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KALEIDOSCOPE

Volume 16, Issue 3

Hyperbole is as American as a gigantic apple pie the size of a football field. Our folklore is littered with super heroes and tall tales. Between Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill we have been dreaming of the impossibly ludicrous and the monumentally absurd for hundreds of years. At the Youth Initiative High School we don't just make up stories about big things—we dream big things and we do big things.

In a world that can sometimes be petty and narrowly utilitarian our teachers and our students search for truth, beauty, and understanding—the big stuff. For fifteen years our students have been exposed to the largeness of the world through their experiences and education at YIHS. But instead of trembling in fear at the size of the world around them they have learned to embrace that world, to become a part of that world, and, ultimately, to try to leave that world better than when they found it.

BIG VISION THE LONG RANGE PLAN

For many years now the YIHS has been working toward formulating a long range plan for the school. This was a part of the Waldorf certification process but was also a valuable tool to tell us who we are and who we want to be. This process was at times a grueling one but it was always thorough and worthwhile.

The Long Range Planning Committee, a subsidiary of the Board of Trustees, spent countless hours gathering data through meetings, surveys, and brain-storming sessions at picnics, barbecues, and all-school meetings. These sessions focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the threats and opportunities it faced from the outside world.

After gathering the data the committee boiled it down into a thick syrup of wisdom and sent it back out to all the committees for review and response. What they got back was synthesized and recapitulated into a statement of the school's long-range goals.

Finally, this manifesto is sent back out to the committees who will be charged with the task of devising and implementing strategies to achieve these goals. So without further ado, here is a picture of the school we want to be...

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THE LONG RANGE PLAN

After years of work by some of the most dedicated members of our corporation we are now, in the 15th year of our existence, able to offer the long range goals of the Youth Initiative High School.

For the entire 15 year life of this school we have resided, more or less, on the 3rd floor of the Viroqua Landmark Center. Those fifteen years have been spent in this building as renters. Youth Initiative High School, regardless of what building we eventually inhabit, requires an environment whose temperature is stable, whose roof is sound, and whose indoor air quality is clean and free of excess pollutants. As renters we have also been unable to exercise true agency in realizing some of the dreams we share about our physical space. The YIHS desires to plant gardens, erect workshops, and have complete control of the academic space we occupy. The YIHS desires to fulfill its full institutional potential. For these reasons the Youth Initiative High School must ultimately become the legal owners and take control of whatever space we inhabit. The Youth Initiative High School should seriously consider purchasing and not just repairing, but invigorating the Landmark Center.

YIHS prides itself on providing a holistic education for all that desire it, regardless of their economic status. The clearest way to continue to provide this valuable education and to reach true financial stability is through increasing and stabilizing student enrollment at 60 students with a student-to-full-time-teacher ratio of between 12 and 15 to 1. Enrollment will increase through clearly defining what the YIHS does best and presenting that information thoroughly and efficiently to the public at large through media outlets and school-run functions and events. The YIHS wishes also to strengthen its pedagogical, personal, and institutional connections to the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School.

Youth Initiative High School, like an organism, is based on the smooth and coherent functioning of many distinct yet inextricable organs. One of these organs is the student body, and their involvement within the school is a central focus of the education we provide. The YIHS must continue to present students with a safe, satisfying, and challenging environment to voice their concerns about the school and act on those concerns in a concrete and productive way. One of the best ways to do this and indeed one of the best ways to improve all school governance is the implementation of structures which facilitate regular and



A scene from the "Gender and Work" class

- ☞ The luring aroma of onions, mushrooms, roasting chicken, bread or butter emanating from the kitchen during the Nutrition main lesson.
- ☞ The boisterous clamor of piano, guitar, and various other makeshift instruments at lunch or afterschool.
- ☞ The fact that students clean the school and supervise the rotation and delegation of cleaning jobs...with infrequent administrative intervention.
- ☞ The full belly laughs only possible when teachers and students can honestly relate to each other.
- ☞ The solid support of a student peer sitting across the from their friend at a Care Group meeting.
- ☞ The simple grace of our morning circle, where we stand and recite our verse to begin every day.

So I try to remember these minor threads, which taken as a whole create the living fabric of the school and turn out the big accomplishments that we're all proud of.

BIG THANKS

We greatly appreciate the local businesses and individuals that match a percentage of student fundraising. These members of the Matching Gift Circle inspire students to meet their goals.

- ☞ Quality of Life Chiropractic, Viroqua
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- ☞ American Family Insurance, Westby
- ☞ Bill Brook Realty, Viroqua

LITTLE MIRACLES

LET THERE BE NO CRACK TO SLIP THROUGH

"In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love."

~Mother Teresa

When dealing with the monumental changes that take place during high school, one must remember the myriad and minor steps along the way. I am struck, as a daily inhabitant of the Youth Initiative High School, by the little miracles, the small things done with great love by the entire school community. In the halls, in the classroom, and out in the world, our students, parents, and teachers bring genuine passion for learning and living.

And why wouldn't teenagers be passionately engaged in school? You may ask. They don't have a real job.

Well, besides school, students have a lot of turbulence and distraction with which to fend; for example, hormones. As you know, teenagers are seething volcanoes of hormones that, when tied to social and emotional uncertainty, can become explosive. Then there are the billions of dollars spent on advertisements targeted at youth, selling them fast food, clutter and images of perfection that tend to sucker punch their self-esteem. Oh, and the whirling buzz of the digital world that surrounds all of us—that has an effect on adolescents as well.

So the seemingly simple act of showing up and being present in school is little miracle number one. And after that, the miracles abound:

- The unexpected student who is struck by a story and comes to class totally pumped to talk about it.
- Seeing students turn to help each other when they don't understand something in class.
- The delight of seeing the one student you'd never expect to dress up like Rocky Balboa and deliver a speech (with a spot-on Stallone accent) actually do it for Social Studies class in front of his peers, who gave a thunderous round of applause.
- All those moments in Care Groups when a student and parents come to understand each other better, or when a student lays out a plan for their near future which they'd never uttered out loud, let alone within a group.
- The teachers with passion pouring forth who dance around the front of the classroom with chalk in their hands.
- The conversations between students and between students and faculty that extend from the class and spill into the hallway.



Art provided by Namthip Nilawong, 9th grader from Thailand

clear communication between committees and between parents, students, and faculty. A particularly important form of communication is the orientation of new members of the corporation to their respective roles within the institution. Faculty, parents, and students need to be thoroughly introduced to their rights and responsibilities as members of the corporation as well as educated as to how the school functions

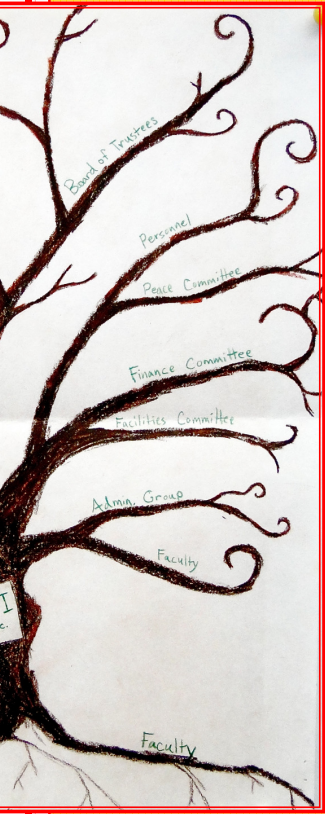
organizationally. Policies and organizational information needs to be clearly structured and published regularly. Institutional memory allows for flexibility and perspective and should be fostered by the retention of core, full-time faculty and administration.

The school's relationship to Waldorf education has always been both fluid and important to our identity as a school. Our relationship to the organizations and structures representing Waldorf education on a national and international level has been somewhat nebulous but continues to grow. This trend toward closer ties with the national Waldorf movement, particularly with AWSNA, should continue but relationships should be bidirectional and should never be allowed to impinge upon the localism and independence that have always characterized this school. Though Anthroposophy should continue to inform us and give us a common paradigm in which to ground our discussions; teachers, parents, and students should continue to think and act within their own identities. Dogmatism of any kind is unacceptable.

Youth Initiative High School is a community that requires the hard work of all of its members but its goal must be higher than the work we do. As individuals working in concert YIHS must find ways to regularly remember and realize its mission statement as a living and inspiring document. Individuals within the corporation should be given the real opportunity express their voice and opportunities should be presented for us to know one another as unique and full human beings through both free and structured social interaction.

As an institution we value stability, flexibility, effectiveness, and vision of purpose in all the work that we do. Clarity and follow through are the most important things we can do to ensure that our work not only achieves its objectives but also satisfies us as human individuals and as members of a group. Much of the time we spend together is in meetings and thus that time should be used in a way that is satisfying for all. All meetings should be planned

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

well in advance and include a succinct, pertinent agenda with a clear purpose. In addition, participants leaving any meeting should have a clear idea of what has been decided and what tasks they are expected to carry out. Members of committees should disseminate decisions to their respective corporate bodies with clarity, thoroughness, impartiality, and all deliberate speed.

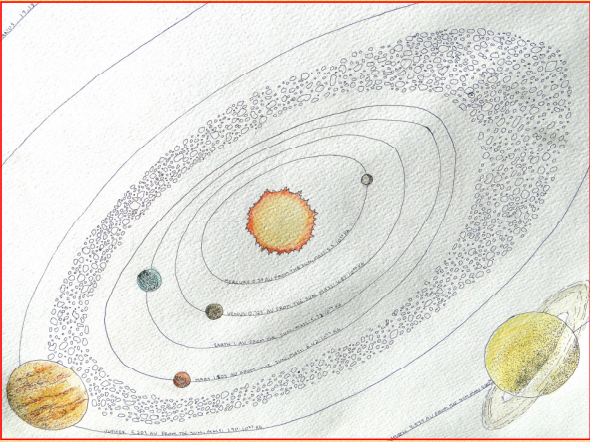
The academic life is the soul of the school, its *raison d'être*, and the place where most of our energies are either directly or indirectly expended. The center of the academic experience is the faculty of the school and that center should be held by a

diverse, multi-talented group of five full-time employees able to carry out both pedagogical and administrative functions. The five full-time employees should be composed of one administrator, and four faculty members able to oversee the curriculum and faculty of the Mathematics, Science, Humanities, and Fine Arts departments. Despite the need for a core full-time compliment of teachers YIHS should not abandon its tradition of community-based instruction. Faculty diversity is essential to the goals of the school including part-time teachers from the community, guest

teachers from other Waldorf schools, and teachers from perspectives other than Anthroposophy. YIHS has created an excellent curricular foundation in the Humanities and Fine Arts but must increase its focus on science, mathematics, and particularly on the experiential learning of practical skills. Part of the academic mission of the school remains the education of the social being. To that end YIHS must redouble its efforts at educating its students in non-violent communication, cooperation and servant leadership.

Committees should review this document and identify the best ways that they can achieve these goals within their mandates. After identifying outcomes in line with this document the committees should then formulate detailed plans to achieve these outcomes and submit them to the Long Range Planning Committee.

-Prepared By Matthew J. Voz under the supervision of the Long Range Planning Committee



Part of the plan is to colonize the solar system with YIHS faculty

JESSE VAN TOL

Jesse was a member of the graduating class of 2002. After his time at Youth Initiative High School Jesse went on to receive his Bachelor's degree in History and International Relations from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Eventually Jesse settle in Washington, D.C. and is now the Director of Communications at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC). The NCRC is an association of over 600 community-based organizations that promote access to basic banking services including credit and savings, to create and sustain affordable housing, job development and vibrant communities for America's working families.

Jesse manages media relations for the NCRC and helps strategically place the NCRC's message throughout the press and blogosphere. He was recently interviewed by CNN regarding the ongoing mortgage crisis and helps strategically place the NCRC's message throughout the press and blogosphere.

One of the most basic principles of Associative Economics is that money is not just something to hoard but a tool with which to help others. Jesse is a part of an organization that is trying to do just that, help others and revitalize our communities.



Silas Hundt ruminates on the future of human kind

SILAS HUNDT

If Youth Initiative High School were the United States of America than Silas Hundt would be Bobby Kennedy. The Hundt family has played a huge role in the history of the school, matriarch Dawn continues to help out on various projects at school, and brother Jacob is a founding student and current Program Administrator and Faculty Chair.

Silas himself is a member of the graduating class of 2006. Since then he has attended the ultra-selective Deep Springs college in Nevada and gone on to study at the equally prestigious University of Chicago.

But Silas has not simply locked himself away in the cloistered chambers of academia. In the four short years since he has left our humble school Silas has found the time to become the co-founder of his own

business, EduLender.com. EduLender provides a service to college students that helps them shop for student loans through instant cost comparisons from their database of private lenders and also helps in consolidating existing student loans. EduLender is off to an auspicious start and has been featured in the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times and on ABC News.

Silas has also been very active in the sustainable food movement. Growing up on one of the first member farms of Organic Valley, Silas has continued to be active in spreading awareness of the importance of healthy food systems from farm to table. Silas recently represented Organic Valley on their Generation-O tour of the East Coast, visiting places like Yale University and the White House while advocating sustainable changes to the Farm Bill and, like any good Wisconsinite, giving away free cheese.

BIG ACHIEVEMENTS

OUR ALUMNI GO BIG

The YIHS’ first graduating class was comprised of a grand total of three students, we now have over 100 graduates dispersed across the globe. Our graduates have a 100% college acceptance rate. That’s right, every Youth Initiative student who has applied to a post secondary institution has been accepted. Our students have attended Deep Springs College, Earlham, Cornell, Naropa, The American Universities in Bulgaria and Cairo, and countless more.

We’re even prouder that our students are able to not only walk the well worn path to the gates of the ivory tower but also to bushwhack their own path through the world. And we are proud of the paths they choose. The hard work, compassion, and social conscience that students develop during their years at YIHS lead them on to work for a better, more humane world as adults.

The men and women who were once our students are redefining the concept of success. To the traditional measures of accomplishment like financial security and material comfort they have added environmental, political, and social responsibility, an awareness and compassion for their fellow humans, and a happiness that cannot be found in a stock portfolio or a new car.

Here are some of our graduates and the things that they are doing.



Anna Chotzen planting seeds in Senegal

ANNA CHOTZEN

Anna Chotzen is member of the class of 2007, and though she is still quite young she has already made her mark in a place thousands of miles from where she graduated from high school.

After graduating from YIHS Anna studied international relations at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. As a part of her studies Anna spent several months in Senegal, West Africa with the organization Living Routes under the auspices of the United Nations Eco-Soc NGO Global Ecovillage Network which promotes the ideas and practices of sustainable development around the world.

Anna conducted field research and studied the theoretical basis for sustainable development with other American and Senegalese University students, the whole time learning intimately about a foreign culture and serving as an ambassador for her own. Throughout it she never lost the sense of place and interconnectedness fostered at YIHS. In her own words:

“There I was in a small village in northern Senegal, watching the first steps of organic agriculture come to fruition, observing all of the difficulties faced. It cannot be entirely a coincidence that I come from the Driftless Region of Wisconsin, one of the richest havens of organic agriculture in the Midwest.”

If you want to learn more about Anna’s travels visit her blog at annachotzen.wordpress.com

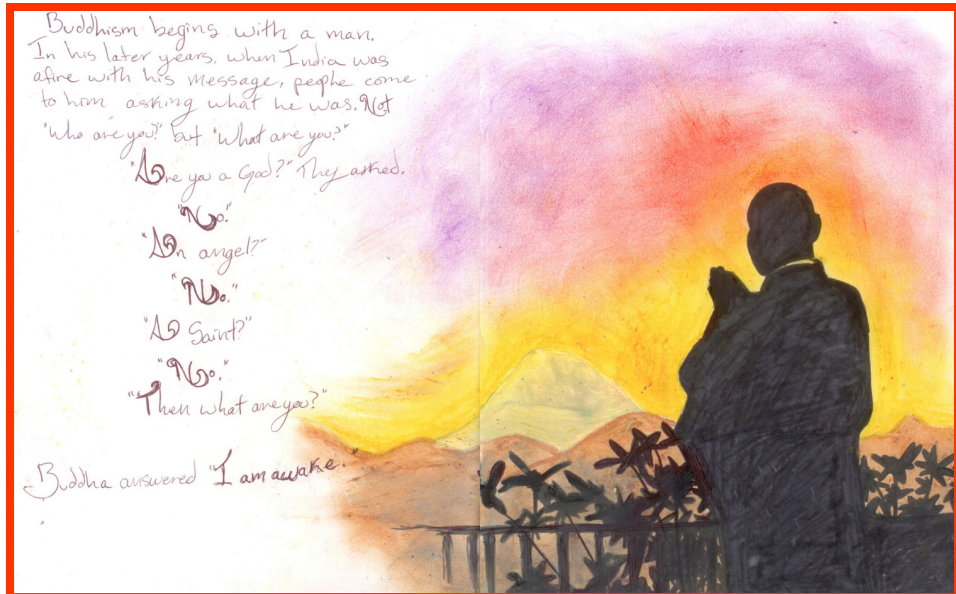
BIG IDEAS

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH



Youth Initiative High School challenges its students to take on the big ideas that have haunted and inspired humanity since the dawn of recorded time (and beyond). There are many paths to the truth and our curriculum reflects the broad strategies that humankind has employed to find that truth. Our students learn science through theoretical and experiential approaches, they learn history through a curriculum that reflects their own inner revolutions and progress, they read great works of literature with an eye to the common threads that weave us all together, and they also learn about religion in an experiential and living way that is simultaneously academic and spiritual. Students are introduced to a wide variety of eastern and western religions through the reading of their sacred texts, through guest speakers, and through immersion in religious services or practices.

What follows are selections of some of the work that came out of this year’s Eastern Religions block. As always, artistic creation and imaginative thinking played a major part in the learning about Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism. Students drew images, developed their own creation myths, fasted for 24 hours, attended religious services, and meditated almost every day in class.



Ayana Perry's depiction of Guatama Buddha at sunset from her Eastern Religions Main Lesson book.

Religious practice is often as important as religious thought, and the idea is that the two inspire and inform each other. Students fasted for a day and recorded their reflections.

Fasting by Cadan Cummings

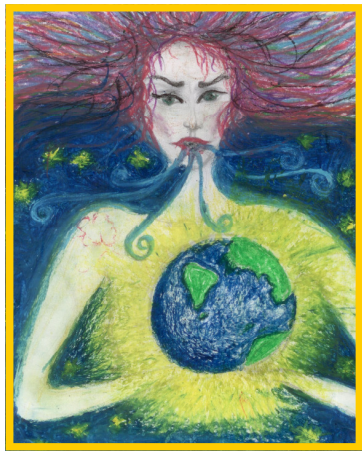
My fasting experience started on Sunday night and ended on Tuesday morning. I set out to find how far my limits are and to tune in more to my daily routine. I started my fast almost accidentally because I woke up late on Monday and had a diminutive bowl of cereal and left before I could take a sip of my apple cider. In class I realized that playing soccer the next day on an empty stomach was not a good idea and decided to start fasting right away.

The first challenge that I had to face was one of psychological hunger. I could not get myself to stop thinking about any kind of food. This was mostly caused by being around fifteen hungry soccer players at our end-of-the-year team party with lots of food. An aid that I found to not feel hungry was my fellow soccer players around me were all eating meat products. I have been a vegetarian now for three years and have heavily reasearched what is in industrialized meat, so I have stopped craving meat for many years now and found it helped me to feel less hungry.

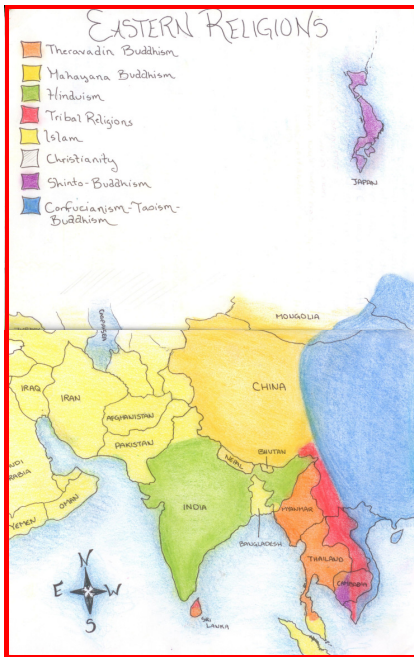
Another struggle with not eating is that I had never fasted or cleansed before and was frankly scared of how I would feel after a day of not eating. If I were to fast again I would know that everything is going to be alright and if not, it can be easily solved.

One bad effect of fasting was I went back into my routine of eating too quickly and made myself ill. A solution to not get sick next time I fast is to eat simple foods like yogurt and vegetable broth once I finish the fast or cleanse.

Overall, I learned many new insights into the tradition of fasting. I have now experienced the same dilemmas that Buddha had to endure on his forty-nine day fast. Fasting has now become a life skill that I will use to help keep my state of mind healthy for the rest of my life.



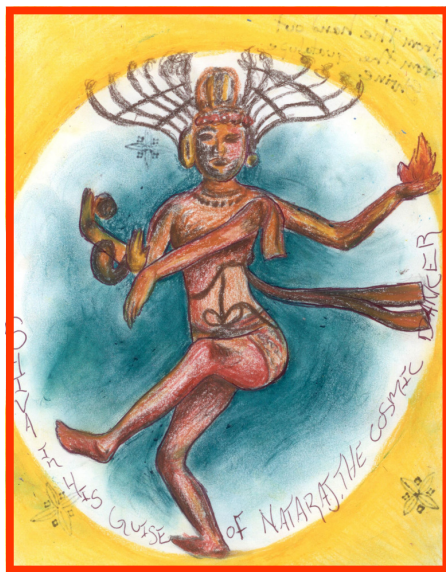
Grace Hallberg-Cain's depiction of creation



A map of the distribution of Eastern Religions from the Main Lesson Book of Corinne Horan



An illustrated depiction of Gannesh from the Eastern Religions Main Lesson book of Corinne Horan



An illustrated depiction of Shiva from the Eastern Religions Main Lesson book of Ayana Perry

Part of every religion is a focus on the selfless act as a purifying and spiritual event. Students were asked to identify such an event and write about its significance.

Selfless Deed by Christine Zinky

This summer, my mom left me alone at my house. During that time there were chores that needed to be done. There were some things around the house. But there were some in the garden, that she had especially asked me to do.

So one sunny day, knowing it simply must be done, I set out to pick chamomile, with my basket in one hand and my iPod and headphones in the other. I sat down in the grass, put some relaxing music into my ears and began to pick the lovely little white flowers. I worked slowly, enjoying the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the grass. As I sat there I realized how wonderful it was to be sitting in the garden. I was free to think whatever I wanted. I was free to be who I was in that little patch of sunlight. I was happy to be getting my hands dirty and it was fun doing this work. At that moment in time, I realized how much fun I was having by myself, with only my thoughts and Mozart, just concentrating on picking the flowers.

It was one of the most relaxing things I did this summer. I was just sitting in the sun, away from the drama and most civilization. It was fun, beautiful, and meditative.

I chose this as my selfless, because I believe that in that moment in time, I was being selfless. I wasn't thinking about what my mom would say when she got home or how the dried chamomile would taste as tea. I was just in the moment and enjoying the work that had to be done.