Gumbo

~~ The Grail Connection ~

February 2012

A Tale of Mentoring: It Takes a Grail Team or Two or Three, Plus.....

Sharon Thomson

On the night of January 17th, High School Senior Lena Cheyne made a presentation on ***The International Trafficking of Women and Children*** *at the Cornwall Grail Center. Following are some of the steps it took for this shy teenager to arrive at such an important turning point in her life.*

In March, 2010 Lena Cheyne attended an Introduction to the Grail program at the Cornwall Center. She had been "persuaded" by her mother, Cindy Cheyne (who had just begun to do volunteer work at Cornwall), to attend. Initially unhappy, Lena sat through the entire program beside her friend Kim whom she had "dragged along" (Lena's words) with her. Present at the program were a number of young international participants at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York City.

Also present at the program was Boston Grail member **Mary Farrell** (in her capacity as Cornwall connection on the National Leadership Team at that time). When it was over—during a mix and mingle moment —Mary and Lena struck up a conversation about a book Mary was reading, *Half the Sky*, and a play dealing with sex trafficking that Mary had recently seen at Grailville. Lena was intrigued enough by the conversation to do more research and ultimately decided to make International Trafficking of Women and Children her Global Studies project at school.

The following year, Lena and her mother Cindy (who was now on the staff of the Center) asked if they could participate in the 2011 Commission on the Status of Women held at the UN headquarters in NYC. Each year the Grail Link to the UN (GLUN) participates in this two-week event, organizing workshops, panel discussions, and other events. Since 2007, GLUN has been sponsoring girls from many different countries, ages 14 to 18, to attend the CSW

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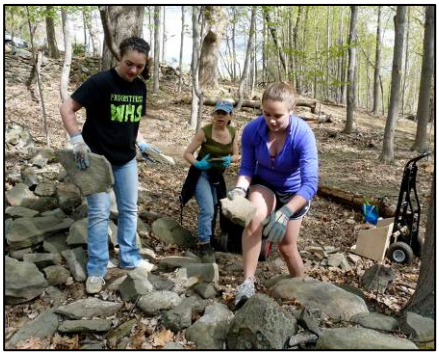
and participate in its work. We, of course, were thrilled by Lena's desire to attend. But we told her she could go on one condition: that she lead a program here on human trafficking before she graduated from high school. She agreed, somewhat reluctantly, due to trepidation about speaking in public. Meanwhile, through her international experience at the CSW, Lena decided to pursue International Relations as a future career, setting her sights on John Cabot University in Rome. She traveled to Italy the following summer (with mother Cindy, of course) to visit the school and to spend time on the eco-farm of a friend she had made at the CSW—Sara, daughter of Italo-Brazilian Grail member, Rosie Rodriguez.



Throughout these two years Lena has eagerly participated in other programs and projects at the Center. But it wasn't until recently that she finally set a date for HER program....

...when WE told her that she wouldn't be going to CSW 2012 unless she did it!

And—despite nerves and a few technical glitches--Lena DID IT splendidly!!!

So much so that during the Q & A, **Mary Kay Louchart** suggested some other places where she might consider repeating her presentation on this important topic, including the Bronx, of course.

One more Grail Team to touch, and be touched by, the life of a promising young woman. And proud mother, Cindy?

Why, she'll be making her commitment in The Grail this Spring, happily mentored on the journey she has shared with her daughter all along The Way.

What's Going On Around Grailville?

Mary Farrell

Not that I think any of you are likely to have difficulty with these reminiscences, but …

- Remember when, back in 2008, the membership of the Grail voted to allow the Grail to sell some land to Heartland Ecovillage?

- Remember the Strategic Plan we adopted in Spring 2009 in which we committed, among other things, to **"**Uphold the work of the Centers as an essential work of the Grail?"

- Remember how at the General Assembly last fall **Bonnie Hendricks** shared with us all her excitement about the Transition movement and what it might mean for the Grail to use our own resources to move into alignment with ways of living that have inspired and sustained us for years (e.g. Permaculture)?

Well, clearly, lots of members do, and so does the Council. Perhaps as a result, a number of ideas, initiatives, plans and projects have surfaced recently and we want you to be aware of what's going on so you can **let us know what you think**.

Specifically real estate has become a topic of interest in and around Grailville. **Meg Bruck** and **Beth Wasmer** served as skilled and diligent negotiators for the Grail throughout their terms on Council and the National Leadership Team. With their Heartland counterparts they laid very valuable groundwork and negotiated agreements concerning how the parties will move forward on any development. Last fall, a sub-Group of the Heartland Ecovillage approached Council asking that we consider a proposal for a smaller development as Phase 1 of the ecovillage. Phase 1, as they deem themselves, consists of **Mary Lu Lageman, Lenie Schaareman, Shirley Beaupre** and Michele Bertaux. They propose initially purchasing four acres of land on which to construct a single, four-unit multi-family home with common area. Later on, the group envisions more development, but this initiative provides the best opportunity for the project to get off the ground. After talking with Mary Lu and Lenie, who represent this subgroup, we have encouraged them to develop a plan for submission, based on the earlier agreements. Clearly, all the specifics of a site plan, financing and purchase agreement have yet to be worked out, but at the moment there is renewed excitement about the prospect that an ecovillage at Grailville may yet become a reality.

Also last fall Grail members **Fran Martin** and **Ruth Gallant** decided that they were ready to make some changes in their lives and asked whether the Grail would be interested in buying their house, located adjacent to Grailville just behind Tidings. Obviously, many factors affect the final decision on such a question, but pros and cons, what-ifs and how-tos are all being explored even as I write.

Why might the Grail be interested in owning this property?

- Its location makes it feel like part of Grailville already (as it once was);
- As we pursue initiatives to repopulate Grailville with people looking to work on the land or build other initiatives, including transition, we need to be able to make housing available without destroying the retreat center capabilities;
- Perhaps there's an income potential if we rent all or part of it out;
- The house is in good shape and has a flexible layout; part of it might even be useful in providing additional meeting facilities for Tidings.

Some of the questions that have been identified include:

- We are not the most well-endowed of organizations; is this where we will get the most bang for our bucks?
- How do we assure that maintenance and upkeep don't overwhelm our capacity at Grailville?
- Do we have the creative capacity to steward such an additional asset?

I'm sure you can imagine the what-if and how-to scenarios being discussed.

Finally, you know from the GA and the previous issues of *Gumbo* that **Bonnie Hendricks** is enthusiastic about the Transition Movement and has been hired to explore the potential to use Grailville's rich resources in a Transition context to realize a vision of Grailville not only as a National Center of the Grail but as a little village, a regional hub. She expands on this vision below and the work she's doing. If the response at the GA to her presentation is any indicator, lots of Grail members are eager indeed to find out more about this process.

What do you think of these ideas or developments? We're listening. Let us know! Add your voice to these discussions! You can call me at (617) 227-5431 or email me, mkf@puck61.net, or contact Noreen at the national office (513) 683-5750 or noreen@grail-us.org. Thanks for being involved!

Reflecting On My First Three Months

Bonnie Hendricks

I've been writing in *Gumbo* the past three months about the Transition movement. Here's the reminder: What is the Transition [Town] Movement? The Transition Movement is comprised of vibrant, grassroots community initiatives that seek to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis. (transitionus.org) Transition is the background, or the framework, for the work I'm doing at Grailville.

This month I want to share a bit of how it's going.

Two questions have guided my inquiry: 1) what is happening in this geographic area in regards to Transition (and related movements, like *Slow Food, Slow Money, Permaculture,* etc.)?, and 2) is there local/Grail energy around any of this that can be galvanized for the future sustainability of Grailville? There are numerous populations that I've been attending to in one form or another. Internally, there are the on-the-ground folks at Grailville (staff, residents, partners), the regional Grail (members and explorers), and the national Grail (the Council, to whom I'm accountable, and non-local membership).

I've been thinking about the 'external' populations as the immediately-local city of Loveland, and the broader Cincinnati Region. (There is also big-picture global context; I do carve out time most days to keep up with things that are happening on that front.)

Internally, I felt a bit like the farmer in the parable of the sower: scattering seed, staying attentive to see where the seeds go and following up with water and nurture with seeds that do find fertile soil. At Grailville, I came in as a bit of an outsider, and there have been questions among the staff regarding my role here, how what I'm doing impacts the good work currently happening at Grailville, etc. It's been a time of trust- and relationship-building, and deepening my understanding of Grailville operations and land use.

One of the things that has been most exciting has been returning to find a revitalized regional Grail. It's been delightful to see so much new energy in the area, and it has been many of the newer Grail members and explorers who have been responding with interest to the conversation about Transition.

Early on, I began to focus on local food. Food – the cost of, access to – is a unifying concern. Grailville is in the midst of an interesting locus of diversity; food has the potential to bridge populations. And given Grailville's agricultural history and present, everyone I've talked to has echoed the sentiment that increasing Grailville's role in local food is "a no brainer." So I've been identifying and meeting with people who play a role the local food picture – chefs, distributers, resource folks (publications); visiting regional farms to see who is doing what; connecting with the local chapter of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA), the state's organic organization; and following the Cincinnati Locavore listserv.

There are many pieces to the local food picture, which, like most things, gets complex. Starting with how we define "local." Since Grailville is part of the Cincinnati region food-shed, I have been working to gain an understanding of the regional food system: who are the key players, what are they doing, what's being talked about, what's in the works for expanding local food. And more and more, others are joining me in the exploration.

Mary Lu Lageman, Amy Tuttle (Grailville Public Ally), Bonnie Hendricks, Claudia Yamasue (explorer) in front of the earthship at Peaceful Acres Farm

Last weekend, a group of us went to a screening of the film *The Greenhorns*, a documentary about young farmers. (Young, in this case is "57 or fresher;" 57 being the average age of the American farmer.) The film was followed by a discussion with a panel of local young farmers. The outing was a good opportunity for a group of us to have a shared experience meeting some of the new young farmers in the area and hearing about new local initiatives, such as the creation of a Greater Cincinnati Food Hub. A food hub is "a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food" – USDA. For more about Greenhorns: www.thegreenhorns.net

The exploration hasn't focused exclusively on food. On one of the few cold days we had in January, a few of us ventured out to Peaceful Acres lavender farm in Martinsville, Ohio. The young couple who owns Peaceful Acres is building an earthship: a home constructed from recycled materials - bottles and cans but mostly tires rammed with earth. While there are whole communities of such structures in New Mexico, where the technology originated, there are only two in Ohio, one of which is in our backyard. It was a good connection to make, and it was interesting to hear about the sustainable building workshops they are offering. For more info about earthships: http://earthship.com/

At the end of three months, I pause to reflect on the question: is there energy around any of this that can be galvanized for the future sustainability of Grailville? Within the last 10 days or so, I'm beginning to think that the answer may be Yes. A core group of folks is emerging who are consistently engaging and responding to invitations, and a growing cadre of other folks are engaging at some level or coming forward and saying they'd like to be involved. The next key piece of the work will be to increase the opportunities for people to come together and begin to get folks engaged with each other around the themes of the exploration.

Are you interested in Bonnie's explorations? Contact her at bonnie@grail-us.org or by calling, (513) 683-5750.

So Who's Going to Plan the Next Grail Gathering?

When the Grail adopted The Movement Building Scenario for the Future in 2008, it changed the way we do national gatherings between General Assemblies:

> CONNECTING NATIONALLY
>
> For the purpose of bonding, connecting and networking, various gatherings/ national meetings/retreats take place in venues around the country. **These gatherings are organized at the initiative of members, who take responsibility for their planning in coordination with national staff**. Such gatherings replace the National Retreat and National Meeting that currently occur in the years between General Assemblies.

In 2009 and 2010, in part to ease the transition to the new format, **Carol Siemering** and the Council took responsibility for organizing, respectively, a National Retreat and a National Gathering. This year, there is an opportunity for you, the movement, to build on the momentum begun at the General Assembly. Anyone interested in organizing a national gathering in 2012 (or 2013) should be in contact with the National Office, office@grail-us.org, and we can help manage the logistics. If you'd like to talk about the possibilities, give Noreen a call at (513) 683-5750

January Grail Gathering in Northern California

Ria de Groot

Clockwise from left: Hermine Glaser, Sharon Wood, Susan Becker, Ria de Groot, Kit Culleton, Monica Thyberg, Lea Grundy, Rosa Ruiz

On January 28, our Northern California Grail Group gathered at **Lea Grundy's** home with a focus on "Hope." The eight of us, **Susan Becker, Kit Culleton, Ria de Groot, Hermine Glaser, Rosa Ruiz, Monica Thyberg, Sharon Wood** and **Lea** gathered, remembered Grail members who are not well, and those who had experienced loss this year, the last of which was Rosa, whose father, Leonardo, died recently. Sharon was brave to drive all the way from Paso Robles. We meditated, read our poems, read quotes and shared our insights on Hope, at this juncture of our lives and the state of the world. This was followed by our traditional potluck lunch and…sweets.

In the afternoon, Lea took her turn to share with us her work in organizing for an election year and her promotion of candidates who stand for the issues "we" value. She painted a mostly hopeful picture for the State of California. However, there is one initiative that could really stand in the way and cause a major shift, and that would be "The Right to Work" initiative. (Basically causing a power shift away from the unions and the work that they do, into the hands of the corporate interests). We appreciated Lea's work and her understanding of the issues.

Rosa and Ria took some time to report on the November Grail General Assembly. We talked about Occupy, fracking, the U.N., Training for Transformation, other presentations, Grail circles, Ecovillage and the European Grail's 90th Birthday, celebrated on Sunday in Grailville's dining room, along with Eva Fleischner's presentation to Grailville of her photo of Lydwine von Kerstbergen in her teen years. All in all it was a delightful day.

Grail Help Wanted

We would like to use, as a regular feature in Gumbo, information about opportunities for Grail members, explorers and friends to be involved in service. If you know of programs, events or ongoing work that could use a helping hand for a day, a week, a month, email noreen@grail-us.org or call the national office at (513) 683-5750.

This month's opportunities come from the Northern California Grail:

DuAnne Welsch wants to rebuild a closer link with San Jose Grail Family Services (GFS), the family resource center spun off from the Grail in 1999. GFS uses many volunteers and if you'd like more information, contact DuAnne at duannewelsch@gmail.com

Lea Grundy, who is involved in various campaigns, says there are opportunities in the Los Angeles area which have to do with getting out the vote this year working with the Central Labor Council in that area. For more information, contact Lea at (510) 548-6500 or leagrundy@hotmail.com

Ria de Groot says "Stockton is just a good place to come for anyone looking to work or volunteer with homeless population and a pre-school I helped set up, which is a Head Start program for homeless children…Our area is also heavily populated with migrant workers and there is lots to do."

At the GA in November, **Eva Fleischner** presented Grailville with a rare and beautiful early photograph of **Lydwine van Kersenberg** who, along with Joan Overboss, brought the Grail to the United States in 1940. The framed photo will be given a place of honor at Grailville, along with other images and treasures of our early years.

GFS
Empowering San José Families

As The Grail Considers Whether to Endorse the Occupy Movement…

The following is a posting from the national Grail listserv which raises broader questions about issues The Grail and Grail members might want to examine.

If we are serious about the impact of the power of capital to broadside fair wages and benefits, to derail just conditions in the developing world, denying social and equitable development for millions, as well as the clear proof that environmental damage is being and will continue to be done domestically and internationally, **I think that a concrete way that we could support OWS is to take a look at our Grail portfolio....to ask what role we as members play in benefits and drawbacks to our stated mission of the Grail.** If we cannot have that dialogue, do we dare to preach to the country? How do we participate in the unbridled aspects of capital investment? (I certainly have strong opinions about the gas industry and the pillage of small towns, villages and even huge urban populations in the name of "energy independence".... how independent is the home owner or farmer in Western New York, Ohio or Pennsylvania is when he/she cannot use the well water to meet essential family needs, water crops, or give water to herds?)

If we participate (and have participated for decades) in the financial rewards of our investments (I have a retirement account through the Grail in TIAA/CREF**), shouldn't we be honest enough to start with our own internal discussion of the Grail's participation in the rewards of capital investment**?

Another aspect of our collaboration with the "system" provided by our legal taxation policies which have granted tax exempt status to religious organizations makes me wonder if we ever reflect on the lands we hold in light of comparisons to millions of families under water with their mortgage? I have always admired the Catholic Worker stand – they accept no federal tax exemption status due to the militarization of our national budget, and they pay all their local taxes....a sign of non-exceptionalism in using the services at hand and paid for along with their neighbors.

Have we ever applied a "fairness doctrine" to our existing holdings? Would we pass any kind of scrutiny that might be applied by a social reform doctrine coming out of the future OWS movement? [Editor's note: The Grail's funds are invested through a Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) lens, which has evolved over the years as new issues emerged. The criteria is reviewed periodically and updated by the Finance Committee and/or the Investments Subcommittee. Both groups, by the way, could use some volunteers.]

There was recent PBS coverage of Harvard's female president, commenting upon how the financial crisis had effected their portfolio....$15 billion lost from about a $30 billion portfolio...and how "frugal" measures now have to be applied. (Harvard's portfolio has since recovered – to $32 billion). Well, as the richest citizens continue to send their children there, as the value of a resume with a Harvard degree begins to represent a future in the 1% bracket, one wants to know "Is Harvard tax exempt?" I do not know the answer to that question, but I am asking us as Grail members to look internally at the question: "Have we accepted the exceptionalism doctrine within our own ranks?" "Do we benefit in many ways personally from the legal/capital benefits of our system – an exceptionalism embraced by most religious organizations and where their savings lead them to fund what benefits their members?"

I would think that if we begin the dialogue internally and get brave and clear on our own organization's participation in the capital system, we might begin an authentic dialogue with other faith-based entities.

I have heard not a peep from any religious organization on this need.....it is quite scary to them and one raising it a church vestry meeting, parish council or with the trustees of our nearest non-profit would probably lead to a bit of outrage. But if we are a serious and realistic movement, let us take an internal look at the Grail. We have benefitted from the accepted notions of decades. I think we could all benefit from such personal and movement scrutiny.

Can we bear the public scrutiny? Can we be a force for the conscience of the religious community nationally who I am sure sit on billions of investment dollars?

My view of OWS and the Grail would be for us to take a good look at where we benefit from our own investments in the capitalist system and then to draw others in the faith-based community nationally to respond bravely to the OWS challenge and to take risks that we are on the right side of history.

Thanks for an ongoing discussion.

-- Best, Kate Twohy

Occupy: Join the Discussion – And Vote!

If you are a Grail member and not part of the national Grail listserv, you're missing a great discussion and the prelude to a vote on whether the Grail should support the Occupy Wall Street movement. If you'd like to ***join the listserv****, contact the national office at office@grail-us.org or (513) 683-5750.*

If you want to have a voice in the voting on whether to support Occupy*, you can at anytime change your member status to Active or Emerita, Voting. It's as simple as a phone call to the National Office, (513) 683-5750 or sending an email to office@grail-us.org no later than Thursday, February 16. Ballots will be sent out on February 17 and must be returned to the National office by March 2, 2012.*

Judith Blackburn testifies against fracking at the Longmont, Colorado City Council meeting

Introducing Ana Luisa Heleno: Intern with Grail Link to the United Nations

(In the *National Grail News*, we introduced Ana Luisa Heleno. She is in New York for three months, staying at the Bronx Grail Center. Now here she introduces herself).

My name is Ana Luísa, I´m 28 years old and I live in Golegã, Portugal. I studied Art History and Education in Coimbra University then I worked in the Photography Museum Carlos in Golegã. I worked as teacher but now I'm unemployed.

And when I started looking for a 'new beginning', the Grail came into my life. Over the years I heard talk about Grail but I thought that Grail was just the name of the house where my teacher Celeste Isabel lives!

Last year I began to discover the Grail by the Lien Network where I found young women with the same interests and concerns and principally I found new friends! At the same time I got involved in the Girl Effect Project through the Summer Camps for girls ages 10 to 14 held at the Grail in Golegã. It was a very rewarding and loving experience! In Lisbon, we work with college girls. For them we have Yoga Classes, movies and spaces for discussion at the Tuesday Meetings.

Now with the opportunity of working in the UN's Commission on the Status of Women, I hope to get new tools for developing and enriching my work in the Girl Effect Project while at the same time work, share experiences, knowledge and love with new persons and invest in the girls because they will do the rest!

Grail Birthdays: February

Make a call, drop a note or send an email to one of your sisters on her special day.

February 1 :	Marlene Braam Cuniberti	February 16 :	Mpanda Kalala
February 2 :	Jennifer Girotti-Karp	February 18 :	Mary Ann McCarthy
February 3 :	Mary Ellen Clifford	February 18 :	Jane Bergquist
February 5 :	Mary Heidkamp	February 20 :	Mary Ellen Camele
February 6 :	Anita Broussard Phillips	February 21 :	Miriam Hill
February 6 :	Rosa Ruiz	February 23 :	Laura Kaplan
February 8 :	Florence Marquez	February 25 :	Dorothy Rasenberger
February 15 :	Deborah Sullivan	February 26 :	Jackie DiSalvo