
Interhelp Newsletter, September 2011

Dear Interhelpers and Friends,

I write this upon returning home from an Interhelp Council/Gathering planning weekend. We met at Nine Mile Farm, home of Michael Rice, where the bounty of the harvest was a feast for eyes and tummies. Feeling full with blessing, we completed the shaping of our upcoming Gathering entitled **“Holding On, Letting Go: Living our intentions in an age of loss.”** We are hoping that many of you join us; it will be a rich and fulfilling weekend, I am sure. We will begin at suppertime on October 28 and finish up with lunch on the 30th. **Please register soon; we expect the weekend to fill.**

For all the Gathering details, see www.interhelpnetwork.org.

Absent this weekend was Rick Gottesman, who is still dealing with water damage at his home in Hancock, Vermont. See his letter below, written just a few days after Hurricane Irene passed through.

Joanna Macy has a new letter on her website (www.joannamacy.net) Carol Harley happened upon a wonderful photo of Fran Macy reading a poem by Anita Barrows; see <http://www.findhorn.org/2008/03/day-3-taking-heart-in-tough-times-with-joanna-macy-morning-session/>

Wishing each of you well. Please be in touch if you'd like to submit something to this newsletter.

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Thanks to Rick Gottesman for permission to print the following:

Just a short note to let you know that I'm okay. As I'm sure you heard, central Vermont took a major hit from Hurricane Irene (one location had over 11 inches of rain in fewer hours)... All roads leading into/from Hancock were washed out in multiple places, making it impossible to travel for the better part of 3 days. With no electricity or phone/cell/internet service, we were, except for shouting messages to our neighbors across the washed out bridge, essentially cut off from the outside world. After the waters subsided on Tuesday, local residents owning heavy equipment fashioned makeshift earthen bridges to reconnect us with the next town over—Rochester, which was itself just as isolated. By Wednesday, the Air National Guard had begun flying in drinking water and other essentials. All the while, surrounding communities were working to find ways to get to us over washed out bridges and roads (some stretches of which only 20-foot deep canyons remain). Yesterday afternoon a convoy of 40-50 electrical repair vehicles poured into town and overnight hooked up the Rochester electric substation with a

temporary replacement. The lights went on in Rochester about 3 this afternoon and about 3 hours later in Hancock.

The experience of the last 5 days has been a frightening, surreal and awe inspiring one. With a few minor but, unfortunately, glaring exceptions, people reacted with overflowing generosity and a wonderful spirit of service to anyone and everyone in need. Although we certainly weren't the hardest hit community, there was substantial property damage both public and private. To my knowledge there were no deaths or serious injuries in our area, although there was a harrowing close call in a house that collapsed in Rochester. The rampant rumors that several coffins washed out of the Rochester cemetery later proved to be true. The cemetery behind the inn [The Gathering Inn in Hancock where Rick lives] didn't suffer the same kind of trauma, although it was at one point under more than 4 feet of water that merely toppled a few headstones. The task of cleaning up, repairing and rebuilding will be a very long one.

Irene will hopefully teach us many lessons if we are wise enough to recognize them as such. I feel very grateful and privileged to have been a part of this. At the community dinner at the fire house this evening, a great cheer went up when it was announced that our electricity (and also, therefore, our well water) had been restored. I couldn't help feeling a bit sad, knowing that life would soon be returning to "normal" and that the warm feeling of intense community would begin to fade as we returned to habitual patterns and obligations of family and jobs. Tonight the street lights are once again blotting out portions of the Milky Way that so brilliantly blazed overhead the night before. The rushing of rivers and whispering of leaves once again compete with the noise of cars and trucks, which I am once again forced to consider before crossing the road. Fetching buckets of water from the river might not have been glamorous or especially fun, but it tended to focus me in the here and now. There were no world events to fret over, no politics, wars, sports or any of the thousands of other distractions we've come to accept as parts of our everyday lives. This was by no means a life or death experience. Except for a relatively few number of individuals who indeed suffered great material losses, we were inconvenienced but never truly in danger. With rivers bursting with water, forests full of firewood, abundant gardens and most of all each other, we could have easily continued for several more weeks and longer. We truly do live in a world of abundance. The notion of scarcity is but an illusion born of fear.