

# EarthMatters

Inspiring people to take responsibility for Earth.

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 3

Spring 2011

## A GOOD FOOD REVOLUTION

By Will Allen

Over the last few years, we have experienced one of the worst economic periods of our lifetimes. We have seen people lose their homes, deplete their savings, and struggle to afford basic necessities.

Who is to blame? It is easy to take shots at people, but I don't think that will help. I choose instead to think about how we are going to lift ourselves up. I think ahead to a new economy that is good for all the people. And I feel this process of renewal is going to begin with the most important thing in our lives: food.

It's something that we all share as human beings—black or white, young or old, rich or poor.

We all must eat to sustain ourselves. Our industrial food system has led us down the wrong road. It has brought us fewer jobs, unhealthier diets, and a centralized system that makes people feel powerless over their food choices. I think we all feel this. There are more food-related illnesses in this country and in the world than ever before.

We can't rely alone on governments or large corporations to fix our bad food system. We can't rely on others



to improve access to healthy food in communities of need. We all have a responsibility to work together.

As I travel this country, I am filled with hope. I have seen young, middle-aged and elderly people taking control of the food systems in their communities. I see people growing food on balconies, side yards, back yards, and community plots. I see new gardens and farms in urban, suburban and rural

communities. I see people raising fish and plants inside buildings, and people who have employed creative techniques to grow food year-round in even the harshest climates, as we do at Growing Power in Milwaukee.

We need everyone at what I like to call the Good Food Revolution table. We need corporations. We need medical folks. Universities. Politicos. Planners. Educators. Dieticians. We

*continued on page 3*



---

# MIKE'S MESSAGE

## A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Did you know that more than sixty percent of NWEI's impact occurs outside of the Northwest? Although we're named the Northwest Earth Institute, more than 5,000 people living outside the Pacific Northwest participate in NWEI programs each year, and the vast majority go on to take actions that benefit themselves and the planet. You may be asking how we reach communities across the United States and Canada. Do we have staff throughout the United States? No. (Well, we do have Deb working from Boulder, Colorado, but otherwise NWEI's staff are here in Portland.) Do we transplant our local volunteers into other parts of North America? Nope. Sometimes they transplant themselves, but generally folks start volunteering in their hometowns. So what is the "secret sauce" that makes NWEI's work come together in communities far from our Portland home base? It's folks just like you, who say "I want to have an impact beyond what I can accomplish through my personal actions alone."

What allows NWEI to inspire more than 9,000 people each year to take action for Earth is a group of people who simply step forward to lead. We rely on hundreds of citizens who are neither sustainability gurus, nor content experts, nor high-level leaders: they're regular people who recognize the opportunity to make a change. We're lucky

to be surrounded by this cadre of committed volunteers, supporters and advocates who agree that we all have the ability to take actions that positively impact the planet.

Each day, ordinary people from all over the continent step up to become leaders in their own communities— like Glen and Carolyn Jenkins in La Cross, Wisconsin, Barbara Duncan in Fairlee, Vermont, Beth Cruise in Victoria, British Columbia, Jim Dunn in Evergreen, Colorado and Leanna Murphy Dono in Durham, North Carolina. How about you? Are you ready to take the next step?

If the answer is "Yes!" or "Yes, but I'm not sure where to start", consider joining us for NWEI's 2011 North American Gathering in Port Townsend, Washington, on September 15-18. For returning attendees, our time together will be used to "recharge the batteries", reconnect with the larger NWEI community and continue the learning that leads to even more effective outcomes. For those joining us for the first time, I am confident that you will feel at home amongst kindred spirits and leave with the skills, resources and inspiration required to build upon the impact you are already having—or want to have—in your community.

As an added bonus, this year's Gathering takes place in an amazing location! Port Townsend sits along the Puget Sound and

lies within the rain shadow of the majestic Olympic Mountains. Consider making a vacation of your travels, by adding a couple days to your itinerary to explore the spectacular Wilderness Coast or other aspects of Olympic National Park. You can even rent a kayak and paddle right from Port Townsend. Few places in the world offer as much natural diversity as the Northern Olympic Peninsula.

The challenges facing humanity and the planet are immense, yet the opportunities for action thrill and infuse us with hope. Whether you're traveling from within the Pacific Northwest or across the globe, if you join us in Port Townsend this fall I can assure you that you'll leave ready to take action, lead in your own community and create the change that our planet and future generations are depending on us to create. I hope to see you in September!

Yours in health,



Mike Mercer

---

For more information about the North American Gathering, please see page 3. You can also find more information on our website, including links to registration, [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org).

# The 2011 NWEI North American Gathering September 15-18, 2011

**If Not Me, Then Who?  
Building Healthy  
Communities and Local  
Food Systems One  
Conversation at a Time**

Registration is now open for the 2011 NWEI North American Gathering. The Gathering will take place September 15-18, 2011 in Port Townsend, on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state.

The Gathering will take place at Fort Worden State Park and Conference Center, overlooking the Puget Sound.

We're very happy to announce that Kurt Hoelting, author of *Circumference of Home*, will be conducting a workshop on Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup> and that Will Allen, founder of Growing Power, will be our keynote speaker on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. Will Allen was named to TIME Magazine's 2010 list of 100 people who most affect our world. We are honored to have both of them as part of this year's gathering.

In addition to many workshops related to creating sustainable food systems, the conference will feature workshops on community building, strategies for using NWEI courses to move your local sustainability agenda, creating walkable communities, edible landscaping and faith community engagement. Daily yoga sessions and organized hikes, as well as community meals will give everyone an opportunity to relax, catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

The Gathering is open to anyone who is interested in deepening their commitment to creating sustainable communities. We welcome attendees who are new to the NWEI community,

and encourage our partners, volunteers, donors, and course participants to attend as well!

To download a complete agenda for the conference, please visit our website at <http://www.nwei.org/north-american-gathering>.

**Registration is open and space is limited, so register soon!**

To register, please visit our website: <http://www.nwei.org/north-american-gathering>.

When registering, please:

- Enter the promo code 19A5HX,
- Select Sept 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>
- Select the number of attendees (the system defaults to two people)
- Then, choose your accommodations. The NWEI Dorm Room or NWEI "ORow" Queen Packages are the best deals.

We welcome calls with questions, and you can reach us at (503)227-2807.

*"This much is clear to me. If I can't change my own life in response to the greatest challenge now facing our human family, who can? And if I won't make the effort to try, why should anyone else? So I've decided to start at home, and begin with myself. The question is no longer whether I must respond. The question is whether I can turn my response into an adventure."  
Kurt Hoelting, *Circumference of Home**

**NEW ECONOMY** continued from page 1

need architects to design our new small farms and community food centers, and we need planners to design sustainable communities to transform food deserts into healthy neighborhoods for all the people. We need people with expertise in the areas of public policy. We need technical experts. Contractors. Composters.

And most importantly, we need our wonderful farmers.

What encourages and inspires me in the progress of this good food movement is that more young people have embraced farming. More people of color have also been willing to enter agriculture once again. However, to truly change our food system, we must have 50 million new people growing food in their local communities. This will take time and patience is one of the keys, but we must commit to action now.

As the First Lady Michelle Obama says, "Let's make sure that everyone in our communities and in our nation has access to good food. Let's Move!" It can be done, and it must be done for our survival. This movement is about creating healthy people and a healthy world. It is about social justice. ■

---

Will Allen is a Farmer, and Founder and CEO of Growing Power, and will be a speaker at the 2011 NWEI North American Gathering. Growing Power is a national nonprofit organization and land trust supporting people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities.

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

---

The Northwest Earth Institute is a

Member of  
**EarthShare**  
Oregon

<http://www.earthshare-oregon.org>

# 9 Reasons to Live Deeply

"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world...as in being able to remake ourselves." – Mohandas Gandhi

*By Bill Gerlach*

The more you look around the more you see a movement underway. The status quo is being challenged from every angle.

People are feeling a subtle yet constant tug – like an eager toddler at your legs – that something is awry in their life and the life of the world. Many have put their hopes in material happiness. Yet now, those same people are seeking a new balance in their lives; abandoning the pursuit of 'more' that consumerism has pushed upon us and the resulting disconnect with the natural world it has fostered.

For me, deep living represents the convergence of three major pillars of our existence:

- LIFE // From the literal breathing, eating, moving kind to the qualitative how-we-spend-our-time kind, Life is the basis on which we all connect, experience and hopefully thrive.

- NATURE // This is the living world around us. The eco-sphere. The amazing manifestation of creation without which we would be unable to survive.

- BEING // The sentient-self. The essence of who we are, expressed both internally and externally. The ability to recognize such qualities in other life forms.

This is just my definition though. What I call "deep living" you may call something else. It's not about the label, rather how we each approach the call to get more out of this one and only life. Some aspects or elements may be more important to you than they are to me. That's OK. It's more about the end, not so much the differences between the means.

What IS critical though is how we approach this deep living as we go about our day-to-day. It is a way of being more than a to-do list. In my mind, when you live deeply, deliberately and with intent you:

Strive towards a minimalist lifestyle, shedding the unnecessary and embracing what remains

Are one with Nature, not apart or above it

Allow mindfulness to bring the present moment into focus

Live by example and share this insight with others, especially children

Let's be clear: This is a journey that takes time and patience. It is not an overnight wonder pill that we pop to clear the ailments of our personal and collective situation. For me, I am still a beginner navigating the ups and downs of this path. Each day brings new opportunity and new perspectives; new awareness of short-comings and new lessons learned. I don't know all the answers and probably never will.

The effort is well worth it though! For all of us there are immediate tangible benefits to living deeply:

- You are not bogged down by unnecessary possessions and thoughts
- You are outside more, appreciating the awesomeness of nature
- You enjoy all that the present moment has to offer
- You find common ground with others
- You enrich the lives of children around you

But think of what could happen if such a shift in how we live happened on an even grander scale:

- A re-balancing of humanity with the natural world around us
- A re-awakening to the sacredness of all life
- A passion for the pursuit of that which brings each of us true happiness
- An embracing of harmony rather than the sewing of discord

Perhaps I'm being overly optimistic. You know what? I'm OK with that. When more and more people think big like this the exponential power of focused intention starts to take over. Momentum builds—albeit slowly at first—and before long, we start to see the fruits of our happy 'labor'. ■

---

Bill Gerlach is freelance writer, blogger and public speaker exploring the intersections of Life, Nature, Being and Community. He lives in Rhode Island with his family, gardens and other simple joys. You can read more of Bill's writing at: [www.thenewpursuit.com](http://www.thenewpursuit.com).

## Choose Your Challenge!

Get ready for the 2011 NWEI EcoChallenge:

October 1-15, 2011 — pick a small habit and make a big difference.

## EcoChallenge: Change begins with you.

# NWEI Community News

## Voluntary Simplicity: NWEI's Newly Revised Course is Now Available

The 2011 revision of Voluntary Simplicity is here! Featuring new articles addressing the effects of technology on our lives and well-being, multimedia resources on simplifying and improved action plans, the 2011 revision of Voluntary Simplicity reminds us all of the joys, challenges and benefits of living simply on Earth. Visit our website at [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org) to order a copy.

## Welcome, Lacy Cagle, our new Director of Curriculum and Community Engagement



This winter we were fortunate to hire a former NWEI intern as our new Director of Curriculum and Community

Engagement. Lacy is wearing two hats here at NWEI, as the new Curriculum Director as well as conducting outreach to new communities. Lacy already has her first curriculum project successfully completed--the Voluntary Simplicity revision.

Lacy has a master's degree in Leadership for Sustainability Education from Portland State University and has worked with college and faith communities on sustainability initiatives for the past seven years. In her free time you can find Lacy biking, cooking, eating delicious food with friends, studying feminism and theology, and "doing just about anything outdoors".

## Welcome, Carolyn White

NWEI is very happy to have Carolyn on board as the new Outreach and Community Engagement Coordinator. Carolyn received a BA in Geography and

minored in Community Development at Portland State University. She is currently pursuing graduate studies in Sustainability at PSU, with a focus on food justice and policy and is teaching a self-designed sustainable food systems course in the fall. Carolyn travelled to Italy to work on biodynamic and synergic farms in 2010 and is visiting Colombia in July to research urban agriculture and sustainable development policies. In her free time, Carolyn enjoys cooking vegetarian meals, hiking, camping, writing, and spending time with her new husband, Paul.

Please join us in welcoming Lacy and Carolyn to NWEI!



## Putting it into Action: One NWEI Community Member's Story

*Sheilah Toomey recently participated in NWEI's A World of Health discussion course. Sheilah was raised in Portland, Oregon and on a farm in Sherwood, Oregon. She is currently retired, and watching her budget carefully - especially now that she "has committed to buying more local and organic food!" Sheilah shared the following reflections after taking part in A World of Health this winter.*

Since taking part in recent discussions as part of NWEI's *A World of Health: Connecting People, Place and Planet* course, I immediately made lifestyle changes in the areas of what I eat, where I live and what I use for personal care. I've researched all my cosmetics, and thrown away almost all the toxic ones. I've put a lady-bug sign on my lawn that says "Pesticide Free Zone" and have committed to non-toxic lawn care. I've gone back to using just

plain washing soda and vinegar for most cleaning.

The course has also reinforced some ongoing habits. I continue to drive less and consolidate errands, which I've been doing for years. I also continue to ride my bike to the grocery store for light shopping trips in the summer and fall.

In the area of food, I've begun to buy mostly organic produce (and have tried to keep calm as I see the total at the cash register). This spring I subscribed to a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, which will provide me with fresh local produce. I stored away my plastic containers and bought glass containers and waxed paper sandwich bags for leftovers (I'm still figuring out what to do with two brand new rolls of plastic wrap). I'm also working on engaging community members in making change, and spoke to the managers of my two local Trader

Joe's about providing tomatoes in glass jars (I am also finding that fresh tomatoes actually make a pretty good spaghetti sauce!). I recycled the plastic water bottle I keep in my car, and replaced it with a stainless steel container.

As I write this, I still have two chapters left in the course book. I look forward to continuing to make changes towards a healthier world! ■



---

# Sense of Place: Is it Really a Thing?

By Gregory Zimmerman

According to us boomers, we invented everything. If we didn't invent it, we popularized it. Following the natural progression of the generations, now the millennials think that they invented everything. Only, here's the thing—some of what we (boomers and millennials alike) invented may not be real. There's a long list of physical, mental and social maladies unverified by social or natural science. In the words of 30 Rock's Liz Lemon, "is that really a thing?" Which brings me to today's question: is sense of place "really a thing"?

Sense of place has been getting a lot of attention lately—from conservation types, artists, authors, architects, city planners, public health professionals and others. This has led me to wonder what elevated the construct of Place, and what societal influences are triggering the conversations about a "sense of place."

Does a desire for a sense of place come from a resistance to the inexorable growth of suburban development and its homogenizing influence? Is sense of place in the news now because planners want to capitalize on it? Is sense of place on our minds now because we are able to think of the land differently, as something to appreciate, not something to master?

It's easier to appreciate woodlands if your livelihood doesn't depend directly on the board feet of lumber they can produce. As we move farther away from land-based economies, the land is increasingly seen as resource for

more than just extracting commodities. The history of organized place-based conservation movements shows us that the debates between appreciations of place versus economic exploitation are not new. Conservationists in the late 1800s and early 1900s were seen as outsiders who could afford their romantic notions but didn't understand economic reality. The sagebrush rebellion echoed the same sentiments in the 1970s. In my region, a new mine and a wood technology plant are currently reinvigorating the age old debate of money now or greater, but less tangible, value later?

Perhaps a sense of place represents a desire to return to something we used to have, when more of us were tied closer to the land? After extensive conversations with my grandparents and grandparents-in-law, who were born in the late 1800s, from what I could tell, they had a sense of place but it was not today's sense of place.

They were connected to the land and seasons. Much of that connection was grounded in making a living off the place in which they were born. Years ago I was traveling with one of the grandmothers in my family, through what to me was absolutely gorgeous country -- a wide sweeping river valley in the northern Great Plains. When I commented on the sheer beauty of the landscape, grandma replied, 'I wouldn't give anything for it, the land doesn't look like you could grow anything on it at all!'

My grandparents had a strong "sense of place", but would not have used those words to describe it. I heard them speak

thoughtfully of the land, its natural history and their history on that land. As far as I know, my grandparents didn't read Wallace Stegner, but they knew their place in the world. They knew of its beauty, and of its challenges. They were attuned to natural cycles. Sense of place runs deep if you're living in the place where your forbearers lived and were buried.

I don't think what we mean today when we say "sense of place" is quite the same as the connection that my grandparents held to their place. I don't think those currently interested in discovering their sense of place are necessarily trying to recapture something we, as a culture, used to have and lost. But, yes, sense of place "really is a thing" It seems to me, what we mean now by sense of place is an evolution of our natural desire to be connected, to each other and our environment--whether a natural or built environment. ■

---

Gregory Zimmerman is a Biology professor at Lake Superior State University in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. He serves on the Binational Public Advisory Council for the St. Mary's River Area of Concern, and other local boards related to environmental protection. This essay was adapted from a post on his blog, [www.know-your-place.blogspot.com](http://www.know-your-place.blogspot.com).

**Find your place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there. —Gary Snyder**

## Connect with NWEI Online:

Read our blog: [blog.nwei.org](http://blog.nwei.org)

Find us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/  
northwestearthinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/northwestearthinstitute)

Follow us on Twitter: @nwearth

Visit our website:  
[www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org)

## NWEI Board of Directors

### Board Chair:

**Rich Bruer**

*Owner/Principal, R. Bruer Co.*

### Vice Chair:

**Alysa Rose**

*President, Rejuvenation Inc.*

### Directors:

**Sarah Cleveland**

*Institutional Investment Advisor*

**Carrie Ella Farrar**

*Sustainability Coord., The Standard*

**Tobey Fitch,**

*Principal, Fitch Associates*

**Jeff Harvey**

*President/CEO, Burgerville*

**Dave Haslip**

*Partner, Deloitte and Touche*

**Steve Mital**

*Dir. of Sustainability, Univ. of Oregon*

**Eric Park**

*Sr. Creative Dir., Ziba Design Inc,*

**Doug Rich**

*NW Reg. Sales Mgr.,  
National Sustainable Sales*

**Jeff Robertson**

*Partner, Barran Liebman*

**Justin Yuen**

*President, FMYI*

## Advisory Board Members

**Anthony Cortese,** *Second Nature*

**Al Jubitz,** *Jubitz Foundation*

**Gus Speth,** *Vermont Law School*

**Darcy Winslow,** *DSW Collective*

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Many thanks to all of our donors and members who contributed to NWEI this winter and early spring!

### The following individuals donated at the Earth Steward (\$100) level or higher:

Fran and Ted Ames  
Betsy and Rick Asai  
Terry Baker  
Margie Baran  
Suzanne Barthelmess and  
Rex Sustello  
Joni Berinstein  
Kathy and Dean Brewer  
Marney Bruce  
Verna Burden  
Scott and Glenda Burns  
Sherry Chilcutt and  
William Halbert  
Sarah Cleveland  
Mark Cohen and  
Margy Ringelheim  
Truman Collins  
Kristin Collins  
Terry Collins  
Theresa Cross  
Craig Cutting  
Gun Denhart  
Linda Dennis  
Lois and Dale Derouin  
Cody Donahue

Connie and Fredrick  
Erickson  
Carrie Ella Farrar  
Sarah and John Ferguson  
Curry First  
Tobey and Teri Fitch  
Charles and Barbara Francis  
Marnie and Erik  
Frederickson  
Jim and Carolyn Freese  
Narada Golden  
Brian Goldstein  
David and Ruth Green  
Ward Greene and Diane  
Ponti  
Anne Harding and Bob Scott  
William and Barbara Harris  
Roger and Margaret  
Harrison  
Dave Haslip  
Beatrice and John Hedlund  
Carsten Henningsen  
Cherie and Howard Holman  
Gail Holmes  
Susan Hoover  
Judith Howell  
Bob and Bonnie Jacobs  
Glen and Carolyn Jenkins  
Andrew and Julie Job  
Al and Nancy Jubitz

Emily Karr and  
Townsend Hyatt  
Jim Kelly and Sue Porter  
Marilynne Keyser  
Marion King  
Leigh Knox  
Jeff and Jennifer Kohne  
Rick and Anne Kunkle  
Grace Lee-Park and Eric  
Park  
Brian M Leitner  
Norbert and  
Christine Leupold  
Elise Lind and Dan Wagner  
Joanna Loehr  
Suzanne MacDonald  
Linda Magee  
Michael McCaffrey  
Virginia Meade  
Dave and Joyce Mercer  
Mike Mercer  
David Moriwaki  
Rick and Holly North  
Milo and Beverly Ormseth  
Linda Park  
Donna Parsons  
John Patrick and  
Rebecca Selove  
Mary Pattison  
Michael Ponder

Ward Greene and Diane  
Ponti  
Jim Kelly and Sue Porter  
Douglas Rich  
Jeannette Richoux  
Margie and David Rikert  
Alysa Rose and  
David Finkelman  
Lore Rosenthal and Michael  
Jay Hartman  
Lena Rotenberg  
Brinna Sands  
Anne Harding and Bob Scott  
Peter Sergienko  
Peter and Penny Serrurier  
Richard Sessions and  
Julia Surtshin  
Jonathan and  
Barbara Sheline  
Sadna and Sunil Shenoy  
William Small  
Bill Stoller  
Greg and Joyce Studen  
Jill and Patrick Sughrue  
Bruce and Victoria Thomas  
Jennifer and Mark Trumbo  
Steve Shostek and Jacqi Tull  
Dilafuz Williams  
Karen Wood

*These donations were  
received between  
12/17/2010 and 4/26/2011*



**Northwest Earth Institute**  
 107 SE Washington St. Suite 235  
 Portland, Oregon 97214  
 503.227.2807  
 www.nwei.org

Non Profit Org.  
 U. S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Permit No. 123  
 Portland, OR

**I'd like to support the Northwest Earth Institute by becoming a member or renewing my membership!**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership:  Individual, \$35     Household/Contributor, \$50     EarthSteward, \$100

**(all donations are tax deductible)**     Sustainer, \$250     Patron, \$500     Founder's Circle, \$1,000

Please print my name/our names as follows in the donor recognition section in the Newsletter:

\_\_\_\_\_

I'm already a member — here's an additional gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Pay by Credit Card:  Visa  MC

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for supporting the Northwest Earth Institute!**



**NEWSLETTER STAFF**  
 MANAGING EDITOR  
 Kerry Lyles  
**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**  
 Kerry Lyles  
 Mike Mercer

EarthMatters is published by  
 Northwest Earth Institute  
 107 SE Washington St., Suite 235  
 Portland, OR 97214

phone: 503/227-2807  
 fax: 503/227-2917  
 email: kerry@nwei.org  
 nwei.org  
 blog.nwei.org

EarthMatters is printed  
 on Neenah Environment paper,  
 100% post consumer recycled  
 Printed by Natural Press

© Copyright 2011