



The Village eView

September 17, 2014

Colette Hoff, Editor

On-Line News of the Goodenough Community System

- The American Association for the Furtherance of Community
- Convocation: A Church and Ministry
- Mandala Resources, Inc.
- Sahale Learning Center

Everyone has a responsibility to not only tolerate another person's point of view, but also to accept it eagerly as a challenge to your own understanding. And express those challenges in terms of serving other people. ~Arlo Guthrie

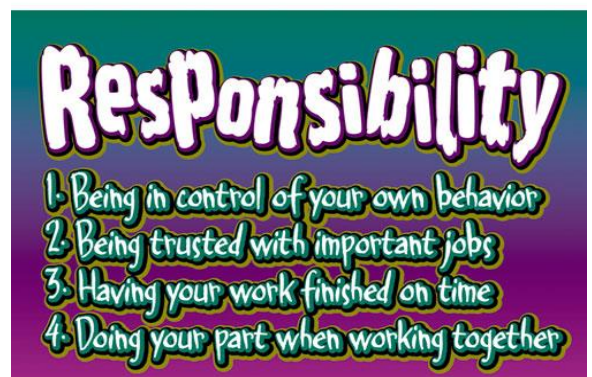
[September 20, Women's Culture Gathering](#)
[September 28, Pathwork](#)
[September 26-28, Take down of White Ten](#)
[October 3, Third Age Gathering](#)
[October 31 to November 2, Harvest Weekend](#)

Responsibility is a good thing!

Remember how you were challenged to accomplish something in order to be able to accept even more responsibility than you had. To be more responsible is to be inviting the world to make you even more responsible for things than you are now. This is a good way to start because when you accept responsibility for something, it is a good thing to do. Being a responsible person is not a hard way to live, it is a more satisfying way to live.

To be responsible is to have the ability to be able to accomplish something. **Response-ability begins by being sensitive**, a good listener, and committed to being helpful to others. So, being responsible begins by being sensitive to what others need and want from you. Being response-able also requires **stick-to-it-ness** or **persistence** so that you finish what you started out to do.

Being a responsible person involves the capacity to sense what is needed, the skills to be able to do what is needed, and the will power to complete the process. **Where** did you learn to be responsible and **from whom** did you receive the call to be more responsible. The real story here is a story about how one or more persons in your life **demonstrated** for you the value of being responsible. **Now you find yourself being an example and a challenge to others** that they be more responsible as well. Being responsible is a life style thing. It **involves a**



commitment to put your energy into living well and being an example of responsibility. So if you don't want to be seen as a responsible person who takes on concern for the world around, then it would be important to style your life in some more irresponsible way. The word responsibility is usually applied to someone who is living in service to others with a great deal of consistency and endurance.

Responsibility is about a life style that values hard work, consistency, and accomplishment. I remember working with an adolescent boy who had noticed that the harder he worked and the better he did, the more he was looked to for help. However, at age 16, he was already deciding to take an easier path in which people did not expect much of him.

Working with this adolescent gave me chills because I could see that he was learning from his environment to take an easier way with less responsibility. I am calling you to a path of self-development in which you are learning to care for others even though that path will bring more responsibilities to your life. Or, as I started these comments, being responsible is a good and right way to live because it supports human evolution and an improved society.

Responsibility educates.

~[Wendell Phillips](#)

Super Heroes demonstrate taking responsibility

Colette Hoff with others



Super heroes like Spider man, Batman, The Hulk, and Iron Man have their relationship to being responsible. Spider man missed an opportunity to do good when he first received his powers, and after that he pledged himself to help others. If you can do something when others cannot, then it's yours to do. For Batman responsibility is burdensome, yet he does what he has to. Iron man holds responsibility lightly.

Several people were sitting around the large table in Potlatch talking about responsibility. One person said right away, responsibility is the ability to respond.

Attitude, another person offered, determines how responsibility is experienced. Social obligation to other people in life in written and unwritten contracts and learning to be responsible is a conscious choice said another participant in the conversation. An elder offered, "It is a gift if a person carries responsibility lightly. Some people are born with a responsibility bone and those who are not born with it have a more difficult time in life."

As the dinner conversation continued, it was noted that responsibility can't be tied to wanting acknowledgment and it is also good to recognize responsible behavior when it is occurring. In the middle of this dinner, a friend dropped in to pick up some tools. One of the other diners, said clearly, "I

will respond to you and get the things you need!" It was a great example as we were talking about the word and concept of responsibility.

We also spoke of childhood memories of how parents were with responsibility and how they taught it. One woman spoke of her father as being very controlling and negative in how he demanded responsibility regardless of circumstances, "Don't complain was his favorite saying, or "Too bad you don't want to." Not the best conditions for a positive experience of responsibility. Another woman spoke lovingly about her mother who with three children and a job outside the home never complained. She read parenting books and was very involved in her children's schools. She took on responsibility with grace!

Much misconstruction and bitterness are spared to him who thinks naturally upon what he owes to others rather than what he ought to expect from them.

Madame Guizot

An Ancient Teaching Story

The Jewish tradition and scriptures speak often of responsibility. For instance, consider the Yiddish Proverb, "God gave burdens, also shoulders." And then there is the story told by a Rabbi:

Once it rained for days on end. When runoffs flooded the town, Mr. Yetzer climbed to his roof for safety. However, the waters continued to rise until they reached his roof and threatened to overwhelm him.

Just then a man came by in a row boat. "Jump in!" cried the man. But Mr. Yetzer said, "No, thanks, I am a man of faith and I am sure that the Lord will save me."

Well, after that the waters continued to rise and reached to Mr. Yetzer's ankles. Steadfastly, he continued to await his salvation even when a helicopter hovered above him and dangled a rope ladder in front of his nose. "No, thanks," Mr. Yetzer said while waving away the helicopter crew. "I am a man of faith, and I am sure that the Lord will save me." The same thing happened when divers swam by. Mr. Yetzer refused their help and the lifesaver thrown his way. Finally, he drowned. In the world beyond, he faced his Master and wanted to know why Divine help had not saved him.

"Help came your way," was the response. "First I sent a rowboat, then a helicopter, then divers, and finally, I sent you a lifesaver. You did not do your part."

It is important to remain open that healing help may not come in expected ways. More than 1500 years ago, the great Jewish Rabbis advised people not to rely on miracles. They taught that bread is not created in loaves; we have to mill and bake the wheat to make bread. Likewise, there is always a portion of responsibility each person must assume for his or her own welfare

A courtyard common to all will be swept by none.
Chinese Proverb

Coming Soon!

Beginning Sunday, **September 28 at 7:00 p.m.** we are inviting all interested to participate in a “**Pathwork Process**,” a process of sharing our own faith journeys. The focus is on what is happening in life now and not on earlier history. It is a process in which we **coach each other** and elicit insights from those who have done psychological and relational work with themselves. John and Colette Hoff have been asked to provide leadership and to resource us thematically. John and Colette would each welcome meeting with anyone interested in attending. Email hoff@goodenough.org to RSVP.

Pathwork will be meeting in West Seattle at the home of Joan. Phil, Barbara, and Jim 7723 13th Av SW, Seattle 98106.

Another Opportunity to Respond

Jim Tocher

In less than two weeks from now we will be taking down the big white tent at Sahale.

As you all know, this is an annual Community event brought on by the fact that the rains will soon come upon us and we don't want to tempt fate and leave the tent up all through the winter.



Our schedule will be the same as always: On Friday, about 10 AM, we will begin the take-down process. Depending on the weather and how many able bodies we have on Friday, we should have the roof frame on the ground and the side curtains wiped down and ready to store. I expect that some of you poor souls will be employed on Friday, but I hope you can join the party on Saturday at 10 AM when we will complete the process. You are welcome to come out to Sahale on Friday night if you can't come out on Thursday night.

As usual, we expect that we will eat well and have great “happy hours”.

Jim and Norm have talked about the responsibility of taking down the large white tent.

From Jim: PLEASE, respond to me ASAP. If you can be part of this, let me know. If you can't make it, please let me know. Also, let me know when you will be arriving.

From Norm: I've agreed to lead the take-down, in keeping with our agreement with Jim to assume leadership wherever possible and let him step back as befits an elder. I look forward to working with as many of you as possible to make the quick work of take-down I know we can pull off well and safely. Good gloves, probably raincoats (just in case), sturdy shoes and a good attitude will all be helpful and welcome. All the better to enjoy Happy Hours! Hope to see you there. I'll be arriving late Thursday night to be ready for a good start Friday. Be well all, and I look forward to seeing you!
Norm

*Nothing strengthens the judgement and quickens the conscience
like individual responsibility.*

[Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#)

Leadership In The Age Of Responsibility: From Hero To Host

~by [Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze](#), Aug 28, 2014

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."
~Mother Teresa

For too long, too many of us have been entranced by heroes. Perhaps it's our desire to be saved, to not have to do the hard work, to rely on someone else to figure things out. Constantly we are barraged by politicians presenting themselves as heroes, the ones who will fix everything and make our problems go away. It's a seductive image, an enticing promise. And we keep believing it. Somewhere there's someone who will make it all better. Somewhere, there's someone who's visionary, inspiring, brilliant, trustworthy, and we'll all happily follow him or her. Somewhere...

Well, it is time for all the heroes to go home, as the poet William Stafford wrote. It is time for us to give up these hopes and expectations that only breed dependency and passivity, and that do not give us solutions to the challenges we face. It is time to stop waiting for someone to save us. It is time to face the truth of our situation—that we're all in this together, that we all have a voice—and figure out how to mobilize the hearts and minds of everyone in our workplaces and communities.

*The salvation of mankind lies only in
making everything the concern of all.*

[Alexander Solzhenitsyn](#)



September 17, free for the moment

By [Barbara Brucker](#) —

I am busy enjoying a week out of the hospital. Took myself to Sunrise (Mt. Rainier) on Monday and enjoyed a wonderful warm day on the mountain. In spite of all my walking and activity in Seattle, I found my hiking ability to be quite limited. I suspect a combination of the elevation and mild anemia - the chemo is hard on those red blood cells. Oh well, a minor disappointment in a thoroughly enjoyable day. In lieu of more hiking I went on up Chinook Pass and enjoyed the views from there as well.

I am scheduled to go back into the hospital on Monday the 22nd for another round of chemo followed by an MRI on October 1. Later in the day on 10/1 I will meet with the neuro-oncologist and hopefully we'll get some sense of how things are going. I choose to believe things are going well since I'm not experiencing any symptoms and continue to feel good. Can't say I'm looking forward to another 6 days or so in the hospital - it is rather confining. I do get up and dressed (in something between gym clothes and street clothes) every morning, work on my computer, walk, ride the exercise bicycle, do my stretches, read, and watch a video every evening. I have learned to take some of my own food so that I have more vegetables than the hospital menu provides. There are also several blessed souls who come to visit me while I'm there so the stay is quite tolerable, it's just not very free.

Meanwhile, before my next admission is the Cancer Walk on Saturday. I'm looking forward to what I think will be a fun event. Several friends are joining me and my sister and brother-in-law are coming over for it. It's a great excuse for a visit.

“Living with integrity means: Not settling for less than what you know you deserve in your relationships. Asking for what you want and need from others. Speaking your truth, even though it might create conflict or tension. Behaving in ways that are in harmony with your personal values. Making choices based on what you believe, and not what others believe.”

— [Barbara De Angelis](#)

A Recent (September 12 to 14, 2014) Workshop for Couples: Friendship and Fun . . .

Nine couples gathered with the intention to improve their relationship. All couples reviewed the issues most difficult for them to talk about and several couples did some extensive work—identify the problems and making some plans for improvement. The Conscious Couples Network firmed up their commitment for giving straight feedback during CCN meetings in the future. More next week!



*Only love
that continues to flow
in the face of anger,
blame, and indifference
can be called love.
All else is simply
a transaction.*

~ Vironika Tugaleva

In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.”
— Eleanor Roosevelt

The deAnguera Blog: Taking Responsibility for Our Food Supply and Having Fun



Yesterday Irene Perler had Mike, Josh, Pharaoh, Serena, and Gabe Harshman working in the garden below Kopet WaWa. Tons of weeds uprooted, especially bindweed. Irene had me removing the bindweed from around the raspberry bushes in the photo on the left. The bindweed had nearly choked out the raspberry bushes so removing it was delicate work.

The photo on the right shows flowers planted by Irene to attract bees. As you can see bumble bees are hard at work.

Climate change is forcing more of us to take responsibility for our food supply. The latest National Geographic Magazine has an article on the continuing drought in the Western U.S. Corporate agriculture uses lots of water because it is often done on marginal lands. Maybe smaller parcels like the Ananda Farm and Sahale might be better especially if we have lots of them.

In Havana, Cuba food is grown in gardens everywhere even on rooftops. Havana gets 50% of its food from gardens within the city or just outside the city limits.

A garden can be a great way to make new friends, even those with major differences. Gardening goes much better with friends. I find it very difficult to just do it by myself. I could not even maintain a garden on the deck of my condo. The motivation just was not there.

Ananda has a farm because they have decided to take responsibility for their food supply. In the 2 years that the Ananda Farm has been in existence they have managed to grow a lot of things in addition to handling 35 chickens and six alpacas. Zach and Hallie, who run the farm are dedicated farmers. Over the years they have tried a lot of different things.

We have been growing food as well but Sahale is not a full time farm. Farming is hard work. We are a Learning Center with ongoing programs like our Couples Weekend last week. We integrated farming into our lives because we wanted to get involved in the Permaculture Movement. Permaculture training courses as Convergences have taken place here. We have all the requisite resources.

In the last issue of the eView John talked about the future: how we imagine and create it. What are we after here at Sahale? We are a demonstration of a sustainable way of life. So is the Ananda Farm on Camano Island. How about a whole chain of communities like ours and Ananda, all linked together making resources available to each other? Each community different and yet part of the larger whole. That's the kind of world I want to live in.

Why did the Ananda Farm have Alpacas? They were acquired from a farmer in Sedro Wooley who was going out of business. Like goats they can mow a range but seem to have a much gentler disposition. One of them, Carly, was getting loved by a group of small children. She settled on the ground and laid her head in one of the kids' laps.

Carly was recently shorn of her fleece and it is in storage until the Ananda Community can find someone who can process it.

Taking up livestock especially large livestock can be quite a responsibility. They need to have room to roam, a place to get out of the rain and plenty of food. The Ananda Farm is able to provide them with these things.



Hey! Look what we found at Sahale! Mushrooms! Growing all by themselves. We wished we knew what kind they were. Any clues?

“The power behind taking responsibility for your actions lies in putting an end to negative thought patterns. You no longer dwell on what went wrong or focus on whom you are going to blame. You don't waste time building roadblocks to your success. Instead, you are set free and can now focus on succeeding.”

— [Lorii Myers](#)



Women's Culture

With this new season, a new year in the Goodenough Community's women's program and culture begins, we invite you to our women's gathering in September

Saturday, September 20 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Listen, listen, listen to my heart song ... What a lovely, traditional chant that sounds even sweeter when sung in women's voices and harmonies!

Listening to each other's heart song, deeply, compassionately, with interest, and with curiosity, and letting others draw out your own heart's truth ... this is the purpose of the women's gatherings of the Goodenough Community.

Please join the women of the Goodenough Community this Saturday as we step into a new programmatic year. We would love to have you come!

We meet on **Saturday, September 20, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.**, at the home of Rose Buchmeier, **9033 13th Avenue SW, Seattle 98106**. Lunch will be served.

Of course, we would appreciate your letting us know if you plan to come. Send an email to Hollis Ryan at hollisr@comcast.net. But please don't stay away just because you didn't send an RSVP! We suggest a donation of \$20, and trust that you will contribute the amount that is right for you. To send an RSVP or if you have questions, please write or call Hollis Ryan: hollisr@comcast.net / 206 399 3219. For directions to Rose's home, please call Rose at 206-764-0193 . We look forward to hearing your heart song!

From the women's leadership team:
Hollis Guill Ryan, focal; Rose Buchmeier,
Marjorie Gray, Elizabeth Jarrett, and Joan Valles,
with Colette Hoff, key faculty.

*"If not us, then who?
If not now, then when?"*
— [John E Lewis](#)

This article is included again to serve as a reminder: it is responsible to send in HRL evaluations. (Editor)

The importance of evaluation

Kirsten Rohde

We have received some post-Lab evaluations and I'm giving you a smattering of comments from these **as a way to encourage more evaluations** be sent. As you know "complaints and complements" about

an event after it is done is very important for those of us who were involved in creating the event. It's important to know if intentions for this Lab were met as well as to hear about each person's experiences. We value knowing not only what was learned but also how the learning happened. What was effective and what was not so effective?

For example, here are some comments on the small groups:

- It was enthusiastic and supportive. Each person contributed, and from my experience, earlier in the game than usual
- Each of us offered ourselves in an incredibly self-revealing way around our individual issues in relating.
- Many “mirrors” to reflect back behaviors and attitudes
- Specific suggestions for ways to use the Lab community could have been more intentional.
- I asked for feedback in very specific areas and it worked for me
- When the leaders didn't do their own work, the group is held up. Equally there was appreciation for group leaders openly working out their co-leading experience in order to become more effective leaders in the group.

Appreciation was expressed for the overall community of Lab:

- The only good way to learn, at least for me, is in company with others. Lab provides that necessary context.
- I enjoyed meal times and after hours in the Swamp for providing chances to have good talks with someone else.
- The ritual we did on Monday about joining made a difference in my intention to learn.
- I liked the talking and provocation of new ideas around being an open hearted friend and I could always enjoy even more singing and dancing
- The telling of the “Prodigal Son” story was very effective, as it touched on so many aspects of conflict, on my own difficulties and on the different work that I knew was going on.

There is general appreciation of the leadership provided by John, Colette, and Dyanne as well as specific mention of others who spoke up, were supportive coaches or good listeners.

Comments about learning:

- Understanding my underlying attitude is important to learning how to be more friendly
- Making the decision to trust another in order to learn
- Understanding communication styles and ways to give and receive feedback is very important.
- Freedom is an inside job and needs a welcoming environment.

Please add your experience and critiques so that we have a more complete picture of the Lab experience. The community planning group begins talking about next year's Lab this fall and we do take all feedback to heart. **Thank you!**

Provision for others is a fundamental responsibility of human life.

[Woodrow T. Wilson](#)

Are People Happier Living in Community? The FIC Wants to Find Out

Laird Schaub
FIC Executive Secretary

The FIC is teaming up with researchers to try to answer this question.

The FIC is teaming up with researchers [Bjorn Grinde](#) (chief scientist with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health), [David Sloan Wilson](#) (distinguished professor of biology and anthropology at SUNY Binghamton), and [Ian MacDonald](#) (PhD student at SUNY Binghamton) to **try to answer this question by going straight to the source: asking people living in intentional communities what they think.**

To accomplish this, we are **inviting all adults living in intentional communities to participate in a study** that can be completed online in about 25 minutes. With the idea that communities may have something important to teach the mainstream, the research will attempt to measure to what extent the quality of life has been enhanced by living in a community.

As scientists who study communities of all sorts—including businesses, volunteer organizations, congregations and urban neighborhoods—the researchers are especially interested in how the organization of social groups influences the psychological and physical wellbeing of members. Intentional communities, they feel, offer an ideal opportunity to study these important topics.

Our hope is that the results will benefit your community, the Intentional Communities Movement, and the general public. We all wish to learn how to improve quality of life.

Here's how it will work:

- Interested communities should **contact Ian MacDonald** at imacdon1@binghamton.edu
- They will be provided with a **link to an anonymous survey**.
- The survey contains questions about life satisfaction, community organization, social relations, and general well being.
- As **an incentive**, every community member who participates will earn their community an **entry into a lottery** (1st prize is \$3,000; 2nd is \$2,000; 3rd is \$1,000). Winning communities will be announced and contacted after the survey is finished. *(Let's win one of these! Colette)*

This project is supported by a **grant from the John Templeton Foundation**. If you have questions about the project, please contact Ian MacDonald at imacdon1@binghamton.edu.

EVENTS OF INTEREST



Harvest Weekend, October 31 to November 2 (NEW DATE)

This year, our apples are ripening early! In fact, we've decided to hold our harvest weekend on October 31 to November 2. While some trick or treaters may not be able to attend, there will be cider-making and lots of applesauce as well as good meals. Feel free to join for the day or overnight. Email hoff @goodenough.org with your plans.

Bite O'Fall

Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson

Birthdays!

- September 22 - Bruce **Perler** – Happy birthday Bruce!
- September 23 - Mike **DeAnguera** – Have a great day!
- September 23 – Pharaoh **Kuykendall** turns 30!
- September 27 - Sadie **Scott** – Happy birthday, Sadie!

AUTUMN TRAVEL

A blonde gets an opportunity to fly to a nearby country. She has never been on an airplane anywhere and was very excited and tense. As soon as she boarded the plane, a Boeing747, she started jumping in excitement, running over seat to seat and starts shouting, "BOEING! BOEING!! BOEING!!! BO....." She sort of forgets where she is, even the pilot in the cock-pit hears the noise. Annoyed by the goings on, the Pilot comes out and shouts "BE SILENT!" There was pin-drop silence everywhere and everybody is looking at the blonde and the angry Pilot. She stared at the pilot in silence for a moment, concentrated really hard, and all of a sudden started shouting, "OEING! OEING! OEING! OE...."

The Goodenough Community:

Cultural Programs & Events in 2014

For the Goodenough Community, cultural life is an arena for creative expression. All programs and events are open to the public. We welcome your interest and participation.

Over thousands of years human communities have organized not only their work life but also their relational and cultural life. The Goodenough Community organizes its cultural life around encouraging human development—through our programs for men, women, committed couples, families and around age groupings. Cultural programs usually encourage maturity, responsibility, and the development of valued relationships. Some of our programs bring everyone together with a seasonal emphasis. Following, are program offerings for the next period on our calendar.

Third Age Gathering, Friday, October 3

Joan Valles

"Old age is ready to undertake tasks that youth shirked because they would take too long." W. Somerset Maugham



The Third Age group is for older adults, approximately age 60 and up, who are interested in exploring the issues of living well while aging, and supporting each other in this “third stage” of life. Call Joan Valles for more information at 206 763 2258, or email me at joanvalles70@yahoo.com

“The value of old age depends upon the person who reaches it. To some men of early performance it is useless. To others, who are late to develop, it just enables them to finish the job.”
--Thomas Hardy

Women’s Culture, Upcoming Saturdays: September 20



With this new season, a new year in the Goodenough Community’s women’s program and culture begins, and I am writing to invite you to **women’s gatherings in September**. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Saturday, September 20

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

We will meet at the home of Rose Buchmeier:

9033 13th Avenue SW
Seattle, WA 98106

For directions, call Rose:206 764 0193



Mark your calendars for 2015!
Human Relations Laboratory
August 9 to 15, 2015

The best event to experience the Goodenough Community!

Seven Fun-filled Days of Social Creativity & Experiential
Learning about Friendship and Effective Relationship

Sahale Learning Center

A 68-acre retreat on Kitsap Peninsula

Family Enrichment Network Parent Group

If you are interested in developing a supportive parent circle for study and conversation about family life, to begin this fall, please contact *Irene Perler* at 206-419-3477 or email irene_perler@hotmail.com. Topics could include: simplifying and organizing life, creating a family culture, development stages and sibling dynamics, understanding roles within the family.

True Holidays Celebration - Saturday, December 6



Our annual celebration will be held on Saturday, **December 6, 2014**.

This event has more than 25 years of history and is set early in the holiday season in order to deepen and enrich the winter holidays for people of all faith traditions.

This interfaith celebration will again be at the

Mercer Island Congregational Church and commences at 7:00pm

Winter Solstice Bus Trip – Saturday, December 20

Old fashioned fun for all ages! With your friends and family, enjoy this day-long journey that embraces the longest night of the year.

We will board a chartered bus and travel over Snoqualmie and Blewett Passes to the beautiful Bavarian Christmas village of Leavenworth. Then we'll head to Eagle Creek Ranch, just outside of Leavenworth, where a horse-drawn sleigh ride awaits us, followed by a buffet dinner.



New Year's Eve Weekend at Sahale!



This year New Year's Eve is on **Wednesday** night. You are invited to come to Sahale for the weekend to join in saying goodbye to 2014 and hello to 2015. You are welcome to come as early as Friday. We plan to have our usual times in good conversation, winter walks, hot-tubbing, making meals together and celebrating the change of year. **Dinner will be served at 7:30pm** on New Year's Eve. Of course, we will have our **7th annual** Train Dominoes Tournament. Time will also be given for serious reflection and joyful celebration.

Email Kirsten, Bruce or Elizabeth: krohde14@outlook.com, bruce_perler@hotmail.com, elizabeth.ann.jarrett@gmail.com

Why do we continue to hope for heroes? It seems we assume certain things:

Quest: A Counseling and Healing Center

Our belief is that mental and emotional health are prerequisites for spiritual well-being, collaboration, and the expression of compassion. **Quest's** counseling and education programs, open to all interested individuals, focus on empowering individuals, couples, and family groups to be happier and more effective. **Call John (206 963-4738), Colette (206 -755 8404). We're continuing to use the office at 2007 33rd So in Seattle.**

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Leadership In The Age Of Responsibility: From Hero To Host

~by [Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze](#), Aug 28, 2014 (Continued from page 5)

Why do we continue to hope for heroes? It seems we assume certain things:

Leaders have the answers. They know what to do.

* People do what they're told. They just have to be given good plans and instructions.

* High risk requires high control. As situations grow more complex and challenging, power needs to shift to the top (with the leaders who know what to do.)

These beliefs give rise to the models of command and control revered in organizations and governments world-wide. Those at the bottom of the hierarchy submit to the greater vision and expertise of those above. Leaders promise to get us out of this mess; we willingly surrender individual autonomy in exchange for security.

The only predictable consequence of leaders attempts to wrest control of a complex, even chaotic situation, is that they create more chaos. They go into isolation with just a few key advisors, and attempt to

find a simple solution (quickly) to a complex problem. And people pressure them to do just that. Everyone wants the problem to disappear; cries of “fix it!” arise from the public. Leaders scramble to look like they’ve taken charge and have everything in hand.

But the causes of today’s problems are complex and interconnected. There are no simple answers, and no one individual can possibly know what to do. We seem unable to acknowledge these complex realities. Instead, when the leader fails to resolve the crisis, we fire him or her, and immediately begin searching for the next (more perfect) one. We don’t question our expectations of leaders, we don’t question our desire for heroes.

The Illusion of Control

Heroic leadership rests on the illusion that someone can be in control. Yet we live in a world of complex systems whose very existence means they are inherently uncontrollable. No one is in charge of our food systems. No one is in charge of our schools. No one is in charge of the environment. No one is in charge of national security. No one is in charge! These systems are emergent phenomena—the result of thousands of small, local actions that converged to create powerful systems with properties that may bear little or no resemblance to the smaller actions that gave rise to them. These are the systems that now dominate our lives; they cannot be changed by working backwards, focusing on only a few simple causes. And certainly they cannot be changed by the boldest visions of our most heroic leaders.

If we want to be able to get these complex systems to work better, we need to abandon our reliance on the leader-as-hero and invite in the leader-as-host. We need to support those leaders who know that problems are complex, who know that in order to understand the full complexity of any issue, all parts of the system need to be invited in to participate and contribute. We, as followers, need to give our leaders time, patience, forgiveness; and we need to be willing to step up and contribute.

These leaders-as-hosts are candid enough to admit that they don’t know what to do; they realize that it’s sheer foolishness to rely only on them for answers. But they also know they can trust in other people’s creativity and commitment to get the work done. They know that other people, no matter where they are in the organizational hierarchy, can be as motivated, diligent and creative as the leader, given the right invitation.

The Journey from Hero to Host

Leaders who journey from hero to host have seen past the negative dynamics of politics and opposition that hierarchy breeds, they’ve ignored the organizational charts and role descriptions that confine people’s potential. Instead, they’ve become curious. Who’s in this organization or community? What skills and capacities might they offer if they were invited into the work as full contributors? What do they know, what insights do they have that might lead to a solution to this problem?

Leaders-as-hosts know that people willingly support those things they’ve played a part in creating—that you can’t expect people to ‘buy-in’ to plans and projects developed elsewhere. Leaders-as-hosts invest in meaningful conversations among people from many parts of the system as the most productive way to engender new insights and possibilities for action. They trust that people are willing to contribute, and that

most people yearn to find meaning and possibility in their lives and work. And these leaders know that hosting others is the only way to get complex, intractable problems solved.

Leaders-as-hosts don't just benevolently let go and trust that people will do good work on their own. Leaders have a great many things to attend to, but these are quite different than the work of heroes. Hosting leaders must:

- * provide conditions and good group processes for people to work together.
- * provide resources of time, the scarcest commodity of all.
- * insist that people and the system learn from experience, frequently.
- * offer unequivocal support—people know the leader is there for them.
- * keep the bureaucracy at bay, creating oases (or bunkers) where people are less encumbered by senseless demands for reports and administrivia.
- * play defense with other leaders who want to take back control, who are critical that people have been given too much freedom.
- * reflect back to people on a regular basis how they're doing, what they're accomplishing, how far they've journeyed.
- * work with people to develop relevant measures of progress to make their achievements visible.
- * value conviviality and esprit de corps—not false rah rah activities, but the spirit that arises in any group that accomplishes difficult work together.

Challenges from Superiors

It's important to note how leaders journeying from hero to host use their positional power. They have to work all levels of the hierarchy; most often, it's easier to gain support and respect from the people they lead than it is to gain it from their superiors. Most senior leaders of large hierarchies believe in their inherent superiority, as proven by the position they've attained. They don't believe that everyday people are as creative or self-motivated as are they. When participation is suggested as the means to gather insights and ideas from staff on a complex problem, senior leaders often will block such activities. They justify their opposition by stating that people would use this opportunity to take advantage of the organization; or that they would suggest ideas that have no bearing to the organization's mission; or that people would feel overly confident and overstep their roles. In truth, many senior leaders view engaging the whole system as a threat to their own power and control. They consistently choose for control, and the resultant chaos, rather than invite people in to solve difficult and complex problems.

Leaders who do know the value of full engagement, who do trust those they lead, have to constantly defend their staff from senior leaders who insist on more controls and more bureaucracy to curtail their activities, even when those very activities are producing excellent results. Strange to say, but too many

senior leaders choose control over effectiveness; they're willing to risk creating more chaos by continuing their take-charge, command and control leadership.

Re-engaging People

Those who've been held back in confining roles, who've been buried in the hierarchy, will eventually blossom and develop in the company of a hosting leader. Yet, it takes time for employees to believe that this boss is different, that this leader actually wants them to contribute. It can take 12 to 18 months in systems where people have been silenced into submission by autocratic leadership. These days, most people take a wait-and-see attitude, no longer interested in participating because past invitations weren't sincere, or didn't engage them in meaningful work. The leader needs to prove him or herself by continually insisting that work cannot be accomplished, nor problems solved without the participation of everyone. If the message is sincere and consistent, people gradually return to life; even people who have died on the job, who're just waiting until retirement, can come alive in the presence of a leader who encourages them and creates opportunities for them to contribute.

Leaders-as-hosts need to be skilled conveners. They realize that their organization or community is rich in resources, and that the easiest way to discover these is to bring diverse people together in conversations that matter. People who didn't like each other, people who discounted and ignored each other, people who felt invisible, neglected, left out—these are the people who can emerge from their boxes and labels to become interesting, engaged colleagues and citizens.

Hosting meaningful conversations isn't about getting people to like each other or feel good. It's about creating the means for problems to get solved, for teams to function well, for people to become energetic activists. Hosting Leaders create substantive change by relying on everyone's creativity, commitment and generosity. They learn from firsthand experience that these qualities are present in just about everyone and in every organization. They extend sincere invitations, ask good questions, and have the courage to support risk-taking and experimentation.

Are You a Hero?

Many of us can get caught up acting like heroes, not from power drives, but from our good intentions and desires to help. Are you acting as a hero? Here's how to know. You're acting as a hero when you believe that if you just work harder, you'll fix things; that if you just get smarter or learn a new technique, you'll be able to solve problems for others. You're acting as a hero if you take on more and more projects and causes and have less time for relationships. You're playing the hero if you believe that you can save the situation, the person, the world.

Our heroic impulses most often are born from the best of intentions. We want to help, we want to solve, we want to fix. Yet this is the illusion of specialness, that we're the only ones who can offer help, service, skills. If we don't do it, nobody will. This hero's path has only one guaranteed destination—we end up feeling lonely, exhausted and unappreciated.

It is time for all us heroes to go home because, if we do, we'll notice that we're not alone. We're surrounded by people just like us. They too want to contribute, they too have ideas, they want to be useful to others and solve their own problems.

Truth be told, they never wanted heroes to rescue them anyway.

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