



Gumbo

~~ *The Grail Connection* ~

April 2012

Welcoming New Grail Members

On April 15, six new Grail members will be welcomed in a ceremony at Grailville. They are introduced by below their mentors and in their own words.

Julia Almaguer

Deborah Sullivan: Julia is a bright, dynamic young woman who brings great energy to The Grail. She is married with two elementary-age children and also has a full-time job. Julia has been a “Math Specialist” for five years at Summit Country Day School and was a teacher for 12 years before that. Julia has sought out ways to be involved with The Grail including attending/supporting regional events, working with the EarthShares CSA at Grailville, and by acting as the coordinator for our Grail book club. It has been a pleasure to get to know Julia over the last year and I look forward to working with her in the future..



Julia: I first became aware of Grailville when I drove past it several years ago. I had to know what this place was. How could a person feel any other way after seeing the House of Joy? One day I turned in the drive and explored. I still needed to know more, so I got on the Internet to find out what this place was that attracted me so. Over time, I signed up for workshops and classes, became an Explorer, joined the book group, attended monthly regional meetings, and now sometimes find myself at Grail activities two or three times a week. I am fortunate to live nearby in Loveland.

My current involvement with The Grail includes coordinating the monthly book club, managing the upcoming Christmas card sale, and attending the Power of the Universe videos on Friday nights during Lent. Tangentially, I serve on the Board of Earth-Shares CSA which is located at Grailville.

I look forward to continuing these involvements, to celebrating Easter at Grailville in the very near future, to becoming more involved with the Transition Town movement, to bringing my young daughter to more and more Grail events and raising her as a daughter of

The Grail, to deepening my ties to the women of The Grail, and to giving my time and talents to benefit The Grail and its mission.

Thank you very much to the women in the Cincinnati region who have welcomed me and taught me about The Grail. I'd like to give special thanks to my mentor, **Deborah Sullivan**. I am always impressed by these women's commitment to The Grail's ideals and the care and respect the women afford others, even when disagreeing. I thrive on the substantive, yet fun, conversations and always look forward to them.

The more time I spend with Grail women, the more I want to. I am thrilled to have found a group of women who are committed to The Grail ideals and who respect my own similar commitment. I am honored to join this group, to deepen my relationships with the women of The Grail, and to work side by side with them to make the world a better place.

Harlene Bryenton

Jean Wilson: It is my privilege to introduce Harlene to the national Grail. She will be joining The Grail on April 15th at Grailville. I met Harlene at Grailville the summer of 2002 when she attended a Joy of Summer program. Everyone on the staff was so impressed with her personality and talents she was asked to be on the staff for the next year's program. Since then I have seen her capably handle a leadership position. She has also developed a close relationship with some of the campers and fellow staff members.



Working closely with Harlene planning the camp program and carrying out those plans has been rewarding and fun! Fortunately I have known her in this capacity for 10 years. We have also become good friends visiting in each other's homes and meeting our families.

She has made many trips to Grailville from Columbus for programs and R&R. She has brought friends to our programs and started a circle of friends in Columbus to watch and discuss Grail DVDs.

She is bilingual, teaches yoga classes, is a musician, involved in women's rights organizations and is on a spiritual search. After a year as an Explorer, studying The Grail mission statement, the history of The Grail and our present activities, she feels she has found a home!! Now, I am disappointed that she is leaving the area and will not be closely involved with Grailville. I hope that Grail members in the Southwest will greet her warmly and help her find a home in The Grail there.

Harlene: I first encountered The Grail a little over 11 years ago. I still remember the feeling I had when I visited Grailville for the first time. I was having a “girls’ weekend out” in Cincinnati with a friend. I had read about the International Crèche Exhibit on the Internet and decided it would be fun to check it out. When I got out of the car, I immediately felt that I was someplace special. That feeling increased as I visited the book shop and the exhibit. Some of the Grail women were available to talk, and I was full of questions. The more I learned, the more I felt like I had found a home. I signed up for the newsletter before I left.

Life was busy, I was working full time, and Grailville is almost a 2½ hour drive from my house, so I wasn’t able to follow up on my interest as I would have liked. I did read the newsletter, and in the summer following my first visit decided to sign up for Joy of Seasons (formerly Joy of Summer), which was held at Grailville at that time. I had a wonderful time, met more awesome women, then became a member of staff for Joy of Seasons. In that capacity I had a chance to get to know and work with **Jean Wilson**, and was able to ask her more questions about The Grail. I attended Grail programs when time permitted and continued to read more about The Grail, including “Women Breaking Barriers.”

There are many things that attract me to The Grail. My personal values align very well with The Grail’s. Since I was a young woman, I’ve been interested in and active in social justice issues – especially as they relate to women. I have a strong love and concern for our Mother Earth, perhaps due to growing up on a farm. I’ve always been interested in spirituality as well, and many of the political groups I’ve been involved with ignored that aspect. The fact that this all fits together so well in The Grail, with the focus on the arts also – well, it just seems like a perfect fit for me.

The other thing that attracts me to The Grail is the quality of The Grail women. I don’t think I have ever been around such a vibrant, dedicated, talented, intelligent, compassionate group of women in my life! Every time I gather with Grail women, I feel honored and humbled to be a part of the gathering.

I am retired now, and a little over a year ago I took myself on a solo road trip to do some thinking about what I want to do with this newfound freedom. I realized that spiritual development and service to others were two important aspirations. I decided to do two things in support of those aspirations. One was to join a Buddhist sangha; the other was to explore membership in The Grail.

Service to others has been important to me since I was a young woman. Coming of the age in the ‘60’s, I was surrounded by a sharp focus on social injustice, and was active in anti-war and civil rights demonstrations. I was quite active in the women’s movement, working on women’s rights at the university and later joining the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union in Chicago. While in Chicago I also learned Spanish and worked and lived in the Mexican barrio there. I continue to work on my Spanish skills. I am not a native speaker by a long shot, but I am able to converse in Spanish fairly comfortably.

While I was raising my son and working full time, the focus of my work was in my workplace, as an active member of Affirmative Action groups. Since I’ve been retired, I have been an active volunteer for Joy of Seasons, worked with an ESOL class, taught Yoga

classes for free, worked actively in the Obama campaign, and supported various community initiatives. I also have “adopted” two beautiful granddaughters, girls who were adopted by good friends of mine. We have been very much a part of each other’s lives for the last eleven years. They are now 12 and 16 years old. I also sponsor a young woman in Uganda, paying for her school fees and boarding expenses. She is a niece of my son’s girlfriend, and signs her letters “your African daughter.”

I am not as active as I’d like to be right now, since I have one foot in Ohio and the other in New Mexico. Once I get settled, I intend to get involved in community work wherever I am. I am very interested in improving and using my Spanish, and in volunteer opportunities in Spanish-speaking areas. I am also interested in looking into the possibility of working with hospice. In the past couple of years, I have been close to people who are dealing with end-of-life issues and I’d like to find a way to support people through that transition. I am interested in growing and supporting The Grail in anyway that I can. And I remain open to being surprised by the unforeseen opportunities for service that life will present.

My spiritual journey is another primary focus of my life. I was born and raised in a Christian family. We belonged to the Congregationalist church, where I served as pianist and sometime-organist and was active in the youth group. Sunday school and church were a regular part of my life. Christianity was the early foundation for my spirituality, which has always been an important part of my life. Christianity helped me develop a strong respect for all living beings, a dedication to serving others, and a reverence for the world we live in. My beliefs were challenged by a number of things when I left home and went to college, and for a while I described myself as a “reverent atheist.” Yet atheism never felt right for me, so I continued to be a seeker. Over the years, I have developed an interest in Buddhism. It feels like a better fit for me. In my personal experience, Christianity seems to be interested in providing answers, while Buddhism encourages and supports questioning. Since I seem to be more comfortable with questions than I do with answers, it works well for me. So my roots are in Christianity, and my current spiritual practice is Buddhism.

I have been an Explorer a little over a year now, with Jean Wilson as my mentor. I have had an opportunity to learn more about The Grail. I went to Cornwall early last year and was able to attend the General Assembly at Grailville in the fall. I’ve continued to come to programs at Grailville when time allows. I am on the Grail listserv, and have read some of the emails, although I need to do better at that. I’ve “spread the word” about Grailville to friends, and have invited a number of them to come to programs with me. I also had a gathering at my house to talk about politics and spirituality, where I showed the Grail DVD. There were a dozen people who attended, one of whom has expressed an interest in learning more. And for the past several years, I have made small annual contributions to The Grail.

I have been slow to request membership for several reasons. One is simply time. I am in the process of trying to sell my house, and I am also doing a lot of traveling – primarily to the southwest, where I intend to move. Another reason is that I’m not sure how I’ll be able to support The Grail when I will likely be living such a long way from any Grail center. I don’t want to become a member in name only. I want to make a contribution. But I’ve learned that I need to be willing to take a step that feels right – even when I have no idea

what the next step will be. I trust that when the time comes, I will have the ability to figure out what that next step is.

Now is the time for me to take this step. I request Grail membership, knowing that it is both a responsibility and an honor.

Quanita Munday

Beth Murphy: I first met Quanita Munday several years ago while I was photographing a Grailville program that she was leading. She had a calm, authoritative presence and an easy-going voice. Later we met again while we were both attending Training for Transformation at Grailville. We had a chance to talk a bit and her approach to being and doing really resonated with me. When the Membership Committee was looking for volunteers to be mentors I said I'd try if they wanted me to, and when **Mary Kay Delgado** read through the list of Explorers who needed mentors, and I heard Quanita's name, I knew right away I wanted to take this opportunity to get to know this person better.



Our conversations were wide ranging, and I always came away feeling enriched. As I was new to mentoring and pretty new to The Grail myself, I wondered if we were doing what we were "supposed " to be doing, but it felt very right. We checked through the big book of materials that the committee had provided, and as Quanita had been around The Grail for some time and been doing programming at Grailville, many of the facts were not news, but we discussed the deeper meanings and implications of all the information.

Quanita has a deep personal spirituality and her natural warmth and ability to connect with others is a joy. Her chosen work path gives her the opportunity and training to use these talents to help and uplift other individuals and groups.

I felt that Quanita was already Grail in so many ways, that I was really happy when she indicated that she would like to take the step of becoming a member. I know Quanita will be a wonderful addition to our Grail sisterhood.

Quanita: I am Quanita Munday, a wife, mother, sister, and friend. I am married to a wonderful man named Steve and have two amazing children, Jacob (10) and Makayla (7). I am also the owner of a business that supports the mission of inspiring people to embrace and heal all of who they are through self-awareness and self-acceptance in the intention to build stronger communities around the world.

My first experience with The Grail was ten years ago when I served as a program manager for Public Allies, an AmeriCorps program. I took the job midyear and there was already a

Public Ally placed at Grailville. That ally, by the way, is currently a Grail sister – **Heather Teagan Blackburn**. Five years later I was reconnected to The Grail while looking for retreat space for my business. Pauletta Hansel, then co-director of Grailville, answered the phone and asked if I would like to meet and discuss doing programs at Grailville. I have been doing them ever since.

From that first moment of yes, I have been making promises and commitments to The Grail in an informal way. From planning Rites of Passage retreats while sitting in Pauletta's living room, to attending Training for Transformation at Grailville, to all of the conversations that I have had with Grail sisters about what The Grail is and where The Grail is growing. These unspoken promises of the heart have been my Commitment Ceremony to The Grail. Now I get to share it with you. I look forward to the Journey.

Emily Snyder

Terry Marshall: I am happy to welcome Emily Snyder as a Grail member. Many of you already know Emily through her involvement in The Grail National Office where she has been responsible for member outreach and development. Among her accomplishments is the recent updating of The Grail website, her numerous telephone conversations with Grail members across the country, her administration of national meetings and the last GA, along with Cari Brehse.



Her first contact with The Grail happened when **Bonnie Hendricks** advertised on Craig's List for an administrative assistant for the National Office. At that time Emily was considering re-entering the job market after spending seven months at home caring for her new son, Aiden, who was born July 25, 2008. After scanning ad after ad and finding nothing that really appealed to her, and not wanting to get involved in the corporate field, she found Bonnie's ad that talked (briefly) about The Grail values and mission. This struck a strong chord in her heart—this was a group she could be interested in. So, on March 1, 2009, Emily started in the National Office.

Since then, her exploration into what The Grail is and what membership means has evolved, developed, to the point that she feels ready to make a formal commitment to living out the values of the vision and mission of The Grail in her own life. Raised as a Presbyterian, Emily feels particularly drawn to the spiritual search in The Grail that makes her feel that The Grail is her spiritual home.

Emily and her husband, Andy, were married November 4, 2006, and now have two delightful young children, Aiden, who is almost three years old and his little sister, Abby, almost two! Andy has worked for 11 years with a home inspection company and, together with Emily, has recently taken on a franchise of the parent company. So, when Emily is not

immersed with Grail membership and outreach work, she is helping him launch his new business venture.

She graduated with a BA degree in art history and went on to get a graduate certificate in museum studies in the Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP) program at the University of Cincinnati. Art remains a major interest as well as her love of reading, although time for these can be limited with a young family to care for. She is also helping her mother write a book that focuses on guiding parents of children with disabilities in finding the appropriate education services. So often children with disabilities are marginalized and Emily's mother, experienced in the problems that can arise in today's public education system, hopes to help guide the necessary changes for the good of the whole community. The first draft of the book is due at the end of April! As if all this wasn't enough, Emily and Andy have recently bought a house in Milford, Ohio, not far from Grailville.

Emily: My first encounter with The Grail:

I remember the bitter cold air surrounding me and the feel of gravel crunching under my heels. But, what struck me most was the quiet. It was a quiet winter morning at Grailville when I came for a job interview and I remember thinking how welcoming the silence was. I left later that morning excited about my experience at Grailville (How many can say that about a job interview?) and vowed that if I didn't get that job, I would still come back.

There are moments for everyone when time seems suspended. When something bigger than you becomes your guide and you know your life has changed. Moments like those I can count on one hand: meeting my husband, the births of my children, and encountering The Grail. I did get that job and began to discover The Grail.

And as I learned about The Grail, I was amazed with the women that built The Grail and committed to The Grail. I found a community of passionate, intentional, and diverse women that had not only articulated what was in my heart but were living those values and ideals! I thought to myself, "*Women changing the world? I think so!*" One aspect that draws me to The Grail is the arts. I have always been a lover of beauty and creativity and The Grail embraces these same ideals and recognizes their importance in our world.

The Grail has brought me so many treasures – awareness of the world and my place in it, spiritual nourishment, continuous learning, and a great list of books to read! I'm excited to begin my life as a Grail member. I offer myself – I know that my membership will manifest differently at different times, but that I will always be "Grail" and intend to live my life with the values and ideals that make The Grail such a dynamic and passionate community of women.

Nicky Westrick

Deborah Sullivan: Nicky Westrick has been a real treat to get to know. She is quiet and thoughtful, deeply spiritual, and has so many gifts to offer The Grail. Nicky is a single mother of two grade-school children, and has a full-time job with Procter & Gamble where she is an analytical chemist working in consumer products research. Nicky is a future

marathon runner, a poet and a musician. She attends and supports Grail regional events and Grailville programs, including Holy Week activities, the annual Ama Sami Zen retreat, and poetry workshops. The Grail Village Choir is actively recruiting her for her musical talents.

Nicky: My grandmother planted generously, in her front acre, rows and rows of zinnias. She gave me a pair of scissors and let me cut as many as I wanted – those orange, fuchsia, red-petaled flowers I love. Next to the sea of color was her strawberry patch equally big. She gave me a bowl inviting me to pick and eat to my delight. Smelling, licking the seeded skin, I savored sweet summer in my mouth. Her gardens, trees, fields sacred, like what I find at Grailville. I feel her presence here.



When I moved to Loveland four and a half years ago, Sunday mornings at St. Columban I noticed a particular family: a son, caring for his father, wife, children, relatives. I was taken with their loving care, I suppose, and came to know the father as Mr. Schickel, the artist. One Sunday, passing him at the font in his chair, I noticed his slippers covered with paint and was inspired to tears with the image of him in his art of expression. I wrote him a letter explaining though I never sent it, but began to write with Pauletta Hansel's guidance.

I found my way one March evening to the House of Joy, sitting in a circle of women embraced with open acceptance. Later, walking into the glorious hymn of spring peepers I sensed that I had found home.

And, I am so grateful to have found all of you. How to tell you who I am? I thought to quote Emily Dickinson, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" But instead, "It's all I have to bring today:"

*It's all I have to bring today –
This, and my heart beside –
This, and my heart, and all the fields –
And all the meadows wide –
Be sure you count – should I forget
Some one the sum could tell –
This, and my heart, and all the Bees
Which in the Clover dwell.*

Claudia Yamasue

Terri Carter: Please join me in welcoming Claudia Yamasue as one of our newest Grail sisters. I met Claudia last year when she attended our *Exploring The Grail* program. What first struck me was her joyful enthusiasm for simply having found us! She had been praying to find a supportive community long before even knowing we existed, so from the beginning she knew that The Grail and the women of The Grail were going to be a large part

of her life...and she was right! Since becoming an explorer she has rarely missed a Grail event and always brings a smile to share.

Having been raised in Detroit, Claudia made several moves across the country before landing in Batavia, where she has settled and focused on raising her lovely daughter Alyssa.

As a single mother, Claudia has a lot to juggle; being a devoted and attentive mother, her job as Senior Business Systems Analyst at Epsilon, singing often (and beautifully) in her church, volunteering at her local animal shelter (which is where she adopted their aptly named dog, Happy) and diving headfirst into her exploration of The Grail. Evidently juggling is another of her talents for I've yet to see her drop a ball!



Claudia brings a joyful heart and eager spirit to The Grail and I'm sure you'll all enjoy getting to know her. I know I certainly have!

Claudia: From the moment I set foot in the House of Joy in January 2011 and met the women from the Cincinnati Grail, I knew that this where I should be. Back in 2005, I had googled "women and spirituality in Cincinnati" and I found the Grailville website. I was very intrigued and put it on my list of places to visit. It stayed on my heart and in my mind for six years. Oftentimes the answer to my prayers (which involve a lot of questions and observations and ideas and soul-searching) was, "Go to Grailville." When I dreamed up my ideal life, it included a rural energy-efficient home with space for women to come and do art, yoga, ikebana, cooking, gardening, singing and to connect with women from around the world. I could hardly contain myself when I came to Grailville the first time and found out that The Grail had already fulfilled my dream. Wow!

Throughout the past year, while I attended various events at Grailville and became a Grail Explorer and attended Grail events, I saw that The Grail vision and mission went beyond the typical boundaries of a women's organization. The Grail is not just about creating supportive places for women to learn and grow, but it is about acting in effective ways to improve lives here and around the world. Calling on the spiritual energy, the artistic and musical means of communicating, and the powerful presence of God and life and Earth, The Grail seeks to bring women together to make things better, even in places where there seems no hope. And The Grail has succeeded and continues to work on issues new and old. Years ago, women in the U.S. had limited opportunities and faced rampant sexism. Today, women in the U.S. are protected by laws and have most of the same opportunities as men, yet there are millions of women around the world coping with appalling living conditions along with the same type of opposition that women of the 1930's and 40's faced here.

As I was poring over the history of The Grail in incredibly thorough articles and writings, I was struck by how the progress of women in The Grail preceded the progress for women in our society by about a decade. How powerful! I have a strong belief in the power of

women to lead, to heal, to influence, to find creative ways of doing things in a holistic way so that there isn't a trail of damage, destruction and side effects behind the progress. Here in 2012, the women of The Grail have much to do and much to offer to the world and our fellow human beings. It is time to use all of the strength and support that we have been given and continue to "create a sustainable world", "nurture a culture of care for all the earth" and "look for signs of hope in a complex world."* The world is calling. I couldn't answer the call alone, but, with my Grail sisters and the examples of their powerful achievements throughout the world, nothing is impossible anymore. It is an honor to become part of such a legendary movement. Thank you all!

**from The International Grail Vision Statement 2012*

Apologies and a Clarification

Carol Siemering

In last month's *Gumbo* I submitted an article about a proposed change in how we define membership for voting purposes. It was meant to be a *report*, not the actual proposal but the article was surely misleading when I said a ballot would go out in a few weeks. The article was actually written at the joint membership committees' meeting and I think I was a little "high" on the meeting when I wrote it!

So here's the reality. First **any change in how we define membership, including who has the privilege of voting must go to the membership for approval** in order for it to be implemented. Second, **we need time for discussion**. When the Council met in late March we felt that two months (April and May 2012) for discussion should be sufficient. We will summarize the discussion in the June *Gumbo* and ballots (which may look a little different from our "proposal" depending on the discussion) would go out after that.

The current definition of who will be able to vote on the matter will still be in effect. (Which means that if you are a "Wider Grail" member – that is non-voting, you can change your designation, and vice versa, simply by calling the National Office.)

Here is the current definition as passed at the 2005 General Assembly.

Active Member

- Consciously lives out her life acting out its connectedness to The Grail Mission
- Does the Work of The Grail
- Participates in a region, team, center or program (opportunities will be provided for 'isolated' members)
- Contributes financially annually
- Follows communications sent out nationally and regionally
- responds to requests for votes

Elder/Emerita

- A member who has an established history to The Grail Mission but can/may no longer respond to Grail responsibilities.

- Self-selects for voting privileges

Member of the Wider Grail Community

- Consciously lives out her life acting out its connectedness to The Grail Mission
- contributes financially annually

Here is what we thought *might* be proposed on the ballot

All members would have voting privileges and it's up to each member to vote on whatever is put to them – matters, according to our bylaws, including Council elections, who represents us internationally, stands we might take, sale of land, changes in our mission and vision statements and the definition of membership.

This does *not* change the very first point about what it means to be a member. The expectation that each Grail member “lives out her life acting out its connectedness to The Grail mission” would remain. Nor does it change financial responsibility as defined above.

When we passed the current definition at the 2005 GA, the thought was that those who selected voting privileges (Active members, Emerita members who chose to do so) would be *responsible* to vote on *every* matter that came to them even if that vote were an abstention. In reality, only about 61% of those members have voted on any given issue, including electing members to the Council.

Also included in the process was possibility for any member at any time to change her designation by contacting the National Office. So she could go from voting to non-voting and vice versa whenever she chose.

It came to our attention that there were new members coming in who wanted to choose the option of “Wider Grail.” They were entering in on their journey with The Grail but felt they could not take on all the definitions of an Active Grail member – participation in a region, team, center or program and/or follow Grail communications and/or take on voting responsibilities. Acknowledging the ebb and flow of Grail women’s lives, that there are times when members can be more participative than other times, we on the Membership Enrichment and Development Team and on the Exploring Membership

Some questions about Membership to consider and discuss

- Does the new definition make clearer that joining The Grail is not the end of a journey, but the beginning of a life-long process of growth into The Grail community?
- Does it diminish what we believe it is to be a responsible Grail member?
- Does the definition in this article reflect your understanding of your membership?
- What would you add or change?

Although the ballot question will be about categories of membership, there are other things you may want to discuss that were in the previous *Gumbo* articles such as:

- the focus on ebb and flow,
- connection rather than commitment,
- which word “recruitment” or “connection” captures membership outreach for you?
- How do you feel about the vision of Grail “circles?”

Team thought that it would be better not to have those voting distinctions especially given the fact that the participation in voting in the last seven years has not met the expectations of that original General Assembly.

With our new vision of “circles,” we hope there will be a circle for each Grail woman to take part in as she is able. However, there still may be times—caring for a sick relative or friend, our own illnesses, work, caring for children etc.—when she may not be able to take full advantage of these circles.

So this is what we hope you will think about and discuss. Discussion in your regional groups, your teams, on the listserv, in *Gumbo* – anywhere and in whatever opportunity you may have. You may send a summary of your discussion to the National Office so it can be shared with all.



Experiencing The Grail at Grailville

Deborah Sullivan

On a surprisingly warm day in early March, 14 women met at Grailville to share a meal and spend the afternoon engaging with and learning from members of the international women’s movement called The Grail. Explorers, members, staff and newcomers shared conversation, music, and hands-on activities, while getting a glimpse of The Grail, past, present and future.



Kathryn Russell, Bonnie Hendricks, Stephanie Wissel at Experiencing the Grail. Photo by Deborah Sullivan

Many of the women had participated in one or more Grailville programs and hungered to learn more. This was an opportunity to test the waters and see if The Grail might be what they were seeking. Most spoke of a longing for a deeper connection with like-minded women who shared a common vision for the world in which we live. Although the program was shorter this year, many of the women signed up to learn more by becoming Grail explorers. We are currently matching these women with mentors who will guide them in their quest for The Grail.

If you know of a woman who might be interested in learning more about The Grail, please pass her name to the National office. The Grail is too special to keep it a secret!



Grail Women, Actors on the Global Stage

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women has just completed its 56^h session (February 26-March 9) and the Priority theme was: ***The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges***

The Grail was “in the house” with 22 registered Grail women and girls from Mexico, Portugal, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa and the USA. There were 193 member states deliberating and deciding, with 4,300 women representing 618 organizations offering a chance to learn, an opportunity to grow in leadership skills, network with new partners, and act as a conscience for the delegates, preparing to hold our governments accountable to agreed conclusions.

We did all of that and this year The Grail took a forward step by sponsoring our own girls’ side event, ***Girls Voices: Challenges of Age and Gender in a Rural Environment***. Africa was well-represented with The Grail panel of Nagaba Agatha (Uganda, age 18); Carmen Siteo (Mozambique, age 18); Laura Kisasa (Tanzania, age 15); Noluthando “Thando” Nzimande (South Africa, age 17); Moderators Veronica Pereira (Portugal, origin Capo Verde, age 20), Naniaca Camara (St. Catharine Academy, age 17, parents origin from Mali and Ivory Coast); Translator Maria Joao Ribeiro (Portugal, age 19) and photographer, Lena Cheney (USA, age 18).

Honorata Mvungi, Grail member from Tanzania and Thando, of the South African Grail, were among those on presenting a panel honoring the legacy of Wangari Mathai, ***Girls and Women as Agents of Change***. On another panel, Lucero Fuentes, Mexican Grail, presented her view on the plight of the rural women in Guanajuato, Mexico.

It was inspiring to see Abida Jamal mentoring the girls late into the night with their presentations and their reports. Two high schools in the Bronx, Mt. St. Ursula Academy and St. Catharine Academy, welcomed the girls to a day of exchange and enrichment. They left with new friends, heightened commitments and wonderful gifts of school bags, tee shirts, note pads and memories.

With Abida’s help, a core of Grail girls and new CSW, friends organized a Network and Information Blog for girls. Lena Cheney, from the Cornwall Grail, who was here for a second year of CSW will be the first to blog on the subject of trafficking of persons.

So many Grail women joined to make the CSW



Grail Side Event: Mary Kay Louchart, Maria Ribeiro, Carmen Siteo (Mozambique), Veronica Pereira, Naniaka Camara (Bronx), Agatha Nagaba (Uganda) Laura Kisasa (Tanzania) Noluthando Nzimande (SOUTH AFRICA). Photo by Ana Luisa Heleno.

gathering successful and productive, from the participation in the bi-weekly meetings with the Girls Participation Task Force all year, to the irreplaceable work of Ana Luisa Heleno who interned with us from Portugal since January, to the backstage efforts of the Cornwall Grail providing our meals while trying to attend some CSW events, to the Open House held in St. Luke's Church Hall as a Metro outreach, we formed a "working net" making it all possible.



Left To Right: Maria Ribeiro, Veronica Pereira (Portugal) Lena Cheyne (USA), Bianca Jenkins, Keila Guerreiro (USA) Lucero Fuentes (Mexico), Maelene Andujar (Bronx). Photo By Ana Luisa Heleno.

Finally, **Sharon Joslyn** travelled with **Angelica Contreras**, Bronx, and three remaining participants to Grailville where the US International Team and Grail members in the region were able to hear and talk with Honorata, Laura Kisasa from St. Teresa School in Tanzania and Ana Luisa who brought the sessions to life with a short DVD presentation. **Marian April McConeghey Goering** came to renew friendship with Honorata with whom she worked in Tanzania and became Grail guide par excellence for the visitors.

The challenge now is to prepare for CSW57 in 2013. The priority theme is the ***Elimination of All Forms of Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls***. The Review Theme is: ***The Equal Sharing of Responsibilities between Women and Men, including Care Giving in the Context of HIV/AIDS***. CSW57 is set for March 4-15, 2013.

How will we be able to involve more girls and boys in the dialogue? How can we overcome the visa restrictions of the US Embassies in many countries to allow girls to participate? How can we make the event an opportunity for Grail interaction and meeting of the participants? With all these challenges and more, we continue our work "With Girls and For Girls," the slogan of the Working Group on Girls, going forward.



Grail Birthdays: April (and Early May)

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

April 7	Barbara Gibbons	April 18	Marian Ronan
April 9	Theresa Dardar	April 20	Elise Gorges
April 10	Stephana (Mary Ann) Tikalsky	April 22	Bonnie Hendricks
April 15	Ingrid Farnham	April 23	Hermine Glaser
April 17	Marian Lucas	April 24	Frances Hebert
April 18	Donna Ambrogi	April 25	Patricia Young
April 18	Barbara Coleman	May 2	Julie Sharpe
April 18	Carole Spearin McCauley	May 2	Gloria Boudreaux

Thoughts on the Occupy Vote

Grail members voted overwhelmingly to Take a Stand on supporting Occupy Wall Street and the Occupy movement but, not unexpectedly, the comments both for and against were thoughtful and interesting. Below are snippets of just a few.

If this doesn't pass, I would attribute it to our lack of programming in the areas of systematic oppression. I notice in the listserv posts against taking a stand on this a lot of misunderstandings about what is at stake in the US right now

Am unclear as to what it means when the Grail supports something-- Also the movement is very loose- what if it defines itself in the future into something we aren't aligned with?

Let's get on board the train of the most important progressive political movement in 40 years.

Although I vote in the affirmative on this, I also understand like any other movement... I am agreeing to the broad stroke principle of what this Occupy movement is about, as noted in paragraph 2 of Jackie's Memo. I do not now nor will I ever simply support every issue, just because it is part of a progressive agenda.

If the OCCUPY MOVEMENT ever gets derailed and does not align with our Grail values, we can vote to withdraw our support. But at this elbow of time, the Occupy Movement seems to be an excellent expression of our values. Blessings on all of our votes and on all of the values that nourish and inspire us.

I support the movement and feel the Grail should; however, I feel the movement will lose momentum unless there are focused outcomes seen. The movement should unify many of its grievances into one forceful and achievable goal of passing a new amendment to limit corporate rule in our government, eg to stop their donations and lobbying, and to force them to pay their fair share of taxes. I think that is the best of the movement and would be achievable if more focused

Member Giving, January 1-March 31, 2012

99 Grail members have contributed \$37,452 thus far this year. Thanks!

45% of Active members
35% of Emerita members
23% of Wider members

Giving by Fund:

Bronx Programs	\$462.50
Cornwall General Fund	\$2,884.00
Grailville General Fund	\$6,170.00
National General Fund	\$21,707.81
Special Projects	\$6,666.00