

# Voluntown Peace Trust

News from "The Farm"

Volume 2, Number 2

June 2006



## Trauma Healing: Recognizing Each Journey as Its Own

*Anja Schaedler participated in the Arts for Trauma Awareness and Resiliency Workshop at VPT in April of this year, which was facilitated by Odelya Gertyl and Jeff From of the Institute for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. Here, Anja reflects on her experiences in the workshop as they relate to her life and work.*

I have been a healthcare provider for over 16 years, working in a number of healthcare facilities throughout Connecticut. My recent experience has included hospice care, ranging from accompanying cancer patients to HIV/AIDS patients. Just recently, I began a career as an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi- and Transsexual/Transgender) Adult Advocate for Sexual Assault Crisis Services in Connecticut. In this position, I work with a variety of communities throughout the state, providing support, counseling, and resources to individuals affected by same-sex sexual abuse or violence.

When the Voluntown Peace Trust invited me to attend the Arts and Trauma Resiliency Workshop, I accepted without hesitation. Given my extensive hospice and healthcare work, I believed that I would be able to engage professionally and knowledgeably with the many issues regarding trauma that such a workshop would explore.

I found the activities, topics, and discussions during the workshop to be right on target. However, when it was time for us to actively and physically engage in a trauma-related exercise I sensed something brewing deep inside me. Somehow, my professional approach to this workshop began to morph into something deeply personal and my thoughts, views and emotions at that point began to change. I began to realize that my own trau-

matic life experiences were beginning to come into play. No longer was this an intellectual exercise in honoring and applying my professional skills in trauma.

Instead, it quickly transformed into an emotional journey through my personal experiences of trauma. What caused this to take effect was the fact that rather being a professional learning experience from a book or a lecture, it became a personally engaging confrontation of crisis, trauma, and self; some of which will be with me for all my life.

This transformation during the workshop from my professional to my personal journey truly enhanced the value of the workshop. What I found I have come away with is a deeper knowledge of and respect for my professional role in accompanying another person through trauma and crisis. I was reminded that though the professional process to deal with a person's trauma follows clearly defined support processes, we as care providers must also remember that trauma, and its path to healing, is extremely difficult.

Each person's path to healing is unique and at times, the person may not want or be able to make the vital life choices to heal. Dealing with trauma, either personally or professionally, is much more than a text book exercise in healing.

As humans, in order to feel secure, we need to be confident and comfortable that we are in control of our surroundings and situations. Yet when crisis occurs, this security is challenged, destroyed, or removed, leaving behind a trail of chaos and confusion. Many victims of violence going through stages of trauma

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*Anja Schaedler and Rick Gaumer create body sculptures of different stages in the trauma healing process during the Arts for Trauma Awareness and Resiliency Workshop*

## History of "The Farm"

In 1962, the property, historically known as the Campbell Farm, was purchased by Mary Meigs for \$12,500 from Homer and Helena Herbert. The family was unaware that Meig's intention was to turn the property over to Robert & Marjorie Swann. The Swanns were an activist couple that had been doing anti-militarism work as part of the New England Committee for Nonviolent Action (NECNVA).

The Swanns met Meigs through her then partner Barbara Deming in the summer of 1960. That summer Deming, as a journalist, had attended a sixteen day Peacemaker training session held at their apartment house in New London. Deming, then a reporter for the *Na-*

*tion* magazine, had become a pacifist after traveling with Meigs through India in 1959 and reading the writings of Mohandas Gandhi. She was further politicized after traveling earlier that year to Cuba where, after interviewing both ordinary citizens and Fidel Castro, came to see the extent to which the US government was demonizing both Cuba & Castro.

Deming, Meigs and the Swanns were friends for many years and the Swanns were frequent summer visitors to Meigs & Deming's home on Cape Cod in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. Although Meigs was primarily an artist and author, she and Deming were deeply involved in the development of NECNVA, both served on the Regional Committee and Deming on the Executive Committee.

## Board of Directors

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## Life on the Precipice: Reflections of Living in the Era of Peak Oil

*Matt Turcotte is approaching the end of a 5-month internship at VPT. We are sad to see him move on, but are grateful for the many ways that he has gifted us with his presence. Here, Matt reflects on his struggles with coming to terms with the reality of Peak Oil and the implications for his life.*

Like many people, every time the price of gasoline goes up, my anxiety level follows close behind it. As I drive past the gas station in town to discover that the price is up another three cents, my head races with thoughts that a year ago were just a tiny blip on my mental radar. Did riots break out on the Nigerian Delta? Were there more attacks on the oil infrastructure in Iraq? Another leak in the Alaskan pipeline? What is Iran up to these days? These are just some of the fears that occupy my mind now as the end of the cheap oil era fades further into the rear view mirror.

Of course, we all knew that this time had to come. Any third-grader can tell you that oil is a non-renewable resource. The mistake that many of us made was in assuming that we would only have a problem when the oil ran out. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Despite the fact that we are producing more oil than ever in the history of the world (84 million barrels per day), demand is outstripping supply. This is especially bad news because it looks as if demand is going to continue to rise, while the rate at which we can pump the stuff out of the ground is going to fall. It is pretty obvious what kind of predicament this leaves us in.

When I first learned about the issue of peak oil a year ago, I was skeptical. Actually, as Elizabeth Kubler Ross would put it, I was experiencing the first stage of grief associated with death: Denial. Because when you think about it, that is what peak oil represents for many of us. Not death in the traditional sense, but the death of many of our assumptions about the world around us and the death of many of the hopes and expectations about what our future will be like. Things as common as driving to the store to buy a loaf of bread for dinner are going to be radically different.

After the reality of this situation became so obvious to me that I could no longer reasonably deny it, the next two stages of grief set in simultaneously: Anger and Bargaining. I was angry that I had been sold a way of life that has no future. How could this have happened? I was angry at the corporate world for obscuring the truth, and for profiting from their lies. I was angry at the government for not taking serious steps to promote renewable energy, and instead choosing to pander to voters who were whining about "high" gas prices. I was angry with my parents' generation for their excessive consumption and gas-guzzling lifestyle.

Amidst this anger, I was trying to bargain with the universe for a way out of the nasty and seemingly never-ending implications that this situation was creating for me. Please just give me enough time to pay off all of my student loan debt before the economy crashes. Just let me have enough time to learn how to grow my own food and build my own house. Then I will get myself set up somewhere and I can bring my family and friends along. Please just give me a little bit more time to LIVE, before my life becomes about survival in a chaotic new world.

Finally, when I came to my senses and realized that all of my bargaining was not going to get me anywhere, that is when the depression set in. I quit my job. I sat around on my parent's couch and watched re-runs of the *Cosby Show*, which is on TV every single hour of the day. Nothing mattered anymore. What's the point in trying to "get ahead" when society is just going to collapse anyway? Why should I try to go out and "make the world a better place" when it was all going to become an unrecognizable nuthouse in a few years?

For about four months, I was a miserable human being to be around. Then one day, I read something in Matt Savinar's book [The Oil Age Is Over](#) that changed my thinking yet again and started me on the road beyond depression and towards acceptance. It was short and it was simple, but it made a lot of sense to me. "You need to take the issue of oil depletion just as personally and seriously as you would the diagnosis of a serious disease."

I realized that sitting around obsessing about the implications of peak oil was not helping me. I had to do something. In fact, I had to do *lots* of things. I went directly from park to overdrive, skipping all of the gears in between. I started reading everything I could about organic gardening, green building and any other topic that I thought would be useful in the future I was envisioning.

It was around this time that I first visited VPT. I was excited and encouraged to see that they were grappling with these same issues, so I decided to join their community. I was hoping that coming here would allow me to experiment with some of the things that I had been reading about, as well as to learn other skills that I hadn't even thought of yet. As it turns out, however, the universe had other plans. In the process of all my learning, I was becoming completely overwhelmed by the amount of things that I was trying to juggle at the same time. It became clear to me that there was something else I had to learn first before I got down to the nitty gritty skills building. That lesson came to me from VPT through the words of Oscar Romero: "We cannot do everything,

and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way..."

Being here at VPT has been a great first step along the path. This place has truly given me new energy to face the challenges that lie ahead. I leave here to be an apprentice with the Sirius Community in Massachusetts, with my head clear enough and my spirit calm enough to learn all of those skills that I want to learn. I have no idea when the descent from peak oil will begin, or how much of a roller coaster it will be, but now, at least, I am looking forward to the ride.

### Peak Oil Watch: Does Oil Need to Be So Expensive?

Did you know that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has offered the U.S. \$50-a-barrel oil? That is one third off of what we are paying right now. The U.S. has rejected that offer, even though the high oil prices are costing about a million U.S. jobs right now. Want to know why? According to BBC investigative reporter Greg Palast, Chavez would keep in Latin America the money made on the oil; not a bad idea for a President to take care of his people? However, this would be a disaster for the U.S. (which under this President Bush has taken on \$2 trillion in extra debt), because while the price of oil from the Gulf states is one third higher than from Venezuela, the Gulf states currently use those petrodollars to buy up \$2 trillion in U.S. Treasury bonds and debt; in other words, the U.S. effectively is paying an oil tax to pay for several wars, lowering taxes for the wealthy, etc. To learn more, you may want to read Palast's new book [Armed Madhouse: Who's Afraid of Osama Wolf? China Floats, Bush Sinks, The Scheme to Steal '08, No Child's Behind Left, and Other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War.](#)



### Letter from the VPT Board Chair

(Continued from page 1)

temporarily disconnect and shut down. While this is a natural response of the brain, it may make one appear or feel unstable, insane, or crazy. In reality the brain is protecting the rest of the body from the trauma.

In my work as a sexual assault crisis counselor, I feel I will be able to respond to victims' needs more effectively, while at the same time remind myself of the difficulties they may face. Trauma of any kind is dramatic, as well as real and true, and every encounter is unique and special. I have found being a counselor with the opportunity to help people through an immediate crisis to be one of the greatest gifts there is. The Voluntown Peace Trust has provided an outstanding opportunity through offering this wonderful, touching and very moving workshop. Something I would recommend to every community service provider. Thanks to you all!

Hello friends,

As we enter this beautiful summer season many thanks are in order to all who have supported us in innumerable ways. First, we have greatly appreciated the energy and wisdom of Matt Turcotte and are sorry to see him go. We also need to thank the many volunteers (especially Jim MacBride of Voluntown) who have helped us in so many ways.

In March, Teri Allen stepped down as Chair of the Board. We are extremely grateful for her support and commitment to VPT. From her help in organizing the founding donors that enabled us to purchase the property and through our first year as an official nonprofit, she has shared her gifts with incomparable generosity. Thanks for everything Teri and we look forward to your continued contributions!

This spring was a time of definitive growth for VPT as we coordinated our first workshops & programs from "Arts for Trauma Healing" to "Youth Theater for Social Change" and "A Theology of Sustainability" with Ched Myers. As we look forward, the community garden is in full swing, new trails have been cleared, and plans are in the works for a new cabin to be built this fall. This cabin will be donated by the Woods family and friends and dedicated to Herbierto Cassquarillo, a former Catholic Worker summer camper from the North End who was killed on the streets of Hartford this past spring.

We would also like to thank The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving for the \$4,500 grant for Camp Ahimsa. This summer The Hartford Catholic Worker, Hartbeat Ensemble and My School in East Hampton will all be holding summer camps for youth.

As we celebrate our successes, we also recognize that many challenges lay ahead. In particular, fundraising continues to challenge our creativity. We would much rather be able to focus our energies on the much needed programs. But you can help! If you would like to support our work please make a tax-deductible contribution. Consider renting the property for your next gathering. Let us know if you are interested in helping us cook for retreats and events. Most importantly, we hope that you will join us for our "Friends & Volunteers Appreciation Day" on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you,

Jackie Allen-Doucot, VPT Board Chair



**Democracy Matters**  
by Cornel West



"Democracy Matters is Cornel West's bold and hard-hitting critique of the troubling deterioration of democracy in America in this threatening post-9/11 age—and a powerful and inspiring call for the revitalization of the deep democratic tradition in this country, which has waged war on the forces of imperialist corruption throughout our history."

**Wish List**

- Dehumidifiers (2)
- Storage shed
- Folding tables and chairs
- Speaker Phone
- Bunk Beds
- Energy Efficient Washer and Dryer
- Combination DVD/VCR
- Digital Camera
- DreamWeaver Web Design Program



**Preventing Violence**  
by James Gilligan



"Structural violence is not only the main form of violence, in the sense that poverty kills far more people (almost all of them very poor) than all the behavioral violence put together, it is also the main cause of violent behavior. Ending structural violence means eliminating relative poverty."

### 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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Our website is *almost up!* Upcoming VPT event and program information will be announced on the website soon. Thanks for your patience!

### The Mission of VPT

*VPT creates and facilitates processes for healing and transforming relationships with ourselves, our communities and the natural world. We offer individuals and groups the opportunity to gather, reflect and share experiences; to learn from each other in creative ways. At VPT, the work of building a just world integrates: artistic and natural sustainable processes; spiritual exploration; self-care; skills exchange; collaborative research, analysis and strategy development; and ongoing collective organizing and action.*



*Photos (l-r): A) Fellow Board Members Jim Hubert and Morliana Evans catch up at the VPT Board Retreat in March. B) VPT's first Youth Theatre for Social Change workshop took place May 27-29 and was a fun, powerful and transformative experience for us all! A) Jim MacBride, Austin MacBride, Dennis DeWees, Matt Turcotte and others helped construct a new bridge during the VPT "Earth Day Work Day."*

