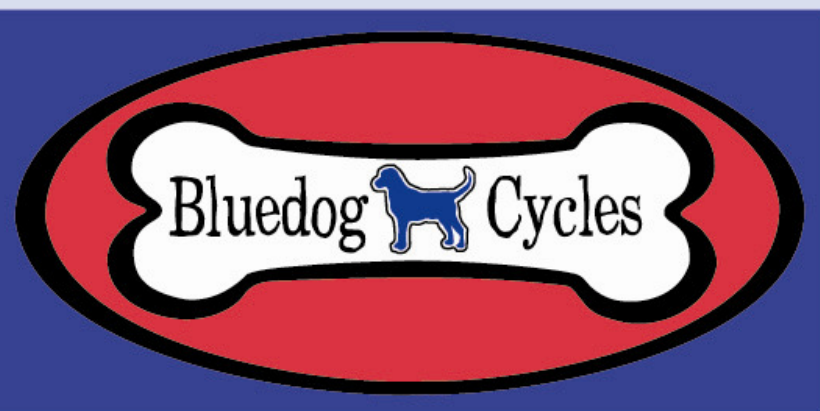


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Alumni Updates

- ▮ Adam Cox (YIHS '06) graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from Lawrence University and is on an archaeological assignment in Barrow, Alaska.
- ▮ Helen Beutler (YIHS '07) graduated with a degree in English from Earlham College.
- ▮ Aurora Brinsfield (YIHS '05) has graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles.
- ▮ Molly Heberlein (YIHS '07) and Emily Colacino (YIHS '07) have graduated from the University of Minnesota at Morris.
- ▮ Moira Koons (YIHS '07) has graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.
- ▮ Nate Baumgartner (YIHS '07) has graduated from the American University of Bulgaria.

*If you have news and updates on YIHS alumni,
contact us so we can let everyone know!*

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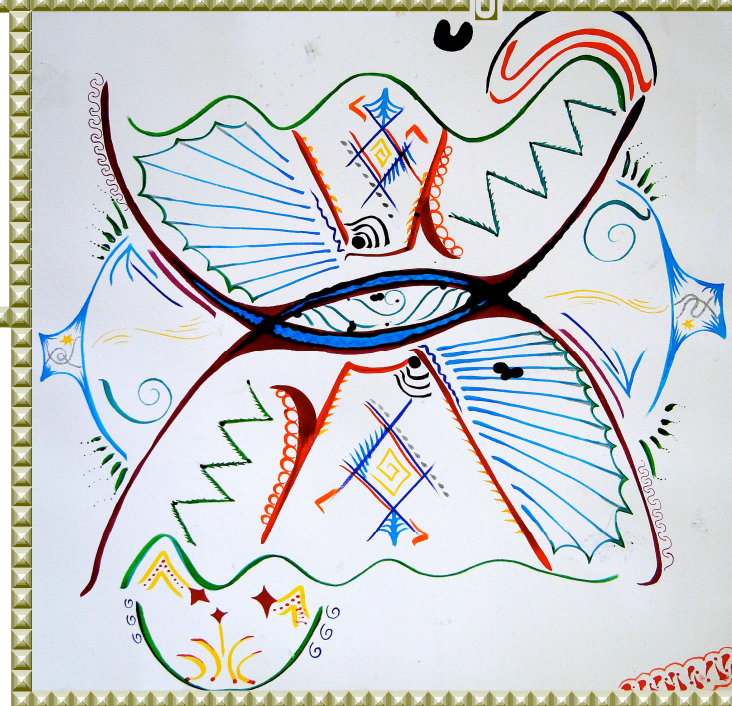
www.yih.net

2010-2011 Retrospective

Another year has passed, and in this issue we take time to reflect on some of the things we've done this year, bid farewell to another class of superb and unique graduates, and look ahead to the future of the Youth Initiative High School.

Overall, the school ended the year strongly as we continue to evolve and improve. The Semiannual All-School meeting was an exceptional success, featuring a number of rousing speeches (one of which is featured in this issue) and perhaps one of the best tasting potlucks in the history of the school. If that's not a sign of institutional health, I don't know what is.

As we close out this year we are thankful for the hard work and generosity displayed by our members, hopeful for success in our upcoming school year, and certain that we will continue changing the lives of young people, year in and year out. We hope you will continue to join us for new and exciting adventures.



Contemplative drawings from the Architecture class

Building for the Future

Inside this Issue:

By Jacob Hundt

Architecture is one of those areas of human endeavor that straddles the divide between the capacities of the Right and Left hemispheres of the brain almost evenly. On the Left – it is eminently practical, concrete, and precise. Even the most wildly experimental architect must also be intimately conversant with geometry, with the

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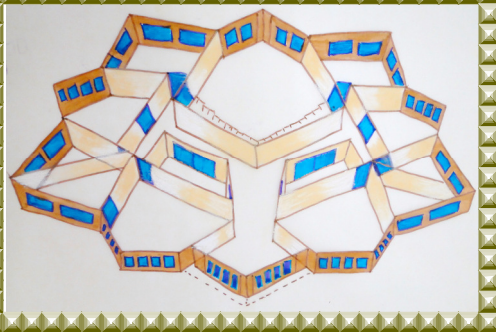
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mathematics of scale, and with the quantitative specs of a whole array of materials, not to mention the detailed demands of the applicable building and zoning codes. On the other, Right, hand, architecture can be among the most powerfully expressive and emotionally effecting art forms, dealing in the intangible and intuitive qualities of form and line, light and shadow. To be a truly great architect, one must be able to design spaces that are functional, sturdy, and efficient, while at the same time working harmoniously upon the hearts and souls of the people who occupy them. In short, the creation of truly humane, living architecture demands the kind of balance of head, heart, and

hands that constitutes the core mission of Waldorf education.

This spring, a group of 13 YIHS students and I had a chance to work closely with an original and talented architect from our local community named Gregory Splinter. The focus of this two-week intensive block was the exciting project of imagining what a brand new Youth Initiative High School might look like. After fifteen years as renters up on the third floor of the Landmark Center, the YIHS Board and community have begun to think seriously about the long-term home for the school. The school has never really seriously explored the possibilities and costs associated with building new, and it seemed like the natural YIHS thing to do to weave this process into a class, allowing students to take the lead. Gregory Splinter, an accomplished architect with roots in the Chicago area and a number of local projects in his portfolio, including the Soldiers Grove village sign and the renovation of the Viroqua Main Street Station, graciously agreed to take on the challenge of this project, and his first taste of high school teaching.

As it turned out, the participants in the class got the privilege of watching a gentle and puckish artist at work over the course of 9 full days, as well as a chance to participate in Gregory's truly unique method of Contemplative Architectural Design. Drawing inspiration from the ideas of Trappist monk Thomas Merton, who famously sought to weave together the contemplative traditions of East and West, Gregory's method seeks to fully open the process of design to the subconscious, intuitive sources of human creativity. Gregory's method of Contemplative Architecture explicitly recognizes the deep truth about imaginative creation that all great artists, architects, and even scientists have known – namely, that buildings, artworks, and new ideas have a kind of independent existence, even before they become manifest in the external world. The truly great creators are those men and women who are most attuned to these emergent creations and who are bold enough and talented enough to carry out their full manifestation.

The process that Gregory led us through in the class began solidly on the Left side of the brain. Students were divided into research teams who collected data and prepared presentations on potential sites for the school, on sustainable and natural building materials, and on the comparative costs of schools built recently in the local area and beyond, while a fourth group prepared a presentation on the architectural ideas of Rudolf Steiner and on the principles of sacred geometry in architecture from around the world. After this exposure to an array of specific facts and data to consider, the class collaborated with Gregory to create a specific building program for the new school? How many classrooms would we need? What kind of square footage? How much square footage is required for mechanical and storage space? The concrete data points were written on the board and came to form the skeletal parameters of the work we were to do.



After a couple of days of marinating in these facts and practical details, the class set it all aside and let it develop in us on the subconscious level. We went on a road trip to Spring Green to see the three room public elementary school in the Wyoming Valley designed by Frank Lloyd Wright towards the end of his life. Then, when we returned to the classroom the next day, Gregory took us far over to the Right side of the brain, into the heart of his design process. We started with 20 minutes of silent meditation, attempting the immensely difficult feat of clearing the mind and thinking of nothing at all.

In front of each student was a large piece of watercolor paper

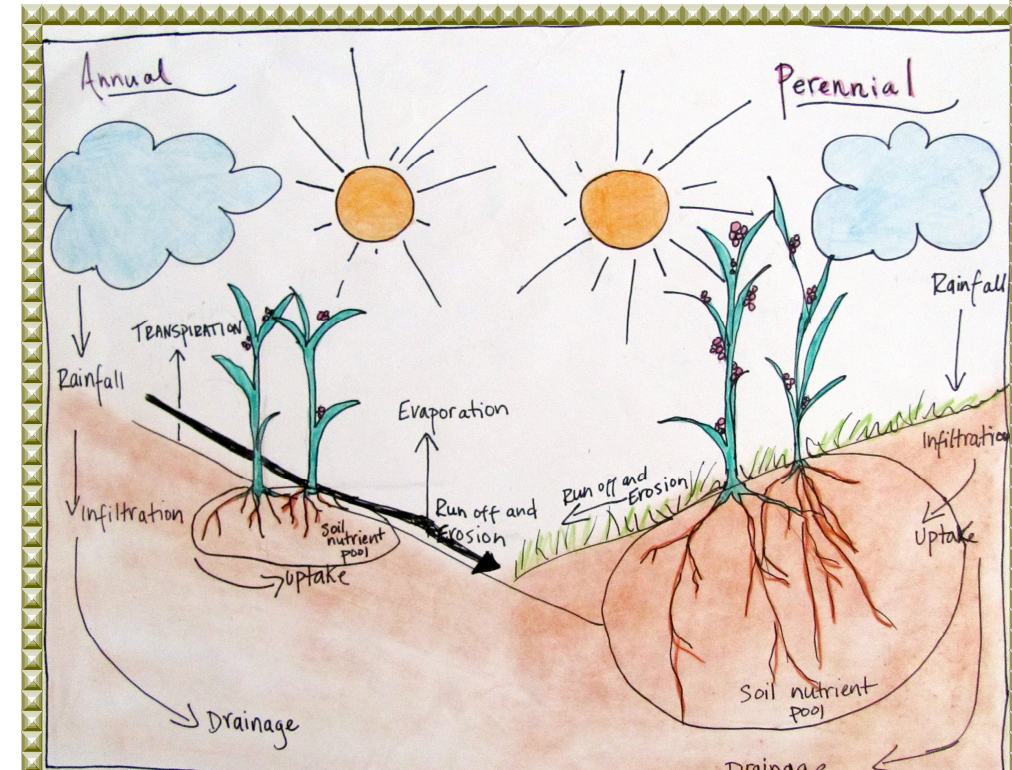
been a dairy farmer with a leaky waste containment pond or an orchardist with an insect infestation. Four scenarios led the students to explore the details of one of these new agricultural approaches inspired by nature. They might be treating sewage like a marsh, growing cash grain like a prairie, gardening like a forest, or managing livestock like a migrating herd. The settings on our little

imaginary farms were to help students realize how specific many of these solutions have to be. It's not a one-size-fits-all world out there, and nature knows it.

In reality my part in the course was very small, with the lion's share of the course's power lying in a two week parade of field trips to farms throughout our region. Jane Siemon and Vicki Ramsey did a beautiful job setting up visits to farms across the spectrum of production systems, products, and personalities. They accompanied the students on each trip and served as guides, always pointing back toward that wisdom inherent in the place. Real places, and real farmers talking about their techniques and their lives on the land. In the end, the course was meant to be a conceptual finger, pointing at a stunningly simple truth. A truth which many weathered and wizened farmers have already learned. The world, and nature in it, is our best teacher. Our only task is and always has been to learn how to listen.



Excerpts from some of the final projects of the agriculture class.



Following Nature

By Logan Peterman

The world as teacher is a paradigm which has long meandered through the thoughts and writings of people in many cultures and times. It is

The world as teacher is a paradigm which has long meandered through the thoughts and writings of people in many cultures and times. It is

I am a farmer named Logan Peterman. I started and ran a small CSA last season on rented land in Reedsburg, Wisconsin and decided with my wife that we wanted to move further into the Driftless region. As we began our transition last fall I was inspired to reach out in the area and look for opportunities to teach. I deeply enjoyed experiences I had working with students in Glacier National Park and thought it was time to start exploring my long held interest in teaching. Thus, a well meaning phone call to Jacob Hundt led to a series of truly invigorating conversations about the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, J. Krishnamurti, and many others. From that initial rapport my relations with the school have grown, and my ideas have grown with them. Ideas for courses on computing, philosophy, ecology, alternative energy, and of course agriculture.

I was honored to participate in the recent two week agricultural course, and worked to use that time to introduce students to the brilliance of natural systems. The key to biomimicry is realizing that nature has developed systems to do things we can only currently aspire to build into our devices and plans. Natural systems use tricks like self-assembly, where a collection of molecules or even organisms assembles itself into a functional unit without any need for an organizing force. Cell walls do this in our bodies thousands of times each day. Or take a cut on your finger as another example. Engineers drool over the way our body can knit itself back together after a traumatic injury. As if that weren't enough, nearly every organism can do the same using only chemistry conducted in water! What if we could build a toaster, or a car that could fix itself if it broke down and produce only biodegradable by-products?

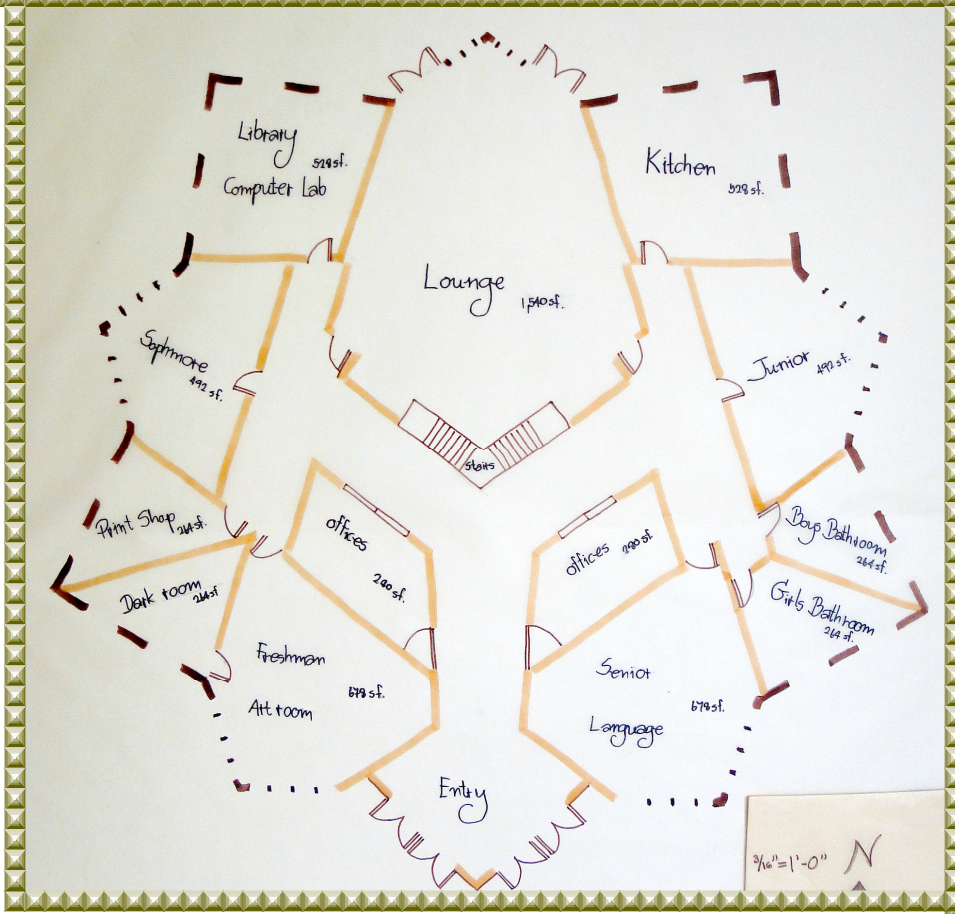
There are many such principles in biomimetic writing, and they all introduce a different facet of nature's art and elegance. It is this elegance that biomimetic scientists and engineers are consulting to find sustainable solutions for problems facing our culture and our world. These concepts fit seamlessly into agricultural systems because more so than any other form of human endeavor we farmers are forced to play by nature's rules.

In agriculture many examples of successful biomimetic solutions already exist, and it was upon these real systems that I based the students' final projects. They were "hired" as consultants by a farmer with a problem. It could have

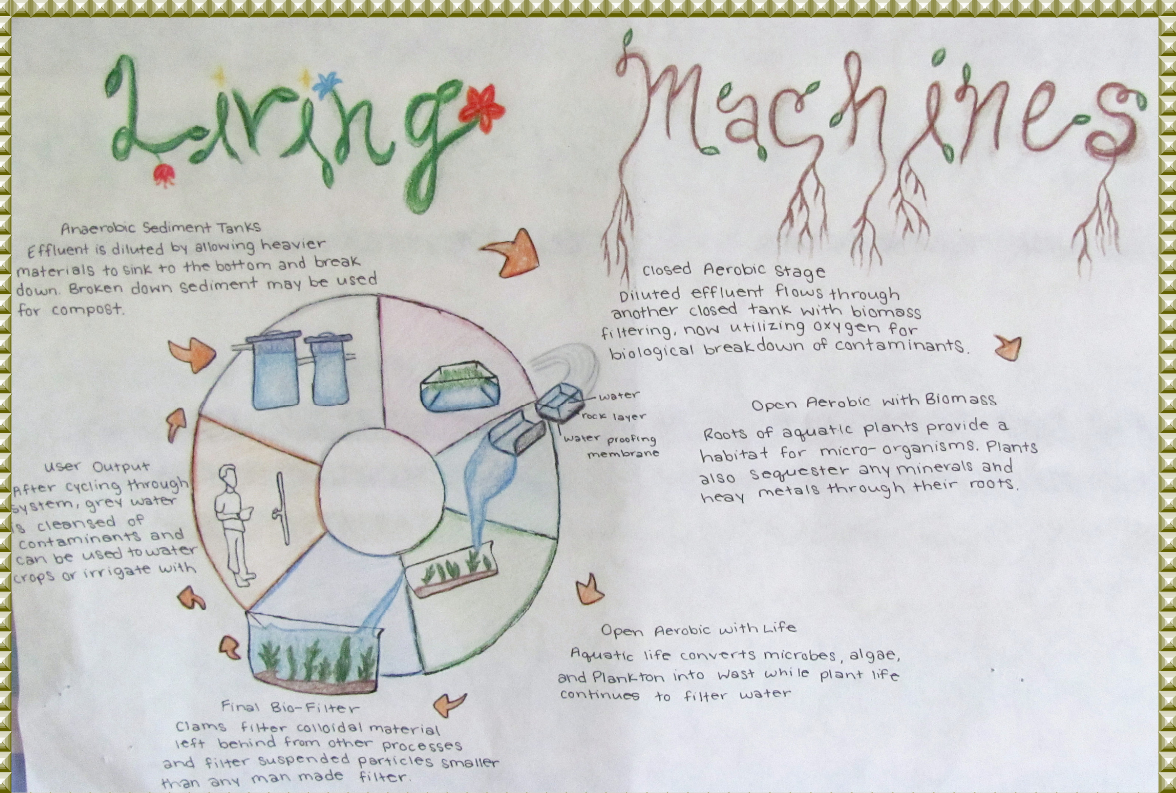
and a set of colored markers. When Gregory signaled the end of the 20 minutes, everyone began to draw. The instructions were not to draw a building, or even to keep the proposed building in mind, but to simply to allow the forms, lines, and colors to emerge and arrange themselves on the paper as they came. After a couple of hours of silent work, the result was a gallery of wild and beautiful drawings that would have fit in with a collection of abstract modern art alongside Miro and Kandinsky.

The drawings were rich and visually striking, but they certainly looked nothing like the blueprints of buildings. Thus, the next step in the process, which took up the bulk of the second week of the class, was to take these more or less unmediated expressions of the intuitive imagination and "rationalize" them into the forms of buildable and appropriately scaled architectural designs. Working with sheet after sheet of onion skin tracing paper, students began connecting lines and calculating areas. They had to think about patterns of movement and access of natural light and air, about the practicality and efficiency of different layouts of exterior and interior walls, and about the identity of different rooms within our design program. But the foundation of their designs remained those wild, abstract intuitive drawings, and it would be hard to imagine the four final designs we created emerging from the raw design program itself.

Watching the way in which these recognizable and realistic designs emerged from the apparent chaos of the original drawings was powerful, even archetypal – cosmos emerging from chaos at the hand of a creator. Several of the students who took the lead in this design process observed how absorbing this work was and that the time in class simply flew by. There was a primal quality to the process, mirroring as it does the creative forces of nature, and it taps into something fundamental in human beings as well. During their most focused and absorbed moments, one could see that the students were engaged in play, and in play of a most profound kind, like children building castles in the sand or forts in the woods. This was perhaps the greatest gift that Gregory brought to this class – it is tremendously difficult to get teenagers, with all of their acute self-consciousness and seriousness to lose themselves creatively in play. This class allowed them to do that and was a reminder of how important creative play is to all of us as humans, both in the process of bringing new ideas and works of art into the world and in tapping into the most profound aspects of our humanity.



(Above:) Gregory Splinter holds court. (Opposite Page and Above:) Examples of student work from the class.



Theories of Evolution

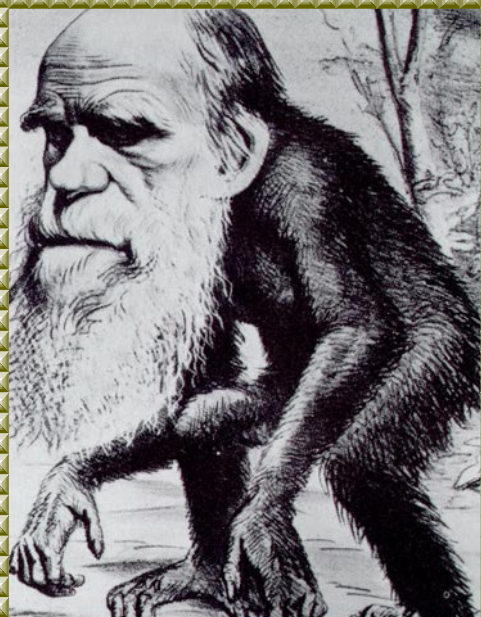
The following speech was given by Matthew Voz at the Annual All School Meeting in May of 2011

Roundabout 6 billion years ago, no one is quite sure why or by what hand if any, there was a great explosion of energy. A light and a heat burst forth in the darkness and the cold. From this chaos, this unordered thrust of power, the universe the stars and the planets, were formed. It was a violent, dramatic, and inspiring beginning. But it was only the beginning. For what is a star or a planet? Naught but a conflagration of fiery gas or an orb of cold, dead stone. But for one planet at least, our planet, this chaos, this wild, unbridled energy of the Prime Movement has become an organized, self-sustaining island of life and beauty in a vast and frigid space. But the beauty of what we call nature was not the product of a single energetic spasm but developed instead over billions of years in fits and starts, incrementally, imperceptibly; but with a wisdom that many can only assign to consciousness.

Fifteen years ago this school was created with the gusto and enthusiasm that frankly only people under 20 possess the energy to create. For many, the frenetic and chaotic first years of Youth Initiative High School have become a measuring stick, a halcyon era ripe with promise and idealism. In this period of our history (yes, we already have a history) the highest principles of our organization; freedom of thought, cooperation, intergenerational endeavor, and the community of higher learning, were forged. Volatility was the word of the day and rules were bent, broken, or, more often, non-existent. What rules did exist came from a palpable process of community contract and individual involvement, and were sweetened with just a teaspoon of playfulness, as children make up new rules for old games. But everywhere there was energy. It was at times difficult to decipher who was a student and who was a teacher, and there were those who would have argued that the distinction was probably meaningless anyway.

But any astrophysicist will tell you that you can't turn energy into matter.

The days of Youth Initiative High School as a crazy experiment, as a Big Bang, are undeniably over. We stand now at a watershed as our planet stood some four billion years ago. Our accretion is complete. Now we must atrophy into an icy Neptune or take the primordial elements given to us and create a living, breathing, *lasting* organization of life. This will not be achieved by the haphazard amalgamation of countless casual interests or the inconsistent application of imagination and effort.



Charles Darwin & Matthew Voz, sophisticated apes.

Some students now attending our school were not born when it was created. They cannot help but take for granted something that is older than themselves. Every day we survive we are becoming less of a movement and more of an institution. Yet in solidifying the revolution we must not destroy it. We must find a way to mature while living tangibly in the excitement and idealism of our first days. I applaud and value our efforts to shape and guide the will but we are in real danger of losing the will altogether.

Our great task then is to sustain the energies of our members, particularly our students, to invigorate those forces of activity and endeavor and execution. But our task is not an

floor, but once we started AJ and I did fine. I gained even more respect for the dance form and for those who dedicate their lives to it.

The last *milonga* we went to was one that we'd discovered on our own. We found it in the local guidebook and, without the recommendations of our teachers, decided to go. We arrived at 11 and the place was relatively full, but quiet, no music. As we entered, they asked if we wanted to sit together or apart. With the heat of 100 or so sets of eyes staring at us from around the hall, we nervously said, "together!" The scene at a traditional *milonga* is an elaborate courtship. Eyes flash around, and a look that holds for longer than a split second means an invitation to dance. So, single men and women sit at separate tables and dart meaningful glances. The *milonga* was quiet, and a bit awkward, because the DJ was late. We waited for about a half hour before he came in, a stocky middle-aged man. Immediately, people started barking out insults as he walked across the dance hall. He fired back. A few men rose from their seats, gesticulating pointedly. The DJ, in turn, defended, and then, almost across the room, he stopped and said "*buenas noches*" and left the hall. People were outraged, standing up, putting on their coats. Our mouths were agape. What had just happened? Then, 5 or so minutes later, the DJ returned, chest puffed, and walked directly to the DJ stand, flashing a few pointed comments to the still unsettled rabble, and started the music. In less than 30 seconds, the floor was full of couples, passionately embraced. I turned to AnnaJo and said, "These are a passionate people."

In short, this was our trip—me, AnnaJo, and the little kicking bouncing baby in her growing belly. We had fun, but it was also exhausting. By Thursday of the second week, after living out of a hotel for 10 days and having my wallet stolen on the subway (yeah, that actually happened!), I really really wanted to go home and hang out in my own kitchen. Luckily we made some friends with a sweet Waldorf family. The father, Alejandro, is a movement teacher and puppeteer and the mother, Maria, is an Early Childhood teacher, and they have 3 sparkingly bright Waldorf kids. We spent two days that week with them and their 3 kids, hanging out in their backyard, having an *asado* (Argentine barbecue) and sharing stories, and it felt like being home.

We can know that the toilet flush spins the other way on the other side of the world, but to really know a place we must interact with the people. This upcoming year Youth Initiative is blessed to host foreign students coming from Waldorf schools in France, Germany and Mexico. These students come to learn about our culture, but in the exchange, we can learn about theirs. I'm excited that YIHS is connected to the WWW, and hope that we can continue to be drawn out as we draw others in.



International group of Spatial Dynamics Workshop Attendees



(Above:) The group of Spatial Dynamics Trainers gathers for a lunch break at the San Miguel Arcangel Waldorf School in Buenos Aires. (Left:) Shawn and AnnaJo relax.

Argentina & the Wider Waldorf World

By Shawn Lavoie

down.” As a dream re-emerges as memory, I still chuckle when I think of people in Antarctica “standing on their heads” and all the other misconceptions I had. But this May, when my wife and I were in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I learned that not only do people on the other side of the world stand upright, they also don’t necessarily “get” that joke.

Without direct contact our assumptions of the world abound. As a rule of thumb we assume that the world is either radically different from or just the same as us. As a developing Waldorf School, nestled in our relatively sheltered corner of the Midwest, we can feel far away from the wider Waldorf world (WWW) and we can hold all number of assumptions about it. This international movement that we are connected with is composed of thousands of like-minded folks, who are trying to manifest this holistic form of education. We are woven into this WWW, even if we speak different languages. On our trip, AnnaJo and I were welcomed into the Argentine anthroposophical community, another isolated corner of the WWW, and we were able to have a genuine exchange.

We flew to the other side of the world for two reasons, one professional and one not. The first is that AnnaJo was invited to be the translator for a Spatial Dynamics training being led by Jaimen McMillan, founder of this anthroposophically inspired movement art and therapy. AnnaJo has studied Spatial Dynamics for 14 years, while for me it was my first encounter. The second reason was that for a Spanish-speaking Tango-dancing couple, Buenos Aires is a dream come true.

Our first week there we were both fully engaged in the movement training with about 120 other participants from across Argentina and South America (see above photograph). We were part of a group of 5 Americans—the founder of Spatial Dynamics, Jaimen, two level-3 trained colleagues of AnnaJo and me, the husband!—who came to support this first Spatial Dynamics training in Argentina. The training was organized by Monica Oddino, an Argentine who's been traveling to the US to train for the last 10 years, and in that time has started her own Spatial Dynamics program in Buenos Aires and has begun to develop her own cadre of students. They were absolutely elated to have Jaimen lead 5 days of all-day workshops and lectures. As the translator, AnnaJo was centrally important to this conference, and was working all-day everyday, translating every word. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to experience this fascinating and transformative movement art, with the added pleasure of learning both in English and Spanish spoken by my wife!

We ran pretty hard that first week, partly due to the training schedule—a couple short breaks between hours of movement exercises—and partly due to the abundant generosity of our hosts. Argentineans don't really eat breakfast, then eat a significant lunch, and don't eat again until usually after 9pm. So, after a day of training that ended at 9, we'd walk or pile into a car to go out to a restaurant. We ate luscious food, but not until 11! And we would get back to the hotel at 1ish to sleep. So suffice to say we were way off of our normal Westby routine of 9:30pm bedtime!

But in the midst of this craziness, we learned to let go a little and go with the flow. We found energy where we didn't know we had it, and we got to spend time with wonderful people and experience a unique culture.

On the culture theme, we found time to do quite a bit of tango dancing during the second week. We had two excellent teachers, a young couple, Marcelo and Lucila, with whom we took 4 group classes and 3 private lessons. They also, the second week, invited us to 2 *milongas*, or tango dancing events. These *milongas* were a trip. First off, the dancers are no-joke, amazing tango dancers, and most of them were over 60 years old! I was intimidated: not because they were showy or unwelcoming, but because they were so impressive, so obviously naturally gracing the dance floor. It took quite a bit of pushing to get me on the

easy one or soon completed. There are grave forces marshaled against us.

The great political philosopher Lao Tzu once said that to have domestic peace a ruler need only to keep bellies full and minds empty. Our society has perhaps done a better job of this than any in human history. The poorest among us live as relative kings but the sense of entitlement which this engenders can at times be staggering. I am ashamed to relate that I have heard students state that they are paying to go to this school and so should be able to do as they please. This is, of course, an unspeakably corrosive attitude to the mission of this school but it is less an indictment of the student body than a reflection of a consumerist culture that defines freedom as unqualified, reckless, and ruthless. To whom much is given much is asked. We must never forget this maxim.

It is this same consumerist culture that has afforded us the technological gadgets which “inform” and entertain us. There is a thin line between entertainment and distraction but there is a wide gulf between the use of technology as a tool and the use of technology as a sedative. More and more we use technology as the latter and I often fear that we, and especially our children, are not learning to use or even to think of technology as the former. Our school must do what it can to remedy this imbalance.

It is not only the faceless goliaths that we must tame but also ourselves. We live in a local community where neatness is not always viewed as self-discipline, where punctuality is not valued as a gesture of respect, where responsibility is not viewed as a privilege, but all are instead too often viewed as so many trappings of a corrupt and inhuman mainstream culture, as babies to be thrown out with the

bath water. Let us not forget that manners are not merely bourgeois pretensions but something even wolves find the decency to observe.

The ability and the fortitude to act, to act decisively, to effect one’s will in the real world is an aspect of the human being that is today under siege. We must protect and foster it if we are to succeed.

This year, like all years, has had its tribulations and its victories. We stand today in a stronger and more confident position as a faculty and as a school than we did just one year ago. The energy of our early years has provided us with a strong and righteous mantle on which to build, but the energy we need to evolve into the future will not come from a massive explosion but instead from a thousand tiny organisms reaching inexorably toward the light.

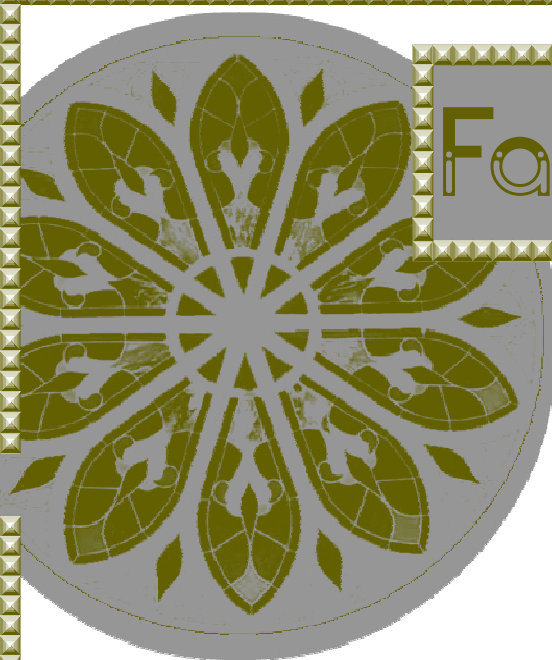


The little boy in this picture (the one on the left, Kili McGeorge) is now a sophomore at the YIHS. His Grandfather, Jerome (right), was a founding member of the school and continues to teach.



Artifacts from the Pre-Cambrian: The second graduating class of YIHS. From left: James Gustafson, Clovis Siemon, Kate Slattery, Jacob Hundt, and an unidentified, tie-dyed fossil. Jacob Hundt is now our Program Director





Faces of the Future



By Shawn Lavoie, Master of Ceremonies

Fifteen years ago, the school had its first graduation. Back then, Youth Initiative and the ceremony were smaller: three graduates and couple handfuls of teachers and parents clustered together in Eckhart Park. Even though class sizes have grown, the spirit of intimacy and authenticity, of seeing each individual graduate in his or her own light, has remained central.

At the time of the first YIHS graduation, the 11 graduates of the class of 2011 were adorable little 3-year-olds. And on this warm late spring day, the graduates stood tall. Their words were clear and true. And they made us all proud and hopeful.

Set in the lush green of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, this year's ceremony was simple yet profound. Each year the seniors and the senior parents collectively organize the graduation ritual. As happens every year, disputes over singing and order and décor arose, but equally predictable, the parents and students came to an agreement.

The ceremony began with the entrance of the graduates to the rousing cheers of their friends and family. With flower crowns and sharp graduation attire, they were quite a sight to behold. Next, the Juniors gave parting gifts to their older peers. After which Matt Voz, history teacher at YIHS, delivered the commencement address. Matt's speech described a class of polarities, of individuals drawn to opposite interests and styles. He noted how as individuals the members of the class had matured to embrace polarities within themselves: the assertive and bold female members and the caring and sensitive male members of the class. After Matt's words, the students themselves came to the microphone to speak.

As a teacher who's known these students for years, I can say that each of them was true to his or her unique personality, while a few, with their reflections and strong presence, gave a glimpse of who they are to become. Opening the space for students to freely speak is obviously a risk, but it always pays off.

In attendance were alumnae and alumnae families, current and former faculty, friends, and prospective YIHS families. Everyone left well-fed, both from the fabulous potluck the parents organized after the ceremony and from the joy and hope exuding from the 2011 graduating class.