The Earth Leadership Cohort and the Work That Reconnects

The Work That Reconnects is known worldwide for empowering activists in social and ecological justice. Developed by Joanna Macy and her colleagues, this dynamic, interactive body of work has inspired many thousands of people to engage wholeheartedly in the Great Turning to a life-sustaining society. Described in the book, Coming Back to Life, it brings a new way of seeing the world, as our larger living body, freeing us from the assumptions and attitudes that now threaten all life on Earth.

Joanna Macy, PhD is a scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. A respected voice in the movements for peace, justice, and the environment, she interweaves her scholarship with five decades of activism. In recent years, Joanna has made a commitment to offer trainings in the Work That Reconnects to young adults and people of color. Her students describe her teaching presence as captivating, clear, and compassionate, and many credit her with creating the conditions for their radical shift in outlook -- from despairing to inspired. She lives in Berkeley, California.

The Earth Leadership Cohort of 15 young adults gathers on three separate weekends in the fall of 2014 to explore the Work That Reconnects (WTR) in theory and practice. In a supportive learning community of peers, each participant clarifies their vision for meaningful work, hones facilitation skills in WTR, and expands self-awareness. The series begins on September 26th with a three-day workshop led by Joanna Macy called, “World as Lover, World as Self” in which the cohort is immersed in a larger multi-generational community of people who care deeply about Earth and her living systems.

The second weekend (October 31 – November 2) is an opportunity for Cohort members to deepen their understanding and experience of the Work That Reconnects among professionals from many fields who facilitate WTR in their communities, workplaces, churches, and classrooms. The Interhelp Network, founded by Joanna Macy and colleagues over thirty years ago, offers an annual gathering for people to engage with the WTR concepts and exercises and to nourish friendships, new and old. The Interhelp Council designs the program to be welcoming for people with little or no experience, modeling superb facilitation of a complete WTR journey.

The final weekend of the series (December 5 – 7) is a retreat exclusively for the Earth Leadership Cohort, facilitated by the three guides who accompany the Cohort throughout the three-part training. Here, the group has an opportunity to reflect on the rich experiences of the previous weekends and begin to integrate new perspectives into their personal and professional dreams. The retreat is also a time for gathering resources, ideas, and support for “going forth” into the world as change agents, healers, compassionate listeners, and empowered citizens. As a community, the members decide how they would like to keep in touch and support one another in realizing their short-term goals and long-term visions.
Becoming a Member of the Earth Leadership Cohort

Young adults, ages 18 to 30, who are interested in participating in this three-part training are encouraged to send in a completed application by May 15, 2014. The application can be downloaded from the Work That Reconnects website at http://workthatreconnects.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ELC-Application.pdf

The learning community grows stronger and more effective over the course of the three months. For this reason, participants are asked to commit to attending all three weekends. If there is an interest in further peer support, the cohort may choose to continue meeting after the formal program has ended.

A central goal of the program is to provide sufficient scholarships to make the opportunity accessible to anyone whose application is accepted. A volunteer effort is underway to raise scholarship funds and grant awards by August 1st. Applicants who would like to apply for a scholarship may complete the Scholarship Application found at the end of the program application. The total cost for tuition, room, and board for all three weekends is $850.

Participants are responsible for arranging their own transportation to the retreat centers where the training weekends are held. (Ride sharing may be possible for some.) The dates and locations are listed below. Arrival time is 2 p.m. Friday afternoon; departure time is 4 p.m. Sunday afternoon. Driving directions to each of the retreat centers can be found on their websites.

September 26 – 28
The Rowe Center, Rowe, MA
www.rowecenter.org

October 31 – November 2
Woolman Hill Center, Deerfield, MA
www.woolmanhill.org

December 5 – 7
Starseed Sanctuary, Savoy, MA
www.starseedsanctuary.org

Accommodations are simple with shared rooms or heated cabins. Vegetarian meals are provided and an effort is made to accommodate special dietary needs. Tenting is an option for anyone who would prefer to sleep outside.

For more information about the Earth Leadership Cohort, contact Aravinda Ananda at: aravinda.ananda@gmail.com
Facilitators of the Earth Leadership Cohort

Kirstin Edelglass is a wilderness guide, ecological educator, and psychosynthesis counselor. She began studying with Joanna Macy fourteen years ago and facilitates the Work That Reconnects in a variety of settings, including as Joanna’s assistant. She founded a wilderness rite of passage program for adolescent girls in northern Maine and developed and co-taught a traveling semester for graduate students in Alaska. Writing, weaving, gardening, and singing provide other soul nourishment. Currently teaching mindfulness meditation and the art of council facilitation, she lives in Marlboro, Vermont.

Aravinda Ananda completed a Masters in Environmental Management at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies in 2006 with a focus on social ecology. She has since been exploring a fundamental shift in humans’ relationship with life and has been writing about this shift in her forthcoming book, Living rEvolution. A member of the Interhelp Council, she has been facilitating the Work That Reconnects for several years. She has a deep love for the land at Starseed Healing Sanctuary in western MA where she is a partner and is helping to develop a center for healing our relationship with all life.

Joseph Rotella is a small business owner and has been active in business sustainability and relocalization efforts. He has been vocal on various social justice and environmental issues and has had letters to the editor published, spoken on the radio, and testified at the MA statehouse. In 2012, his business was certified as a Sustainable Business Leader, and in 2013 he helped to found Waltham Local First. As part of the Climate Action Liaison Coalition he employs someone to work on climate advocacy. He is a member of the Interhelp Council and has been facilitating the Work that Reconnects for several years.