



# Chrysalis

Volume 6      Spring 2009

*Newsletter of  
The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World  
at  
Timberlake Farm*

Dear Reader,

As we write to you on the cusp of the Spring Equinox at a time when there is great concern for the world, we see this moment as an unprecedented opportunity for a new vision of the future to come into being. It is a time to stay centered in the deepest understanding of life's meaning as old forms dissolve and new forms emerge to replace them. At this time of transformation, our thoughts turn to an original fairy tale by Ruth Sanderson entitled *The Enchanted Wood*.

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Once upon a time there was a verdant land that grew barren and dry. The desperate King called his three sons to him one day and asked them to go on a quest for the Heart of the World in the hope the drought could be brought to an end. One by one, the sons set out to find the Heart of the World. First the oldest son set out and encountered a wise woman, the gatekeeper to the Heart of the World, who gave him this warning:

Be true to the quest, at any cost;  
Stray from the path, and you will be lost.

But the oldest son, who was a great hunter, disregarded the wise woman and was drawn away from his quest by the thrill of the hunt of a white stag.

When the first son did not return home, the second son set out on his quest to find the Heart of the World. In turn, he came upon the wise woman who offered him the same warning she had spoken to his brother. But the second son, who was a great warrior, disregarded the wise woman as well and was drawn away from his quest by the allurements of a knight in black armor.

When the second son did not return home, the third and youngest son, Galen, set out on his quest to find the Heart of the World. Coming upon the wise woman, who again offered her warning, Galen asked if he and his horse might rest at her humble cottage. The wise woman bade him tether his horse and join her and her daughter Rose for dinner, and he followed her bidding.

The next morning, Rose offered to accompany Galen on his quest for the Heart of the World. The wise woman unlocked the gate and Galen and Rose began to make their way through the thick brambles of a dark and lifeless wood. Soon, they came upon Galen's oldest brother who, in great weariness, persevered in his hunt for the white stag. Galen almost left the path to come to his brother's aid, but Rose reminded him of the wise woman's warning to be true to the quest for the Heart of the World.



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As they continued through the misty forest, they soon came upon Galen's second brother who suffered many wounds and was locked in a sword battle with the black knight. Again, Galen was tempted to rescue his brother, and again Rose reminded him not to stray from the path.

Despairing, Galen asked himself a question: "My brothers were tempted by what they love most, hunting and fighting. But where, then, is my temptation?" And Rose replied, "Don't you see? . . . What you love most is your brothers, so you wanted to leave the road to help them. Instead, you chose to stay on the path and remain true to your purpose to help all the people of the kingdom."

Once these words were spoken, the forest around them began to change. "Trees that were stunted and leafless a moment before began to branch and bud. Blossoms appeared on lifeless thorn bushes. Pale green points sprang up out of the moldy earth, turning into wildflowers that spread over the ground like a carpet being unrolled for a king." And as they traversed a bend in the path, they came upon an open glade. There, in the middle of the glade, was a wonderful tree with intertwined trunks that they recognized as The Heart of the World. From that moment on, the land was restored to its living splendor.<sup>1</sup>

~

The Heart of the World was a guiding vision for Galen as he set out on a quest to restore the land to its original splendor during a time of drought and degradation. During our own time of economic upheaval and global crisis, many seek a vision that can guide us toward the future. In this issue of *Chrysalis*, we offer you such a vision given prophetically by Thomas Berry in our first issue of *Chrysalis* in 2004, "Our Children: Their Future."

Here, within three short pages, Thomas gives us a vision of "The Heart of the World" for our time. It is this vision that has guided the work of the Center since 2000 and it is toward this vision that all our programs point. It is a vision in which the human being moves beyond personal gain, power, might and even familial relationships toward a feeling, in the depth of the soul, of oneness with the world. In this story, there is the foundation for a new moral imagination based in the understanding that the wellbeing of an individual, or a family, or even a nation, is not really possible apart from the wellbeing of the Earth as sacred community.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Sanderson, *The Enchanted Wood* (Boston, Little Brown, 1991).

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Departing from the usual format of *Chrysalis*, in this issue we bring you this story, this vision, and an invitation. As with many non-profits, several of our primary donors have had to rescind significant pledges in support of our work over the next three years. We have held this situation within a sacred silence so that we might recognize a pathway forward.

While it is always a deep blessing to have one or two benefactors who are in a position to carry a work forward, it is a deeper blessing to have a wide circle of support for a work in the world. Over the years, the Center has been blessed by the devotion of many people.

Now, we have reached a crossroad where we need to join hands with others who can come together as a “Circle of Light” in a loving embrace around the work of the Center in a new way. To supplant the pledges that have been lost at this time, we seek a circle of 150 people who will join with us in carrying Thomas Berry’s vision forward through a pledge of \$360 for each of the next three years. This “Circle of Light” will provide crucial support for our operating budget and allow us to continue our programs while we undertake a very special project to save the Thomas Berry Hermitage and make it a permanent home for the Center’s work for educators and children (see [www.savethethomasberryhermitage.org](http://www.savethethomasberryhermitage.org)).

We invite you to read Thomas Berry’s vision, “Our Children: Their Future,” and to consider playing a part in creating a “Circle of Light” that will enable this vision to be carried forward through the work of the Center. Center Founder, Carolyn Toben, has offered to enter into an arrangement with the non-profit whereby the Center would raise the funds to move the Thomas Berry Hermitage to Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary and enter into a long-term lease agreement that would allow the non-profit to use the earth sanctuary land for its programs. We have a three-year window of opportunity, from now until June 30, 2012, to continue the work of the Center and secure a permanent home for its operations on the land.

We hope that our “Circle of Light” will grow to 150 people by the Autumnal Equinox on September 22, 2009. On that day, as the autumn light ripens the earth’s harvest, we will hold a gathering in gratitude for the abundance provided by all those who have joined us in support of Thomas Berry’s vision for the future of our children and the Earth.

In the months to come, our staff and members of our Board will be calling you to ask you to consider joining our circle and to answer any questions you might have about our work as it moves forward. Meanwhile, there is a special envelope in the centerfold of this issue of *Chrysalis* through which you can either make a “Friend of the Center” donation, or make a three-year commitment to join our “Circle of Light.”

With love and gratitude for the devoted gifts of so many friends over the past nine years.

Warm regards,



Carolyn Toben, Founder



Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director

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# It Takes A Universe

by

Thomas Berry

The child awakens to  
a universe. The mind  
of the child to  
a world of wonder.  
Imagination to a world  
of beauty. Emotions  
to a world of intimacy.

*It takes a universe  
to make a child both  
in outer form and inner  
spirit. It takes  
a universe to educate  
a child. A universe  
to fulfill a child.*

Each generation presides  
over the meeting of these  
two in the succeeding  
generation.

*So that the universe  
is fulfilled in the child,  
and the child is fulfilled  
in the Universe.*

*While the stars ring out  
in the heavens!*



Artwork by Liz Levitt

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# Our Children: Their Future

by

Thomas Berry

Our children will live, not in our world but in their world, a future world that is rapidly taking on its distinctive contours. Our exploitative industrial world, despite all our scientific discoveries, technological skills, commercial abundance and stock-market advance, is in a state of decline. The long-term survival of our children will depend on a new relationship between the human and the natural worlds. A change is taking place from exploitative relationships to one of mutual enhancement between the natural and the human worlds. The type of prosperity known through the industrial process of the twentieth century will never again be available.

A new creative period, however, will be available. Our children must activate these new forms of delight in existence in the great variety of human activities. Indeed we ourselves have begun this process. Already we are aware of the following conditions the children need if they are to attain the fulfillment for which they are destined.

## Health and Environment

Our children need a healthy earth on which to live. A sickened planet is not conducive to healthy children physically, or to emotional or psychic security. They need pure air and water and sunlight and fruitful soil and all those living forms that provide the context in which human existence can be properly nurtured. Only if we provide this context will we fulfill our obligations to our children.

## The Great Community

Our children need to become members not only of a local or even of the human community. They need to become conscious members of that wonderful community of all the living and non-living beings of the world about them. Human community as such is an abstraction. The only real community is the integral community of the entire continent, the entire planet or even the entire universe. We are awkward at this manner of thinking because our religions as well as our humanist traditions carry a certain antagonism toward the natural world. But now the refusal of human beings to become intimate members of the community of the earth is leading to devastation of the entire planet. The next generation can survive only as functional members of this larger community. Our children are instinctively aware of this. We need only foster this awareness.

## Literacy

Our children need to learn not only how to read books composed by human genius but also how to read the Great Book of the World. Again, reading this Great Book is natural to children. Alienation from this primary educational experience has been, in our generation, the source of unmeasured disaster to every aspect of human existence. The New Prosperity requires a new language, a language of nature that presently begins to be understood by those involved in solar energy, by the new architects, the new educators, the environmentalists. This new language is primarily the language of the earth, a language of living relationships that extend throughout the universe.

We have here on the North American continent a superb natural setting in which our children can become literate, capable of understanding what their world is telling them. Above all this natural world is telling them about a new prosperity, a new richness of life, new energies that are available, new experiences to enjoy.



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## Energy

Our children must understand how to function with the energy of the sun and the wind and the water rather than with the energies of fossil fuels or of nuclear processes. Our inability to use these other energies properly has led to a situation in which the planet earth is covered with grime that is not only harmful to all forms of life but which is eating away with its acids the very stones and structures of all the great cities of the world. The understanding of more benign energy forms and the skills to interact with them effectively, these are absolute necessities for the survival of our children in a sustainable life context.

## Food

Our children need to learn gardening. The reasons for this reach deep into their mental and emotional as well as in their physical survival. Gardening is an active participation in the deepest mysteries of the universe. By gardening our children learn that they constitute with all growing things a single community of life. They learn to nurture and be nurtured in a universe that is always precarious but ultimately benign. They learn profound reasons for the seasonal rituals of the great religious traditions.

More immediately, however, is the question of physical survival. With the every-increasing loss of soil on which food-growing depends, with the rising inflation in the economic situation, with the need for food grown in an organic context, and with the crowded situation in our urban centers, the capacity of local communities to grow a significant amount of their own food on very limited areas of earth will become an increasing urgency. Community-supported agriculture projects are already developed throughout the North American continent.

Elementary education especially might very well begin and be developed in a gardening context. How much the children could learn! A language related to life! Emotional responses to blossoming and fruitful plants, social cooperation, death as a source of life. They could learn geology and biology and astronomy. They could learn the sources of poetry and literature and the arts. They might even be saved from the sterile and ephemeral world of electronic games.

## The Managerial Role

Our children need to be prepared for their role in the fruitful functioning of the Great Earth itself, the first and greatest of all corporations. They need to learn that the managerial role in all human cooperative enterprises is to enhance the functioning and meaning and value of this primary corporation of the planet on which we live. If the Earth becomes bankrupt there is no future for anything that lives on the earth. The remarkable achievement of the earth in its natural state is its ability to renew itself and all its living forms. There is a minimum of entropy in the earth system. Energies are cycled and recycled indefinitely. The infrastructure renews itself. No human process can do this. Neither automobiles nor roadways, nor subway systems, nor fossil fuels, nor railways, nor power plants, nor nuclear stations renew themselves. They last a few years and then rust away and the resources of the planet are no longer sufficient to renew them.

A completely new managerial role begins to identify itself. It will function in a different fashion and with different ideals from the manner in which management functions at present. This new mode of management begins to manifest itself in development of new courses and programs of Ecological Economics.

## Revelatory Experience

Our children need to understand the meaning and grandeur and sacredness of the earth as revelatory of the deep mysteries and meaning of the world. Rather than teaching them to disdain the natural world as unworthy of their concern, it would be most helpful if our religious traditions would move toward a stronger emphasis on the glorious phenomena of the universe about us as modes of divine communication.

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In a special manner our children need to observe and esteem the spontaneities of nature in the various bioregions of North America. These spontaneities give expression to genetic diversity which is the most precious endowment of the living world. Without the marvelous variety of living forms that swim in the sea and live and move upon the earth and fly through the air, our own human understanding, our emotional life, our imaginative powers, our sense of the divine, our capacity for verbal expression; these would all be terribly diminished. If we lived on the moon our sense of the divine would reflect the lunar landscape; our emotions, sensitivities and imagination would all in a similar manner be limited to a lunar mode of expression. So with our children, they are what they are and have such remarkable expansion of life because they share in the natural world that they have here on the North American continent. The radiance of their surroundings is even now reflected in the radiance of our children's countenances.

## A Sense of History

Our children need a sense of their unique historical role in creating this new ecological age. This future world is something that has never existed before. We are involved in an irreversible sequence of planetary developments. For the first time an integral form of the planet earth with all its geological contours, its living forms and its human presence has become possible as a vital, functioning reality expressing itself in its unbroken sequence of splendors in movement and song and an infinite variety of color in the sky and throughout the five continents.

There is a certain truth in the expression: "The Dream drives the Action". Among the greatest contributions we can make to our children is to assist them in their dreams of a world of pure air and water and sunlight and soil, where the company of living being would flourish as this has not happened in recent centuries.

## America

As this country has often been the leader in the great industrial-technological experiment that has been taking place in these past two centuries and as this country has suffered severely from the devastation consequent on the petrochemical period through which we are passing, so now we might well become the leaders in guiding the children of the world toward this more splendid future that is presently in the making. If we see the aurora, they, hopefully, will see the dawn.



*Thomas Berry talks with children at the Center.*

**Thomas Berry** has been honored by both the United Nations and Harvard University for outstanding contributions to the development of ecological consciousness. His books include *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* and *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*.

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*We wish to express a heartfelt thank you to the following individuals and foundations for their generous support of our work from January 1, 2008 – March 9, 2009*

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# Center Programs 2008

## Programs for Children

### **Children of the Forest**

**An Afternoon Program in the Natural World for 6-9 year olds**

**3:45 – 5:30 pm**

**Spring: Wednesday, March 18 - May 6, 2009**

**Fall: TBA**

**\$160**

Once a week, rain or shine, a group of 8 children explores the forests, fields, creeks and organic garden of Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary. Unhurried by the pressures of time, they are guided in natural play and exploration by Sandy Bisdee, staff Naturalist/Educator, who brings over twenty years' experience with children and the earth to her work at the Center. The program is entirely outside in the fresh air, sunshine, wind, rain, fog and all kinds of weather! Parents may drop off their children or stay for solo time on woodland trails.

### **Make New Friends: A Nature Camp for 5-7 year olds**

**June 15 - 19, 2009**

**9:30 am – 3:00 pm**

**Cost: \$175 a child (limited to 12 children)**

**Staff: Sandy Bisdee and Scott Crews**

In this magical week together, we will make new friends deep in the forest, bubbling in the brook, blossoming in the garden and living in the open meadows. Our days begin with music, natural play and sharing time, and continue with nature walks, where we experience "magical moments" on woodland trails. In the afternoons, we gather in the story circle, make time for artistic expression, and go creek exploring off the Creeping Cedar Trail. The week will close with a joyful "Children of the Forest Festival" on Friday. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

### **Exploring Secret Places: A Nature Camp for 8-10 year olds**

**June 22 - 26, 2009**

**9:30 am – 3:00 pm**

**Cost: \$175 a child (limited to 12 children)**

**Staff: Sandy Bisdee and Scott Crews**

In this week of adventure and imagination, we will explore woodland trails, but also venture off the beaten path into the wilder areas of the natural world. Join us as we share in the wonder of these experiences together! Each day we make new connections to secret places in the natural world, and new friendships with each other. The week includes poems, stories, songs, rhythm games, music making, and exuberant sharing in the feeling of community with the natural world. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

### **Earth, Air, Fire, Water: A Nature Camp for 11-13 year-olds**

**July 6 - 10, 2009**

**9:30 am – 3:00 pm**

**Cost: \$175 a child (limited to 12 children)**

**Staff: Sandy Bisdee and Carolyn Toben**

Join us in exploring the elements of earth, air, fire and water with new eyes. Each day begins with stories and songs from many cultures followed by expeditions into the mysteries of the magical garden, woods, creeks and rocks of our earth sanctuary. Together we will discover an inner relationship to the elements. In the afternoons we give imaginative expression to our individual experiences of the morning through poetry, art and journaling. Healthy snacks are prepared daily. Please plan to bring your own lunch.

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## Programs for Schools & Groups

### **Awakening to Nature**

**Grades pre-school – K, 9:30 am –12:00 noon, \$200**

**Grades 1-5, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm, \$250**

**Number of Children: maximum 24**

“Awakening to Nature “ brings the inner lives of children into a new relationship with the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the natural world. Throughout the changing seasons, children are invited to slow down and experience the fullness of each moment at the earth sanctuary; to take in the sounds, the smells, the feel of the air, the colors and movements of forest, creek, pond, garden and meadow. Through story, music, movement and visual image, inner experiences are deepened and shared. The day ends with a heartwarming circle of reflection. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades pre-K-5.

### **The Poetry of Nature**

**9:30 am – 1:30 pm**

**Grades 6-12**

**Cost: \$250**

**Number of Students: maximum 24**

*“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things” ~ Mary Oliver*

Students are led along earth sanctuary trails on a journey that deepens their connection to the natural world through silent practices and poetry readings at special sites. While taking in the images of each new place, students are called to write their own poetry of nature. The day culminates in a poetry reading after lunch where each contribution is deeply connected to their experiences of the earth sanctuary and to their inner life. They read poems, ask questions, and share reflections on the day and their sense of belonging to the natural world. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of students in grades 6-12.

### **Native American Journeys**

**9:30 am – 1:30 pm**

**Grades K-5**

**Cost: \$250**

**Number of Children: maximum 24**

“Native American Journeys” is a program about Native Americans that begins around the fire circle. Original and traditional stories, Native American poetry, songs in various tribal tongues, original and traditional flute music, artistic activities, guided earth walks in smaller groups, exposure to everyday artifacts, discussion about food, medicine, shelter, clothing, stewardship and spiritual beliefs can be woven into this day together. Our time together is centered around gratitude, respect for all creation, silence, giving and receiving, sensorial awareness and individual gifts. The children come away with an experience that is deeply connected to the natural world. We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades K-5.

### **Special Design Programs**

Since 2004, the Center has created a wide range of Special Design Programs for schools, churches, and universities that bring children, young adults and educators into a deep personal connection to the natural world. The Center welcomes inquiries from teachers and schools, pre-school through college. We offer many possibilities for educators to partner with the Center in creating a compassionate human presence to the Earth.

We are happy to set up an exploratory meeting with you to consider ways in which the Center might tailor a program to the particular needs and values of your learning community. If you are interested in exploring a Special Design Program with the Center, please contact Center Director Peggy Whalen-Levitt at (336) 449-0612 or e-mail her at [beholdnature@aol.com](mailto:beholdnature@aol.com).

*Applications for Children’s Programs may be downloaded from our website at [www.beholdnature.org](http://www.beholdnature.org). Please call the office at (336) 449-0612 to arrange a date for a school group before sending in your registration forms.*

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## Site-based Educators' Programs

The Center offers an opportunity for educators who are familiar with the philosophy of the Center to offer their own programs for students at the earth sanctuary. Educators who have attended either the Seventh Generation Teachers' Program or The Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program are eligible for this opportunity. In keeping with the mission of the Center, we ask that participating educators design programs for children, young adults and college students that call upon their inner faculties of imagination and intuition and enable them to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world. The fee for a Site-Based Educator's Program is \$125 per day. If you are interested in this opportunity, please request an application from Center Director Peggy Whalen-Levitt at (336) 449-0612 or e-mail her at *beholdnature@aol.com*. Once we have reviewed your proposal, we will contact you within a week to confirm a date. Programs are limited to 30 students.

## Programs for College Students

### **Garden Apprenticeship Program**

The Center seeks college students who are interested in working in our organic garden under the direction of our garden volunteer coordinator, Sandy Bisdee. If you are interested in making a commitment to a weekly schedule of service during the Fall, Spring or Summer semester, please contact Sandy at *sandybisdee@hotmail.com* or e-mail the Center at *beholdnature@aol.com*.

## Programs for Adults

### **The Bird Whisperer: A Retreat with Randy Senzig**

**Saturday, May 2, 2009**

**9:30 am – 4:00 pm**

**\$65 (lunch included)**

A shift in Randy Senzig's understanding began when he realized that beyond the teaching of content, young people are drawn to you when you act in a way that says to them that you care about all life. A teacher of public high school science, Randy has taken to heart Thomas Berry's recognition that "while we have more scientific knowledge of the universe than any people every had, it is not the type of knowledge that leads to an intimate presence with a meaningful universe." His students call him the "Bird Whisperer. Join "The Bird Whisperer" for a journey through his story of bringing young people into an intimate presence with the natural world.

**Randy Senzig** has taught science for 31 years in North Carolina and Florida public schools. He holds a NC Science Teaching License as well as being a NC Certified Environmental Educator. Randy is a NCSU Kenan Fellow, the 2006 NC Environmental Educator of the Year, his high school's Teacher of the Year, NCSTA District Science Teacher of the Year and has received many grants to promote outdoor education. He was the co-director of NCSU Summer Environmental Camp. His website, *Birds in the Schoolyard*, promotes outdoor education. He wrote the Wake County Environmental Science Curriculum. Randy has studied at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, pursued graduate studies in Conservation Biology at Florida International University and earned a Masters in Education at the University of North Florida.

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## **The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice**

*A Two-Year Co-Research Program for Educators funded by the Kalliopeia Foundation*

Since its beginnings in 2000, The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World has worked closely with ecotheologian Thomas Berry to re-imagine the child's relationship with the natural world. Seminal to these conversations is the following quote from Thomas Berry:

*There is a certain futility in the efforts being made – truly sincere, dedicated, and intelligent efforts – to remedy our environmental devastation simply by activating renewable sources of energy and by reducing the deleterious impact of the industrial world. The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder, beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude the natural world remains a commodity to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality to be venerated. The deep psychic shift needed to withdraw us from the fascination of the industrial world and the deceptive gifts that it gives us is too difficult for simply the avoidance of its difficulties or the attractions of its benefits. Eventually, only our sense of the sacred will save us.<sup>1</sup>*

In considering the education of children and young adults in our culture, we have come to believe that this “deep psychic shift” that Thomas Berry refers to is the central task of our time. To what extent does the schooling of children contribute to their view of the natural world as a commodity? How might we create a context within which children awaken to the wonder, beauty and intimacy of the natural world? What might be done to restore a sense of the natural world as a sacred presence in the lives of children? These are the questions that have concerned us.

In response to these questions, the Center initiated a two-year program in the Autumn of 2006 entitled “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice,” designed to prepare educators to develop capacities to nurture the deep inner faculties of imagination and intuition in children and young adults, and to create contexts within which children and young adults are given the opportunity to develop a bond of intimacy with the natural world.

Each year, the Center accepts a new class of twenty educators into “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice” program. The group is comprised of teachers, parents, child psychologists, guidance counselors, religious educators, child care providers, naturalists, college professors, and others who are entrusted with the care of children or young adults and who indicate a deep interest in developing capacities for nurturing a relationship between the inner life of the child/young adult and the natural world.

Designed as a co-research among participants, the program unfolds over the course of two years. During the first year, participants come together for Saturday retreats in the Fall, Winter and Spring, as well as a two-day retreat in the summer. In the second year, participants develop a practice in consultation with Center staff and reunite for a retreat in the Summer during which practices are shared. The program is intended to be a meaningful sequence of experiences that build one upon the other. Therefore, we request that participants make a commitment to attend every session and complete readings and assignments prior to each retreat.

In the first year, we focus on “Presence” - the development of inner capacities, both in ourselves and in children and young adults that enable us to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world. In the second year, we focus on “Practice” – the development of new ways of working in the world.

At the Center, we try to create a meaningful context for our programs by paying close attention to the rhythm of the day. Retreats begin with a moment of silence intended to quiet the mind and create a field of receptivity for the group. Every retreat includes solo time in the natural world, time for reflection and sharing, the fellowship of shared meals at lunch, and presentations related to the theme at hand.

*Applications can be downloaded at [www.beholdnature.org](http://www.beholdnature.org) or requested by contacting Peggy Whalen-Levitt at the Center at [beholdnature@aol.com](mailto:beholdnature@aol.com) or (336) 449-0612.*

*A beautiful collection of practices has now been published entitled  
**The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice, 2006-2008**  
To order a copy, see “Publications” at the Center website*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Berry, Foreword, *When Trees Say Nothing* by Thomas Merton, edited by Kathleen Diegnan, Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003, pp. 18-19.



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# The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World

## A Brief History

The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World was established as a non-profit organization in March 2000 in a public/private partnership with Timberlake Farm, a 165 acre earth sanctuary located in the foothills of North Carolina. The earth sanctuary was placed in a conservation easement with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina in 2001.

During the 2000-2001 academic year, the Center invited a group of educators to participate in a series of retreats with ecotheologian Thomas Berry (*The Dream of the Earth*) and writer/educator Richard Lewis (*Living by Wonder*) entitled “The Biological Imperative: Nature, Education and Imagination.” These retreats marked the beginning of our work with educators in which we considered the question “Can we establish a new form of dialogue between ourselves and the extraordinary phenomena that make up our living universe?”

From 2002-2006, the Center offered a yearlong intensive program for educators entitled “The Seventh Generation Teachers’ Program.” Through a series of three retreats, teachers shared their own ecostories, kept a nature journal, and transferred new ways of listening and responding to the natural world to their practice as teachers. Seventy-nine teachers participated in this program during its first four years.

During the Fall of 2006, our work with educators took the form of a new two-year program, “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice,” funded by a grant from the Compton Foundation. Now in its third year, this co-research program continues with the support of the Kalliopeia Foundation and attracts educators from all over the country.

The Center’s Programs for children and young adults have served over 6,000 young people from more than 50 public and private schools in the foothills of North Carolina since the Center’s inception in the Fall of 2000. The Center’s approach to working “small and deep” with children and young adults is realized in our present offerings including “Awakening to Nature,” “The Poetry of Nature,” “Native American Journeys,” “Children of the Forest,” and our one-week nature camps in the summer.

In the Fall of 2004, the Center initiated Special Design programs for schools and groups. Through programs tailored to the needs of a particular learning community, the Center has created a wide range of Special Design Programs for schools, churches, and universities that bring children, young adults and educators into a deep personal connection to the natural world. These programs offer many possibilities for educators to partner with the Center in creating a compassionate human presence to the Earth.

The Center publishes a biannual newsletter, *Chrysalis*, which reaches an international audience. Published since the Fall of 2004, *Chrysalis* is a forum where thoughts on the relationship between the inner life of the child and the natural world are exchanged, as well as a vehicle for making Center programs visible to the general public.

Now in its ninth year of existence, the Center was invited to make a presentation about its “Inner Life of the Child in Nature” program at the Child/Spirit Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee on November 8, 2007. In recognition of its distinguished service in carrying forward the work of Thomas Berry, the Center was awarded the Thomas Berry Award by the Greensboro Public Library on November 10, 2007.

The Center’s work is now reaching wider audiences through publications and television. An article about the Center’s work with children, “Ten Caterpillars Yawning,” appeared in *Earthlight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age*, edited by Cindy Spring and Anthony Manousos in 2007. In the summer of 2008, the Center was featured in a North Carolina Public Television segment of Simple Living on the child’s relationship with the natural world that included interviews with Thomas Berry, Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, and Joseph Cornell, author of *Sharing Nature with Children*, *Journey to the Heart of Nature*, and *Listening to Nature*. The Center’s work will soon be featured in the forthcoming book, *For the Love of Nature: 101 Solutions for the Restoration of Biodiversity*, by Briony Penn and Robin J. Hood with Guy Dauncy.

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# The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm

*1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC 27377*

*(336) 449-0612 (phone & fax)*

*E-mail: beholdnature@aol.com*

*www.beholdnature.org*



## Mission Statement

The mission of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is to bring to life a new vision of the relationship between the inner life of the child and the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the universe.

Presently, the natural world is viewed as a commodity to be used rather than as a sacred reality to be venerated. A shift in our way of relating to the natural world is essential if we hope to participate in nature's unfolding rather than in its demise. This shift is nowhere more crucial than within the field of education where the child's way of relating to the natural world is formed.

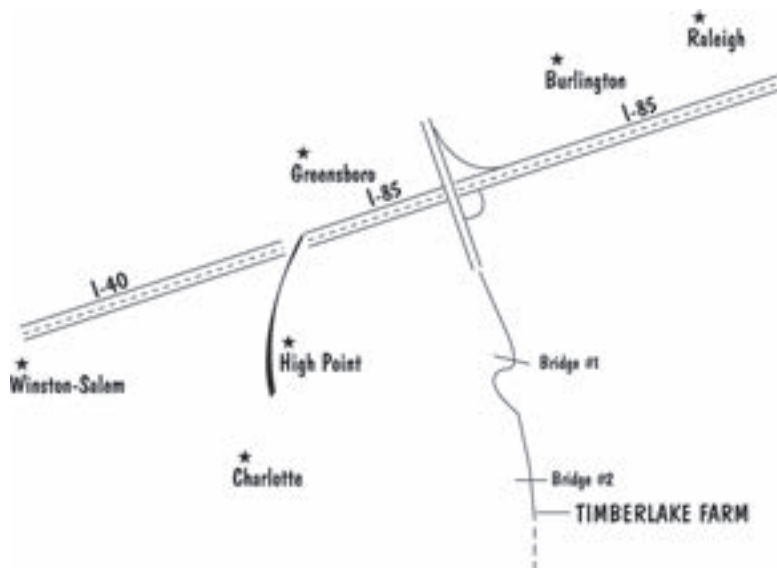
Located within the beauty of a 165 acre earth sanctuary, the Center's way of working is threefold: First, the Center offers a setting within which national presenters explore the relationship between the inner life of the child and nature from diverse perspectives. Second, the Center provides a context for teachers to deepen their own personal connection to the natural world and to be co-creators of ways to bring nature awareness to all paths of teaching. Third, the Center designs programs for children, young adults and college students which call upon their inner faculties of imagination and intuition and enable them to form a bond of intimacy with the natural world.

FROM WINSTON-SALEM/  
GREENSBORO

Take I-40 East to I-85; continue about 13 miles beyond Greensboro towards Burlington. Exit at Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). You will go under the overpass and loop around. Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.

FROM RALEIGH/DURHAM/  
CHAPEL HILL

Take I-85 South towards Greensboro. Continue on I-85 about 10 miles past Burlington. Exit on Rock Creek Dairy Road (Exit #135). Turn left at the top of the exit and go just over two miles. The Timberlake Farm entrance is on the left at the top of the hill.



*The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is a non-profit organization that champions inclusiveness and actively discourages discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other factors that deny the essential humanity of all people. Furthermore, the Center encourages a love and respect for the diversity of the natural world.*

Center for Education, Imagination and The Natural World  
at Timberlake Farm  
1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road  
Whitsett, North Carolina 27377

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