

Inner Fire Spring 2015 Update

inner  *fire* deep healing • without meds



UPDATE - Spring 2015

Spring has arrived at Grace Brook Farm, the future home of Inner Fire, with daffodils galore. We intend on breaking ground in the autumn of 2015. Until the new facility is available, we will be launching a Day Program that has all the programmatic content of the full Inner Fire offering, but without on-site residency. For this, we have rented two nearby cottages that can house five seekers and some staff personnel. All activities and meals will take place at Grace Brook Farm, between 7AM and 9PM. To support the Day Program we are now contracting with therapists and guides who are pioneering, experienced in their passion and able to work with and teach small groups of people seeking balance through such will-based activities as gardening, forestry, cooking and housekeeping and proactive therapies such as artistic, spatial dynamics, music, speech and drama. These guides must enhance and promote the integrity of each individual's soul journey.



Editor's Corner:

Welcome to the Inner Fire Update! You are receiving this because you have shown earlier interest in this initiative or because somebody thought you might be interested. We plan to publish this newsletter a few times a year.

I'd like to introduce Inner Fire by explaining why I offered to help write and publish this newsletter. I am a retired teacher and science writer who emigrated from the Netherlands 60 years ago. My artistically gifted and highly imaginative older sister was hospitalized with a diagnosis of schizophrenia at age 27. She spent the rest of her life in mental institutions, her disease controlled by psychotropic medications. In 1977, when she was 50 years old, she took her own life by jumping out of a window. During my 86 years of living I have seen other similar cases. We have made brilliant advances in medicine such as knee or cataract surgery but have not been able to meet the challenge of mental illness in a meaningful way that goes beyond psychotropic medications. So, having encountered Inner Fire a year ago, I wondered whether my sister might have been able to withdraw from her medications and lead a full life, if she had been able to experience therapies such as are offered by Inner Fire.

A fascinating 17 minute video of the journey of a woman who blossomed after leaving psychotropic meds can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG_tA52D-rE
This person now serves on our Advisory Board.

Beatrice Birch, the driving force behind the Inner Fire initiative, was recently interviewed on local TV. I highly recommend watching this 30 minute interview:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDu3zIF7fvA>

Currently Inner Fire is one small initiative in Vermont, USA. My hope is that the ideas and therapies used here will in time be widely recognized as effective healing modalities, allowing many human beings to regain their full humanity.

- Gerhard Bedding

Our Mission:

Inner Fire is a proactive, healing community offering a choice for people to recover from debilitating and traumatic life challenges without the use of psychotropic medications. We will help people to carefully withdraw from their use of medications.

We will do this by providing the opportunity to engage in a structured program of:

- 1) Proactive and empowering therapies which harmonize the relationship between the body, the soul and the spirit;
- 2) Intentional work in gardens, woods, kitchen and household;
- 3) Group counseling and peer led sessions encouraging self-expression and compassionate listening.



Seeker?

At Inner Fire, program attendees are called “seekers.” How did we come to use the term, “seeker” rather than client, patient or resident? For years, I painted with men in a local prison before moving to Vermont to launch Inner Fire. One day when I went in to the prison, a fine young man told me that he had been trying to write to a friend on the outside about our painting class and how hard he found it to describe what actually happened in the class. He told me that eventually he wrote: “Well, it is a painting class, but really, it is a spiritual class.” Then he stated, “This is what I was seeking on the outside - isn’t it strange I had to come to prison to find it?” Certainly,

he and so many other young struggling individuals are “seekers,” for they are seeking more than life generally presents these days - and they are thirsty for depth and meaning. As life is a journey, forever unfolding and offering opportunities for inner growth, our staff - work masters and therapists - will be referred to as “guides,” yet I believe we are all seekers and, with what we learn, also guides.

- Beatrice Birch

Seekers Share 9 Day Sanctuary

To meet the wishes and needs of Seekers longing for the opening of Inner Fire’s residential program, we have been offering 9 Day Sanctuaries which give a taste of the rhythm and intentionality of the Inner Fire program. Our programs include music and artistic therapy, spatial dynamics ~ a form of movement, wholesome cooking and outdoor work. The latest Sanctuary began on February 14th drawing three seekers from Vermont, Maine, and NY.

In Vermont, gardens are under several feet of pure white snow in February, so gardening does not suit this season well. Therefore, individuals worked with our local blacksmith, Ian Eddy, for three hours each morning. This was a very rewarding challenge...calling upon focusing, attention to detail and the courage to make their hammer sing-out with conviction! Personally, I found it heartening to experience how the vulnerability of these individuals was gradually replaced with confidence. I could only smile with joy to see how during the week their stance became more firmly grounded, how they gripped their hammer with greater determination, and how their eyes sparkled with deeper enthusiasm as the days passed in the forge. I am so grateful to Ian for opening his forge and sharing his years of experience.



Creative and wholesome cooking guided by an experienced chef, was also an important part of each day. During the preparation of meals, one might hear the singing of rounds or conversation in Spanish. In the afternoons the seekers engaged in proactive therapies such as artistic, spatial dynamics, music, speech and drama. After lunch and a quiet time, we put on our snowshoes

and headed out into the fresh, crisp air following the animal tracks lacing through the snowy woods.

We gathered beside the wood stove during the evenings. These last hours of our day, framed by song and an opening and closing meditative verse, were spent in review and sharing as well as conversations on various themes proposed by the seekers such as boundaries. A Buddhist meditator joined us for another evening, sharing his experience and wisdom.

Biographical sharing and insightful games also helped to build community and appreciation for each other.



Many other experiences enriched our lives during these nine days: Drumming together; a silent meal, highlighted by one seeker's wonderful sense of humor which had us all in fits of laughter; a blind walk, guided when necessary, by a partner; stacking fire wood; cleaning and caring for the house. We were all taken beyond our comfort zones and yet felt enriched.

The rhythm and intentionality in these 9 Days is more powerful than one might initially imagine. Many seekers come from chaotic lives where there is no rhythm. How can the inner work for healing be done if the outer life is chaotic? So, to adjust to the Inner Fire rhythm is not always easy to begin with but the wisdom of it is always greatly appreciated as time passes.

Until the Inner Fire home is built, these 9 Day Sanctuaries will soon be leading to a Day Program, offering all that the residential Inner Fire program aims to offer from 7AM - 9PM,

7 days a week, for individuals who can live independent of Grace Brook Farm. More details are available upon request.

- Beatrice Birch

Fire

**Someday, after mastering
The winds, the waves, the tides and gravity,
We shall harness for God
The energies of Love,
And then, for the second time
In the history of the world,
Man will have discovered FIRE.**

- Teilhard de Chardin

Who's Tending the Fire?

You'll find photos and descriptions of the four members of the Inner Fire Board and the twelve Advisory Board members here: <http://innerfire.us/board-bios/>

In addition, a sizable group of people has been attending monthly foundational gatherings for more than a year to help build a nurturing ground for the Inner Fire initiative. Volunteers also appear often to help with gardening and other tasks. Even if you live far from here, you can contribute bits of kindling to our fire by sending us positive, supportive thoughts. We plan to publish letters you send in a future issue. And some of you may be able to act on the appeal below. Also, we are developing a wish list of resources we would like to have on hand. Here are a few to start with: gardening tools, inspiring books and documentaries, quality cooking ware...

Your tax deductible donation to Inner Fire will change lives, allowing recovery and productive re-engagement in life for many. We depend upon the generosity of supporters like you to make this possible - thank you! A generous donor is adding 50% to all donations until a \$200,000 limit is reached, another donor is doubling small donations of \$50 or less. So, if you act soon, your donation will be increased substantially.

We are especially grateful for sustaining gifts that allow Inner Fire to plan and build for the future! Your sustaining gift will automatically be withdrawn or charged to your credit card each month until you decide to change it - thank you!

Unlock the potential of a seeker by giving to Inner Fire's Financial Aid Program. For many, the cost of therapeutic support for recovery is beyond their means. Thank you for helping us extend Inner Fire's light to all, regardless of financial capacity.

"I have all these feelings inside me and cannot reach them. I used to be able to think clearly but can't now. It's as if the meds are pushing who I really am under the table."

- Seeker