

Voluntown Peace Trust

News from "The Farm"

Volume 1, Number 2

November 2005



Greetings from the New Community Partners!

In January, we (Harold Burns, Danny Malec and Mary Novak) began conversations with the Board about the possibility of becoming the new Voluntown Peace Trust (VPT) onsite community partners. After discerning together with the Board, we came to the property in early May. Kevin Jones joined us for one month and provided much needed counsel on land use and maintenance issues.

The months since have been filled with: planting and tending to an experimental or-

ganic garden; meeting and learning from our neighbors; significant facilities cleaning and maintenance; coming together with the Board to begin exploring a vision for VPT; and all the nitty gritty details of setting up a new organization. In June, VPT obtained its tax exempt status as a 501(c)(3).

We have also welcomed over 500 new and old friends to "The Farm," including: local women journeying through the *JustFaith* program; young folks for summer camp brought by the *Hartford Catholic Worker*, *Sacred Heart Parish* (a Puerto Rican Catholic Church in the north end of Hartford) and *Hartbeat Ensemble* (an activist-based political theatre group); young folks for the 6th Annual



Youth Peace Experiment sponsored by the *War Resister's League*, *Youth Peace Club at Norwich Free Academy* and *F.R.E.S.H. New London*; members of *Atlantic Life Community* for its bi-annual retreat; young folks for a training weekend coordinated by *American Friends Service Committee* and the *War Resister's League*; and *Maryknoll Sisters* who are international peacebuilders. *Alliance for Living* also worked with us to create a healing weekend for low-income folks living with HIV/AIDS. In these

months, we have been sustained by the individual peacebuilders working in Burma, East Timor, Nicaragua, Palestine, Atlanta, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Taos who have come to be with us in the Farmhouse to rest, retreat and lend a hand.

Connecting with the local, regional, national and international peace & justice groups has grounded all of our efforts here and we have begun to work with them in various capacities, including: organizational support work, planning and facilitating meetings and retreats, organizing speaker tours and providing nonviolence workshops. Soon we will begin planning next year's programs and we welcome your input and suggestions.

Board of Directors

Teri Allen, Chair
Jackie Allen-Doucot
Robert Brown
Morliana Evans
Jim Hubert, Treasurer
Liz McAlister
Judie McKenna, Secretary
Liz Woods

Partners

Harold Burns
Danny Malec
Mary Novak

Books We're Reading



Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement



by Barbara Ransby

"In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed...[This] means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you can change that system."
Ella Baker, 1969

History of "The Farm"

When we are out and about, almost everyone—local community folks, those who have lived here in the past, members of peace and justice organizations, etc.—asks if we live at "The Peace Farm" (or, "The Farm"). From documents found on the property and through many conversations, we are learning this property's rich history and its long tradition as "The Peace Farm." We hope to share a little bit of that history each time we write to you.

From the Voluntown Historical Society, we understand that the property was owned in 1750 by Dr. John Campbell, the first physician in town; the property stayed in his family for over 100 years. According to one historical-society newsletter, "there is a room behind the chimney in the cellar which several sources report was used as a hiding place for the slaves who came through the underground escape route during the Civil War."



Putting the Vision into Action

This Summer, we began a collaborative visioning process with members of the Board. This process has been informed and inspired by models such as the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee and Occidental Arts & Ecology Center in California. Through this process, we are working to understand and articulate how this place, consistent with its rich history, can best contribute to transforming today's violent global reality.

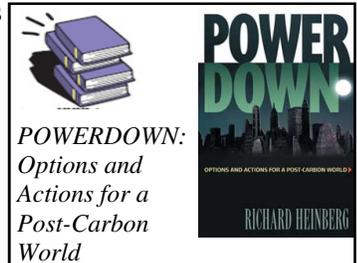
In the midst of this process, we are also beginning to do the work here. The following elements reflect where we have come together in our visioning process and the work we have begun here. We look forward to your input as this vision continues to develop and take shape.

At VPT, we are:

- Supporting movements for justice, sustainability, social change and peace;
- Creating space for people to come together, explore the causes and effects of structures and systems of violence, learn from one another, and work toward just structures, systems, and relationships;
- Providing space for healing, spiritual development and transformation, recognizing that the work for peace begins within the individual;
- Valuing the contributions of people from a wide variety of backgrounds, faith traditions and walks of life;
- Recognizing the spiritual connection between human beings, human communities and the natural environment;
- Prioritizing the needs of marginalized and oppressed communities and natural systems in order to better understand how to move toward integrated, just and sustainable relationships;
- Providing space for critical analysis, dialogue and creative processes where experiences are valued and the world is the classroom; and

- Exploring a life and work practice rooted in the principles and values of nonviolence and committed to non-violent living, organizing and action.

As we continue the journey, we feel the need to recognize the many wonderful people who have supported and given us encouragement along the way. We were initially invited to consider this project by Liz McAlister, who readily shares her gift of wise counsel and accompaniment with so many. Thank you Liz for encouraging us to say "yes." We are also deeply grateful to Jackie and Chris Allen-Doucot who took this project from the dreaming stage to reality in the midst of their already full lives at the Hartford Catholic Worker; your commitment is simply stunning. Our heartfelt thanks to the Board of Directors for all of their hard work prior to our arrival, plus their support and constant encouragement since. To Teresa Hougnon for masterfully facilitating VPT through the early phases of our visioning process, we are eternally grateful. And to Barbara McGrath and the folks at the Connecticut Urban Legal Initiative/University of Connecticut School of Law for their expert legal and organizational support, we would be lost without you. The graced guidance and friendship of Joanne Sheehan, Rick Gaumer and the folks at the St. Francis House Community moves us more deeply into our work here and keeps us sane; for this we are so thankful. Finally, chances are we would not still be here in Voluntown were it not for the local support and hospitality we have received. Our deep appreciation goes to the Voluntown community, and in particular, the MacBrides, Gil Grimm, and Peg Price; you have inspired and taught us so much.



by Richard Heinberg

"[T]he purpose of this book is not to provide yet another cheerful manual on how to save the (human) world (as we know it). But neither is it my goal to helplessly bemoan our inevitable collective fate. Rather, it is to explore realistically our options for the next century. When I say 'realistically,' I mean that I take as my starting point the belief—arrived at reluctantly after years of reflection and study—that we have already advanced so far in certain directions as to have foreclosed possibilities that we would all prefer were available."

Popular Education Corner

Three years ago, when the first "Peak Oil" conference was organized in Uppsala Sweden by The Association for the Study of Peak Oil, very few knew what our oil-dependent world was facing. Today, if you conduct an internet search of the phrase "Peak Oil" you will see over 2 million hits. Check out these credible websites and engage five people in dialogue about "Peak Oil:." www.peakoil.net and www.energybulletin.net/news.php. In future publications, we will explore emerging responses to Peak Oil.

The Birgitta Grimm Scholarship for the Arts

This is a newly created scholarship fund for artists from marginalized and oppressed communities to spend time at the Voluntown Peace Trust either as part of a program or on retreat. Birgitta Grimm was a Swedish born artist & poet who died of cancer in March 2005 in Voluntown. Birgitta moved to New England at 18 and was the late wife of our dear neighbor Gil Grimm. She was also the mother of three children including our friend Cecilia Grimm, a visual and trapeze artist now living in New York City. If you would like to donate to this scholarship, see page 3.



Community Partner Bios

**Stephen Kobasa,
¡Adelante Hermano!**

Stephen Kobasa supported, guided and animated VPT from its inception, and generously served as Co-Chair on the first Board. Stephen resigned from the Board October 1st after 2 years of service for which we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude. A longtime peace-maker and Catholic school-teacher for 25 years, Stephen was summarily fired October 13th from Kolbe Cathedral High School in Bridgeport, CT when he refused to fly the American Flag in his classroom as a matter of faith and conscience. "The Church can only function with its prophetic voice by standing outside the state," he said. Stephen's witness reminds us what it means to remain human in the face of structures of violence. ¡Adelante Stephen!

Harold Burns was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland and has been part of the peace & justice community since he was quite small. He attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon where he studied Contemporary Dance and Religion. Since graduating from Reed, Harold has worked for Planned Parenthood, been an election observer in El Salvador, and worked for Migrant Head Start. Most recently Harold worked with Newborn Holistic Ministries in Baltimore.

Danny Malec is from Atlanta, Georgia where he trained as an Industrial Engineer and worked as a strategic management consultant for over two years. After leaving the business world, Danny served for three years with Jesuit Volunteers International in Managua, Nicaragua. There, he worked at Project Generating Life and helped start an outreach program for drug addicted youth. After leaving Nicaragua, Danny continued working with Latino youth in Atlanta, Georgia and during that time became active with the Open Door Community, participating in the community's various works of mercy and resistance to war and empire. Danny recently completed a masters program in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) where he focused on restorative justice and youth violence prevention.

Mary Novak practiced law in California for over 15 years in the areas of environmental, water, energy, land use, death penalty, employment and workplace injury law. As a Supervising Attorney for the East San Jose Community Law Center, Mary was Clinical Faculty at Santa Clara University (SCU) Law School. Most recently, Mary was Program Director for Faculty Development at SCU, working with faculty on community-based learning and Jesuit education pedagogy. Mary is a trained spiritual director, having done graduate study in theology and ministry, and is an experienced facilitator and mediator for groups working for social change. Mary lived and worked at Jonah House in Baltimore, Maryland during much of 2004.



*Lost Prophet:
The Life and
Times of
Bayard Rustin* by John D'Emilio

"From his direct encounters with Southern racists and rabid anti-communists, Rustin saw that 'if I struck them they would have been on familiar ground and able to defend themselves and to strike me back.' For Rustin, the belief in nonviolence blended moral imperative with a long view of how permanent change would come." (excerpt)

Wish List

- Dehumidifiers (2)
- Speaker Phone
- Bunk Beds
- Futon Couch
- Storage Shed
- Toro Timecutter ZX Rider Mower
- Water and Energy Efficient Washer and Dryer
- Combination DVD/VCR
- HP Laserjet Printer
- Macintosh Computer

Founding Donors Needed

We owe our gratitude to the committed and generous people who came together last year to raise the down-payment for the purchase of this property. Generous founding donors have also made yearly financial commitments so that VPT can service the mortgage debt. With twelve more founding donors, the mortgage will be covered, allowing VPT's resources to be devoted to programming, operations, and facilities repair and maintenance. Please consider becoming a founding donor.

Voluntown Peace Trust Donation and General Information

The work of VPT is possible because of your generous support. Please make checks payable to *Voluntown Peace Trust* and send to 539 Beach Pond Road, Voluntown, CT, 06384. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you!

_____ I would like to support the work of the Voluntown Peace Trust. A check is enclosed for the amount:
(Please circle) \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1,000 \$5,000 \$_____ (Other)

_____ I would like to donate to the Birgitta Grimm Scholarship for the Arts. My check is enclosed.

_____ I would like information about becoming a VPT Founding Donor.

_____ I would like information about Voluntown Peace Trust programs and/or partnering opportunities.

_____ I would like information about VPT internship opportunities.

Contact Information: _____



Voluntown Peace Trust

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Email: voluntownpeacetrust@gmail.com

Our website is currently under construction.
Upcoming VPT event and program information
will be announced on the website soon. Thanks
for your patience!

**Please contact us if you would like to tour the
property, are interested in rental opportuni-
ties, or would like to volunteer.**

*The Voluntown Peace Trust is a non-profit center
for social change and sustainable living. For
nearly 50 years, the 57-acre property in
Voluntown, Connecticut has been a place for
equity-based community economics and nonviolent
living, organizing and action. Grounded in this
history, VPT brings together individuals and
groups that are developing constructive
alternatives to the violence of our age.*



For over a decade, Hartford Catholic Worker's Summer Camp has been held here in Voluntown; VPT was pleased to welcome them again this year. In July and August, over 60 young folks from North Hartford spent time fishing, swimming and exploring community together.