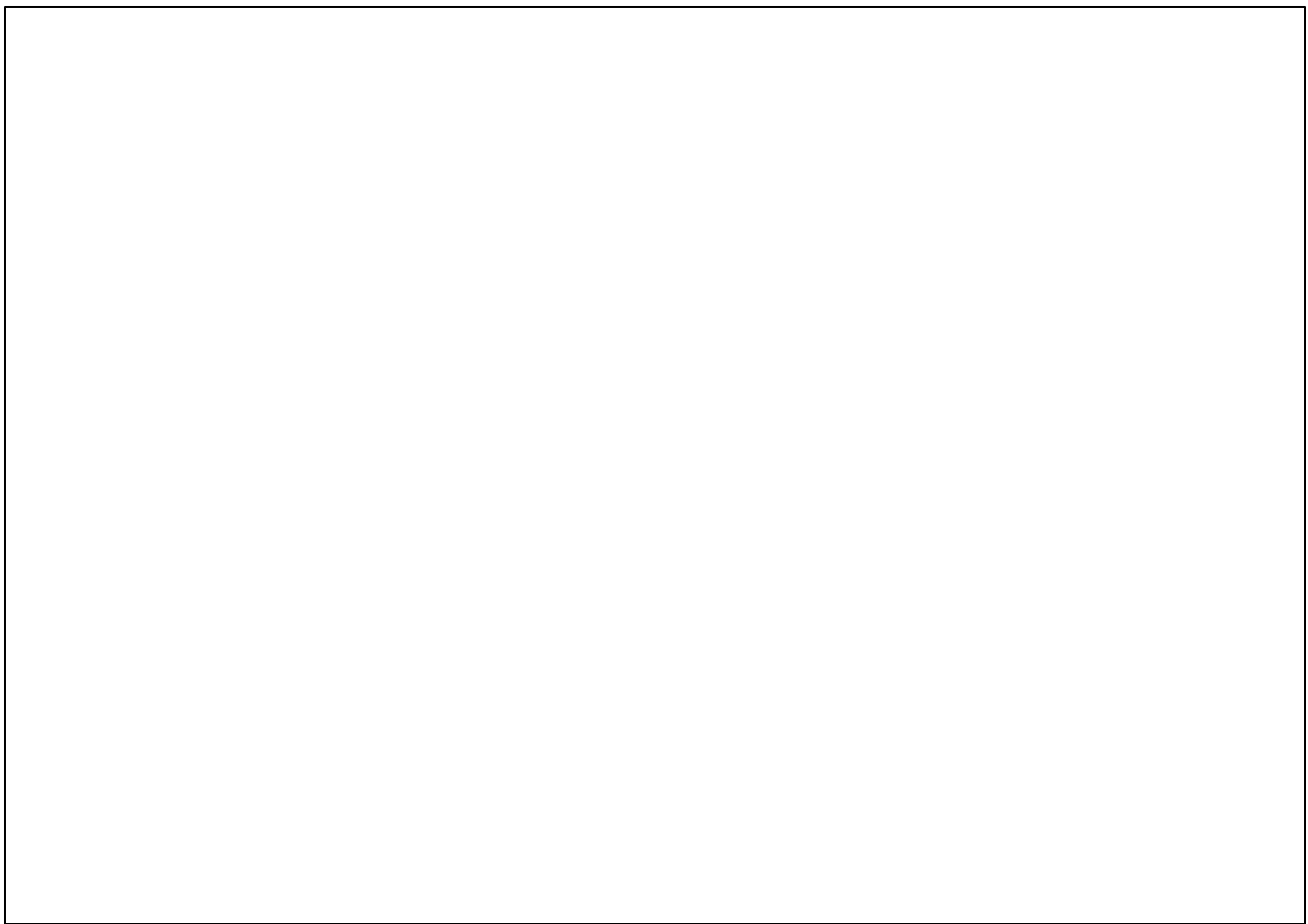

interhelp



a networking newsletter

June 2001
Issue No. 21

Interhelpers Honored for Peace and Justice Work



Long-term Interhelpers Don and Lois Booth shared the 2001 *Martin Luther King, Jr. Award* at the New Hampshire MLK Jr. Coalition's annual Martin Luther King Day Community Celebration. Lois, at 78, remains a stalwart full-time volunteer for New Hampshire Peace Action, when she is not leafleting and vigiling for an end to sanctions against Iraq or to end the arms trade. Don, at 84, has an impressive and honorable record of arrests for nonviolent civil disobedience, protesting missile guidance systems and the "School of the Americas" which trains Latin American military elite who so often have turned up as death squad leaders. The *Boston Sunday Globe* featured a respectful article with a photo of their vigil, on the front page of its Arts & People Section.

One of our newer Interhelpers, Dot Fisher-Smith, whom we came to love and admire at a two-week Joanna Macy training, was given the Southern Oregon Chapter of the ACLU's *Commendation Award* "in recognition of her many contributions during a lifetime of political activism."

Interhelp is an international network of people who share their deepest response to world conditions that threaten human life and the earth. We help one another within our own communities to move through feelings of isolation and hopelessness to empowerment and action. We offer community gatherings and training in despair and empowerment, deep ecology, and personal support systems. We try to integrate deep social concern (and support social activism), personal psychological growth, and our recognition of a nonsectarian spiritual core.

The Interhelp Council

Rosalie Anders, Madeline Casey,
Judy Conrad, Mary Gleason,
Rick Gottesman, Wendy Levitis,
Eleanor Mathews, Kristina Orchard
(Secretary/Treasurer), Michael Rice
(Newsletter Editor), Emily Sack,
Sondra Sprinkling (Chair),
Kaela Vronsky, Judith Waldman.

Michael Rice, *editor*
Kimberley Debus, *layout editor*
Please send editorial matter to:
Michael Rice
Interhelp
P.O. Box 61
Delmar, NY 12054.

Correction

The editor regrets the typographical error in Issue #20 in regard to the web address for the Northeast Earth Institute.

The correct address is:

**[www.nh.ultranet.com/
~compassb/NEI.htm](http://www.nh.ultranet.com/~compassb/NEI.htm)**

Note the ~ which is at the upper left hand corner or most keyboards.

The 2001 Gathering and Open Space

The 2001 Interhelp Gathering featured a Children's Program, after a lapse of several years. We were fortunate to have five children aged 8-12 participating. They reported having a good time and we hope for more children's participation in the future.

Saturday was given to "Despair and Empowerment" work during the morning and much free time during the afternoon. The D&E exercise, a "cairn of morning" followed by expressive work with clay, was sandwiched between "Joys and Challenges" and "Words of Encouragement and Empowerment." Support groups met once on each of the four days of the Gathering. Spirited evening programs included circle dancing expertly led by Peter Adair, and on Sunday, a play by the children, poetry reading by Hugh Mitchell, singing from a new CD by Wendy Levitis and Kirstin George, and outrageous games.

Sunday morning and afternoon were devoted to a major innovation for us: an adaptation of "Open Space Technology" (see, for example, Gail Boorstein's letter in the September 2000 issue) to our theme of acting on our compassion. Instead of "interest groups" we provided space for anyone to convene a topical session at either a morning or afternoon time slot (or at a meal). A period of shake-out or negotiation allowed people combine groups, or reschedule, so that each person could participate where he or she wished. Each convener filed a Summary sheet on the questions:

- Reason we felt this was important
- How this related to the theme Turning Compassion into Action (if it did)
- Information, feelings, ideas that came up
- Some future action steps that were envisioned or desirable
- Contact information for follow-up

Topics that met and reported back included:

- Earth Poetry workshop (*see also page*)
- Report on Lauren and Tom's Basra 2000 project with showing of preliminary version of a video (*Note: The Council Meeting in early June 2001 was privileged to see the final version; it is superb!*)
- The Natural Step framework for discussion of sustainability
- Art for Transformation
- Making a rational choice about whether or not to have children
- Council of all Genes: Taking responsibility for genetic engineering
- Introduction to Zen meditation
- Dismantling Racism
- Deep Ecology Education and Alaska Wilderness Canoe Expedition (*including a multimedia slide show repeated during an evening program*)
- Empowering kids
- Effective Political Action

A noteworthy departure from more typical OST uses was the wide variety of styles represented in the various sessions – meditation, art, discussions, and presentations. There was wide agreement that the format should be repeated at future Gatherings, perhaps under a different nomenclature, such as "Compassion Fruit" (since the actions that might result are the fruit of our compassion – or simply stimulate our compassion).

EARTH POETRY: *An Open Space Session convened by Hugh Mitchell*

Note: The second full day of the 2001 Gathering was devoted to a self-organizing process of convening sessions (in either of two 90 minute time slots or around meals) on topics related to Turning Our Compassion into Action. More than ten such sessions were convened, including a poetry writing workshop led by Hugh Mitchell. The work reprinted below is the unedited and incomplete result of the brief workshop, intended to illustrate the process.

The convener's summary states that it was important "to enlarge our compassion for earth and, using the creative poetry writing process, help to educate about earth problems and solutions. Creativity is primary action. It connects us to the universe. We listed images, learned a little about the creative process and feelings involved. We suggest holding regular poetry workshops. More information available at hmitch@frontiernet.net."

White Pine (draft)

Like a shining sword grown green,
wind blown and high
and reaching for the deep blue
blanket called the sky

a long leafed pine strong
and fine survivor of the saw and ax
that felled the forest,
hacked the meadows open,

White pine with two hundred years
spent reaching for the sun,
growing from this stone brown earth
from one earth one star
witness of the still and shining universe.

- Hugh Mitchell

A Convocation of Worms (fragment)

We shall not mourn the corpse of the poet:
we will eat it – (crawl in, crawl out)

We shall not mourn the collapse of the farm,
the malling of the wetland:
We will survive.

We shall not scorn the Fresh Kills garbage mountain
— it is our food:
We'll make it living soil

We shall not mourn the death of habitat
for bear or buffalo:
We work beneath the surface,
turning shit to black gold.

- Michael Rice

A deer is like a spirit
A deer is like a new baby
A deer is like a lullaby
A deer is like magic
A deer is graceful movement
A deer is like joy
A deer is like fear
A deer is like quiet
A deer is like a shadow

Nowhere to hide
I move gracefully through the trees
I jump with joy hardly leaving shadows
I am spirit I am magic
I am a lullaby
-SOUND- (*read in a staccato voice*)
quick move fast run hide move fast run quick hide fun fast hide
No Nowhere
Nowhere to hide

- Judith Waldman

Peace Poetry

The following poems were written by children in grades 1-5 at an after-school program at VIVA HOUSE, a Catholic Worker house in Baltimore's inner city. Judith Waldman has been leading Empowerment exercises and self esteem work. Judith writes: "These poems were the result of a sharing circle on what peace means to us. I feel honored and awed by their sharing and creative responses."

Peace was my dream
Falling into my heart,
Over and over again,
Peace was my dream.

Peace gave me good life,
Good heart and people who love me.
If I lost Peace everything would be lost.

Peace is in your mind,
Peace is in your heart,
You can't see Peace,
Because Peace is in you.

Gather to make a peace group,
Your group members are love, unity,
And life. If your group works together,
You have a perfect peace group.

Give a rose for peace,
Give a rose for togetherness,
Give a rose for life — and just give
A rose for peace.
- Dominic

Peace is like Freedom.
Freedom is like Justice.
Justice is like Martin Luther King.
Martin Luther King is like love.
Love is like when we all come together.
- William

Peace is like bread and roses
Roses in the sky.
Bread is the freedom that we live.
Roses are the justice that we need.
Peace is like bread and roses.
- David

Peace is like quiet.
It is nice and
It makes me feel relaxed.
I like peace because it's nice.
It makes me feel nice
And feel better.
- Terry

Peace is your friendship with your friends
Peace is like a beautiful rose when you see it in a garden
Peace is your family
Peace is good times
Peace is joyful and great
Peace is life and love
Peace is kindness
Peace is wonderful
Peace is loving babies
Peace is love and respect we have for each other
Peace is nice and like a rainbow
Peace is the wonderful friends you have at
Viva House.

- Desheara

Peace is like a rainbow.
The peace makes me feel
Special. Peace is really
Nice.

This is what I think of peace.
Peace reminds me of love.
It reminds me of love because
Peace is sweet. This is what
Reminds me of peace.

- *Tiandra*

Peace is like a dream when you sleep.
Peace is like being by your self.
Peace is like being in a deep sleep.
Peace is like being in heaven.
Peace is like having peace.
Peace is like having quiet time.

- *Brian*

Peace is like trees rattling in the wavey wind.
Waterfalls dancing as it falls.
Also like the dirt beneath my toes.
Also taste like sweet coconut juice.
Peace is my dream and I hope some day,
I hope I find that special word Peace.
Peace is like Justice dreams
Love and hope.
Peace is like truth and love
And its reach to the stars above.
If you give this word Peace a rest
You can see the word itself.

- *Frederic*

Peace is like friendship that always
Comes together. Peace is like happiness
That we always have forever. Peace
Is like everything that happens everywhere.
So please keep the peace in every way.

Peace is when you can relax.
Peace is when you have freedom.
Then peace is like you and me
Forever.

- *Wendy*

Peace is like love.
Peace is Joy all around.
Peace is friends getting along together.
Peace is happiness.
Peace is niceness.
Peace is being together.
Peace is good times with your friends.
Peace is friendship.

- *Harley*

FACILITATION

Wendy Levitis spent the better part of last year working part-time for Planned Parenthood in central Vermont, organizing a Youth Summit with 130 students from the seven high schools in the Lamoille Valley in Vermont. The one-day Lamoille Valley Youth Summit entitled "Our Powers Combined," was held on Wednesday, November 8, 2000, at Smugglers' Notch Resort. It was the result of planning work by area youth and community groups in the Lamoille Valley.

Planning for the event was inspired by student-generated ideas and resulted in what a rich day of reflection and proactive problem-solving in the following core areas of students' lives: Healthy Relationships, Substances, Sexuality, Health and Nutrition, and Peace-keeping.

Music and art complemented and reflected the day's discussion. Community professionals with expertise in these core areas agreed to co-facilitate with youth, providing dialogue, education and brainstorming in each topic area. Concrete suggestions for next steps to be implemented subsequent to the Youth Summit in our schools and communities were solicited from participating youth.

Student reaction to the Youth Summit is highly interesting, and excerpts will be published in a forthcoming issue.

The following article was written by Wendy to guide students in facilitation techniques for this event. We bring it to readers of this Newsletter because we regard it as a beautifully concise description of effective facilitation anywhere.

What Does It Mean To Facilitate?

by Wendy Levitis

Webster's: "to make easier"

Roget's: "to guide"; "to further"; "to clear the way for"; "to unclog"

To facilitate is all these things. To facilitate a discussion means to get it started, make sure everyone gets to talk, and gently keep the group on track so that by the end, you have met the goals you set at the beginning. You then conclude the talk.

In the case of a talkshop, facilitating means allowing students to speak honestly without feeling judged or embarrassed. To do this it helps to agree with the group on some ground rules they come up with — such as "We agree not to interrupt." "We agree not to use names in talking about what was said here." "We agree to respect each other's differences and look out for each other's comfort." "We agree to try to listen compassionately." It also means helping the group go through the three steps of arriving at recommendations for next steps:

1. ISSUES: identifying what the issues are and prioritizing which of them you want to talk about.
2. GOALS: picturing what the ideal world would be if we could completely solve the problems you've identified.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS: getting practical — listing two or three detailed things that we could actually do to work towards the goals.

For example, if your area is Healthy Relationships, your group may identify violence at home and violence in relationships as the two topics you really want to address. Talk for a while about the reality of these issues. Then you might agree together that the goal was to eliminate all forms of violence from family and romantic relationships, and to live in a world where good communication was a skill people used to keep their relationships healthy.

And then your group could think of a few things that might help towards this goal, such as:

"We want every student to have a 'safety net' of other students to go to for help."

"We want our schools to offer us self-defense classes for free."

"We want to learn in school about how to have healthy relationships..."

“We want money, time and training to make a movie about how violence affects us...”

After your group has talked, you should be sure to leave enough time to summarize your ideas and check in with everyone. You can use an activity or a free-form discussion to allow everyone to end the discussion together and come away feeling safe and heard.

Editor's Note: Space in this issue does not suffice for Wendy's very interesting description of the open process by which student participants were selected and the surprising maturity of the "youth-generated recommendations from the Youth Summit in the five student-selected areas of Substances, Sexuality, Healthy Relationships, Peacekeeping, and Mind-Body Connection. We hope to bring this in the next issue. But we cannot resist Wendy's final comment on the limitations of the facilitation training:

Harmony through diversity did not prevail in every case. In one discussion called “Student-Led Anti-Drinking Campaign,” the student co-facilitators, a young, serious couple from the local technical college, proposed that their group recommend a no-tolerance student-led initiative against alcohol use by teens. The problem was that these two facilitators believed deeply in this approach, while their group unanimously argued that teens will always drink, so the proper solution to alcohol-related problems among teens is to make teen drinking safer. The social lines between these students were getting in the way, but could perhaps have been overcome if the facilitators had been better instructed in leaving their own agendas at the door.



We were talking . . .

We were talking about Edna St. Vincent Millay,
A quote we heard:
“I shall die and that is all I shall give to death.”

Another comes to mind:
“The world is too much with me today...”
How sometimes it feels like
The whole web of life is so shaky
That I personally have to quadruple my efforts
To hold it together.

“I shall die and that is all I shall give to death.”
Living as if life mattered.
Our whole weekend of planning
(discussing, processing, groaning, giggling)
The Interhelp Gathering for February 2002
Rose up and collected itself into:
“Living as if Life Mattered.”

“I shall die and that is all I shall give to death.”
Alive in a death culture
how do we encompass our desire to celebrate
as the wheels of greed grind faster and faster
to another extinction — but
this time maybe the whole human race,
Not just one or another short sighted or
Decadent society, as for example Rome, or
Easter Island or the Shakers.

Yet, as we race to our demise
We deny death any place in our lives:
We do not attend to the many killings that bring us
To the end — cruel lives and deaths
For our people, our domestic animals;
Herbicides for our corn, seeds that cannot be saved;
Global starvation, disease and slave labor for
Our “free trading” partners.
Bombs for those who do not agree
Under no fly zone ozone depleted blue skies.

How can we possibly celebrate??
We must, we must! It is in our genes,
Like sleep, hunger, procreation.

Denying life, denying death
We become the living dead.

- Sondra Sprinkling

News From the Network

Joan Maloof writes: I have been thinking of the Interhelp “family” daily, and trust that you all had a wonderfully fulfilling Winter Gathering. I am particularly interested in the Open Space Technology. How did it go? Where can I learn more about it? Is it something that might work in a University setting?

Here’s what I’ve been up to in Salisbury [Maryland]:

1. Publishing results from my dissertation. (Rewarding to see them in print.)
2. Designing a new major for Salisbury State University called, “Environmental Studies.” (Very interdisciplinary.)
3. Beginning a new research project on the effect of logging on moss species. Logging is the #2 industry here after chickens, and it is sad to see the older mixed species forests being replaced by pine plantations. Unfortunately we need more scientific “proof” that this is ecologically harmful.
4. Working with a student group on improving our city’s recycling. I’m happy to tell you that the students at the University are becoming more environmentally aware and active.

Jim Hatley and I are still meeting weekly as a support group. My daughter got her first “real job” as a field producer at the local TV station. She is just the caring and compassionate sort we need in the media. Life on the farm continues to be abundant. My greetings to all Interhelpers.

Madeline Casey sends us this poem by Rumi:

Dance, when you’re broken open.
Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance, when you’re perfectly free.

Kirstin George writes: Here’s a quote for the next *Newsletter*, if you like it. I can’t remember where I saw it:

“While we fight for our lives, let us live lives worth fighting for.”

Gene Knudsen Hoffman writes: Haven’t been on the mail writing route for a long time – glad to be back. Sending you some things which I feel might be good for Interhelp. Write a bimonthly column what is now a local magazine *HopeDance*.

Editor’s Note: She enclosed reprints titled “What Price Reconciliation” (issue #24), “People of the Broken Heart” (issue #26), and “This Could Be Our Future” (issue #27) (www.hopedance.org) as well as a reprint from Fellowship Magazine, “Why I Think There’s Hope for Humanity.” We wish we had space for the entire reprint. Its opening paragraphs are:

When I was asked, “Do you have hope for humanity?” My mind said “No!” My heart said, “Wait a minute. Listen to me.” I did. This is what I heard.

I think war and violence are human problems. That’s why I’m hopeful. I’ve seen that humanity can change, and it has – not by force, not by threat, not even by cajoling, but by creating a safe place to be heard, to hear, and to choose what is best. . .

Gene Knudsen Hoffman, author, psychotherapist, and peacemaker, lives in Santa Barbara, California. Founder of FOR’s US-USSR Reconciliation Project and the Compassionate Listening Project, she has traveled all over the world in her work for peace. For more articles by and about Gene Knudsen Hoffman and her work for peace and reconciliation and compassionate listening, click to www.coopcomm.org/listening.htm.

News From the Network

Paul Lipke writes: My last communication with Dana [Donella Meadows, whose death in March deprives us all of a great thinker, writer, and compassionate, pioneering activist] occurred just before her illness, on February 1, when I sent her the poem below written by Stephen Dunn. Her reply was, "Wow, Great poem. Thanks." So it seems fitting to share with my Interhelp family on this sad day:

*The Guardian Angel**

Afloat between lives and stale
truths,
he realizes
he's never truly protected one
soul,

they all die anyway, and what
good
is solace,
solace is cheap. The signs are
clear:

the drooping wings, the
shameless thinking
about utility
and self. It's time to stop.

The guardian angel lives for a
month
with other angels,
sings the angelic songs, is
reminded

that he doesn't have a human
choice.
The angel of love
lies down with him, and loving

restores him his pure heart.
Yet how hard it is
to descend into sadness once
more.

When the poor are evicted, he
stands
between them
and the bank, but the bank sees
nothing

in its way. When the meek are
overpowered
he's there, the thin air
through which they fall.
Without effect

he keeps getting in the way of
insults.
He keeps wrapping
his wings around those in the
cold.

Even his lamentations are
unheard,
though now,
in for the long haul, trying to
live

beyond despair, he believes, he
needs
to believe
everything he does takes root,
hums

beneath the surfaces of the
world.

*from: *New and Selected Poems 1974-1994*, by Stephen Dunn (W.W. Norton, 1994).

News From the Network

Peter Adair wrote this letter to his local newspaper in the wake of the Quebec protests:

A group of distinctively dressed protesters demonstrated against the intrusion of an unrepresentative corporate monopoly into the economic and social system of a less developed society. There was destruction of private property.

This event occurred in Massachusetts in 1773. It is called the Boston Tea Party.

In that year the British East India Company, a government-controlled business, forcibly introduced its tea into the American market at a price underselling domestic tea distributors. The colonists, having no voice in a "free trade" policy decision that undermined the fabric of a maturing social and economic system, reacted militantly. They produced a spark that would later flame into the American Revolution.

This is the heritage the activists in Quebec, Seattle, and elsewhere are displaying. It is a revolt against a new kind of tyranny called corporatism, whose guiding value is the maximization of profit, at the expense of any concern about health, justice, public welfare, or environmental impact.

While the form is new, tyranny itself is as old as civilization. Beginning 3500 BCE, there arose cities (the root word of 'civilization'), whose characteristics were standing armies, concentrations of wealth, and exploitation of the less privileged. In historical outline, civilization was expressed first through the royal tyrannies of kings and emperors, and then in modern times through the state tyrannies of militarism, communism, and fascism. Now, a system of corporate rule has formed, principally with American based transnational companies, justifying any exchange in the name of profit.

How far can it go? Already it has gone so far that destruction of non-human life on land and in the seas is producing an extinction spasm on a scale unknown for 65 million

years. It has gone so far as to allow sweat-shop villages, where workers are virtual slaves and their children are born with brain damage from industrial pollutants. It has gone so far that cows and other herbivores are fed the meat of their own kind, forced to become cannibals. Truly, it is not just the cows that are mad.

It requires a great deal of control to establish and maintain these exploitations. Is this why the US is the world's number one producer of military armaments, and the number one exporter of torture devices? Is this why with 6% of the world's population we have 25% of the world's prisoners (two million at last count)?

What is unique about corporatism is its global scope and naked ideology. It allows us to clearly see into the heart of all the tyrannies that have accompanied civilization. What does this craving for profit, for money, reflect? Greed. Greed for power, control, privilege. What do these reflect? Insecurity. We do not seek power unless we feel threatened by inadequacy. What do the pervasive psychological conditions of fear and inadequacy reflect? At root, they are a response to the loss of felt connection to the living earth that sustains us. It is the price we humans pay for our invention of civilization.

Only when we are able to confront our greed and overcome our illusory separation from Earth, will global corporatism be undermined, and give way to genuine human values and relationships.



*A Fable**

One day, a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people live. The father thought that his son would then appreciate the material things that money can buy.

They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from the trip, the father asked his son, "Did you enjoy our trip?" "It was great, Dad."

"Did you see how poor people live?" the father asked. "Oh yeah," said the son.

"So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they have four.

"We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end.

"We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night.

"Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon.

"We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight.

"We have servants who serve us, but they serve others.

"We buy our food, but they grow theirs.

"We have walls around our property to protect us and they have friends to protect them."

With this, the boy's father was speechless.

Then his son added, "Thanks, Dad, for showing me how poor we are."

**anonymous, from cyberspace*

PLEASE SEND US: *personal news as well as articles or reviews for publication in the Newsletter (as text within e-mail to: risprin@attglobal.net); or a personal note for the editor to share with members of the Interhelp Council; and a contribution as follows:*

_____ I enclose a contribution of ___ \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$25 for the next 4 issues of the Newsletter

_____ I contributed recently; please keep sending me the Newsletter

_____ Please keep sending me the Newsletter even though I can't contribute just now.

_____ I would like to help Interhelp thrive and expand its supportive services and scholarship aid to activists, and am enclosing a tax deductible contribution of: _____).

Please make checks payable to Interhelp, Inc. and mail responses to:

Interhelp PO Box 61 Delmar, NY 12054

WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

Deep Ecology and the Universe Story: Seizing the Creative Moment

July 25-29 at Arthur Morgan School, Celo, NC

Led by three Joanna Macy trainees, Elisabeth Dearborn, Ph.D., Mary C. Coelho, Ph.D., and Robert McGahey, Ph.D. Cost \$190 including meals, plus Housing options \$20 to \$60. Contact Bob McGahey at 1-828-675-5535 or mcpahey2@wnclink.com.

Ourselves, Our Community, Our World

September 12-17, 2001 at Earthlands, Petersham, MA

Led by four facilitators trained by the Foundation for Community Encouragement, several with experience with Joanna Macy: Jessica Zane, Robert Reusing, Angela Sevin, and Rusty Myers. Cost \$400 includes board, dorm-style or camping and conference expenses. Contact Jessica Zane, 43 Spruce Hill Rd., Hadley, MA 01035, 1-413-586-8543, zzzam@earthlink.net.

2002 Interhelp Gathering: "Living as if Life Mattered" SAVE THE DATE!

February 15-18, 2002 at Rowe Conference Center, Rowe, MA

Several events sponsored by the **Sacred Earth Network's** Metamorphosis Project may still be open: "The Mindful Forest" July 27-29 in Southeastern Vermont and "Healing Self, Healing Earth" September 7-9, in Petersham, MA. For more information, contact: Sacred Earth Network, 978-724-0066 or 978-724-3443, borage@mindspring.com.

Joanna Macy's public teaching schedule in the coming months includes several events in Europe and many on the West Coast. Her next East Coast event scheduled so far is at Rowe Conference Center, Rowe, MA, in October 2002. For up-to-date information, please consult Joanna's new website, www.joannamacy.net

Interhelp, Inc.

P.O. Box 61

Delmar, NY 12054

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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we invite you to subscribe

"I shall die and that is all I shall give to death."

— *Edna St. Vincent Millay,*
"Conscientious Objector"