



Natural Connections at Mercy Center

April 2007

April showers will bring May flowers. This comes to mind as I sit at my computer and heavy rains are pelting against my window. The Nor'easter is bringing us cold and wet weather along with incredible winds and high tides. But soon hopefully, it will be warmer and all the buds we see seeking warmth and sun will burst with color!

April is also the month many environmentalists coordinate events and activities to help others remember to protect the Earth and conserve its resources for the health of all living creatures on the planet. Earth Day is officially April 22nd, but many of us are celebrating this coming week or all month. Communities are scheduling clean-up activities, days to hike and explore the beauty of nature, and/or concerts to celebrate the Earth.

I think Earth Day is a good day to review the basics. That we need to conserve natural resources - that every drop of water or kW hour generated is precious and should be used wisely. This means that sometimes we need to think before

Upcoming Events & Activities at Mercy Center

- Time to Review the 3 R's
- Earth Day at Mercy Center
- Scholarships at Mercy Center
- The Universe: Its Story - Our Story
- Sleeping Under the Stars
- The Sacred Order of Survival

We should begin by examining how we live and how we use resources - such as energy, water and materials. Enjoy Earth Day this coming week and begin to reflect on how you might change one thing you do to conserve more resources this coming year.

Working to step lightly,



Sherill Baldwin, Ecology Director at Mercy Center

Time to Review the 3 R's

Adding Waste Reduction to our Life

Although it may not seem like a big deal to recycle your bottles, cans and paper, it continues to be more important than ever. Recycling is about preserving natural resources. Every time we use a product, we can examine what materials that product is made of and begin to imagine the resources extracted to make the raw materials, as well as provide energy to manufacture it. Resources, such as energy are used during extraction, manufacturing and marketing. Resources are used to package the product too.

Recycling, however, is the easiest of the three R's. The three R's are a hierarchy; reduce, reuse, recycle - before landfilling or incineration. Reducing is an action taken to eliminate or reduce the amount or toxicity of materials before they become a solid waste or trash. Reuse is the act of using something over again in it's current form. When you cannot prevent the waste from being generated, it has been reused as many times as possible or perhaps it cannot be reused, then you should recycle it.

While recycling is important, reducing our waste, or our use of resources is by far the most important of the three R's. It is also sometimes the hardest to conceptualize. You must

Earth Day at Mercy Center

Help us Expand our Heirloom Garden

Saturday, April 21

9am - 4pm

Or anytime in between



On Saturday, April 21st, in honor of Earth Day, we will be expanding the garden near the green house (aka 'the cage'). Last year this garden grew heirloom vegetables, mostly tomatoes.

This year, with the help of Lizbet Ferrante, an intern from Sound School, in New Haven we will be able to expand our garden. The heirloom garden will grow more varieties as well as more produce in hopes of providing vegetables for our dining services. We plan to plant different tomato varieties, fingerling potatoes, snap peas, green beans and popcorn to name a few vegetables we'll grow.

One huge obstacle to growing any food at Mercy Center is the amount of animals seeking to feed on our bounty. While we expand the size of the garden, we will also create more

think of reducing before acting on using the resource itself.

A couple of examples - if you need to go to the convenience store for something - you could drive or you could choose to ride your bike. The choice, or action of riding your bike, has reduced the use of gasoline to pick up items at the store.

In terms of waste management, my favorite example involves ice cream. By getting my ice cream in a cone, I end up eating the container and have not used a cup. It's not that I didn't waste a cup, it's that I didn't use it to begin with.

Try and practice some waste reduction this month - it could be delicious.

[Learn more about waste reduction from Ask Umbra at Grist](#)

animal resistant fencing, in hopes of preventing deer, rabbit or woodchuck invasions.

Starting at 9am on April 21st, we will be plotting the new garden, placing fence post holes, laying wire fencing (to prevent woodchucks getting in) and making a new fence around the perimeter of the garden including a gate (or maybe two). We will work to 4pm. You may join us for all or part of the day.

If you're interested in joining us, please contact Sherill at 245.0401 or sherill@mercybythesea.org.

[To learn about other Earth Day activities in Connecticut](#)

Scholarships at Mercy Center

Ecology Program
Scholarships Available!



In addition to offering programs that are low cost and/or free, Mercy Center also provides scholarships for programs that might otherwise be cost prohibitive. Funds are available for all programs including ecology programs.

When the Mercy Northeast Ecology Program first came into being, the committee felt that everyone should be able to learn about and/or connect to the environment regardless of income. So there is a small pocket of money to help people attend ecology programs - specifically Mercy Center sponsored programs which are listed either as The Spirit & the Earth in our Soundings catalog, or has been promoted in Natural Connections.

If you would like to attend a program and need financial assistance, please contact us.

For more information about available scholarships for any upcoming ecology program, please contact Betty Orosz at betty@mercybythesea.org or 203.245.0401.

Sleeping Under the Stars

The Universe: Its Story - Our Story

Including the Cosmic
Walk!

Marlene Bosch, CSC
Saturday, April 28, 9am -
Sunday, April 29, 2:30pm
\$145*
\$75 commuter rate



*Includes meals and shared room/central bath

Come celebrate the mystery and experience the awe of the Universe's 13.7 billion year journey and our connection to it. Journey together to deepen our love relationship to this evolving mystery from stardust to cells, from flowers to an expanding universe. The time together engages our whole being: body, mind, heart and spirit. It includes the Cosmic walk, rituals, input, personal reflective time and group sharing.

Denise Turcotte, CSC, MS, is currently co- coordinator for the New Dawn Earth Center in Cumberland, Rhode Island. As a naturalist, educator, and "student" of the new cosmology, she shares her passion for earth and engages others in reflecting upon the interconnectedness of all life and their role as the consciousness of the universe.

Marlene Bosch, CSC is a member of the National Sacred Dance Guild. Centered in creation spirituality, she believes in the presence of a life force deep within which calls each person to enter the cosmic dance of all creation to heal the planet and to celebrate the beauty and oneness of all.

[Register for this program now](#)

The Sacred Order of Survival

With Timothy Kowalik, Cynthia Kazmirsky,

Outdoor Accommodations for the Tracker Series



As mentioned before, Mercy Center is offering new programs this spring and summer which are, as a grouping, referred to as our 'Tracker Series'. They are programs designed by four individuals who are students of Tom Brown, Jr. and Earth-Heart Institute and members of the New England Trackers.

These programs are scheduled at a time when we have few to no rooms available in the main building. However, the instructors of the programs were not daunted. What better way to help participants connect with nature than to sleep under the stars?

For our outdoor accommodations, we will provide an area for folks to set up their tents. All meals included with the program will be eaten in the dining room. Parts of the program will be held in conference rooms and parts will be conducted outside. An outdoor toilet and shower facilities will be available close to the tent area.

Although program participants will be sleeping outdoors, amenities such as our book store, Coffee Corner, silent areas (Grant Living room, Lyons Chapel and the Seaside Meditation room) and the dining room will be open for participants.

Like other visitors and guests, participants who are sleeping outdoors, will be asked to respect the privacy and quiet of others. A policy many are surprised about, but often embrace once they practice it, is that cell phones are not allowed in the main building or the beach area. Participants sleeping outdoors will be asked to refrain from using their cell phones in the tent area to respect the quiet of others.

Timothy Grantham and Kari Miller

Saturday, May 5, 9:30am -

Sunday, May 6, 3:30pm

\$200

*There are few rooms for this program and most participants will need to camp. Camping rate: \$150.

In cultures that live close to the Earth, survival entails much more than just a meal and a place to sleep. Rather, survival means integration within the natural world, where Nature teaches and provides for all of your needs. In this way, survival becomes not a hardship but a blessing. In this class, participants will learn the Sacred Order of Survival and gain practical experience with its four principles. Come take a lesson from the squirrels and learn to make a simple shelter with natural materials and no tools that will keep you alive and dry. Learn how to collect and purify water using principles that will work even in a desert. Learn the basics of traditional fire making and see what rubbing two sticks together can teach you about survival. And see what Nature has to offer for sustenance by exploring edible and medicinal plants on the grounds of the Mercy Center.

Timothy Kowalik, PhD, is on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and has been studying healing and awareness in the aboriginal traditions taught by Tom Brown, Jr. and the Earth-Heart Institute. He has taught awareness and basic survival skills at the Apeiron Institute for Environmental Living, the Bioneers by the Bay Conference, and to schools and scout troupes. Tim is a founding member of New England Trackers.

Cynthia Kazmirsky has played in the woods and swamps and honored the plants and nature since childhood. A child of Slovak farmers, she became aware of the healing spirit of plants and herbal medicines. She has studied with Tom Brown, Jr., attended the Tracker School and herbal studies with Gail Ulrich and Rosemary Gladstar. She now lives in the

For more information or to arrange for our outdoor accommodations, please contact Betty Orosz at 245.0401 or betty@mercybythesea.org.

[For more about Mercy Center](#)

woods of south central Connecticut and caretakes the land that owns her.

Tim Grantham has had a lifelong love affair with old skills and ways of living. He has studied primitive skills with the Tracker School, been trained in the Vision Quest experience with Earth-Heart. Tim has taught survival skills and ceremony at the Apeiron Institute for Environmental Living and works with schools and local Boy Scouts. He is a member of New England Trackers.

Kari Miller, MD, is a board certified family practice physician with clinical experience caring for Native Hawaiians and Native Americans. Kari has been trained in the Vision Quest experience with Earth-Heart and has trained in wilderness survival and philosophy skills with Tom Brown, Jr. She has a strong interest in the Sacred Feminine. Her favorite work is in healing through listening.

[Register for this program now](#)

****NEW HOURS** Mercy's Ecology Center**

The Ecology Center just reopened after a winter break on April 10th.

The Ecology Center has recently purchased many new books. It has undergone some changes - to become more of a library & reading room. New books and DVDs to our collection include books on gardening, native & invasive plants, Native American spirituality, natural history, books on labyrinths, books and movies about food, art, nature and the environment. We also now have our own copy of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Please join us at the Ecology Center - to learn something new and enjoy our reading space.

New Ecology Center Hours:

Tuesday: 9am - 12noon

Wednesday: 1 - 2pm

Upcoming Garden Work Parties

More 'garden work parties' for have been schedule for this spring.

As you may know, Mercy Center has a lot of gardens. Many have been a little neglected over the years, and are looking for kind hands to bring it back to life. Consider coming out and joining me for a Garden Party.

No need to RSVP.

Park at the Ecology Center (Emmanuel House, door with the Earth Flag) and from the Ecology Center we'll walk over to the garden chosen for that day. If you're late - I'll leave a note at the Ecology Center indicating where I'm working that day.

Upcoming Garden Cleanups at Mercy Center:

Friday: 2-4:30pm

*Please call ahead to confirm the Ecology Center will be open.

Wednesdays 2-4:30pm

April 25

May 9

May 23

Thursday 2-4:30pm

April 19

May 3

May 17

May 31

JOB OPENING: Ecology Educator

The New Dawn Earth Center in Cumberland, RI seeks a part-time (15-20 hrs/week) Ecology Educator to work with the Director to further the mission of the Center through program development and presentations. Candidates should be aware of the interconnectedness of all life, be familiar with eco- systems and have knowledge of sustainable practices. Applicants must work collaboratively; have teaching experience with children and adults; have experience or interest in coordinating a small organic garden. Flexible hours, some weekends and evenings. Apply by May 15, 2007.

Send resume to Valerie Swift, Sisters of Mercy, Northeast Community, 15 Highland View Rd., Cumberland, RI 02864 or e-mail to vswift@mercynortheast.org.

Mercy Center at Madison

167 Neck Rd.

PO Box 191

Madison, Connecticut 06443

Phone: 203.245.0401

Email: info@mercybythesea.org

Web:

Mercy Center is a conference and retreat center for human development. The Ecology Program is supported with funds from the Mercy Northeast Community, Mercy Action and ministry funds from Mercy RI and Mercy VT.

<http://www.mercybythesea.org>