

Ebb and Flow

Reversing Falls Sanctuary Newsletter

November/December, 2017



What We Heard

Narrative summary of notes taken at the Small Listening Circles.

The mission of Reversing Falls Sanctuary is to

- ❖ Build strong community bonds
- ❖ Support local artists and musicians
- ❖ Care for our earth
- ❖ Welcome people on diverse spiritual paths

Two circles began with reading Phyllis Wheatley's Poem, "Turning to One Another." These are the first lines:

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask: 'What's possible?' not 'What's wrong?' Keep asking.

Mission: “A lot of people don’t know what this place is.” There is a need to better define our mission and to figure out how to communicate to the broader community who we are and what we care about.

Sacred Space: “It is so sacred here. The walls, floor, ceiling, are saturated by what we do.” We are fortunate to have a beautiful sacred building as our home in North Brooksville — a space that is safe, inclusive, welcoming and, indeed a sanctuary in the true sense of the word.

The Building: “How important is the building to the larger Reversing Falls Sanctuary community?” As we care for the Earth, we strive to care for our building — this includes plans to bring water, install a bathroom, remove or repair the steeple and paint the exterior of the building. Suggestion: “The steeple could be removed, repaired and replaced over time as money is raised.”

Ritual: Ritual is a basic human need. It is a priority for us, and we try to include this element in all our programs. We heard a call for more singing

Community Conversation: “Reversing Falls Sanctuary should be a place to meet and exchange ideas, even if differing ideas.” Community conversation is a valued facet of our gatherings. Suggestions for guidelines for group sharing have been offered. The small listening circles were followed by a Peace Circle led by Fred Van Liew. He began by asking participants to identify a guideline for conversation they wanted to see observed.

Program: “There is a variety in the programming, but it is always soulful.” Much gratitude was expressed for what RFS offers the community. There is broad agreement that we are a community that has a strong spiritual core, and this informs all of our decisions and all of our programs. There were requests for continued programs around Native American wisdom, Climate Change actions and solutions, social justice issues and advocacy. “Climate Change programs reflect sensitivity to ideas and concerns of our RFS community and an awareness of the gifted and experienced individuals who live among us and who have expertise to offer.” Creative ideas for how to improve our programming, how to respond to the current moment we are living in, and how to engage conflict resolution strategies were shared. There were requests to see more opportunities to again share meals and to schedule uplifting and fun performances.

Leadership and Organization: “I am inspired by the leaders here.” /But/ “What is the current leadership structure?” Most folks appreciate that our leadership style is non-hierarchical. We move in circles and work hard at identifying the gifts of our members and encouraging them to share those gifts with the broader community. We need to de-mystify how decisions are made, i.e., improving feedback to the community regarding deliberations and outcomes — increased transparency.

Projects: “I like ‘activism,’ getting things done, not just talking about problems.” Many folks like to ‘do’ as much as to ‘dream.’ Not everyone knows what we have done in the community: RFS helped facilitate the creation of the Brooksville Farmers’ Market, planned and directed the remarkably successful and significant Greenhouse Project and the WindowDresser Builds, offered Nonviolent Communications Training, and co-sponsored a conference on Community Self-sustainability. At the sanctuary the walls have been repaired and painted, the floor has been refinished and a labyrinth painted on the floor, a track lighting system and a system for hanging art installations have been installed, an art installation has made the landscaping more attractive, the attic has been insulated, a heat pump has been installed, storm windows have been installed, and mold remediation and basement sealing have been completed.

For the worker bees among us, much more remains to be done. We are working now on an appeal letter, brochure, outdoor sign, new RFS logo, and window shades as well as the more ambitious projects detailed above under *building*.

Community: “Building community is the foundation of democracy.” There were extensive comments on the nature of the RFS community and on the issue of our relationship to the larger community in Brooksville, on the peninsula and the island. There was much appreciation for the kind of caring community created at RFS, but there was a concern about the level of commitment we see. Someone asked, “What are we asking people to commit to?” It was suggested that we consider asking folks to become “friends” of Reversing Falls Sanctuary as opposed to “consumers” who come to programs that appeal to them.

We seem of two minds when it comes to our relation to the area community. Do we keep seeking opportunities to partner with others, to offer programs or initiatives that will engage or interest community folks? Or do we “stay true to who we are” and recognize that “we cannot be all things to all people?” Is there a way out of this impasse if we break from the “us” and “them” paradigm and think not in terms of outreach to the community but instead of seeing ourselves as part of the neighborhood? The question then becomes, “How can we be good neighbors?”

Wisdom: “Spirit is a river. Like a river, Spirit changes course.” Anne read this quote from Thomas Holland and added, “The reversing falls are metaphor. We need to be willing to change direction.”

Jan Watson used to say, “Don’t describe yourselves.”

Jean Templeton emailed to say that she read in a book by Virginia Satir “that in all group settings, people bring their family of origins into the group, so you end up dealing with a cast of thousands with all their emotional needs.”

David Vandiver emailed to recommend a book by Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life, Welcoming the Soul and Weaving Community in a Wounded World*. One of the chapters is entitled: Creating Circles of Trust and the book includes a DVD by Palmer entitled “Circles of Trust.” Thanks David — timely and excellent book!

Pat Wheeler calls our attention to the opportunity offered us in continuing work with Fred Van Liew in creating “Circles of Peace.” Seventeen of us attended a “Circle of Peace” with Fred just after the small listening circles were completed. It was a revelatory evening with much to absorb.



Conclusion: It is fair to say that most of the comments at our small listening circles were thoughtful, respectful and encouraging. For those of us privileged to be “listeners,” it was an experience of deep wonderment, good challenge, and heartfelt sharing.

This report is a collaborative effort from the planning team: Doug Cowan, Martha Jordan, Carole Pascal, Pat Wheeler and Gary Vencill with Hosts: Daksha Baumann, Anne Ferrara, Gail Vencill, Tony Ferrara and Kathleen Caldwell. Special thanks to the 21 participants and to the 9 hosts and to Anne Ferrara for writing an initial draft to which others added.

WindowDressers' Build



Greetings from Tom: After tying up many loose ends of preparation, implementation and completion of this year's Blue Hill Peninsula Community Build of Window Dressers I send you, on behalf of the Steering Committee, a heart felt THANK YOU.



The Steering Committee began the process in April at a meeting of statewide builds held in Belfast. We then formed three Measuring Teams whose members measured thirty-three structures for a total of 295 inserts. Our team loaded a truck in Rockland with unfinished frames and we began the set up at the Brooksville Community Center the next day. In the meantime, our Food Coordinator gathered twelve local cooks to prepare our savory breakfasts, lunches and desserts.



You were the next extremely essential ingredient in the entire process. Without your help we would not have completed this valuable community project. You delivered a quality product in a timely fashion. You are helping our neighbors and friends stay warmer this winter while helping the Earth. Your participation has strengthened our community. Incredibly so, and we had fun doing it.



Your Steering Committee extends to you its thanks and gratitude for your spirit and your job well done.

Tom Adamo, Tony Ferrara, Bill MacDowell, Bill Mulliken, Ray Yardy,
Food Coordinator: Karen Adamo



Coming Events

Thu. Nov. 16 at 4 p.m., *Chris Farrow-Noble* returns to Reversing Falls Sanctuary to celebrate her newly published book, *Walking a Labyrinth Daily: Exploring a Spiritual Practice*. Chris will read excerpts and sign copies. Event concludes with a labyrinth walk. After the gathering, we are invited to a pot luck supper at the home of Mike and Elaine Hewes.



Sat. Nov. 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p. m. *Sherri Mitchell* workshop: *From Traumatic Paralysis to Unified Action*. Sherri teaches us how to recognize our wounds, barriers, and blind spots; how to acknowledge the wounds of others; how to move beyond these obstacles to achieve unity; how to be good allies, and how to achieve cohesion within our movements.

The workshop costs \$35. Please bring a bag lunch.

Register with Sherri Mitchell at healingturtleisland21@gmail.com



Sun. Dec. 3, 4 p.m. *Women's Circle*

Mon. Dec. 4, 4 p.m. *Women's Healing Circle with Gail Page*

Sun. Dec. 10, 4 - 6 p.m. *Old Fashioned Holiday Cookie Swap and Tea*

Please come and swap cookies, swap stories about your holiday memories, and bring enough cookies to share. Bring a recipe as well. Nothing builds community like a cookie!

Info: 326-0899 or check the Reversing Falls Sanctuary website listed below.

Sun. Dec. 17, 4 p.m. *Advent Spiral*

Watch for more details about this year's Advent Spiral and other special events this holiday season in our next newsletter.

Photo credits: WindowDressers Build photos by Bill Mulliken

Small Listening Circle, Labyrinth and Sherri Mitchell photos by Pat Wheeler

Information at www.reversingfalls.org or find Reversing Falls Sanctuary on Facebook.

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