

# Pathwords

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SPRING 2009

## Finding Common Ground in Our Humanity

By Karen Millnick

**Editor's Note:** Parts of this article have been excerpted from the 2009 Sevenoaks membership letter.

In some ways, the economic recession has given us a common ground on which to stand together as humans. Sevenoaks is no different from the rest of the country, facing changes and economic challenges. We have been tested throughout the years, and recently we have received some challenges that brought each member of our Pathwork Helper community into a deep process of self-reflection. In searching for guidance, we have looked within, and we have also reached beyond our own Pathwork region to bring in leaders to help us identify and heal our issues. I was moved at our Helper's Retreat this past March to find commitment, perseverance, and patience in our Helper community as the group opened to new modalities for healing and evolving.

Sevenoaks is a small ecosystem in the hills of Virginia. As the home of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork since 1972, Sevenoaks has offered thousands of people, from all walks of life, a sacred space in which to process, heal, and expand in consciousness. Now in 2009, we have discerned that our new mission at the Center is directly related to offering our land for the sacred space of retreat. This direction is related to the changes rippling through the country in that we want to establish a common ground and sense of place for anyone who wants to come to Sevenoaks.

With that mission in mind, we are changing the name on our website to "Sevenoaks Retreat Center, Home of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork." We are simultaneously honoring

*Finding Common Ground, see page 7*



Lighthouse Building photographed by Patty Mahaffey

## Cultivating a Center of Transformation

By Bill McRae  
General Manager

Sevenoaks is moving way beyond business as usual, creating a rich container for the Pathwork to flourish and offering a center of transformation for all. The goal is sustainability through operations, and numerous novel ideas and plans are in the works.

We are identifying and contacting compatible program leaders, currently targeting people with a following on the West Coast, as well as local leaders still too small for "the Omega circuit." We are revamping our rental pricing structure and broadening our offerings, and the phone is ringing. We are now "co-marketing" with rental customers who open their programs to the public so that their events take on a similar stature to our workshops. Our first personal retreat in some time was held Easter weekend. We are working in the area of transformational leadership, creating a totally new program to offer to business leaders during our low occupancy midweek period. The program team consists of a few Helpers and several professionals in the field, and we hope to attract others to present their existing programs as well. I envision receiving federal grants to aid in furthering this work, so popular in Washington these days.

More programs mean more excitement at Sevenoaks, and we are conveying this message through new brochures, ads in magazines, in journals, and on search websites, and improved email and post mail to purchased and shared lists.

*Cultivating a Center, see page 10*



Sevenoaks Pathwork® Center  
of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork

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[www.sevenoakspathwork.org](http://www.sevenoakspathwork.org)

The purpose of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork is to use the Pathwork process to contribute to the psychological and spiritual awakening of humanity.

The mission of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork is to teach and to exemplify the Pathwork process.

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## Spring 2009 Editorial

# Expanding Our Center

Spring, a season of rebirth and renewal, seems appropriately connected to all that is unfolding at Sevenoaks as we begin our annual membership drive, face difficult economic challenges, and attempt to expand our reach well beyond the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork (MAP) community.

Although it may seem a less than ideal time to ask for a financial commitment to Sevenoaks and MAP, read this issue of *Pathwords* to discover how support of this land and the expansion of the Center may benefit you in ways you have yet to realize. The thread weaving throughout this issue relates to recognizing the importance of commitment to our “center,” both the physical, tangible Sevenoaks Center and our spiritual center within. We are being asked, during what could be a stressful time for some of us, to consider our priorities, our focus. To what am I turning my attention? The abundance in my life, or the fear of uncertainty?

As Board President **Sid del Cardayré** suggests, in times of uncertainty we need to nourish our souls. Sevenoaks offers us a place to do that. My own connection to Sevenoaks and commitment to membership began long before I ever intended to become involved with Pathwork. From my first experience here, the natural and spiritual beauty of this place impacted me. I wanted to return. And I wanted to ensure that it would continue to exist. As **Darlene Rollins** and **Isdra Lake** express in their personal reflections, we can be nourished and replenished here, on the land and as part of the community. **Gary Vollbracht’s** two articles speak to the abundance and deepening commitment present here, evidenced by a recent retreat for Helpers and his own personal realization. Helping to heal and nurture others can take many forms extending beyond this Center, as seen in the gift Helper Apprentice **Michelle Basile** extends to her music students in teaching them to open their hearts. Our hope is to make this gift available to others who have yet to benefit from Sevenoaks and MAP.

With that goal in mind, **Bill McRae** and **Karen Millnick** explain why the expansion of Sevenoaks to become a more encompassing retreat center and the renaming and revamping of the Center and website are necessary. It’s clear we are in a time of transition, personally and collectively. It’s also clear that even if you can’t physically be here during this time of transition, supporting the spiritual and financial expansion of this Center will expand your “center” and that of those around you.

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## A Pathwork Memory

By *Joe Johnson*

**Author’s Note:** Years of personal work, the loving guidance of Eva’s lectures, and a number of our workers and helpers make this story possible.

A few years ago, in a Healers’ Path workshop, we were meditating together on the beach at Sandbridge, Virginia. Several Pathworkers were there, sitting in the first light of morning. Jonathan Goldman was teaching us how to see, and even feel, the pulsating heart of Mother Earth, in her aura, just above the eastern horizon. This moved me into a state of awed receptiveness. After some encouragement from Spirit, I began to write:

“We are a cache of disembodied spirits, associated with the energy form your group has created. We will continue to exist after your group has disbanded. We are a force for loving compassion, which will travel the Earth forever, filling the needs of those who have not had your opportunity for opening to the Light. Your loving goodwill has created this movement.”

*Joe graduated from PTP in 1998, has done some post-graduate teacher training, and taught meditation to PEP students.*

## Feed Your Soul at Sevenoaks

By Sid del Cardayré  
President

Recently I spent several days in New York City on business. Much of that time I attended conference meetings while rain drenched the city, causing me to develop seasonal affective disorder (or as a friend calls it, a “badittude”). Finally, the sun emerged, and I spent some time hanging out in the park with a few thousand of my favorite Manhattanites, managed to get out and eat some real food, see some art, visit some AA friends, and hear some live music. It was awesome! I even brought back some fresh flowers for my room.

Despite all the financial fear and loathing going on in the world, and especially in New York City, people are still vibrant and positive. Although many folks are struggling and offering discounts to get more business, the city has about 8 million people that need to eat and get around. They continue to build and invest in their infrastructure because they know that the current economic situation will get better.

Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs says that we take care of our basic needs such as food and safety before we devote time or energy to psychological needs, love, self-esteem, or self-actualization. So if a lower need is not met or is threatened, a person becomes stressed and unbalanced and does not address the higher needs. A person is even less likely to do so if those higher needs are seen as luxuries, and then the needs are just set aside or forgotten. But higher needs are not luxuries; they are the gifts of humanity.

It seems to me that the “vicious circle” here is obvious. If we were animals without self-awareness or reason, then Maslow’s theory falls right into place. But as humans, and especially as spiritually/metaphysically aware humans, we *know* that many of our physiological and safety needs can be extremely affected by our spiritual groundedness and/or connection to God. I believe it was Ghandi who said

something along these lines: “I have so much to do today, I’d better meditate *twice* as long!”

The current financial stress is being felt everywhere and especially at nonprofits like Sevenoaks. I personally have been through an enormously stressful winter with my business, not knowing if I was going to lose half of my sales and need to start layoffs, and then to top it off, not even being able to take my usual week or so off for winter decompression. But I can honestly acknowledge that every bit of Pathwork, awakening, and/or workshops that I did over the past four months benefited me even more than usual.

What I can’t understand is how, when we are feeling fearful or hurt and need spiritual food and healing the most, we choose to push these needs down to the bottom of our

hierarchy, as Maslow suggests. Have you ever forgotten to water a plant, but then remembered just in time before it faded away? Wow! It’s amazing how that plant drinks up the water and comes right back to life. Many times, that’s just how I’ve felt after each workshop, each Transformation Program weekend, and (almost) every Helper session.

It’s true that Pathwork will live forever through the lectures. But will it live vibrantly and have its beautiful and healing effect on people’s lives if we do not feed it, teach more students, train more Helpers? I personally believe that Sevenoaks and the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork (MAP) are the place for this to happen on a reasonable scale. And currently it seems that cannot happen without obtaining outside help through

renting the center to other modalities or doing annual fundraising and membership drives.

This is why I feel that it is especially important for you to be a member of MAP this year. Come to our new programs, take a short workshop, check out the Awakening Program, show up at members’ weekend, and have a class reunion (hint to my PTP class). All of these things not only help guarantee the future of the Pathwork and Sevenoaks, but feed our souls. And personally, I can do a *much* better job of handling my basic needs when my soul is fed and I can feel God in my life.



Budding apple tree in Sevenoaks’ orchard, courtesy of Jim Adams

# Pause... Spaciousness...

## Helper Retreat Deepens Commitment, Community Building

By Gary Vollbracht

February and March witnessed much interaction and engagement as the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork Helpers and Helper Apprentices prepared for and participated in one-on-one interviews with facilitators and two open 2-hour conference calls. The two-month process culminated in a Helper retreat the weekend of March 20-21, facilitated by two skilled senior Pathwork Helpers: Michael Roblee, from the Great Lakes Pathwork, and Alison Green-Barton, from California Pathwork.

At the Helper retreat, 20 of our 28 Helpers convened for three days of hard work, mostly focused on building a container strong and safe enough to hold all the deep and painful issues that can appear to separate us. During the retreat, we experienced the relief of dissolving or lessening the tension fields we have been holding for years, even decades. But not all the tension fields dissolved. We have more work to do. Most importantly in continuing this work, we learned and practiced skills needed to deal with the tension fields created by issues that arise from seemingly intractable and insoluble differences that sometimes appear to separate us and blind us to each other and to our oneness. We learned the skills of recognizing the need to *pause* in the midst of our sometimes-heated engagements and the beauty in those strained moments of creating

*As you cleanse  
yourselves inwardly  
and leave behind  
aspects of your  
personality that are  
not compatible  
with your newly  
awakening self,  
so must the  
entity Pathwork  
do the same.*

Pathwork Guide  
Lecture #253

*spaciousness* around these jagged tension fields, spaciousness for God. Most participants found this to be a positive, even an amazing experience. We expressed great gratitude for Spirit and for the love and skills of our two Helpers, as well as our participants' positive intent for resolving problems and building community.

Although the retreat was a culmination of much preparation, at the same time, it was only a beginning. During our time together, we came to see and understand the magnitude of the hard work on our plate as we continue this process of building our precious and beautiful Pathwork Helper container and community. In our experience of community, we once again recognized the importance of being committed to this work. Living our Pathwork, both individually and as a leadership community, is, after all, our reason for being as Pathworkers. The rewards exist in the process and evolution of our growth in consciousness as imperfect human beings in community with each other and the Cosmos. Please pray that we find the courage and commitment to continue what we have begun. The invitation is open for us all.

Love,  
Gary  
Helper Retreat Organizer

Helpers used these guidelines during the retreat:

- Deepen our spiritual practice together; actively utilize our higher self connections to strengthen the group container.
- Suspend judgment to allow each other's reality to coexist and seek to build understanding of our assumptions.
- Allow a moment of silence between each person's contribution, take a personal or collective pause when we feel emotionally reactive, and use that moment to pray and listen for the deeper truth.
- Continuously practice staying in contact with each other.

Take a moment as you read this to pause at each item and feel how actually learning to build this practice and exercise these muscles are the building blocks for the new society the Pathwork lectures promise.

# Michelle Basile Nurtures Youth's Musical Genius

By Pauline Hovey

Like a well-orchestrated composition, Michelle Basile's life has pieced together beautifully her love of music, connection to healing energy, desire for meaning, and longing to bring Pathwork into the world.

A Pathwork Apprentice Helper, conductor, and music teacher of gifted and at-risk youth, Michelle is incorporating Pathwork fundamentals into her classrooms at the Appomattox Regional Governor's School for the Arts and Technology, a magnet high school in Petersburg, Virginia. Working with a student body she describes as "a potent mix of intelligence, talent, fear, and mistrust," Michelle teaches them how to listen—to their inner being, to each other, and to music, without judgment. "Our premise is that the first law of love is to listen," Michelle said.

Whether she's teaching music history, orchestra, music theory, or audition prep, Michelle said, "In all my classes I encourage the students to create a space for each other to be real, grow through their problems, find their inner beauty, be excellent, and feel cared for. Ostensibly, it might seem like I am an easy teacher, but I'm really not at all. I require everything they have to give."

Recognizing her own sensitive nature and musical talent at a young age, Michelle had aspirations of becoming a concert pianist, but she suffered an arm injury while in college that redirected her life. Unable to resume playing the piano, she attempted to leave music behind her by moving to Italy "to get another life." But after five years and a variety of incredible experiences, "I realized I needed to be in music," Michelle said, so she returned to the U.S.

Drawn to listen to other musicians, Michelle started turning the pages of their music while they played. Her presence had such a positive effect, they would often ask, "Are you doing something, because I'm playing better while you're standing there?"

That's when Michelle discovered the healing power of presence. "I learned how listening helped people," Michelle said. "And I wanted to see if there's a way we can listen better to each other to nurture our inner genius to come forth, because I found that even high caliber musicians were still tentative when they played." Her growing interest in combining music and energy work led her to a master's in conducting and to the Barbara Brennan School for Healing, where she read Susan Thesenga's *The Undefended Self*—another life-altering experience. "This hit the spot of the inner work I needed to do," Michelle said of her introduction to Pathwork, "and I found it traveling into my soul."

Michelle enrolled in the Pathwork Transformation

Program (PTP), and during her third year, her mother died. "I realized that if my mother could die, then I could die too, and I wanted to do something meaningful with my life while I was alive," Michelle said, "so I put everything on hold." She entered the Pathwork Experience Program (PEP) and moved to Sevenoaks. When a colleague working for the Richmond Symphony asked her to substitute conduct a Youth Orchestra rehearsal, Michelle told him, "I'm not doing music right now, but he begged me to help him." So she did, and eventually the Richmond Symphony hired her.

"Working with teenagers was new to me," Michelle said. "I found I really resonated with that age group. They're less fixed in their belief systems, and are much more open and

responsive to being guided and helped. I was like that as a teenager, really sensitive and longing for some connection to myself as an artist, and I didn't have anybody to meet me there."

After three years, Michelle accepted her current teaching position, where one of her responsibilities is to help students prepare for recitals or to audition for music colleges. "We work with the Pathwork principles of the higher self, lower self, and mask," Michelle explained. "I change the terminology, but the

focus is to get to know the parts of the self that come on stage with us in performance and get in the way of our authentic, undefended self-expression."

Michelle incorporates tools such as awareness exercises, a practice log similar to the Daily Review, "and lots of in-class performances, which, for musicians, are like mini Pathwork work scenes. We do exercises to plug into the network of energy that gives us the experience of being much bigger than our bodies. I teach them to remember how sacred their hearts are—all these little things that invite their imagination to open wider so that they may be able to hear beyond."

Apparently, her technique is working. Last year her orchestra students won every prize at an international competition in New York City. "One of the judges

*Michelle Basile Nurtures, see page 10*



Michelle Basile is surrounded by her students during a music class.

# Met by Pathwork

By Isdra Lake

For many years prior to discovering Pathwork I had pursued a spiritual life that focused on the higher self. And that served me up to a point. But I reached a ceiling and found myself intensely curious about my emotions, my real/human inner life that was not particularly lofty or pleasant. I had wearied of aiming at sainthood and wanted to find and accept the ground I actually stood on. When I found the lectures through Susan Thesenga's book, *The Undefended Self*, I knew it was an answer to prayer—a prayer for finding what was yet hidden, whatever that was. I wanted to find my undefended self.

As I began reading the lectures, I trusted my intuitive “yes” to them even before my mind understood the concepts. Next I took a couple of introductory workshops wherein I was awed by the raw truthfulness and vulnerability of those who worked. I was struck by the tears and snot, the anger and human imperfection that was allowed and held without judgment. I glimpsed in those workshops a path to take through my own numbness and rigidity, without having to deny the greater reality of my being.

When I came eventually to Sevenoaks for a Labor Day weekend workshop with Donovan and Susan, I had no idea it would lead to five years of the Transformation Program (PTP). But at the end of the workshop, we were given information on PTP, and as I left for my home in California, there arose this thought, “if all things were equal, I would like to attend the first year.” Within two months, I had rented out my house and leased an apartment in Charlottesville. I arrived in time to start PTP1 in the fall of 2000.

Since graduating PTP in 2005 I have completed Helper Training as well, but I want to record publicly

my deep gratitude for the five-year Transformation Program. Those first five years were the most significant period of my personal process and served me beyond my expectations.

While at times PTP was an uneven and challenging experience, a very human experience and experiment, in the end,

I was changed by it in ways it would take many pages to articulate. Whenever I found myself fussing over something I didn't like, or a teacher I perceived as imperfect, I returned to an inner prompt that said, “If I am committed to my own process, this container and these teachers are good enough, wise enough, loving enough for me to do what I need to do.” And so it was.

From a longer perspective at this point, I see the Pathwork in its process form as an interpretive dance—different teachers and regions teach it and work with it differently. And like everything that lives and breathes, it evolves and changes over time. So, too, our individual needs change and evolve. When we tune in

to our internal guidance system, even when it has some static, we will find what our next true step is and we will find those to meet us there. Coming here was my right next step. When a

friend asked me to describe in a nutshell my experience of PTP during the first year, I told her I had been *met*. There was no higher praise

I could offer—what more could I ask for than to be met where I was?

Now I am able to meet myself most of the time. But I needed all the hands and hearts my Pathwork community offered to get here, to see me when I could not see myself. To each of you who were my PTP teachers (Alegría, Wendy, Brian, Julia, Janeil, Keith), thank you from my heart for what you gave to me and held me through. Thank you for meeting me where I was and teaching me how to meet myself. Thank you, Kathryn, my Helper, who was an integral part of the process. And thank you to my group who traveled with me.

I could not have done it alone.

With love,  
Isdra



“What more  
could  
I ask for  
than  
to be met  
where  
I was.”

# Cherishing a Path and a Place

By Darlene Rollins

I have been a member of the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork (MAP) since 1985 when I started the Transformation Program. Over these 24 years, I have not always been able to support MAP and Sevenoaks as much as I would like, but here are the reasons why I send what I can.

The fact that I have received in my own life more than I can ever give back is just for starters. When I entered the program, I had been in therapy for 15 years, and I was suffering and all tied up in knots inside. I was also looking for a connection to God. Now, I feel that I am actually in the Garden of Eden, walking and talking with God. What the Guide has promised has been manifested in my experience. I have the tools and the consciousness I need to make my life worthy of the ever-transforming and transformative gift that life is.

The programs and the trainings this organization offers are among the best in the world, and I know of no other that could take me as deep. These teachings have become the foundation of my life. They continue to unfold within me and give me the ongoing tools I need to love and serve as fully as possible.

I support MAP because I deeply want this work to continue and be available to people. I see the potential to help us all flower into our greatest selves and to temper and hone new leadership and true citizenship in the world. That is why I have dedicated myself to this path and to sharing it with others. I know how far it has taken me and see so much need for this in the world.



Daffodil blooming along Sevenoaks' path, courtesy of Jim Adams

Another vital reason I give to MAP through my membership and donations is an incredible place called Sevenoaks. For 25 years I have come to Sevenoaks and walked the land, beat the pillows, and prayed in a circle with my brothers and sisters. For me, to have a path and a place is true perfection! To have a spiritual home such as this is a blessing beyond measure.

MAP and Sevenoaks are in a time of transition, but the winds of inspiration and the sparks of creativity seem to be generating a whole new set of possibilities and openings. I find it an exciting time to be a member, and we are hoping more of our members will join us in leadership opportunities.

New committees are forming for alumni, outreach, programs, membership, and fundraising, and those who don't want to serve on a committee can contribute through their ideas or suggestions. We welcome all your contributions.

As we begin our membership campaign, and in the spirit of all the gifts we have been given through MAP and Sevenoaks, I ask that you give as generously as possible, not just for us as members but for the larger world and the souls who are yet to come, so that the Path and the Place will be here for them to cherish.

Thank you.

[Finding Common Ground from page 1](#)

the Pathwork history and relationships that have matured here, while opening more fully to our common ground with humanity in this time of change. We believe that if Pathwork is to grow and flourish, it will happen here. We hope to deepen relationships with those we have known for years and to connect with those we have not yet met.

Based on our intention to meet a variety of needs, the Center's spring and summer offerings include new workshops in healing, shamanism, awakening, and revitalized Pathwork programs. We are developing a new area of programming in "transformational leadership," which will welcome business leaders to strengthen their inner lives and learn new ways of being with the task of leading others. This program will bring much-needed income to the Center during mid week. We will be launching a Year One Pathwork Transformation Program class this fall, a new Pathwork Helper Training class this winter, and a new Advanced Pathwork Studies Teacher Training class in 2010.

A vibrant committee of friends has already started to plan Members' Weekend on July 10-12. During the course of the weekend, we will offer additional events, including a couple's workshop and breathwork. This year's theme is aptly named "Embracing Change, Celebrating Renewal."

Please contact Beth Hedquist at [bethh1902@comcast.net](mailto:bethh1902@comcast.net) if you would like to help. I hope you will join us in embracing change.



# 4x4 Class of 2010 Discovers Higher Self Aspects

Our fourth year of the Pathwork Transformation Program ended the weekend of April 2-6. The focus of this year was transforming lower self aspects and our negative intentionality. A challenging year! But in this final session, we focused on our Godself that holds us while we work with finding, accepting, and transforming our lower self aspects.



Members of the 4x4 class of 2010 are (front, l. to r.) Mary Patterson, Barbara Fotta, Ruth Adams, Helper Julia Jensen, Amy Marx, Kimberly Middleton, (back row) Helper Apprentice Gary Vollbracht, Bill Ryan, and Kevin Jandreau.

It was a celebration of coming to see higher self aspects shine through each member of our class.

When we compiled a list of positive attributes and ranked them in order of those qualities most often evident in the entire class taken as a whole, a profile of the higher self aspects of our class emerged. Five qualities tied for tenth place, and here they are:

- #10 – Strong, spiritual, sensitive, persevering, creative
- #9 – Playful
- #8 – Humorous
- #7 – Courageous
- #6 – Gentle
- #5 – Honest
- #4 – Compassionate
- #3 – Willing
- #2 – Caring
- #1 – LOVING

We celebrate and offer ourselves as the Divine Rays we are to our Pathwork community, to our friends, colleagues, and families, and to the planet.

With love,  
The class of 2010

## Guild Formed to Develop MAP Guidelines, Standards

Recently the Mid-Atlantic Pathwork (MAP) formed the Pathwork Guild, an association of Pathwork Helpers and Helper Trainees with responsibility for setting standards for professional conduct and managing credentialing of Helpers. As MAP has continued to grow and expand, and with emergence of some difficult ethical issues, the MAP Helpers realized improvements were needed in terms of clarifying ethics requirements and monitoring compliance.

“The Mid-Atlantic Pathwork has always had a loosely organized structure, depending on a rather small tightly knit group of Helpers to deal with ethical and other professional issues,” said Carol Hunt, a senior Helper and presiding steward of the Guild. “I and some other Helpers decided a couple of years ago that it was time we had our own independent professional

association to set and enforce guidelines.”

The Guild currently has five duly elected stewards who are professional, credentialed Helpers or Apprentice Helpers under the auspices of MAP. They are responsible for developing commonly agreed upon ethical guidelines for Helpers and anyone professionally practicing Pathwork, including teachers and trainees, in the Mid-Atlantic region. Forming the Guild to develop procedures for educating, monitoring, and enforcing these standards within the Helper community relieves the Council of these duties and frees it up to focus on running programs, trainings, classes, and other school-related functions.

“Our hope is this is an indication that Helpers in the region take ethics and credentialing seriously,” Tom

Hubbard said. “Our intent is to provide a safe, therapeutic container, to show that we value orderliness and the conduct of our work, and to acknowledge that we have a balanced sense of the healthy role of authority and surrender to it, while at the same time trying to avoid excessive authoritative structure.”

Ethical standards/guidelines may be obtained by contacting any member of the Guild or by writing to MAPGuild@gmail.com. Current stewards are Carol Hunt, presiding steward; Tom Hubbard, recording steward (secretary); Ruth Glick; Brian Stokes; and Isdra Lake.

“We hope to be a strengthening and supportive body to further the Pathwork in our community and throughout the world as a respected, trustworthy, and compassionate spiritual/psychological process,” Carol said.

# Emissaries of the Abundant Life

By Gary Vollbracht

Recently in meditation I experienced a deeper and more powerful understanding of the word *abundance*—what it means to be fully alive, to live a life of abundance

My intention that morning was to recapture a unique taste of freedom I had experienced the previous day after a lively engagement with my brother Paul. Paul and I have been raised strongly Lutheran, but I left Lutheranism nearly 10 years ago, while Paul stuck with the church, serving it as passionately as I have come to engage Pathwork. Although our conversations are always deep and earnest, this time when it ended, I sensed something different. This engagement had not been about expressing who is right or wrong but rather honestly expressing what is alive in each of us. I was free to be Gary, free from Lutheranism and free from any residual allegiance I had developed toward Pathwork. And Paul was free to be Paul. The freedom that resulted from our conversation had surprised me. Later Paul described his experience during our conversation as “fun.” Fun with what is most alive in us. I found myself wondering: can this level of vulnerability and intimacy be sustained?

So I brought that intention to my morning meditation, longing to return to that space of freedom. Freedom to explore, to expand. Freedom from judgments of others and myself. As I sat there, fear came up immediately, but I blurted out a “no” to fear. Issues came up that had given rise to my fear, my imperfections up against my perfectionism. Again I sent a strong message from my being to accept the imperfections and grow onward. Give up my case of unworthiness. Celebrate the abundant life in each of us, abundant in each moment, abundant irrespective of external circumstances.

My meditation turned to the notion of Christ in us. Drawing from my old Lutheran roots, the words quietly arose from deep within me: “I have come that

they might have life and have it abundantly.” (I later found that scripture verse in John 10:10.) Suddenly clarity about the purpose of Jesus Christ’s life was there in front of me. His purpose stood in juxtaposition to what I had been taught from birth that Jesus Christ came to suffer and die, to bear the punishment of my sins. I could freely announce my “no” to this rigid dogma of my Christian roots and embrace a new purpose for the life of Jesus Christ: so that we can have an abundant life! Here. Now. Eternally. And the “no” was not harsh but a gentle letting go of something that had served me well 30 years ago but was not alive in me now.

Drawing on unknown Pathwork lectures, I recalled that the abundant life manifests from within each of us. Not abundance in the crass sense of the word, but abundant life, as in bliss supreme, a fulfilling life. The emphasis is on *life*. Yet I was aware of my own inner battle, thoughts, and images pulling me away from the abundant life that is my birthright. Abundant living is rich in feelings, spontaneous, and free. I could feel my “yes” to this up against my “no.”

As more unfolded, I could see that *our purpose in life* is so that the world can have life and have it abundantly. We are to be *emissaries of the abundant life* that Jesus spoke of. This is what Christ, or Christ consciousness, living in me manifests. I am this Christ living in me! And this Christ in me today, as recorded 2000 years ago, is so that the world can have life and have it abundantly. This comes organically from my being as I have life and have it abundantly. It cannot be otherwise.

Finally, the prayer of Saint Francis came to mind, but in an expanded version. Lord, make me an instrument



Jenny Zia and Gary Vollbracht

of peace, of abundant and full living, of love, of truth, of joy, of wisdom, of beauty. How can we be such instruments? By dismantling our mask selves, purifying our lower selves, and being fully present in our real selves. From such a place we become emissaries of the abundant life!

The meditation time was coming to an end. A voice arose: “Gary, don’t rush off quite yet. Bask in these feelings. It is why you are here!”

*Note: Related Sevenoaks Workshop June 5-7: Some of us who were raised Christians but who subsequently left the church come to Pathwork in a state of rebellion, confusion, or simply questioning our Christian roots. Jenny Zia and Gary Vollbracht will offer an experiential workshop “Recovering (from) Our Christian Roots,” where participants will have a safe container in which to explore this rebellion, confusion, or questioning, drop and heal what doesn’t fit from our Christian upbringing, and reclaim aspects that could hold meaning for and enrich our spiritual lives today, thereby making peace with and integrating our Christian roots. The workshop will not be about discussing theory or arguing, but about dropping deep into our individual wells of life and honoring and sharing what we find. Call the Sevenoaks main office at 540-948-6544 to register.*



Cultivating a Center from page 1

Our website is in constant process, and Sevenoaks will soon be Tweeting about being on Facebook.

The staff is excited, as everyone is conjuring up fresh approaches to their jobs, learning new skills, and generating ideas to help us grow. Each week we do “teambuilding” by pitching in a couple of hours to do small jobs of low cost but high impact for the customers such as painting, adding signage, and working on grounds projects. The staff is rearranging and painting offices in Center Building, and soon Karen Millnick will move her office here. We are designing low-cost outdoor teambuilding props (a low ropes course) that the leadership development programs and our own Transformation Program and rental groups can use. With some volunteer labor (hint, hint), we will create an organic garden in the area below CB this spring and build it out in the next year. It will provide much better food, plus a high coolness factor, and will offer work/learning opportunities for groups (better co-op than doing the dishes). Our organic

garden could become central to a program or part of a wellness program. PTP5 is considering a gift of a new sign at our roadway entrance to create better first impressions for all the expected new visitors to Sevenoaks.

The Board, the Joint Management Team, the Pathwork Council, and the various committees are clarifying roles as we seek to strengthen fiscal responsibility in planning and decision making. We have new Excel tools to manage the calendar and occupancy rates, price events and communicate details. Revamped bookkeeping gives quick access to profit/loss statements on anything from a single program to a line of business to the entire center. The FY10 budget shifts emphasis from expense tracking to revenue generation and gives financial responsibility for specific activities, including Pathwork programs, to those leading them. Strong leadership, programs, staff, and the infrastructure changes to support them will nourish us and naturally grow us toward our own transformation and sustainability.

## Interested in Helping?

- Identify a program leader or leadership/change consultant who can create a following here.
- Write a grant proposal.
- Work in the garden.
- Tweet or Friend us on Facebook.
- Help us build outdoor learning props.
- Renew your membership at a higher level than last year.
- Help fund one of these initiatives designed to cultivate the garden of Sevenoaks into the center of transformation that it can be.

Contact  
billm@sevenoakspathwork.org

Michelle Basile Nurtures from page 5

came up to me after we competed and said, ‘I’ve been doing this for 16 years, and this is the first time I have ever cried listening to an orchestra. You and the students looked at each other with such love. It was deeply moving,’” Michelle said. “We were the most diverse orchestra there, and the only group that didn’t have special attire. The kids really learned that it was what was inside of them that won the awards, not how they looked. This was a *huge* lesson for kids this age, especially the at-risk kids: finding and trusting their inner value.”

Michelle attributes her ability to her “experience of going through all that personal process work in PTP and facing myself year after year and learning to love whatever is there. And then getting more

confident and grounded in Helper Training, turning my eyes outward with compassion to see other people’s process and struggles and hold them with lots of patience. I had a lot of patience issues to work out—people in my HT

group would say that was my thing—so this really prepared me to work with teenagers, where you need patience.”

During PTP Michelle became attracted to a proposed emissary program of bringing Pathwork into the world but the program didn’t materialize. “I envisioned myself helping, but I didn’t know how,” Michelle said.

Uncertain of where Helper apprenticeship will lead, Michelle simply sees herself as a link in the chain. “The teachers in PTP have been solid for me, and, as a result, I’ve learned how to be present and fallible and honest and always growing. That’s what I feel like I’m doing with these kids.”

It turns out she is bringing Pathwork into the world after all.



Michelle conducts her high school orchestra

# Regional Events Calendar



## Fredericksburg Area

### **World Labyrinth Day—A Free, Global Celebration of the Labyrinth, May 2, 12 p.m.**

Come participate in this ancient spiritual practice. Walk the Earthwalk Center's 11-circuit classical labyrinth or the Natural Communion labyrinth of Enchanting Run (for contact info, see next listing).

### **Memorial Weekend Open House Retreat to Celebrate Life! May 23–25 at the Earthwalk Center**

Join us for an immersion into “now” through the portals of nature, stillness, being; experience the Queen of the Forest. Free event, includes an optional Rappahannock River float on Monday, weather permitting! For more information on either of these Earthwalk Center events, contact Darlene Rollins at 540-752-5540 or email: [heaven@earthwalkways.com](mailto:heaven@earthwalkways.com).

### **Ongoing Free Pathwork Conference Call Lecture Series**

A total of 20 people participated in a pilot program studying and discussing four early, less known Pathwork Guide lectures. We enjoyed both reading the lectures and getting together for lively and useful sharing. Build community and spiritual practice. Contact Darlene Rollins for upcoming schedules, lectures, and presenters at 540-752-5540 or email: [heaven@earthwalkways.com](mailto:heaven@earthwalkways.com).

## Richmond

### **A Spiritual Awakening: A Pathwork Approach to Recovery Saturday, May 2 – Sunday, May 3.**

Led by Pathwork Helper Julia Jensen, assisted by Stanley King, Apprentice Helper. For more information, contact Julia Jensen, 804-781-0660, or email: [canscream@yahoo.com](mailto:canscream@yahoo.com). After April 17, cost is \$225.

### **Deepening Awareness**

A new lecture study/process group is forming, Monday evenings, 7:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., June 1 to August 3. \$25 per session. For more information, contact Julia Jensen, 804-781-0660, or email: [canscream@yahoo.com](mailto:canscream@yahoo.com).



## Events and Retreats at Sevenoaks

see page 12

## Washington, DC, Metro Area

### **Rockville, MD, Process Group**

Open to new members, the group continues its focus on *Creating Union: How to Discover and Overcome the Obstacles to a Fulfilling Relationship* and the basic principles of Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

For more information, contact John Bayerl, 301-520-2764 (cell), or email: [jbayerl@comcast.com](mailto:jbayerl@comcast.com).

### **Eckhart Tolle's A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose Fairfax, Virginia, third Tuesday of every month**

We are immersing ourselves in Tolle's accessible and yet profound approach to awakening, discovering the freedom and joy of a life lived in the “now.” In this class, we will not only learn from Tolle, but also live and embody the learning as much as possible in the class itself. Next class meets May 19, at 7:30 p.m., in the Program Building of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, in Oakton. Contact Zimri Putney at 703-517-7372, or email: [zim@nextgencapital.com](mailto:zim@nextgencapital.com).

### **Beyond ME: Opening to the Healing Presence of Being with Donovan and Susan Thesenga A One-Day Workshop: Saturday, May 30, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm Crossings Center**

8505 Fenton St. Suite 202, Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Experience *Natural Awareness*, a wonderful method for feeling the *Presence of Being*, and experience a new method of emotional process work, called **Questioning Beliefs**. \$75. To register, send check payable to Donovan Thesenga, 299 Pathwork Way, Madison, VA 22727 or email: [soulwork@wildblue.net](mailto:soulwork@wildblue.net)



# Events & Retreats at Sevenoaks

Register online at  
[www.sevenoakspathwork.org//programs/workshops.php](http://www.sevenoakspathwork.org//programs/workshops.php)

**Climbing Deeper into Love: Finding Your Way to Deeper Connection in Relationships with Tom and Wendy Hubbard**

Memorial Day Weekend, May 22–25, Friday 8 p.m. to Monday 2 p.m. \$495

Find a practical roadmap for what holds you back in your relationship and what keeps you from breaking through negative patterns....to climb deeper into love.

**Pursuit of Happiness: Embracing What Is with John Bayerl and Ruth Glick**

Memorial Day Weekend, May 22–25, Friday 8 p.m. to Monday 2 p.m. \$495

Open to sustained joy and satisfaction in your life by embracing all of your life experience.

**Harnessing the Warrior Spirit: A Workshop for Men with Keith Covington and Kent Peterson**

May 29–31, Friday 8 p.m. to Sunday 2 p.m. \$395

A mature and compassionate warrior spirit can help unite men effectively to build a better world of satisfying relationships, close alliances, and sustainable prosperity. In this workshop, we will tell our stories, speak our truths, and share our feelings while supporting each other in growth.

**Falling in Love...With Yourself: A Workshop for Women with Kathryn Fleisher and Cindy Haney**

May 29–31, Friday 8 p.m. to Sunday 2 p.m. \$395

As women, we go through life enmeshed in personal and cultural pain; questioning whether we are good enough, attractive enough, pleasing enough, generous enough, successful enough... the list goes on. In this workshop, we will cocreate a sacred, strong community of women to hold and nourish us in our journey to greater wholeness.

**Recovering (from) Our Christian Roots with Gary Vollbracht and Jenny Zia**

June 5–7, Friday 9 p.m. to Sunday 2 p.m. \$495

Discover and share how our religious history and experiences fit our soul's journey, its courage, and its longing to unite with God within.

**Discovering Stillness, Deepening Inquiry, and Awakening to the Mystery of Being: A Three-Day Silent Residential Retreat with Mukti**

June 11–14, Thursday 8 p.m. to Sunday 2 p.m. \$495

Mukti, whose name means liberation, teaches in the lineage of her husband Adyashanti. Mukti will lead this retreat in deep silence, except for the time together in satsang. Both satsang and meditation are suited to penetrating heartfelt questions and, along with shared intention, create a synergistic combination for Self remembrance.

Next Deadline: June 25, 2009  
Send your articles, photos, and  
calendar events to:  
[newsletter@sevenoakspathwork.org](mailto:newsletter@sevenoakspathwork.org)

To contact a Pathwork Helper,  
call  
Sevenoaks Pathwork Center  
540-948-6544

Pathwork Lectures are available at:  
[www.pathwork.org](http://www.pathwork.org)  
Pathwork books are available online  
[www.sevenoakspathwork.org](http://www.sevenoakspathwork.org)