

Winter 2006-7

World Water Forum and Alternative Forums

By Cathy Holt

An International Gathering of Water Experiences was held in Mexico City in mid-March. The conference, a prelude to the fourth World Water Forum, was to generate an inclusive space of reflection centered on the challenges societies are facing around the management and use of water.

Barbara Harmony, Coordinator for the Water Committee of the Bioregional movement since 1984, was a keynote speaker. Her address began... "My purpose here today is to talk about the changes in consciousness that I believe must occur for us to share water and use it wisely." The Bioregional Water Committee's resolutions refined over the last 20 years formed a large part of her speech and described the changes in consciousness.

While the 4th World Water Forum (20,000 attendees) met, an Alternative International Forum in Defense of Water was also taking place in Mexico City. Free and open to the public, this people's forum met in city buildings, a union hall, and tents in public places. The Bioregional water resolutions formed a basis for the discussion.

The Alternative Forum received funding of about \$50,000 (\$500,000 pesos) from the Local Assembly of Mexico City. Space in public buildings such as museums was donated. Bioregionalists Arnold Ricalde, Joscelyn Proctor, and Helen Samuels were some of the key organizers of the Alternative Forums, especially the "Espejo de Agua" (Mirror of Water), a 5-day event that began with a Hopi-Aztec dance.

There were workshops on water rights, a stage where educational skits, music and dance took place, a women's teepee, tables for NGO's, a children's area, and a "Green Room" for computers, media links, and film showings. Flower petals and colorful corn kernels combined to create complex and beautiful mandalas, which would be dismantled at the end. In a festive opening ceremony, some of the traditional grandmothers joined the younger women in a dance of blessing with copal and flowers.

An encampment of around 800 members of the National Assembly in Defense of Land and Water and against Privatization—mostly indigenous peoples such as the Parota, whose land is being threatened by a dam and flooding—was held at the Monument to the Revolution. •••

Voice of the Turtle Bioregional News

*Tierra mi cuerpo
Agua mi sangre
Aire ni aliento
Fuego mi espíritu*

*Earth my body
Water my blood
Air my breath
Fire my spirit*

Grailville—Site of the 10th Continental Bioregional Congress July 12-20, 2008

The site of the next Continental Bioregional Congress is Grailville, near the Little Miami River in the Central Ohio River Valley Bioregion in Loveland, Ohio. See www.grailville.org. Grailville is just northeast of Cincinnati. It is a 300 acre farm consisting of a retreat center, organic gardens, hiking trails, woods, pastures, ponds and creeks, labyrinths, a constructed wetland wastewater treatment system, and the up and coming Heartland Ecovillage.

Grailville has been an environmental, education, and retreat center since the 1940s. It has buildings with names like *Oratory*, *Tidings*, *The Ark*, and *The House of Joy* that are central to the Grail Movement's emphasis on women's issues, spirituality, ecological sustainability, and social transformation throughout the world.

Formed in the Netherlands in the 1920s, The Grail is an international women's movement working in 20 countries, as individuals and Grail groups, interconnecting regionally, nationally and internationally. Called by spiritual values, The Grail envisions a world of peace, justice, and renewal of the earth, brought about by women working together as catalysts for change.

The U.S. Grail brings together committed women who:

- Build bridges among different faith traditions and spiritual paths;
- Foster international exchange and understanding;
- Challenge economic systems of disparity;
- Work for the rights of women and children;
- Support ecological environments toward a sustainable future;
- Celebrate the sources of life that abide in the roots of our diverse cultures.

Grailville, established in 1944 in Loveland, Ohio, is the first and largest U.S. Grail center and home to the National Grail Office. U.S. Grail centers are also located in Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY; The Bronx, NY; and San Jose, CA. •••

Voice of the Turtle

ECOHABITAT, EXPERIENCIAS RUMBO A LA SUSTENTABILIDAD

A book Review of *Ecohabitat: Experiences Towards Sustainability*

By Laura Valdes Kuri and Arnold Ricalde de Jager

This book is mainly a synthesis of the bioregional and ecovillage movement in Mexico. The experiences reveal how many people are working, creating and developing a new society with an environmental, social, economical, cultural and spiritual view, building a road towards sustainable development. This book shows examples of how lots of activists started to look for new ways of living and restoring the Earth.

Inspired by the Bioregional philosophy and praxis, the Mexican Bioregional Movement is named *The Consejo De Visiones Guardianes De La Tierra*. Most of the authors of this book belong to this beautiful network of people that have dedicated their lives to the Earth. There are many more projects, centers, products, services, proposals that are not included in this edition; this book just has some very high quality examples.

This volume was made with hard work from the editorial council, the voluntary contributions of all the authors and also the alliance between the following NGO's and Governmental institutions: Red Mesoamericana de Ecoaldeas REM; ORGANIK A.C.; AYOTL A.C.; Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA); Global Ecovillage Educators for a Sustainable Earth (GEESE); Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda del (DF SEDUVI 'Local Housing and Development Ministry'); Centro de Capacitacion para el Desarrollo Sustentable; CECADESU-Semarnat (Instituto Nacional de Ecologia); INE-Semarnat (National Environmental Institute); Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales Semarnat (Federal Environmental Ministry).

Book Grand Opening Event

The rainbow with all its different colors were appreciated by the people who attended the presentation at the Museo de Culturas Populares de Coyoacan. There were 450 people from many sectors: academics, scientists, politicians, members of the parliament belonging to different parties, artists, activists, teachers, kids, youth, farmers, traditional healers, elders, mexican dancers, environmentalists, earth guardians, local community leaders, punks and social leaders.

There was a beautiful art exposition by Gerda Hansberg, who creates her own watercolor paints with herbs. Then there was a great show of music and dance by Odin Ruz, Deva Baumbach, and Luix Saldaa, and a slide show with pictures taken by Jan Svante. The new web page of the REM was an-

nounced: www.reddeecoaldeas.org

There was a space for an Eco-Fair with several expositions. Information on sustainable topics were given to the attendants. Organic canaps and beverages were offered to the public.

The book was discussed by Laura Valdes Kuri, Arnold Ricalde de Jager, Jose Iturriaga, and Carlos Gomez with Tiahoga Ruge. Here is an excerpt from Jose Iturriaga's speech:

"Although this book has a solid theoretical and academic foundation on environmental issues, it is primarily the work of several people who speak from living this way. It comes from households of people practicing living ecologically with a religious or spiritual fervor. I'm not exaggerating.

The individual efforts to save the environment of the planet, although modest in their global outreach, are nevertheless heroic. As a matter of fact, the sum of all the individual efforts, if adopted by millions, would result in the salvation of the earth. If we take care of the quality of life for our family, we are taking care of the quality of life of the community and, ultimately, for the whole world. We cannot have a global environmental spirit if we don't have it first in our daily, domestic and local life.

In this book the individual examples are called anonymous heroes, a useful term to use if we want to plant a new consciousness to improve the relationship with our environment."

We give special thanks to: Helen Samuels (Tekio), Fabio Manzino, Elena de Hoyos (Ayotl), Angelika Koniecki, Dra. Ana Maria de Jager, Carlos Guash, Javier y Oscar Cota, Joscelyn Proctor, Kareen Kohn (Organik), Giovanni Cialo, Beatrice Briggs, Deba Baumbach, Odin Ruz (Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage), Tiahoga Ruge, Nashieli Pacheco, Miguel Angel Domiguez (CECADESU), Museo de Culturas Populares, Alejandro Valdes Kuri y Antonio Fouilloux (Graficos), Laura Itzel Castillo Juarez (SEDUVI), Adrian Rivera, Arnoldo Matus (INE), Photos are by Jan Svante, Food and Beverages by Green Corner, Biopla-neta, Rancho el Amate, Tequila Cuervo and Itcate Tom.

The book is free of charge. You can make a donation of \$15 for Ayotl and Organik expenses and ground shipping costs.

(laukur@prodigy.net.mx and despertares222@yahoo.com.mx)

Somos uno con el universo

Siempre para siempre siempre.

Laura Kuri Arnold Ricalde •••

Help the Turtle

We hope to publish the Voice of the Turtle regularly. To make it maximally interesting, it would be nice to share information and ideas about bioregional issues and activities in all the continent's bioregions.

Have you or someone you know written something that might inspire, educate or help another bioregion? If so, email them to Ken Lassman at

seasonsandcycles@yahoo.com

*From the invitation to the
Mirror of Water
by Joscelyn Proctor*

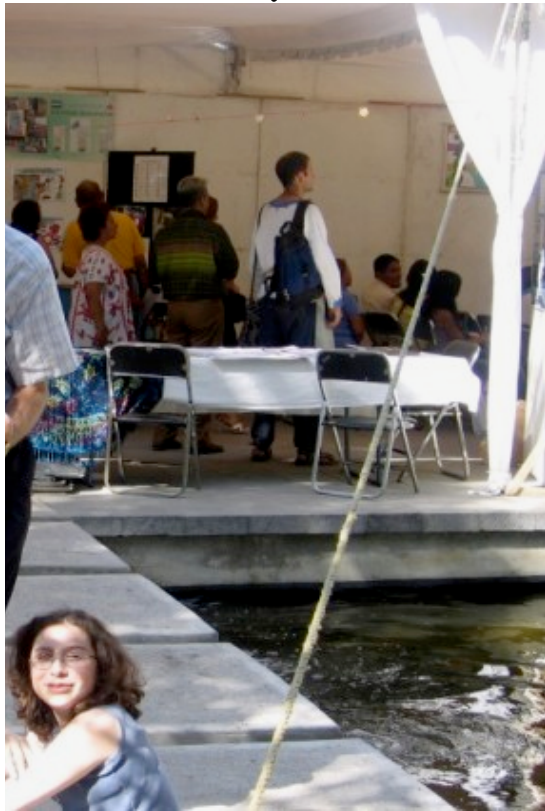
Atzin Zihuatlahtocan

Interchange of the Word between women around water March 18th and 19th, 2006 in the water mirror of Chapultepec.

Thru history women have been working in consciousness for water, as we all have it as our blood and mother earth's blood, this sacred vital liquor, we are intimately related with her and our moon cycles....

We invite you to unify our hearts and actions for the rescue of our relation with water. That's why we call all the women from the different nations to expose and interchange your practices, knowledge and ancestral or futurist visions and wisdom, focused in the conservation of our relation with water from our houses, communities, regions and watersheds.

**"Espejo de Agua" (Mirror of Water)
A 5-day Event**



**Bioregionalism: An Online Resource
Guide—Part 1**

By Ken Lassman

My parents' commitment to education was unequivocal. During World War II, my mom and her twin sister were two of the first women to receive degrees in business, and later my Dad was a public school teacher in the local high school. My Mom wasn't able to translate her business degree into a profession back in the 50's because, in the words of the Business School at the time, "you can't get a job in business because you are a woman."

Nevertheless, when I was growing up in the 1960's, I was brought up with the clear message that education was the ticket to a lifetime of success. Time-Life sent us a whole series of large format books through the mail on a wide variety of topics: The Universe, Fishes, Mountains, Weather, and so on, all with the same format: an essay written by some expert, followed by a photographic section, full of vivid pictures that etched themselves in my mind long after the book was closed.

Toward the end of the series, a book with a curious title arrived: **Ecology**. Nobody I knew had ever heard of this word, but I remember memorizing its definition and repeating it to anyone who would listen. Without any real understanding, I recited it to anyone who was curious about it: *the interaction of different species with each other and their habitat*. Over the years, this meaning has taken on deeper and deeper significance both to me and to others around me. Exploring its meaning has become one of the central threads in my life.

Bioregionalism is a variant of the concept of ecology that is central to my understanding of the planet that we are a part of. Yet it is a term that is as foreign to many today as the term "ecology" was to folks when I was growing up. With that in mind, this column intends to provide resources for the curious to help them flesh out the term "bioregionalism" in the same way that the Ecology book helped me develop an understanding of that term when I was growing up.

The way we absorb new concepts has changed radically since the 60's, so here I will be focusing on internet resources about what it means to live in bioregionally sustainable ways. These online resources are, of course, secondary resources, since the primary resource for everyone must be the land and life that surrounds us wherever we live. But these online "bioregional tools" can create helpful bridges of understanding as we explore what it means to live sustainably in the landscapes that we share with all other species.

Since this will be an ongoing column, please feel free to send me your favorite bioregional resources, online or otherwise, to include in future columns. Send these suggestions to: seasonsandcycles@yahoo.com

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Dear Bioregional Friends,

Mark your calendars now to participate in one of the traditions of the bioregional movement. The 10th Continental Bioregional Congress is happening in the heart of the Central Ohio River Valley at Grailville in Loveland Ohio, near Cincinnati July 12-20, 2008.

We are also seeking your hands-on involvement months in advance in order to make this event happen—whether in small ways or in much bigger ways. The closer you live to the Cincinnati/Loveland area, the more your involvement is welcomed. We also welcome you from areas further out on the tributaries. Keep in mind that the Ohio River Valley area takes in most places in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky and some neighboring states. Of course, we welcome all the ways that any of you throughout the continent may want to contribute to the effort of making CBC10 happen.

Bioregional congresses have been fertile ground for inspiring many individuals to craft lives and livelihoods more in balance with Earth. Out of these gatherings, communities and organizations have been born or given a boost, publications and curriculums have been initiated and hands-on tools for sustainable living have been fostered—all in the spirit of deepening our commitment to re-inhabit our life-places. Bioregionalists have been gathering in congresses and councils to envision and develop a realistic, restorative way of life in the bioregions of the Americas since the beginning of the 1980's, both on the local and continental level.

The Continental Congress has convened about every two years, in

- Ozarks (Missouri, 1984)
- Great Lakes Bioregion (Michigan, 1986)
- Cascadia (British Columbia, 1988)
- Gulf of Maine (Maine, 1990)
- Edwards Plateau (Texas, 1992)
- Ohio River Valley (Kentucky, 1994)
- Cuahunahuac (Mexico, 1996; this was also a hemispheric gathering)
- The Prairie- Kansas Area Watershed (Kansas, 2002)
- Katuah in Southern Appalachians at Earthaven Ecovillage (North Carolina 2005)

A bioregional group from the host region has put on each one of these convenings. In a sense, from its beginning in 1984, there has been just one congress, going in and out of session on that average of every 2 years, for over 20 years, maintaining its continuity between assemblies through secretariats and coordinating councils.

Perhaps the success of bioregional congresses comes from the participatory nature of these events. Representatives of many ecosystems gather to model human governance that explores the possibilities and respects the natural limits of the



Grailville--The Site of the 10th Continental Congress

planet. We co-create a ceremonial village for a week that can bring about dynamic shifts in consciousness and renewed passion within the participants to live more harmoniously on Earth. Besides learning from folks across the whole continent of North America, opportunities are created to build a more intricate and effective local network supporting each others' projects and lifestyles.

Some of you from our area may remember the local bioregional congresses of the Ohio River Valley held at Michaela Farm in Oldenburg, Indiana in the early 1990's and also the 6th continental congress held in this bioregion near Louisville, Kentucky in 1994. For me personally, those congresses have been life-changing events that helped steer me toward literally coming home to my roots, meeting my soul-partner and husband Richard and co-creating an off-grid strawbale house.

For about a year now, a site committee consisting of seven of us have been meeting at Grailville to start laying the groundwork for this event.

We are now widening the circle and inviting especially those in the Central Ohio River Valley region to join in as this event is being created. The local bioregional movement is essentially being rebuilt in the process of organizing this congress, which I hope ultimately helps us all in our own projects and the way we live.

The basic areas in which members of our current site team need assistance for the congress are:

- Food coordination (including a focalizer for rounding up local organic food of our region & cooks)
- Promotions
- Site logistics (including design and creation of temporary structures)
- Hospitality & Wellness
- Registration
- Youth program and child-care
- Transportation arrangements
- Cultural sharing coordination

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Resources continued from p.3

Planet Drum

www.planetdrum.org/

This site was established and is maintained by the Planet Drum folks. In many ways, this is the grandmother of all bioregional websites, since Planet Drum is on the short list of progenitors of the bioregional movement. Included on the website is a library of articles, bioregional resources, and projects that Planet Drum is either directly or indirectly involved in. One of the online resources there is Peter Berg's seminal essay: *Amble Toward Continental Congress* that helped launch the bioregional congress movement. There are regular updates of Planet Drum activities here as well, including posts from their wonderful work in Bahia de Caraquez in Ecuador.

The Bioregional Congress

www.bioregional-congress.org

This is the Continental Bioregional Congress' official website. It includes maps, definitions, a history of the congresses, and regular updates for anyone interested in the bioregional movement. As such it is not only growing and changing, it is a networking and resource tool for the movement as a whole. See the sidebar on the previous page for the definition of bioregionalism from this site.

Over the next months and years, look for a continuing increase in resources as updates are made and the combined knowledge of our many bioregions are linked. There will also be updated plans for the next Continental Congress in Ohio in 2008.

The Ecovillage Network

<http://gen.ecovillage.org/>

<http://ena.ecovillage.org/>

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Here are the ways you can get involved—pick any or all:

1. **Specific task/interest.** Let us know if you have interest in helping in a specific way as mentioned above—or-- anything you think may be needed in order for this to become a successful event.

2. **Event planning gatherings.** Come to our planning meetings that are a combination of sharing our love of place, our projects and strategizing for the 2008 event. Our next meeting is planned for January 2007 at Grailville.

3. **Listserv.** Join our listserv OhRiValley-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to raise consciousness about and organize

Bioregionalism is not just an abstract concept; rather, one of the ways it manifests itself “where the tire hits the pavement” is in the form of *ecovillages*. Ecovillages roll together the disparate components of living sustainably in bioregionally specific ways. They aspire to integrate all the facets of living sustainably in an eco-region. These include: building techniques, waste management, permacultural ways of food production, sustainable economics, decision-making, and more.

Ecovillages have taken root all over the world in urban, suburban and rural settings and in all sorts of cultural traditions. These websites chronicle these efforts and help you find resources and groups all over the planet.

Bioregional Democracy

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioregional_democracy This collaboratively written article outlines many important concepts included in bioregionalism and it provides resource links to explore the concept of bioregionalism further. It's an especially useful resource for exploring the concept of bioregionalism with others in your area.

Regional Sustainability

www.sightline.org/research/sust_toolkit

The Sightline group supports the Tidepool.org website, which is a bioregionally specific news agency for the Pacific Northwest. Among its evolving interests is a “sustainability toolkit” which can be a useful starting point for exploring the issue of local

sustainability. The site includes a list of useful links to organizations in the Pacific Northwest committed to these principles, as well as inspiration for what is possible for the rest of us.

Watersheds and Ecoregions

<http://www.epa.gov/surf/>

The US government has an intriguing “Surf your Watershed” website that can be a useful resource for your area. Included are watershed maps, natural areas, pollution sources, water quality information, and as well information about environmental groups in your area. This might be a useful place to post your local group information if you want to get the word out in your area.

www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/

In addition to watersheds, there is another important way to look at the local landscape since other species especially recognize what ecoregion they are a part of. The above website is co-sponsored by the World Wildlife Foundation and the National Geographic Society. It has maps that show what ecoregion you are a part of and it has links to detailed information about your ecoregion such as dominant species, endangered species, ecological profiles, and much else.

So folks, get online and get outdoors. Keep gathering local wisdom and sharing it with each other as we all re-inhabit our locale's landscapes, watersheds, ecosystems, and ecoregions.

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for the Congress and post any relevant events as we rebuild the bioregional movement in our area.

Please contact me if you want to stay posted and join this endeavor or have any other questions.

For other info and web links to bioregionalism and our next Congress site, see:

www.bioregional-congress.org

www.grailville.org

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Mary Meyer

Coordinator, The 10th Continental Bioregional Congress
marylmeyer@gmail.com 812-933-0067 •••

Responsible Management of Human Manure & Urine At Outdoor Festivals And Gatherings

Steps Towards An Environmentally Sound, Ecologically Responsible, Low Energy Resource Management System

By Richard Cartwright

I believe we must consider an alternative to the habit of carelessly dumping our bodily waste products out into the world, as we do now on a daily basis.

“By defecating directly into water, we pollute it. Every time we flush a toilet we launch five or six gallons of polluted water out into the world... Even after the contaminated water is treated in wastewater treatment plants, it may still be polluted with excessive levels of nitrates, chlorine, pharmaceutical drugs, industrial chemicals, detergents, and other pollutants. This “treated” water is discharged directly into the environment.”

Joe Jenkins,
The Humanure Handbook

Treating the product of our bodily processes as waste—is the first mistake, and a denial of the life process in which we participate. Dumping it elsewhere—is the second very costly mistake. We need to recognize that in the process of getting rid of a valuable resource (human manure and urine) we waste huge amounts of potable water and energy.

In order to begin to change this wasteful practice, I offer the following **low energy resource management system** for use at outdoor festivals and gatherings, summer camps, and similar events. This is an alternative to the environmentally degrading, energy intensive, aesthetically offensive chemical toilets most often employed in these situations. Another motivation is to introduce a more sensible way of dealing with ‘shit’ to those unfamiliar with humanure composting.

A suitable method of dealing with human manure and urine at outdoor gatherings involves mixing them, as deposited, with an optimal carbonaceous material mix such as sawdust. This will form a contained pile that will compost above the ground. The toilet structure may then be removed.

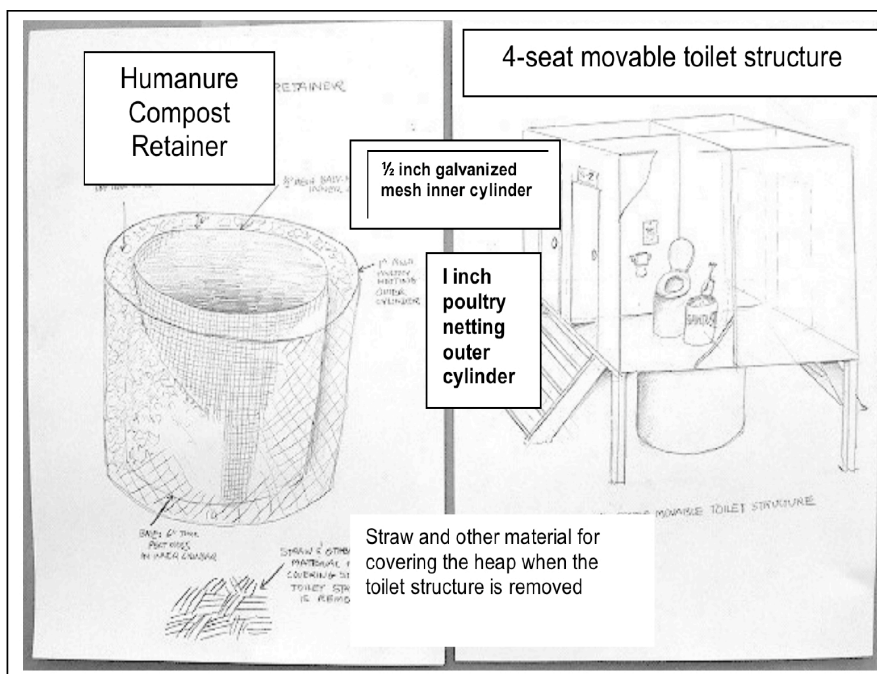
The advantage of this aerobic composting in an above-ground pile over the relatively anaerobic composting typical of enclosed toilets is that the aerobic pile will generate higher temperatures, thereby ensuring a more rapid and complete destruction of potential human pathogens.

This is very different from the infamous “outhouse” of old, which does a very slow job of composting and is a source of ground pollution. It differs also from the containerized pits, which

often compost less than ideally because of lack of oxygen and carbon materials.

Composting destroys potential human pathogens. The composting process generates internal, biological heat that can kill pathogens in a matter of minutes. But with adequate time, low temperature composting, will also yield compost suitable for agriculture purposes. Proper composting destroys possible pathogens and completely converts the humanure into a new, benign, pleasant-smelling, and beneficial substance called *humus*, which is then returned to the soil to enrich it and enhance plant growth.

For a detailed description of the composting process and how pathogens are destroyed yielding the beneficial end product, as well as a description of other toilet systems suitable for continual use, there is no better source than The Humanure Handbook, 2nd edition, by Joseph Jenkins. Having personally used the humanure system for over 13 years in our home, I can attest to its workability.



To minimize the management of this resource conversion system, movable toilet structures should be assembled using bolts and nuts or screws instead of nails. These should be put directly over the spot where the human manure compost stacks are to be built.

The mobile toilet structure should be disassembled and stored for reuse at another location the following season. At the end of the cycle (one full year or more) a valuable mound of compost (less than half of the original volume) is the result—ready for application to feed trees and other perennial plants throughout the landscape.

The illustration (see left) shows a 64 sq. ft. (5.94 sq. m.) wooden 4-seater with separate rooms. It is an idea for a possible moveable toilet. The inner retainer for the deposits is a 3' tall cylinder constructed of 16' x 3' (4.87m x 91cm) piece of 1/2 inch (1.27cm) mesh galvanized hardware cloth. A 6 ft. (1.82m) diameter circle of 1-inch (2.54 cm) poultry netting 3' x 20' (91cm x 6.1m) holds dried or partially composted leaves between it and the inner cylinder.

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Voice of the Turtle

Bob Randall joined the Coordinating Council at the 9th Continental Bioregional Congress. He recently received the Community Health Leadership Award from the St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities for his leadership of Urban Harvest in Houston. These excerpted comments from his acceptance speech are worth reprinting here because he raises the importance of horticultural literacy, which, like ecological literacy, may be as important to our future as reading literacy.

Access to Horticultural Literacy should to be a Human Right

By Bob Randall

On behalf of Urban Harvest, my family, and myself I want to thank you very, very much for this award. I am now nearing the age of 65. For the last 20 years, I have worked here in Houston on food, starting in 1987 with the Interfaith Hunger Coalition and continuing since 1994 with Urban Harvest.

Urban Harvest is a nonprofit organization that uses fruit, vegetable, and habitat gardens to improve the quality of life in the greater Houston area. These gardens serve to strengthen community spirit, create therapeutic environments, provide quality food, create income, and above all-- educate.

Urban Harvest teaches organic gardening techniques hands on in gardens, and in print, on our web site and through sit down classes including permaculture, vegetables and fruits. We help neighborhoods build both successful community gardens and outdoor classrooms at schools. School gardens teach nutrition and respect for the environment, provide skills for life long exercise, and because they teach core curricula and get children excited about learning, they are increasingly supported by school systems.

Urban Harvest also provides fresh locally grown food through a farmers' market and this encourages local farmers. We also sell excellent seeds and fruit trees. And we encourage responsible land use through a new and rapidly growing association of 90 organic landscaping businesses.

Everyone Working Together

Over the last two decades, I have been privileged to work on these tasks with a remarkable and diverse collection of board members, staff, and volunteers. Some I am pleased to say have joined me here tonight.

Staff and volunteers worked at our offices of course—though in the early days we barely had a desk and no phone—but equally in the wards, the barrios, the suburbs, and even in places far from the Houston center like Galveston, Cat Spring, Channelview, and Magnolia.

In the beginning the effort was kept together by two partially disabled elderly 4th Ward church deacons who volunteered at a food pantry in a shotgun house and hand-carried water from the church to the garden for 18 months. But 20 years later, things are much different and many times more effective. Since 1994, Urban Harvest has recognized 370 extraordinary individuals for five to 21 years of work on this effort. We presently help 150 neighborhood agencies or groups where we have affiliated community gardens, and about 100 businesses. We have 900 members and support from dozens of philanthropic organizations and individuals

This sort of dedicated effort can only happen if the group takes the time to define goals, agrees on ways to move ahead, and assures volunteers that we will support them if they work hard and well on the agreed improvements.

If I deserve this leadership award, it is probably because I have worked consis-

tently, if not always well, to make sure we truly value the widest diversity of individuals and groups by supporting their work on important goals.

But What Goals?

In 1987, with a faltering economy and area food donation at its capacity, the Interfaith Hunger Coalition started a network of community gardens to serve the hungry. I got recruited.

When we started the community garden project, we thought that merely putting community gardens on the many vacant lots in low-income areas and perhaps at church food pantries would be enough. We did that but it wasn't enough.

We quickly learned that most of the poor knew almost nothing about how to grow food efficiently, nor for that matter did most other people—even the educated and affluent. Even farmers growing cotton, rice or soy knew little about growing produce. Like the whooping crane, in our area vegetable and fruit gardening and farming was headed for extinction if nothing were done.

The Problem with Our Food

The tacit assumption was that somehow everyone—even retired minimum wage laborers-- should be able to afford food grown in distant places, trucked here and resold. This can only happen if these distant farm workers can be paid very, very low incomes and fuel is cheap. To some degree this system has been working for decades, but it also fails many of us. And its future is uncertain and poses a

Continued next page

Managing manure continued

The cylinder diameters can be adjusted to account for greater or lower anticipated capacity. These sizes will accommodate the deposits of 70-80 people for one week.

The 4-seater depicted uses 4 toilets depositing into the central cylinder. The half-inch mesh of the cylinder is sufficient to hold the humanure and sawdust mix in place. The 6-inch buffer of leaves surrounding the central pile keeps odors and moisture from escaping the pile. Adjacent to each toilet seat is a container of sawdust with a scoop and a set of instructions for the user.

When the human manure compost stack reaches the 3' height (or sooner), the movable toilet should be disassembled and removed. The composting pile should then be topped with a 12" layer of straw or similar protective material, and allowed to sit for at least one year before use as compost.

The more people who can be exposed to an excellent humanure composting system and the opportunity it affords to clean up after ourselves and express true stewardship respectful of all life, the sooner our wasteful flush and poison practice of dealing with this human resource will end. •••

Voice of the Turtle

serious risk for all of us.

To be marketable, long distance produce must incorporate several values—

- It should harvest all at once ideally by machine,
- Grow on marginal land,
- Be uniform and not need sorting,
- And above all, it shouldn't rot or be easily squashed.

In selecting vegetable and fruit varieties to grow, taste and nutrition are unfortunately not important qualities for a farmer to aim for. In general, you can sell produce lacking in flavor or nutrition--especially if camouflaged with salts, sugars, and fats--but you can't market what is rotten or squashed or expensive, so you need easy-to-ship varieties with long shelf life.

Unfortunately, the result of a diet high in salts, sugars and fats and low in fresh produce is a number of diseases like hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Because fresh produce is comparatively expensive, these diet problems are more acute and harder to change among the poor, and the diseases have worse affects upon their dependent children.

Hort Literacy and Hort Schools

Our originally tiny gardening group began to see the problem as a literacy effort. People say they *don't have green thumbs* as if they were born with this affliction. But we knew they had not attended gardening schools and didn't have gardening teachers or even a "green thumb" grandmother as an example.

So somehow we had to launch an effort to educate everyone everywhere —both children and adults-- about the best ways to grow food productively, sustainably and locally. We needed to do what the book people did in Texas in the 19th century and launch an effective literacy drive

Much of the last 20 years has amounted to getting the word

out about gardening literacy, growing the numbers working on the problem, and expanding the scope of the effort through increasingly useful and detailed strategic plans for the years ahead.

Broadly we want everyone: adult or child, whatever language they speak, or physical or mental challenge they confront, whatever their education or income, whether urban, rural, or suburban: *to know what they can do with land horticulturally to be productive and sustainable.*

- We want communities to have the tools to do this themselves;
- We want each of you to know what you can do; and
- We want you to help others know how to be horticulturally literate

If I had more time, I might tell you that my work in the Nigerian Sahel when I was in my twenties, and in the Southern Philippines when I was in my thirties, convinced me that many serious health problems among children in those places are related to the long distance food trade also, but for different reasons. That is another story however.

Rather here I want to close by saying that I believe most communities on this planet would be much better off if they grew and consumed their produce locally, and if everywhere more resources were devoted to educating people in the best ways to do this.

Access to Horticultural Literacy Needs to be Added To the List of human rights.

Hort-literacy and more broadly eco-literacy may not be as important for our planet's survival as book literacy, but it is nearly so! Thank you again from our entire organization for this very wonderful award.

Thanks for the Help

Congress implies a coming together of a representational body to make decisions, share information, and map the future for those it represents. *Conferences* quite often are gatherings at which people present and discuss information. The Continental Bioregional Congress, by being a congress, incorporates the information sharing and networking of a conference but toward a broader aim: to come together as representatives of the life places where we live, and to chart, discover and learn about how to live more sustainably in those life places for the good of all. Furthermore, the congress itself functions as a ceremonial village, modeling for participants a way to live in balance with community and eco-community.

In this spirit, the Continental Bioregional Congress Coordinating Committee would like to thank all those who have helped since the last congress to make the next congress happen. All members of the council have worked on all the below efforts, but thanks especially to the following for working especially hard on the below:

Annual Meeting: *Laura Kuri, Liora Adler, Beatrice Briggs, Andy Langford, Alejandro (Chewy) Mondragon, Ivan (Revo);* **10th Congress Site Committee:** *Mary Meyer, Richard Cartwright, Bonnie Hendricks, Heather Jobson, Beth Barr, Bob Miller, Barb Fath;* **Finance:** *Caryn Miriam Goldberg, ENA & Linda Joseph, Bob Randall;* **Fundraising:** *Caryn Miriam Goldberg, Barbara Harmony;* **Voice of the Turtle:** *Bob Randall, Ken Lassman, Barbara Harmony;* **Web Site:** *Richard Cartwright, Keith Johnson.*

From www.bioregional-congress.org

"Bioregionalism re-connects us into the living biosphere through the places where we live. Bioregionalism acknowledges that we not only live in cities, towns, villages and countrysides; we also live in watersheds, ecosystems, and ecoregions. The awareness of those connections to the planet is vital to our own health and the health of the planet. By discovering our connections to the planet, we find a context for our lives to grow in. This context allows us to find ways to live sustainably in our settlements while at the same time provides us ways to nurture and restore the more-than-human community that surrounds us and which we are dependent on in so many ways."

About the Coordinating Council Of the Continental Bioregional Congress

By Ken Lassman

As the link providing energy from Congress to Congress, the Coordinating Council acts are limited to activities approved by the previous congress. Since the last Continental Bioregional Congress at Earthaven in North Carolina, this group of dedicated and active individuals has worked to find the location for the congress in Ohio. The Council has been supporting a local bioregional core group in Ohio to grow into the Site Committee for the next Congress in 2008.

The Coordinating Council meets in monthly telephone conferences and has had one face-to-face meeting since the Earthaven event in 2005. It plans to meet face-to-face one more time in Ohio in 2007, before the scheduled CBC10 Congress, which is slated for July 12-20, 2008.

Until then we will begin monthly postings on our ongoing activities. We encourage you to get involved in the projects we are undertaking. You can do this by directly contacting the appropriate email contacts or post on the listserv your thoughts, suggestions, or additions

Current Bio-council Projects

Developing a Bioregional Curriculum: Currently we are hoping to create a curriculum similar to the permaculture approach of a core curriculum with a toolkit. This will help expand our understanding of places. This curriculum will include many levels of understanding including physical, mapping, ecosystems, cultural aspects, storytelling, traditions, the historical, the philosophical, spiritual understanding, perceptions of place, and how our land is connected to the planet as a whole. A bioregional curriculum committee was formed at the last Congress, and the Coordinating Council is facilitating this process as well. Contacts: Liora and Ken

Fundraising. As the US gets more insular and defensive, the need for scholarships to help activists attend the next congress from Canada, Mexico, and other nations becomes greater. We are also committed to providing a core-operating fund to assist the Site Committee in organizing the next congress. Even small amounts of money can make a major difference if it helps even one person share an important idea with another on the other side of the continent. If you would like to contribute once or regularly to either of these goals, or if your organization would like to be a co-sponsor for CBC10, please contact: randall1@houston.rr.com

The Bioregional Congress Website www.bioregional-congress.org aspires to be a bioregional information resource

The last congress selected The Coordinating Council. It is made up of:

Liora Adler is from the Tepetzlan HueHueCoyotl ecovillage and the emerging Gaia University project (www.GaiaUniversity.org). She works with the Ecovillage North America (ENA) and Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) organizations, and was also a facilitator/translator at the Kansas Bioregional Congress.

Caryn Goldberg is a poet, writer, organizer, and instructor at Goddard College in Vermont, and headed up the Site Committee for the Kansas Congress (CBC8).

Barbara Harmony cofounded the National Water Center in Eureka Springs, Arkansas and has been the coordinator for the Water Committee of the Bioregional Movement since 1984. She has been involved with the Ozark Area Community Congress (OACC) since 1980 and was their representative to the Green Coordinating Council for three years. She has attended all but one Continental Congress.

Laura Kuri and Fabio Manzini. They are extraordinary bioregional organizers from Cuernavaca who have extensive connections with the very vibrant bioregional movement in Mexico and in South America. They hosted the Biocouncil's March meeting in Mexico City and in the HueHueCoyotl Ecovillage in Tepetzlan at the same time as the International Water Conference.

Ken Lassman is a naturalist occupational therapist, and is co-founder of Kansas Area Watershed (KAW) Council. He has been involved in a number of Congresses, including CBC8. Ken acted as Content Editor for this *Turtle*

Mary Meyer organized several local bioregional congresses in the Ohio River Valley area in the 90's and currently creates sustainable and holistic lifestyle programs and events in southeastern Indiana; she is also a massage therapist/artist. Mary is the overall coordinator of CBC10 to be held at Grailville in the Ohio River Valley. **Richard Cartwright** has been a bioregional organizer, is involved in local food initiatives, and is an Advisory Committee member of SE Indiana Solid Waste District; he is a landscaper by profession. He is also part of the core site committee for next CBC10 and is working with facilities logistics and the website. **Richard & Mary** were on the core site team of the 1994 Turtle Island Bioregional (continental) Gathering in Kentucky. They live in Oldenburg, Indiana where their main bioregional project is living in their self-built off-grid strawbale home."

Bob Randall is a former anthropology professor and Peace Corps volunteer who with many others has created an incredibly effective community garden and permaculture project in Houston that has mushroomed into an organization with a \$650 thousand dollar annual budget with 21 staff. See www.urbanharvest.org. He served as Layout Editor for this *Turtle*.

Kimchi Rylander was one of the main organizers at Earthaven ecovillage for CBC9.

center with an events calendar, Congress updates, bioregional links, maps, and other resources. If you have events to post, have web expertise to share, or links of interest contact: Richard Cartwright.

Continental Bioregional Congress: Ohio River Valley July 12-18, 2008. The Council has supported Mary Meyer and Richard Cartwright who are both Council members and local Site Team members who act as liaisons between the two groups. The Council has advised them in helping set up and work with the Site Team to prepare for the Congress, and in the process of preparing, to help jump-start the rebuilding of the local Central Ohio River Valley bioregional movement. If you are interested in assisting with any of the activities above, **please contact:** marylmeyer@gmail.com

Parrots and Jaguars on the Border

A Landscape Perspective

By David Hodges and Matt Skroch

(Abridged. See full text at their web site. Reprinted with permission from www.skyislandalliance.org/newsletter/06_Autumn-TheBigPicture.pdf)

Standing on a promontory in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental of northern Mexico, one may peer northward across the Sierra San Luis, past the Rio San Bernardino, and gaze - on a good day - at the mighty Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona. Here along the Sonora-Chihuahua border a short 60 miles south of the U.S., you may have the chance to sit under squabbling flocks of thick-billed parrots delighting in cones of subtropical pine forests at Mesa de las Guacamayas.

In 1917 and 1918, thousands of the brilliant birds traveled northward to the Chiricahua Mountains and beyond where, back then, they were common residents in smaller densities. We can only imagine the experience of standing in Pinery Canyon amidst a sea of falcon-sized parrots simultaneously squawking away while raining down stripped pinecones from above. Noisy and brightly colored, along with an attitude that didn't include much concern for humans, the thick-billed parrot population was soon decimated by the gun. They no longer occur in the US Sky Islands.

Extinction has forever vanquished several creatures native to the Sky Islands in the last two hundred years. We're fortunate that the parrot in Mexico hasn't met this end, yet. In many ways, the idea of thick-billed parrots re-establishing their presence in the US Sky Islands provides the flame for which fuels our drive towards ecological redemption. And it's not just this magnificent parrot that gives hope to our shared efforts. Many other species that no longer occupy their historic range, and thus lack the ability to fulfill their evolutionary duties in the larger community of life, still provide much hope - they avoid the ultimate end, although survive in pockets of relict habitat, breeding facilities, or wilderness areas that roads don't reach.

Let's be clear - even with the wonderfully diverse cast of the Sky Island's special plants and animals, we are missing several key actors on the stage. Fortunately, they haven't yet left the theater. The Mexican gray wolf, the black-tailed prairie dog, the aplomado falcon, the jaguar, the river otter, the pronghorn antelope . . . and just about every native fish and amphibian - they all have something in common with the thick-billed parrot. They remain. And with help, their time will come to once again reclaim their former grounds.

Their return doesn't necessitate our departure either. Population growth provides serious challenges that must be dealt with, although much of the issue is how and where we grow. We are currently active participants in a historic period of transformation within the region, and the responsibility lies on the current generation to make critical decisions that have significant implications for our future inhabitants.

Great opportunities exist right now, as does the threat of 2500 homes on the next ranch sold. Is the current paradigm of outward growth and resource consumption sustainable? No. Neither is it acceptable. On public lands in the United States, we contend with resource threats that include off-road vehicles, open-pit copper mines, catastrophic fires, over-grazing, power lines and a myriad

of other issues. On private lands - often those critical linkages that weave our region together - there is more uniformity in threat: *Homes*. We are awash with the ecological impacts of an unprecedented population explosion (currently about 35% growth per decade).

In our mind, there are three critical challenges we face for our region's ecological integrity today: the protection and expansion of protected areas on public lands, the preservation of rural characteristics outside of federally-owned land, and the safeguarding of landscape connections between the Mexican Sky Islands and those north of the border so they remain open and permeable for wildlife.

The jaguar provides a good example of the importance of linking private and public lands to effect conservation, along with the importance of unimpeded movement from populations in Mexico. The only areas in which jaguars have been documented over the past 10 years in the US are on protected public and private lands, the latter of which some refer to as "working wilderness." These areas are all adjacent to large blocks of wild country in Mexico, with no physical barrier to prevent movement north into the US.

If we are to recover the jaguar and other aforementioned wildlife in the U.S. Sky Islands, . . . Public land protected areas . . . must be expanded, and their integrity assured. These areas are the most intact ecological systems that our land management agencies oversee and act as bulwarks against exotic species invasion that wreck havoc on natural ecosystems. . . .

Secondly, we cannot underestimate the ecological threat that rural ranchland conversion to high and medium density residential units pose. Ex-urban development - without consideration of wildlife linkages in Sky Island valleys - is pinching off landscape permeability at an alarming rate. Putting ranches on the chopping block is a landowner's right, although ranchers we speak with invariably state it's not their preference but rather a relatively poor option to staying afloat. Open space is a fundamental value we cherish throughout our region, and thus public financing to protect this dwindling resource must be increased.

. . . . Lastly, we cannot construct a wall across the wildlands of our international border. As a world-recognized Biodiversity Hot-spot, the Sky Island region, by definition, serves as the critical link of the North American Continent. Its severance would have dire consequences to the natural history and unique assemblage of plants and animals of this magnificent place. No doubt we must address our flawed immigration and border policy - but to do so at the ultimate expense of an entire ecosystem would prove irresponsible, unnecessary, and shortsighted.

In spite of many challenges we remain hopeful. . . . Someday soon, we expect to be standing on a promontory in the rugged Chiricahua Mountains, peering southward past the Rio San Bernardino and the Rio Bavispe, across the Sierra San Luis to the Sierra Madre. The view will be clear and open, with parrots chattering overhead. As we look across the landscape, we will take pleasure in the knowledge that the full complement of native Sky Island species have been protected and/or restored to their former haunts, thanks to the vision of many people who have put differences aside and worked together to protect this magnificent wild landscape. Until then, there's much to do. •••

Voice of the Turtle

That Tree is a Genius

You can see it in the way it lets
wind pour through one side of branches
without tiring itself, all bend.
How it leans and then lets the sun
pull it closer. How it drags a jubilee of leaf,
stepping out of itself without going anywhere.

Put your hand on its trunk.
Feel the pulse of no pulse,
the legs that shot up decades ago
from roots that ran like rivers
around rock and slope, through
lives that leave no remnant.
That tree holds it all,
sees who we love best
and why we despise ourselves too often.

Loves the change in the weather
which is always, holds mountains
of birds ascending and flying away.
That whole tree sings its mourning dove
then sings wind, a genius of history
and branch crossings, a dancing fool
all winter. That tree is my body.



Above: some members of the Continental Bioregional Congress Coordinating Council, ecovillage residents and a visitor view the great tree at Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage during a rest break in the Annual council planning meetings.

At left: a contribution from Councilmember Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg.

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg is a poet and writer, and author of six books, including three collections of her poetry. She teaches at Goddard College where she coordinates the Transformative Language Arts concentration, and she serves on the CBC Coordinating Council. She lives in the Kansas area watershed.

Bio Congress Contributions

Since November 2005, we have received contributions ranging from \$750 to \$10. This money helps greatly in providing a web site, paying for the next congress, helping bring people who need assistance to the congress, and paying minimal costs of having a council that plans continent wide.

Many Thanks to...

Anonymous, Rudolph M. Ballentine, Beatrice Briggs, Richard Cartwright, Dr. Mike Carr, Nancy Edwards, Anne Forbs, Caryn Miriam Goldberg, Barbara Harmony, Alice Kidd, Mark Larson, Ken Lassman, Josh Lockyer, Jim Lorman, Joyce & Gene Marshall, Stephanie Mills, Mary Meyer, Bob Randall, Redmoonsong, Kimchi Rylander, Juan-Tomas Rehbock & AP, James & Eilen Schenk, and Andie Stefaniak.

Make Checks Payable to: ENA/CBC account

Attach note: Designation: *Continental Bioregional Congress account*

Mail to: ENA, ATTN: Kailash, 64001 County Road DD, Moffat, CO 81143 USA

If a credit card charge, please list Type of Card (VISA, etc.)

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Expiration date _____

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Please tell us your mailing address, country, phone, fax, email

A receipt will be sent to you by mail qualifying this donation for tax deduction. If this is to be a monthly pledge for one or two years, tell us how much per month and what the total will be. For more donation information, please contact:

Linda Joseph, Phone/Fax: (719) 256-5002 • webmaster@ecovillage.org

Voice of the Turtle

Welcome Home Statement

In 1984, the first North American Bioregional Congress (NABC) adopted the statement below. NABC II and III reaffirmed it:

A growing number of people are recognizing that in order to secure the clean air, water and food that we need to healthfully survive, we have to become guardians of the places where we live. People sense the loss in not knowing our neighbors and natural surroundings, and are discovering that the best way to take care of ourselves and to get to know our neighbors is to protect and restore our region.

Bioregionalism recognizes, nurtures, sustains and celebrates our local connections with: Land, Plants and Animals, Springs, Rivers, Lakes, Groundwater and Oceans, Air, Families, Friends, Neighbors, Community, Native Traditions and Indigenous Systems of Production and Trade.

It is taking the time to learn the possibilities of place. It is a mindfulness of local environment, history, and community aspirations that leads to a sustainable future. It relies on safe and renewable sources of food and energy. It ensures employment by supplying a rich diversity of services within the community, by recycling our resources, and by exchanging prudent surpluses with other regions.

**10th Continental Congress
July 12-20, 2008
Grailville**

What You Can Do for All Our Bioregions

a) Donate money, b) become a Congress sponsor, c) attend the Congress in July 2008, d) volunteer for the next coordinating council in 2008, e) join a subcommittee of the coordinating council to help create either website documents or develop bioregional education or create future issues of Voice of the Turtle, or make our fundraising more effective and consistent. Finally, consider whether you have the time to make a big impact: talk with local bioregionalists about hosting the 11th Congress in 2010 or 2111. If you can do any of the above, Mary Meyer can refer you to the proper organizer at marylmeyer@gmail.com.

Bioregionalism is working to satisfy basic needs locally, such as education, health care and self-governance. The bioregional perspective recreates a widely shared sense of regional identity founded upon a renewed critical awareness of and respect for the integrity of our ecological communities. People are joining with neighbors to discuss ways we can work together to:

- Learn what our special local resources are;
- Plan how to best protect and use those natural and cultural resources;
- Exchange our time and energy to best meet our daily and long-term needs;
- Enrich our children's local and planetary knowledge.

Security begins by acting responsibly at home.

Welcome home!

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