts*, p. 138.

⁶ *Evening Thoughts*, p. 118.

We know that these kinds of formative experiences are dwindling in the lives of contemporary children. And yet, Thomas Berry encourages us to embrace the present moment with “hopeful activity” rather than desperation.⁷

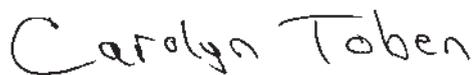
In the spirit of “hopeful activity,” the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World enters its second seven years. Our work with educators has evolved into our signature program “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice.” In this issue of *Chrysalis*, you will read about the first year of this program and plans to continue this co-research into the future.

Our children’s programs reached a new maturity this year with our inaugural program, “Children of the Forest,” based on the Forest Kindergartens of Germany. In this issue of *Chrysalis*, we offer a journey into the heart of the program through Sandy Bisdee’s diary of the children’s most intimate experiences with the natural world.

Also in this issue, we celebrate the graduation of Jessie Towle from Prescott College in “Seed of the Future.” Over the past five years, Jessie has created a new educational form centered in a bond of intimacy with the natural world. Thomas Berry and other mentors gathered at the Treehouse on December 2, 2006 to honor the occasion.

As a staff, we engage in a weekly practice of beholding, meditative reading and silence that deepens our own soul capacities for the work with educators, children and the natural world. Now, more than ever before, we are convinced that a commitment to the development of inner capacities of soul and spirit is the hope of the future.

With warm regards,



Carolyn Toben,
Co-Director



Peggy Whalen-Levitt,
Co-Director

⁷ *The Great Work*, p. 19.

“The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice”



Since its beginnings in 2000, The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World has worked closely with ecotheologian Thomas Berry to re-imagine the child’s relationship with the natural world. Seminal to these conversations is the following quote from Thomas Berry:

There is a certain futility in the efforts being made – truly sincere, dedicated, and intelligent efforts – to remedy our environmental devastation simply by activating renewable sources of energy and by reducing the deleterious impact of the industrial world. The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder, beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude the natural world remains a commodity to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality to be venerated. The deep psychic shift needed to withdraw us from the fascination of the industrial world and the deceptive gifts that it gives us is too difficult for simply the avoidance of its difficulties or the attractions of its benefits. Eventually, only our sense of the sacred will save us.¹

In considering the education of children and young adults in our culture, we have come to believe that this “deep psychic shift” that Thomas Berry refers to is the central task of our time. To what extent does the schooling of children contribute to their view of the natural world as a commodity? How might we create a context within which children awaken to the wonder, beauty and intimacy of the natural world? What might be done to restore a sense of the natural world as a sacred presence in the lives of children? These are the questions that have concerned us.

In response to these questions, the Center initiated a two-year program in the Autumn of 2006 entitled “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice,” designed to prepare educators to develop capacities to nurture the deep inner faculties of imagination and intuition in children, and to create contexts within which children are given the opportunity to develop a bond of intimacy with the natural world.

The response to “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature” program exceeded our greatest expectations. It was heartening to read the applications of so many educators who indicated a deep interest in creating a new vision of the relationship between the inner life of the child/young adult and the natural world. We attempted to compose a group of educators that represented diversities of place, context and young people served – a microcosm of the macrocosm, so to speak. The final group of 24 educators come from as far away as Vermont, work with young people from 2 to 22 years old, and represent teachers, child psychologists, religious educators, medical doctors, parents, nature educators, child care providers, horticultural therapists, college professors and volunteers who work in contexts ranging from homeless shelters in New York City to nature preserves in North Carolina.

The program is unfolding through four retreats during the 2006-2007 school year and one two-day retreat in the summer of 2007. At the Center, we try to create a meaningful context for our programs by paying close attention to the rhythm of the day. Retreats begin with a moment of silence intended to quiet the mind and create a field of receptivity for the group. Every retreat includes solo time in the natural world, time for reflection and sharing, the fellowship of shared meals at lunch, and presentations related to the theme at hand. Each retreat ends with a reading that brings closure to the experience we have created together throughout the day.

Over the course of our two years together, we have invited the educators to “come alive to landscape,” especially to the landscape within which they work with children. We’ve asked them to begin a daily practice of awakening to landscape by keeping a nature journal as follows: “You might begin this practice of awakening to landscape by calling forth from memory, at the end of each day, one image of the natural world that has stayed with you from the day. You may recall nothing—simply write that down. But you may be surprised

¹Thomas Berry, Foreword, *When Trees Say Nothing* by Thomas Merton, Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003, pp. 18-19.

to find that this simple practice of looking back over the day yields a bounty of images. Choose one and write it down. If you have time, you might stay with the memory for a while, letting it deepen and noting how the qualities of the image evoke a particular response in you. Soon you will find that this practice of remembering an image at the end of the day will strengthen your capacity for beholding during your waking hours.”

In preparation for our second retreat with Robin Moore and Nilda Cosco, Co-Founders of the Natural Learning Initiative, we invited the educators to awaken to the landscapes within which they work with children and young adults and to submit a journal entry relating to these special places: “Be as brief or expansive as you like, but try to stay in the mode of loving attentiveness rather than objective description of the schoolyard, backyard, preserve, urban street, etc. that you and the children call home.” Through these practices, we are slowly learning to shift from a spectator role to a relational way of knowing the world around us. One religious educator offered the following description of her church courtyard:

You enter this cloistered retreat off a covered breezeway. Take steps along a stone path. Two huge, old pin oaks stand as sentries on either side. They provide shelter and shade. Their imposing solidity a reminder of all that they have seen. The purifying cedars rise up to make this place clean. There are large rosemary bushes for remembrance. Remember the earth, remember the reason we gather, remember those who have gone before, remember those who will need this place somewhere down the line. Descend now, down steps into a safe haven so close but yet so far from the street. In this recession the traffic noises fade a little. The bubbling oasis of a fountain can be heard-- that magical lulling sound of water over rocks. The stone walls make a fortress declaring this a secret. Stacked stones in grays, roses, whites—so many hues await the eye. All around are variegated greens: laurels, ferns down low, boxwoods, camellias, dogwoods, and rhododendron. Many bloom in their own time guaranteeing color in all seasons. The patches of lawn are lush with grass and clovers. Distracted, your eye follows the busy path of a parade of ants moving to and fro with great purpose. A squirrel scampers by. Some birds converse, their voices carrying a rapid-fire sense of urgency. Are you perceived as a threat? Climbing ivy and other vines draw the eye up to the open clear view of sky. Gaze upward, the clouds and changing light mark the day and weather. The slate roof slopes down and below the brilliant colors of stained glass merge the cathedral inside with the one present in this outdoor space. Acorns crunch and leaves crackle underfoot as you take advantage of a hospitably placed bench. In the center is the labyrinth. This age old pilgrimage borrows its spiral shape from nature. The entrance beckons, inviting you in to walk and begin the unraveling of self, the letting go, the silencing to move round towards the center where the listening is all. The columbarium occupants keep company lest one grow lonely. A Celtic cross stands tall yet unimposing to remind us of Creator, creation, our part of a whole, a promise of thin places. Circles underfoot, moss green and growing undeterred by footfall above, wind round and round and suddenly find yourself on the way back out. The impulse is to stop and bow; to turn your face to the sun and feel the wind's caress fare thee well. Clarity restored, energy renewed, it's time to depart. For now.

During our third retreat, we turned our attention to inner landscapes: our own and those of the children and young adults in our care. Guiding us on this journey was Tobin Hart, psychologist and associate professor of psychology at the State University of West Georgia. Founder of the ChildSpirit Institute and author of *From Information to Transformation: Education for the Evolution of Consciousness* and *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*, Tobin is a leading spokesperson for the inner lives of children.

In preparation for this time together, we asked the educators to reflect on their own inner experience of the natural world: “Pay particular attention to the ways of knowing that allow this experience to unfold: beholding the moment, slowing down, appreciating what is before you, empathetic resonance, communion and listening with the heart.” We also asked them to share a brief story of a young person’s feelings of awe, connection, joy, insight, or deep sense of reverence and love for the natural world; pondering, puzzling over, or playing with questions about the natural world; playful encounters with nature; or any other experience at the meeting place between the inner life of the child/young adult and nature.

On April 28, 2007, we will continue this exploration of the inner life of the child with Richard Lewis, Founder of the Touchstone Center for Children in New York City and author of *Living by Wonder: The Imaginative Life of Childhood*. During the first four retreats, we have encouraged the educators to take their time moving through this meeting place between inner and outer worlds. In the summer of 2007, we will begin to move these newfound capacities and understandings toward a practice in each educator’s situation.

Throughout the year together, we have experienced the kind of deep renewal that is the sole foundation for envisioning new forms of education for the young. Thomas Berry gives voice to what we now know: “As we recover our awareness of the universe as a communion of subjects, a new interior experience awakens within the human. The barriers disappear. An enlargement of soul takes place. The excitement evoked by natural phenomenon is renewed. Dawn and sunset are once again transforming experiences, as are the sights, sounds, tastes, and feel of the natural world about us.”²

²Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 18

Children of the Forest: A Diary

by
Sandy Bisdee

*If a child is to keep alive his
inborn sense of
wonder . . . he needs the
companionship of at
least one adult who can share it,
rediscovering with him
the joy, excitement and mystery of
the world we live in.*

~ Rachel Carson

In the Fall of 2006, the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World inaugurated a new program for children based on the Forest Kindergartens of Germany. Recognizing that the over-scheduled lives of American children leave little time for natural play outdoors, we initiated a “Children of the Forest” program where a small group of children could spend time outside after school. In the following diary excerpts, Sandy Bisdee gives a rich and moving account of the inner and outer worlds of these children who traveled to the earth sanctuary once a week to make friends with the natural world.



Tuesday, September 19, 2006

The first day of our “Children of the Forest” program started on one of the last days of summer. Large grey clouds brought a much-needed rain with rumbles of thunder in the distance. I went to the Chapel several hours before the children came, to get “right.” I had felt harried and hurried and scattered that day and I knew I had to center myself at the Chapel before I met my little friends. The chapel is a beautiful place. The trees surround it with loving arms of various greens, browns and reds. A muddy lake Macintosh reflected the tree line like a Monet painting. It didn’t take long for the inner anxiety to ebb away. The subtle orchestra of the crickets, like tiny chiming bells, gave me a thrilling concert. Thrilling in its softness and sweetness. I sat and entered the Silence.

Three children arrived for the program. Alizse in her pink raincoat and the twins, Nathan and Quinn in yellow capes. They looked like aquatic butterflies! Since it was raining with a little thunder, I took them under the Treehouse where we sang, became acquainted with one another and rinsed off little stones in the drips from the porch above – salmon colored stones placed artistically on the wood. We sang the mud song for a second time. When the thunder had ceased its roar, we ventured off to the forest. We wondered who else was out with us on such a rainy day! Heron circled the lake as we watched her disappear

into a tree. Turtle poked her head up from the pond and cloud lingered above, almost close enough to touch. Quinn really wanted to touch the cloud! So did I. The dark verdancy of the path invited us to enter its cavernous mouth, its mysterious aura enclosed in a tunnel-like vision. "A ghost!" Quinn exclaimed when she saw the opening of the trail. What is it that she feels, I wondered?



Mushrooms of varying sizes and colors were everywhere and the children seemed to find each and every one along the trail. Flowers with their buds open and closed beckoned the children's gaze and touch. We smelled the rich, moist earth – a pervasive moist perfume - as we walked along on top of the velvety forest floor. The cloud had come to us. The sounds of frogs were around us, but we did not see them. Nathan recognized so many things from his past summer camp experience last June. When we came to the path of the sacred circle and teepee, his memory lit up with the vision and he led us up the trail. Inside the teepee, the deer skull with the turtle shell and moss hat sat in the center of the cone. The children drew a collective deep breath as they began to explore this mysterious place. Alizse put the turtle shell on her head like a hat! Quinn found a little collarbone that she could not part with for the rest of the journey. She fingered it over and over in her hand, feeling the smoothness of the bone and testing its strength. Alizse swung on the big vine that hung from the tall pines while the twins explored. A frog hopped away, and Nathan tried to catch it, but could not and he let it go on its way.

The rain had almost stopped and we sat on the bench on the little boardwalk by the pond's edge. The sounds, smells and magic of the moment brought us into silence as we gazed out over the brown water. Then Nathan remembered the logs he had found earlier along the path and wanted to put them in the water for the beavers to use for their home. Teamwork prevailed and Alizse, Nathan and I lugged the logs to the edge of the dock and watched them splash into the water. Quinn held the little collarbone wondering if it would break like plastic. Was it plastic, she wondered?

Back to the bench by the pond's edge, I gathered them on my lap and near me and told them a story about the last few days of summer when there were three little children - "And a grown-up," Nathan chimed in - who knew that the season of summer was about to come to an end. The animals knew it too. The story went on with the children removing their shoes and feeling the puddles of summer rain and the cool mud under their feet. It told about the animals sensing a change in the air and knowing that a time of rest was to come. By the end of the story, the children were eager to remove their shoes, just like the people in the story, and walk barefoot. The earth felt soft. The puddles were warm. The moss was like a fluffy cushion under our feet. "A carpet," I called it, and the children laughed at the thought of a moss carpet in their homes! One area of moss was particularly soft and we sunk a little, each taking turns to sink. It was an area where the roots and trunk of a tree had been a long time ago.

Time. It was time to go back to where we began.

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Starting in the chapel seemed like the best way to begin with my second group of children, Annaleise, Skye and Tate. They would be coming at 3:30, and entering the silence before we met seemed like the best way to prepare.



Skye arrived first, full of exuberance and memories of her past camp experience with us this past June. Annaleise, an old friend of Skye's, arrived next. Tate, who had never met the other two friends, came next. The three children were ready to go into the forest as soon as they were assembled. We started off walking by the lake and looking at the fish in the pond. Little fish swam around the cattails and the jewelweed. Then we entered the creeping Cedar trail. The variety of mushrooms and little flowers called to them right away and Skye led the way from one beautiful encounter to the next. The mood was one of joy and discovery as we traveled along together sharing our experiences. The day was a perfect temperature for the first day of autumn. Skye remembered the blessings and the songs from camp three

months ago, and she remembered the experience of making blessing wands. I happened to have a knife, waxed linen thread and an equal amount of enthusiasm, and we began to look for the right sticks to make our wands. The children showered the day with their love, blessing every little thing along the path, sometimes in union. They sang songs of love and thanks to Mother Earth, and Annaleise included the stars and Grandfather Sun as she sang. I listened and gave thanks for their cosmic attunement. The tiniest mushroom, the tiniest flower, boneset, and small frogs were all adored by the blessing wands.

Then we came to the trail at the sacred circle. The teepee loomed in the distance. The three friends began an exploration into the mystery of the space. The teepee was a pyramid. The deer skull, turtle shell with moss on top, the woodland creatures made by former campers, the prayer ties from a special design program that hung from the center of the pyramid, the green rock slate with faded letters that read "wolf," "hummingbird," "bat," and other animal names from a former Council of All Beings, were inscribed in time. All these things in space became a most amazing mystery. This was not really a mystery to be solved, but a mystery to be aware of and the clues were everywhere. They knew that this place contained mysteries of prayer, imagination, the past inhabitants of the land, the present creatures living there, and events that had left their mark. We spent a long time exploring the mysteries of the place.



It was time to go, although no one really announced it, and so we took leave. "I won't be here next week," Annaleise said. "When you find more clues to the mystery, will you tell me when I come back?" We traveled along the Creeping Cedar Trail up the hill. New friends came to meet us in the form of rocks. Blue rocks, grey rocks, clear quartz - treasures to be held and taken to the creek to be washed. The children had begun to settle down and were more comfortable in the silence.

We arrived at the bridge on the creek and washed our rocks in the warm creek, in the first day of autumn water. They slipped on the bank as they climbed down to the waters edge, and they watched me balance my big feet on small rocks as I washed my special rock. The Silence filled the moment and we just were. We were just there. A peace and a stillness and a silence entered our activities as we played by the creek. We could have stayed there another 30 minutes, but my watch told me that we only had 15 minutes to get back to the Treehouse to meet the parents. Ninety minutes was not enough time for the Children of the Forest. We need much more time. I will make sure we get to the woods as soon as we can next time, and that we have the time that we need to enter the Silence that opens up like a bright starry sky when the clouds part and the cosmos beckons us to enter the mystery.



Tuesday, September 26, 2006

The weather was glorious, sunny - and autumn had been with us for five days. The twins jumped out of their mom's van ready to go! They have such enthusiasm for this experience. I imagine that they bring that enthusiasm with them to many things. Then Alizse arrived.

The trees seemed to call to the children today. They spontaneously ran up to hug certain trees and tell them they loved them. They smelled the flowers and trees and, together, we smelled the most subtle aromas. "It is the most beautiful tree that I have ever seen," Nathan said. There is a tree that has been cut through, and the trunk and roots are quite a scene. Some children count rings, others climb on it, most admire the variety of fungus growing on it. Nathan noticed the root system sticking up in the air and we all had to get a closer look. He seemed to be a little sad that the roots were not in the ground anymore. We walked around and looked at all of the things growing in the remainder of the old tree. Quinn put her hand in the center of the cut trunk and told us that this was the heart of the tree. The other children put their hands on it too. The next tree was an old birch. The children ran up to it. "Look! It has words on it! A word tree!" We admired the markings. Rocks, acorns, old puffballs, and then, a caterpillar. The children decided that it was a gymnastic caterpillar due to all of the funny positions that it was taking. At summer camp the children would not have been able to part with it, but now, just three months later, they are willing to let frogs hop away and caterpillars stay in their woodland home. I am really touched by this.

As we approached the creek on the creeping cedar trail, Nathan spied a large piece of bark that had slipped off of a tree. "A boat!" he exclaimed as he ran toward it. "Can we ride in it?" We dragged the bark to the creek and I positioned it on some rocks in the water so it would be stable and the three entered the boat. Nathan had fully expected to launch downstream and was a little surprised that it didn't move. He nearly tipped his sister into the water as he tried to hoist it off of the rocks, but soon the three were traveling in unison, content to travel in their imaginations! When the ride was over, we headed up the trail toward the next place that called to us.



Thursday, September 28, 2006

Tate and Skye arrived about the same time. Skye's mom was not feeling well and was concerned that Skye might be tired. If she was, the forest quickly revived her! We started out on the Creeping Cedar Trail, little "crystals" lining the way. There was a joy in the air today. Skye brings a joy and a song wherever she goes and Tate had a subtle smile on his face, a sense of being comfortable with his new relations. Tate found a rock friend right away, which he lugged with him for a while. It was pretty big. Skye found branches that looked like antlers and she became a deer. Tate hopped like a frog and he became a frog. I became eagle. The three friends frolicked along the path. Skye brings the element of imagination to the journey. Her focus is a bit more inward, the outer and inner becoming a living drama. The mushroom becomes a throne for a frog and the rock is where he got married. She adorns it. Tate delights at the shape of a tree and marvels as the wind moves the tops of all the trees, all but the big one.



We arrive at the Creeping Cedar trail bridge. It becomes our destination. The children begin exploring the creek bed. Little fish, crayfish and rocks catch their eyes. They make a home on either side of the bridge and begin collecting rocks, washing them and placing them just right. I disappear downstream a bit, and sit on an old mossy rock in the creek, so as not to be too much of a presence in their play. Tate carefully steps on each rock as to not get his shoes wet, and perches near one spot. Skye appears to glide, skate and slip over the slippery rock surface and I ask her to slow down and try to walk on the rocks that are not in the deep area. I was sure she would end up in the calf

deep water! I don't want her to fall, and I want her to learn how to balance, and her mom was concerned about her getting a cold and I work to strike a balance with my words and expectations. She really does not care if her shoes are wet or her skirt is dirty. It is so refreshing to see her blend into the creek.

A little frog hops by Skye's house at the foot of the bridge and we sit in a circle and gain its trust. Skye is so eager to hold him and does for a bit. Tate is content to let him go. Learning to sit still, learning to let go, delighting in the communion of human and other than human, these are some of the lessons of "Children of the Forest."

I sit back again and watch the creek flow, the children create a new world, and the sunlight filter through the trees. It is time to walk back. We need more time. "I went to school today and I had a great day." "Did you?" Skye spontaneously asks Tate. "Yes," he answers. She continues: "I got a new lesson today. I picked corn off with tweezers into a bowl." As a former Montessori teacher I remember the lesson and how much the children love to do that work. Skye picks up a red leaf and hands it to Tate. He places it inside his hat, a holding place that makes him smile. We become eagle, deer and frog again and look for food. I choose a bud from a plant for deer, inwardly careful to choose a bud that will not harm the plant. "You didn't ask the plant" Skye states. She remembers that I always ask a plant's permission before I pick it, and it is one of the lessons that I teach the children. One must look around and see how many other plants are like it, especially important with the flower family. And then we ask the plant and then we listen for the answer. "I asked it silently," I assure her as I present a bud to deer.

I must find some way to share our experiences with their parents, who bravely signed up for something so totally different from what other children are doing. I want to learn how to put into words the tremendous gift that these parents are giving their children by sending them into the forest at a time where their children have not built up filters to filter out sense impressions that bombard them from the world that they live in. They have sent them to a place where their children can be fully human and where the natural world showers them with rich colors, aromas, sensations, sounds and perceptions that cannot be manufactured, bought or sold. They have sent them to a place that will become a healthy part of their developing sensorial systems. As we move so quickly into the future, the children are exposed to thoughts and ideas that create a web of confusion. I don't want to go backwards in time, but I do want to offer a balance to the material insanity of our time; an experience of wholeness in the natural world that offers its gifts to children, permanent gifts to their being. A place where rocks replace plastic. A place where experience creates a lifelong love affair that they will pass onto their children, just like these parents have done.

Thursday, October 12, 2006

While waiting for Annaliese, Kai, Tate and Skye gathered around the basket of goodies on the bench that were left over from my Native American program that morning. Each child picked a stone, arrowhead or natural object to hear the story that it had to tell. Experience has taught me that the children never grow tired of these stories and they ask and ask for more. Some children take this up in earnest and tell me stories. Kai's eyes found the flattened pumpkin. "Can I hear that story?" "Next time," I promised, as Annaliese arrived. We headed for the Field of Blessings, which was waist high in grasses, deadly nightshade and asters. The children waded through it like bay water, slowly. "Look! Little tomatoes!" This is deadly nightshade, little one. Prickly and not for human consumption. "Look! Flowers! They had discovered the row of cosmos hidden behind the field. Happily they frolicked along. I turned toward the large cosmos field and the forest children followed my lead.

As we arrived at the field of cosmos, we pondered how we might enter without trampling down the lovely orange flowers. We discovered little paths and followed them. "Lets play the seed game!" I offered. First I plant the little seeds. They curl up quietly on the earth. Then I tell them they are dreaming the dream of what they will become. Winter brings snow and ice, but they are warm. Spring brings rain and they grow. And grow they did! It wasn't long before the children announced that they were flower fairies, granting me wishes, each in his or her own special manner. "Oh no, a hunter!" Skye exclaimed. In our games there is always a hunter. I tell the flower fairies that I will protect them, but we must go into the forest.



We find a log bench and I share a pear from the pear tree in my yard (the best pears in the world, I hear from the forest children) and we gaze out into the autumn woods, mossy trees and beyond. We find an old creek bed and follow it to the crystal place. The children are real adventurers, navigating fallen logs by going under and over them and balancing on unsteady ground. They recognize that I am too big for some of the crossings and Tate offers to lend me a hand. Crystals have become the goal. We arrive at a white rock dam and cannot go any further. It is a magical place that we hang out in for a while. Tate spies an "armadillo" in a crack behind the big rocks. I have a look and it did resemble an armadillo.. After a good long look, it appeared to be a harmless, weathered fabric of some unknown origin and I say "It sure does look like an armadillo."

Back on the Keyhole Trail, the children are drawn to the rocks. The girls fill their hands, and then their shirts with various sized crystals. Kai wants a story from one particular rock. It turns out that it is a very old rock that was on earth before the dinosaurs, except it used to be part of a much larger rock. Earthquakes and ice brought it up to the top of the ground and ice broke it apart. The walk back was long and, for once, I was not going to get back in time. This was a good thing for me, so timely all the time. The children wanted more stories from leaves and more rocks - more and more perspectives. By now, the girl's shirts were loaded with treasures. Tate had settled on one special rock and we saw the trailhead that would finally lead us back. I had assured the children that I was not lost. We made our way back to the Treehouse.

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

I can't believe that this is the last day of the "Children of the Forest" program. I had to check the calendar twice, hoping that I missed something, got confused with the dates. I finally came up with a parting gift. It was a stone heart wrapped in a furry mullein leaf with a note telling Nathan, Quinn and Alizse what joy they have brought to the heart of the earth and to my heart, also.

We headed off toward the huge hay bales in the Field of Blessings. There are two of them. Along the path, we found mud mounds, a tiny red leaf and cool branches. My little fledglings ran ahead, checking back to see if I was with them. "Take our picture, "they shouted! Then they took off across the field, looking behind them for me. "I'll meet you at the flowers" I called as they ran toward the border of cosmos. "They are all looking at us" Nathan exclaimed, and it appeared as if they really, really

were looking at them. Nathan and Quinn picked several and Nathan dug up soft red earth/clay for a base and replanted them. Alizse spotted an animal, white, across the way and we followed the wind toward her sighting.

They spotted the magical garden and remembered the green peppers and the persimmon. Then we saw them. The cows. A small herd was in the field right outside of the garden fence. The twins went running up to the fence, scaring them away. We stood there at the fence, hoping that they would come back toward us. They wanted to feed them grass, but the cows would not come close. We stood for a while, waiting. Alizse and Nathan went over to the picnic table outside of the garden and admired the fossils, stones and bones on the table. Nathan went into the garden. Quinn was glued to the fence, a tunnel vision fixed on those cows. They were getting used to her presence, and I had a talk with the children about moving slowly so as not to startle them. "Make them come closer" Quinn asked. She was convinced that I held the magic key to getting those cows to the fence. "I can't, Quinn!" I apologized.

Nathan had discovered a way to twist the unripe permissions off the tree and he and Alizse had several. Quinn was glued to the spot. I went over and started to take her hand, but instead stood with her, wishing that they would come up to us. I took her hand and we walked back to the garden. Nathan picked a tiny pepper, the smallest pepper that I have ever seen, and offered it to me. It was delicious. He spotted an old dandelion and said that I could make a wish. I said that maybe we could make it together. He said it would be more powerful that way. "What shall we wish for together?" I asked. Without a moment's thought, he said that we should wish that we would be together again soon, since this was the last day. We blew at the same time, wishing that we would be together soon. The seeds floated away, carrying our intention. The cows had come to the fence closest to us and we went back out to see them. I sliced the pear I had brought and served them slices. Alizse and Quinn sang to the cows. Moo moo, we love you, with melodic high notes that only little children can hit. The cows lined up to listen, coming closer all the time. I swear that one perked his ears for a better angle to hear the little angels sing. This encouraged them and they sang for a while. Nathan admired the udders. The sun was setting and it was in the low 50's with a wind and it was getting cold. I looked at my watch and could not believe how the time had flown. Nathan found an old log and wanted me to carve a face into it. Oh I wish! I carved our initials. We cut through the woods to get back and Nathan knew the end was near.

The three of us went back to the fire circle and I gave them my little gifts - stone hearts wrapped in soft mullein leaves tied with a leather strand. Reverently they opened them. Quinn wrapped hers back up and asked me to take a picture of it. My camera battery had run out at the beginning of our day, so I hesitated for a moment and with a twinkle in her eye she asked me to do it with my mind! She really surprised me with that request. I know that Quinn and I have much to teach each other. Nathan loved the message on the card, I think: "You have made the heart of the earth very happy and my heart also." Nathan said when he got home he was going to put the card on the refrigerator OPEN. Alizse accepted her gift with the joy with which she has accepted every aspect of the program, of our time together. The children of the forest have helped me forge this new path, this work at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World.



Seed of the Future

In her poem, "Opening Anthem," M.C. Richards sounds themes that resonate deeply with our work here at the Center: "Wholeness we bear within us like a seed.... We are its art. Its forming makes us good.....The schooling that we seek is full within."

In the year 2000, Jessica Towle came to us from New Jersey to live at the Center as our first intern. Her interest was in a schooling that came from "full within," from a deep desire to learn from the woods, fields, creatures, plants, stars, sun and moon.... from the patterns of the seasons. While working in the magical garden, assisting in the children's programs, welcoming visitors, Jessie was learning always from her own deep absorption in the natural world as well as from those who came here. Lessons of newness of life, cycles of growth and decay, light and darkness, patience and humility, became part of her own nature. When the time came to seek "formal" education, Jessie was insistent upon continuing to shape her life in a way that she knew inwardly was right for her. "I must have an education that gives meaning and purpose to my life, and I must learn from those who live what they teach" she said. She had already met Thomas Berry who became one of her early mentors. In a conversation with Jessie reported in our Fall 2004 issue of *Chrysalis*, he had said to her, "Create a century, Jessie." Through many further conversations with Thomas and others who supported her dream of initiating an education that would inspire new social forms for our times, Jessie developed her own degree program through the Adult Degree Program at Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona. For the next four years she sought out mentors and teachers in the fields of anthropology, education, depth psychology, botany, aesthetic communication, and more. With each of them she set up a careful program of study which included presence to the natural world and practice of attention to it. To each of her teachers and mentors she brought her love of the earth and her keen sense of the sacredness of life. From each of them she received an appreciation of her keen intensity in learning, and the deep benefit of their years of experience.

On December 2, 2006, some of these teachers and mentors gathered at the Treehouse to celebrate Jessie's day of graduation from Prescott College. Each brought gifts of loving thoughts to take into her new work back in her home state of New Jersey at Genesis Farm, an organization dedicated to the creation of new social forms inspired by Thomas Berry where her inner growth and development will continue to be supported. Her gift from our Center was a stone found on our land which we have placed in our magical garden. It reads:

SEED OF THE FUTURE

Jessica M. Towle
Prescott College
December 2, 2006

Congratulations.....
"Create a century, Jessie."



Jessie Towle, Thomas Berry and Carolyn Toben (December 2, 2006)

Opening Anthem

We do not scold the cock for calling dawn,
the cow for lowing when her day is done:
a time for rising, a time for bedding down,
a time for traveling to the town and home again.

Life has her seasons, teaches us her tides.
Says, "Wait! Reflect!" Says "Leap! Give all!"
We follow in her wake in little boats
getting the feel of currents as we ride.
We put to sea or seek the shore with equal joy.
We climb the mast or set the grate below.

Our song is deep within us for the work:
to keep the faith, to worship and to grow.
The vine winds through us, spring and fall:
now lush in fruit, now wizened bough.

Wholeness we bear within us like a seed:
to die, to grow, to sleep and grow again.
It is the mystery of person and of world,
of inner fire and flavor and respect.
It is our name, our home, our neighborhood.
We are its art. Its forming makes us good.

The schooling that we seek is full within.
It rises to the surface as we move.
It has the face of angels, human speech.
All present borderlines are lit with warmth
like autumn maples tilting in the sun.

Our planet is our school, and far beyond:
Our church, our shop and study, and our fields.
We are all learning to awake:
awake in dream, in meditation and in prayer.
Inspired awake! Inspired awake!
We feel it thus: one mighty school, the teaching everywhere.¹

~ M. C. Richards

¹M. C. Richards, *Opening Our Moral Eye: Essays, Talks, & Poems Embracing Creativity & Community* (Hudson, New York: Lindisfarne Press, 1996), pp.77-78.



Center Programs 2006 - 2007

Programs for Children

Earth Guides Program for Schoolchildren

9:30 am - 1:30 pm

Ages K-12, \$10 per child

Number of Children: minimum 12, maximum 24

September-November, March-May

The Earth Guides program is an all-day program for schoolchildren focusing on nature awareness through sensory experiences, art, story, and a visit to our organic Magical Garden.

Tiny Kingdoms for Tiny Folks

9:30 am – 11:45 am

Ages 3-5, \$10 per child

Number of Children: minimum 12, maximum 24

September-November, March-May

Tiny Kingdoms is a magical morning filled with wonder, music, songs, stories and a relaxed journey through our Earth Sanctuary trails led by our experienced Earth Guides.

Children of the Forest

An Afternoon Program in the Natural World

3:45 – 5:15 pm

Kindergarteners: Tuesdays, March 20 – May 8, 2007

First - Third Graders: Thursdays, March 22 – May 10, 2007

\$160

Once a week, rain or shine, a group of 10 children will explore the Autumn forests, fields, creeks and organic garden of Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary. Unhurried by the pressures of time, they will be guided in natural play and exploration by Sandy Bisdee, staff Naturalist/Educator, who brings over twenty years' experience with children and the earth to her work at the Center. The program will be entirely outside in the fresh air, sunshine, wind, rain, fog and all kinds of weather!

Parents may drop off their children or stay for a parent tea with Center Directors, followed by solo time on woodland trails.

To reserve a place in "Children of the Forest," please download an application form at our website, www.beholdnature.org, and send a check for \$160 (payable to CEINW) to the Center by March 15, 2007.

Native American Journeys

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Grades K-8, \$12 per child

Number of Children: minimum 12, maximum 24

September-November, March-May

Native American Journeys is a program about Native Americans that begins around the fire circle. Original and traditional stories, Native American poetry, songs in various tribal tongues, original and traditional flute music, artistic activities, guided earth walks in smaller groups, exposure to everyday artifacts, discussion about food, medicine, shelter, clothing, stewardship and spiritual beliefs can be woven into this day together. Our time together is centered around gratitude, respect for all creation, silence, giving and receiving, sensorial awareness and individual gifts. The children come away with an experience that is deeply connected to the natural world. We are happy to tailor this program to grades K-8.

Make New Friends

A Nature Camp for 5-7 year olds

June 11 – 15, 2007

9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Cost: \$175 a child

Number of Children: 12

Staff: Sandy Bisdee and Scott Crews

In this magical week together, we will make new friends deep in the forest, bubbling in the brook, blossoming in the garden and living in the open meadows. Our days will begin with music, natural play and sharing time, and continue with nature walks, where we will experience “magical moments” on woodland trails. In the afternoons, we’ll gather in the story circle, make festival costumes and props, and go creek walking off the Creeping Cedar Trail. The week will close with a joyful “Children of the Forest Festival” on Friday. Healthy snacks will be prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

Exploring Secret Places

A Nature Camp for 8-10 year olds

June 18 – 22, 2007

9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Cost: \$175 a child

Number of Children: 12

Staff: Sandy Bisdee and Scott Crews.

In this week of adventure and imagination, we will explore woodland trails, but also venture off the beaten path into the wilder areas of the natural world. Join us as we share in the wonder of these experiences together! Each day we will develop new connections to secret places in the natural world, and new friendships with each other. The week includes poems, stories, songs, rhythm games, music making, and exuberant sharing in the feeling of community with the natural world. Healthy snacks will be prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

Sandy Bisdee brings over twenty years’ experience as an educator to her work as Center Naturalist/Educator. A gifted storyteller and musician, Sandy has engaged a deep study of Native American perspectives. **Scott Crews** is a graduate of Elon University who has graced the Center with his love of music, children, and the Earth for the past four years.

Programs for College Students

Garden Apprenticeship Program

The Center seeks college students who are interested in working in our organic garden under the direction of our garden volunteer coordinator, Sandy Bisdee. If you are interested in making a commitment to a weekly schedule of service during the Fall, Spring or Summer semester, please contact Sandy at sandybisdee@hotmail.com or e-mail the Center at beholdnature@aol.com.

Programs for Parents

See “Children of the Forest” above.

Programs for Educators

The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice

2007-2009

This is an intensive two-year co-research project with a group of twenty educators interested in nurturing the interior life of the child and young adult in relationship to the natural world. Please see description on pages 4-5 of this issue of *Chrysalis*. Educators are invited to apply by July 1, 2007. Applications can be downloaded at our website, www.beholdnature.org. Center staff will select twenty participants from the pool of applicants by August 15, 2007. The program leads to "Inner Life of the Child in Nature" practitioner certification.

Dates: October 13, 2007, February 2, April 26 and July 1-2, 2008.

Cost: \$200 (covers books, materials, mailings and meals)

"Day Away" Retreats

Saturday, April 21, 2007

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Saturday, April 5, 2008

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Cost: \$65

Beginning in the Spring of 2007, the Center will offer seasonal day retreats for educators and parents that allow them to renew their own deep connection to the natural world. Day retreats will include silence, reflection, solos on earth sanctuary trails, and lunch at the Treehouse.

Special Design Programs

We invite schools to consider entering into a partnership with the Center in order to bring the rhythms of the natural world more fully into the school year. The Center welcomes inquiries from teachers and schools, pre-school through college, who wish to tailor a program to their particular situation. Please see details on the opposite page.

The Wes Sexton Educator's Scholarship

A dear friend of the Center, Wes Sexton, died suddenly on December 10, 2005. Through his rare depth of soul and compassion, Wes served the children of Siler City Elementary School as a counselor for 35 years. He found his way to the Seventh Generation Teachers' program in its inaugural year, drawn there by his love of the natural world. Last year, after receiving word of the fourth year of the program, Wes wrote to us saying that the communication "was all I needed to remind me that's what I really wanted to do. After getting the book, *Last Child* and beginning

reading it – I'm excited about being part of the next Seventh Generation program." Wes died shortly after our first retreat, during which Wes shared the hope of bringing the woods back to children at Siler City Elementary School through a nature trail behind the school. In honor of Wes, we

have created The Wes Sexton Educator's Scholarship that will enable one educator a year to attend The Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program for free. Through this memorial, Wes' quiet presence will continue to inspire us to bring love into the world.



Special Design Programs: An Invitation

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is located at Timberlake Farm, a 165-acre earth sanctuary in Whitsett, NC. The earth sanctuary is a unique place of beauty with wildflower meadows, an organic garden, and five miles of gentle woodland trails, small streams and twin lakes. It is a setting where the pace of life slows down and the presence of the natural world can be fully experienced.

Since 2000, the Center has sponsored day programs for schoolchildren at the earth sanctuary. These programs offer a one-time nature awareness experience for children where they begin to make a personal connection to the natural world. It is our hope now to extend this experience into ongoing partnerships with schools. Beginning in 2004, the Center has invited schools to consider entering into a partnership that will bring the rhythms of the natural world more pervasively into the school year.

The Center welcomes inquiries from teachers and schools, pre-school through college. We offer many possibilities for educators to partner with the Center in order to weave a new way of knowing the natural world into the academic year.

Our Special Design Programs begin with an exploratory meeting between Center staff and a teacher or school. When we sit down with teachers to create a Special Design Program, we engage in a dialogue about where a possible collaboration might take us. What are the values of the learning community? How might the child-nature reunion be nurtured there? How can we provide continuity of experience for the children or young adults so that their connection to the natural world deepens over time? These are some of the questions that open up possibilities.

To date, the following schools have partnered with the Center in this way:

- Blue Ribbon Mentor Program – Chapel Hill-Carrboro Public Schools
- B’Nai Shalom Day School
- Elon University
- Emerson Waldorf School
- Greensboro Day School
- Greensboro Montessori School
- Jackson Middle School
- NC State University Science Camp
- NC Zoo
- River Mill Academy Charter School
- Youth Focus

The Center staff brings years of experience to the creation of Special Design programs with teachers and schools.

Co-Director **Carolyn Toben** has taught in Greensboro public and private schools and colleges with an emphasis on alternative and interdisciplinary education. She served for 18 years as a seminar leader at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching in Cullowhee and at the Center for the Advancement for Renewal in Education in San Francisco. Her article, “Teacher Renewal: Pilgrims and Passages” was published in the *Holistic Education Review*.

Co-Director **Peggy Whalen-Levitt** 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. Furthering her interest in the evolution of consciousness, Peggy completed the Foundation Year in Anthroposophical Studies at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, NY in 1995.

Staff Naturalist/Educator **Sandy Bisdee** brings over twenty years 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 will soon complete her studies to become a certified environmental educator with the North Carolina Environmental Education Certification Program.

If you are interested in exploring a Special Design Program for your school or group, please contact the Center at beholdnature@aol.com or call us at (336) 449-0612.

Friends of the Center

*We wish to express our heartfelt thank you to the following individuals and foundations
for their generous support of our work in 2006*

Individual Donors

Anonymous (2)	Gordon Grundman	Marie Nordgren
Linda Baggish	Donald & Ruth Halverson	Latrell Oliver
Nancy Beckman	Mike Hanas	Katharine Osborne
Dale Berns	Shirley Holmes	Suzanne Parkhurst
Margaret Berry	Allison & Roger Hunt	Anna & Douglas Parr
Peter Berry	Judy Hyman	Roger Pearman
Jerryanne Bier	Marjean Jones	Diane Pendola & Theresa Hahn
Augusta Bird	Susan Joyner & Bryan Peters	Liz Pungello
Becky Blomgren	Raachel & Stephen Jurovichs	Ted Purcell
Joanne & Arthur Bluethenthal	Alan & Norma Kahn	Nancy & Dennis Quaintance
Jeri Board	Malcolm Kenton	Bonnie Raphael
Kat Bodrie	John King	Jim & Denise Riddle
Steven & Frances Bombart	Dacia King	Beth Riddle
Sheri Bonner	Bruce & Mary Kirchoff	Bob & Linda Rodriguez
Sarah Borders	Susannah Lach	Jeretta Schaefer
Sydney & Hannah Britt	Sandy LaGrega	Debby Schimmel
Bill Cahalan	Jeff & Donna Lane	Randy & Iris Senzig
Helen & Larry Cardman	Rita Layson	Phyllis Shaw
Emily Chamberlain	Jo Leeds	Mary Southard
Gay Cheney	Cynthia Leonard	Joyce & John Speas
Susan Clawson	Cathy & Henry Levinson	Andy Stewart & Peggy Kinney
John & Lynda Cock	Norma Levitt	Fred & Becky Story
Ed & Jeanne Corbin	Richard & Carol Lewis	John & Gregg Sullivan
Lisa Damian	Bernard Lieberman	Barbara & Richard Terry
Scott Davis	Helen Lowry	Carolyn Toben
Jo Deck	Jeffrey May	Scott & Stacey Toben
Lin & Bob Donaldson	Becky Mayer	Steve & Janice Toben
Debbie and Robert Dowling	Marion McCollam	Mary Water
Laurel & Dean Driver	Michael & Anita McLeod	Don & Darlene Wells
Thomas Droppers	Doris Dowdell Moore	Geraldine Whalen
Pamela & David Duff	Mary Day Mordecai & Ned Hulbert	Peggy Whalen-Levitt & Andrew Levitt
Annie Dwyer	Russ and Jean Moxley	Jewel and Robert Williams
Annamarie Edwards	Ellyn Mullis	Nancy & David Winton
Robin Evans	Una & Jack Nakamura	Robert & Lucetta Zaytoun
Jo Ann & Richard Fireman	Julie Nazar	
Dave Gilbert and Margaret Rowlett	Elizabeth Newman	

Foundations

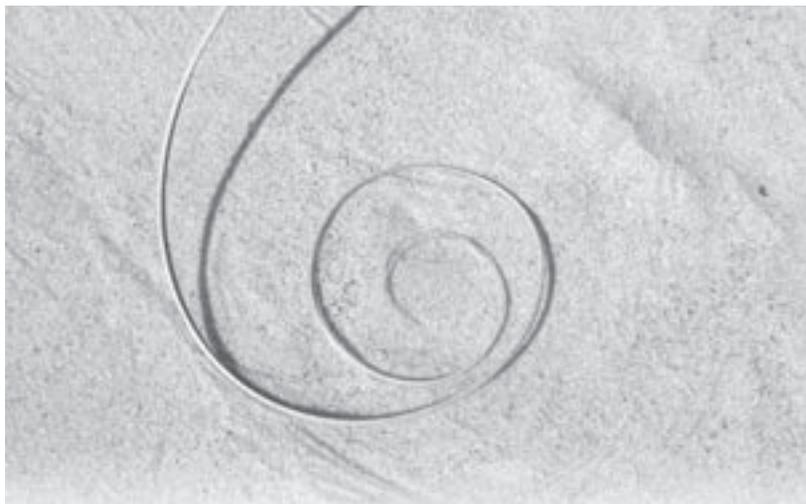
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Blue Bell Foundation
Compton Foundation
Daniel & Barbara Berry Family Foundation
Emily Monk Davidson Foundation
Fenwick Foundation
Flora Family Foundation
Foundation for Global Community
Hayden-Harman Foundation
Hummel Family Foundation

Honor Gifts

Pam Brumbaugh, in honor of Elon Interns
Helen & Larry Cardman, in honor of Olga Benson
Carole Chase, in honor of Carolyn Toben
John & Lynda Cock, in honor of Thomas Berry
Donna Kenton, in honor of Malcolm & Gary Kenton
Lou Wallace, in honor of Carolyn Toben

Memorial Gifts

Stefanie & David Anderson, in memory of Sheila Myers
Sam & Anne Hummel, in memory of Russell Britt
Kay Lineberry, in memory of Wes Sexton
Robert Moloney, in memory of Sheila Myers
Estelle Morin, in memory of Wes Sexton
Rebecca & Richard Shaia, in memory of Sheila Myers
Anne Vesano, in memory of Wes Sexton



“Our Life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on the mid noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.”

~ Emerson

Mission Statement

The mission of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is to bring to life a new vision of the relationship between the inner life of the child and the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the universe.

Presently, the natural world is viewed as a commodity to be used rather than as a sacred reality to be venerated. A shift in our way of relating to the natural world is essential if we hope to participate in nature's unfolding rather than in its demise. This shift is nowhere more crucial than within the field of education where the child's way of relating to the natural world is formed.

Located within the beauty of a 165 acre earth sanctuary, the Center's way of working is threefold: First, the Center offers a setting within which national presenters explore the relationship between the inner life of the child and nature from diverse perspectives. Second, the Center provides a context for teachers to deepen their own personal connection to the natural world and to be co-creators of ways to bring nature awareness to all paths of teaching. Third, the Center designs programs for children, young adults and college students which call upon their inner faculties of imagination and intuition and enable them to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world.



Advisory Council

- Thomas Berry Ecotheologian and author of *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story*, and *The Great Work*.
- Joseph Cornell Founder of The Sharing Nature Foundation and author of *Sharing Nature with Children*, *Listening to Nature*, and *Journey to the Heart of Nature*.
- Richard Lewis Founder of The Touchstone Center for Children and author of *Living by Wonder*, *The Bird of Imagining*, *In the Space of Sky* and *Cave: An Invocation of the Beginnings of Art*.
- Richard Louv Founder of Connect for Kids, columnist for the San Diego Union-Tribune and author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.
- Robin Moore Founder of the Natural Learning Initiative at North Carolina State University and co-author of *The Environmental Schoolyard*.
- Anthony Weston Professor of Philosophy at Elon University and author of *Back to Earth: Tomorrow's Environmentalism*.

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC 27377

(336) 449-0612 (phone & fax)

E-mail: beholdnature@aol.com

www.beholdnature.org

A Brief History

During the 2000-2001 academic year, the Center invited a group of educators to participate in a series of retreats with ecotheologian Thomas Berry (*The Dream of the Earth*) and writer/educator Richard Lewis (*Living By Wonder*) entitled "The Biological Imperative: Nature, Education and Imagination." These retreats marked the beginning of our work with educators in which we considered the question "Can we establish a new form of dialogue between ourselves and the extraordinary phenomenon that make up our living universe?"

Beginning in the Fall of 2002 and continuing to 2006, the Center offered a yearlong intensive program for educators entitled "The Seventh Generation Teacher's Program." Through a series of retreats, teachers shared their own ecostories, kept a nature journal, and transferred new ways of listening and responding to the natural world to their practice as teachers. Seventy-nine teachers participated in this program during its first four years.

The Center's Next Generation Children's Programs, including an Earth Guides Program, Tiny Kingdoms Program, and Summer Nature Camps, have served over 3,000 children from more than 40 public and private schools in the foothills of North Carolina since the Center's inception in the Fall of 2000.

In the Fall of 2004, the Center initiated Special Design programs for schools. Tailored to the values of particular learning communities, these programs provide continuity of experience for children so that their connection to the natural world deepens over time. To date, the Center has co-created 15 Special Design programs, three of which have spanned an entire school year.

The Center publishes a biannual newsletter, *Chrysalis*, which reaches an international audience. Published since the Fall of 2004, *Chrysalis* is a forum where thoughts on the relationship between the inner life of the child and the natural world are exchanged, as well as a vehicle for making Center programs visible to the general public.

Now entering its seventh year of existence, the Center was featured on NC Now, UNC-TV's flagship news and information series, on April 17th 2006. With support from Hooked on Nature and The Compton Foundation, the Center initiated a two-year program entitled "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice" in the Autumn of 2006.



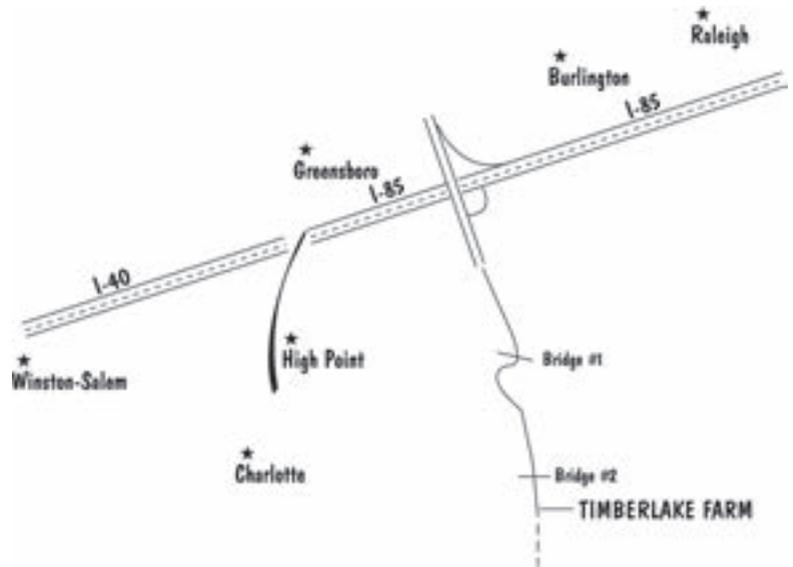
Camomile by Sarah Evans

FROM WINSTON-SALEM/
GREENSBORO

Take I-40 East to I-85; continue about 13 miles beyond Greensboro towards Burlington. Exit at Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). You will go under the overpass and loop around. Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.

FROM RALEIGH/DURHAM/
CHAPEL HILL

Take I-85 South towards Greensboro. Continue on I-85 about 10 miles past Burlington. Exit on Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.



The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is a non-profit organization that champions inclusiveness and actively discourages discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other factors that deny the essential humanity of all people. Furthermore, the Center encourages a love and respect for the diversity of the natural world.

Center for Education, Imagination and The Natural World
at Timberlake Farm
1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road
Whitsett, North Carolina 27377

Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Whitsett, NC Permit No. 19
