



## Fall/Winter 2015 Newsletter

---

### Inner Fire Welcomes First Seekers

By **Beatrice Birch**



It is with such gratitude that I write to all of you from far away countries as well as throughout the United States, to thank you for your support coming in so many different forms from appreciative and supportive thoughts to donations to our building and support- a-seeker fund.

On September 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, our non-residential, Day Program began with the seekers, their parents and Inner Fire guides and therapists standing in a circle in the garden alongside the Grace Brook. In turn, each shared their wishes for the year ahead. It was very moving as both seeker and family members had been through so much together and finally had found a program which kindled their hope and allowed for and encouraged their proactivity in their healing process which steadily would lead to freeing themselves from the use and influences of the psychotropic medications.

Everything that happens at Inner Fire is intentional and has a therapeutic purpose. Looking closely at our schedule, what you may notice is there is a rhythm and order to the day. There are times when one works outdoors splitting or sawing wood, in the garden or clearing in the forest when we rely on each other and work in company. We have opportunities to appreciate the support and work of the other and also observe an individual's developing skills and stamina.

Other parts of the day are focused on one's own development. Through the therapies: music, speech arts, artistic, eurythmy or spacial dynamics, massage, biographical work or psychosynthesis the seeker, through their own activity, meet themselves; their strengths and challenges. During these therapies, soul breathing, inner harmony, wonder and courage are kindled. In time, the seekers may grow to appreciate themselves as a work of art, evolving and dynamic.

Many people ask what the day at Inner Fire looks like: Bearing in mind that out of form comes freedom, and that inner order is easier to obtain if outer order is taken seriously...

We enjoy a hearty breakfast at Grace Brook Farm at 7am and spend the day engaged in the Inner Fire Program until 8:30 at night. By 7:30am we are washing-up and by 8 we are ready for either a morning walk up the dirt road, through the forest and alongside a field to the dead end, or three times a week, for group eurythmy with Vadim, our therapeutic eurythmist. To have the opportunity to do eurythmy together as a community is such a gift.

Our morning circle follows when each seeker and guide gives a glimmer of how he/she is doing and also something for which they are grateful. Then seekers either head outside, to the kitchen to start to prepare the main meal of the day (we are very aware of how fortunate we are to be able to eat such quality local and organic food under the creative guidance of Audrie, our GAPS chef and tutor) or to their one on one therapies.

Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons bring the seekers together to do group work with Biographical Arts or Psychosynthesis. Hours are carved for house cleaning, using biodegradable cleansers and practicing appreciation and attention to details, mentoring and also a house meeting.

Each evening we engage in group soul nourishment through learning West African Drumming, singing, knitting while listening to an impressive and inspiring biography, and group discussions on relevant themes. We are even gifted with a Kora concert once a week by an extremely talented musician. Weekends thus far have found us hiking and exploring the green mountains of Vermont and the beautiful Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire.

Though the Inner Fire day program has only been running for three months, it is so heartening to experience already how the seekers have responded to all that has been offered. I am full of admiration, great strides have been taken despite the traumas of their past. Many feel safe for the first time in years and strive to let go of old patterns and forge new gifts and abilities which will lead them with renewed confidence into the inevitable challenges life offers. They grow to recognize the hidden opportunities in these challenges and even begin to entertain the thought that just these challenges, which they once may have shied from, might actually 'belong to them' and are necessary for their continued growth.

We close the evenings together with the below verse by Rudolf Steiner:



**Quiet I bear within me.  
I bear within myself  
forces to make strong.  
Now will I be imbued  
with their glowing  
warmth.**

**Now will I fill myself with  
my own will's resolve.  
And I will feel the quiet  
pouring through all my  
being,  
When by my steadfast  
striving  
I become strong to find  
within myself the source  
of strength,  
the strength of inner  
quiet.**

## **Why Did Walter Swift Decide to Come to Inner Fire?**

"I was in Detroit, Michigan in the summer of 2015 and as circumstances dictated, I found myself very much addicted to crack cocaine and facing imprisonment. Inner Fire had been presented to me as a program that was unlike any of the two dozen others I had unsuccessfully tried. Inner Fire told me, 'No one can heal your addiction, or any other illness you may be suffering from, you alone must do this monumental work. We simply want to show you the route you must take to get there.'"

"It was something I had always known. I simply needed someone else who knew what they were talking about to say it to me as well. Beatrice Birch said, 'Walter you must heal yourself, Inner Fire is simply a place where it can be done.' I believed her. So, I chose to embark on a path that would rekindle the embers of my inner fire."

**-Walter Swift**



## **Who Is the Seeker?** **By Juliane Weeks, Music Therapist**



Here I am, with my instruments laid out, gong, drum, chrotta, flutes, bells, and, of course, the lyre, and a 'tool box' of therapeutic exercises in my mind, none of which seem to fit this special situation. Before me stands a young man, a musician, far more versed than I am on the drum, guitar and bass, yet engaged in his own inner world, gripped by voices that make him inaccessible. How can I reach him? What can unlock the door, still the voices and allow the musician in him to speak in the language which we both love and share? I grapple with that question. I am uncertain. I listen.

One day, at the lunch table, he says that he would love to hike the Appalachian Trail sometime. We start our session that day with a preparatory exercise: A lively anapest rhythm to be walked energetically, forward and backward, with accompanying gestures and simultaneous sounding of "tu-mu-tuh", beginning on the tone C and ascending from there to the fifth.

After two times of intensive back and forth and vocalizing with great determination, P. assertively expresses "I don't want to do this!" Nevertheless, he is willing to continue, while I add another challenging element to it by throwing a copper bar into his open hands and have him throw it back to me as we continue to step and sound the given rhythm.

After this invigorating prelude, I sense P's need for an out-breath in form of some creative expression. I hand P. my lyre. "Hike on the Appalachian Trail" is the title I suggest. The first movement is a beautiful improvisation he creates on the lyre, with rests in between that – as P. reflected afterwards – signify the breaks the hikers take to look and enjoy the view around them. The next movement I suggest is entitled "Under a Starry Night Sky" followed by "Sunrise". The music is a delicately woven fabric with clusters of tones. There is a tenderness and peacefulness in his expression.

From here, I sense it is time to move into a more dramatic mode, which I call "Ready for the New Day: Meeting and Overcoming Obstacles," with the djembes now being the main instruments. For this movement, P. creates a lively set of interspersing rhythms, which lead to the final movement "Victory". I add to P.'s lively drumming the warm majestic sound of the E-gong. The hike is a metaphor for life's journey. For a moment, the windows have opened, and Peter's soul could find her way to the mountain top.

We concluded our musical expedition with a quote by the composer H.G. Burghardt about the importance of music as a healing art. As he was leaving, P.'s parting words stayed with me for a long time: "Music is my language. It's the language of the heart." Thank you for this gift, P., for the inspiration you gave to me, the seeker, the one who seeks guidance to help you find your voice, kindle your spirit and set your soul free.



*Having the courage to say yes to a process of unfolding with no preconceived idea, but a listening with the heart and engaging fingers...*



*Here the centering and focusing arises out of the ability to observe and copy the work of a master sculptor...*

## **Nutrition At Inner Fire** **By Audrie Brown**



As a health educator who believes that the human being tends naturally toward health, given the proper conditions, I have taken the concept that "food is our best medicine" as a guiding principal of my life. There is so much to learn and understand about food and the choices we make every day. With food we are working on many levels: physical, emotional, social, cognitive and practical. There are innumerable philosophies, paradigms

and prescriptions for what constitutes a healthy diet. Our world is filled with nutritional misinformation that causes much illness and suffering.

Hippocrates (460-370 BC) said that all diseases begin in the gut. Current research is indicating that our gut micro-biology influences our thoughts, emotional state, likes and dislikes, choices, and behavior. Neurotransmitters are produced in the digestive system and sent to the brain. There is growing evidence that abnormal gut flora is at the root of many, if not most, chronic mental and physical illness. In describing the Gut and Psychology/Physiology Syndrome (GAPS), Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride has shown how essential it is for us to reestablish a healthy gut micro flora to heal many of our modern illnesses. Using the GAPS dietary protocol, one can seal and heal the gut lining and regain a greater degree of physical and mental well-being.



At Inner Fire we provide organic, natural foods to meet the dietary needs of each individual. Using traditional healing protocols such as the GAPS diet, we prepare simple, wholesome foods to create and maintain a healthy lifestyle. We will make lacto-fermented vegetables and cultured dairy products such as yogurt, kefir and sour cream. We use local, organic meats and vegetables to make stocks and soups. By using the bounty of our gardens and sourcing food locally, we are connecting with farmers, and learning to prepare and preserve the food that sustains us. Together, we are practicing the skills necessary to maintain our nutritional health for the long term.

How we nourish ourselves depends as much on our attitude toward food as the choices we make. As we work together to grow, prepare and share our daily food, we are developing healthy rhythms and relationship to our food. Sitting together for our meals with gratitude, in a peaceful, family-style atmosphere, we are all deeply nourished by each other as we share food that has been prepared with love and intention.

## **Mental Health Nursing Students At Inner Fire**

### **By Jan Lucier**

I teach the course: Mental Health Nursing at Elms College in Chicopee, MA. I brought my mental health nursing class to Inner Fire to give them a first hand direct experience of an alternative mental health system. The students have a 3-hour didactic classroom experience and an 8-hour clinical experience per week throughout the semester. Besides Inner Fire, the clinical sites I use are inpatient psychiatric units in hospitals. The large hospital inpatient units are primarily based on the medical model and use pharmaceuticals as the first line of treatment.

On our visit, Beatrice shared her vision and facilitated a clay project with students. I lead everyone in a therapeutic drum circle. The students were moved emotionally and experienced the healing power of alternative approaches to stress reduction. I am a holistic nurse so it is important to me to expose the nursing students to alternative models based on the Recovery Movement in mental health. The treatment I believe in teaches seekers empowerment, hope, respect, resilience, and a bright future.

The students write a reflective journal each clinical day in the semester. Without exception, the entire class raved about the experience and commented on the passion and beauty of the vision and mission of Inner Fire. The students commented on the inspiring message that Bea brings about hope and dignity.

Exposing the students to an enlightened approach to treatment for individuals with mental health challenges proved to be quite valuable. The students measured all subsequent clinical programs and treatment to Inner Fire and found those approaches sorely lacking. We all are most appreciative of Bea opening her heart and the doors of Inner Fire to the nursing students from Elms College.

## **Editor's Corner:**

### **Why Inner Fire?**

**By Martin Kemple**



I first visited Inner Fire this Autumn, on one of those astonishing October days when the hillsides are awash in color, as the crimson of red maples are starting to give way to the shimmering gold of birches, the rusty copper of tamaracks and the deep burgundy of ancient oaks.

Eight of us gathered in the cozy living room of the farmhouse for a morning check-in, to reflect briefly on a meditation reading and then make plans together for the busy day ahead: clear brush for a new hut out in the woods beyond the upper meadow; split and stack firewood; prepare food for the midday meal; clean house.

I smiled inside at the familiar, "Chop wood, Carry water," ethic that is so essential to restoring balance to our increasingly push button, remote control lives. For many years, I led work crews of at-risk youth on an educational farm in Montpelier. I saw first-hand how returning to the natural rhythms of the earth allowed people to start to free themselves from unhealthy habits of thinking and behavior patterns that can very subtly rob us of our free will.

But there is something far more going on here at Inner Fire than just connecting back to nature, as important as that is. In our morning circle, Beatrice read aloud a passage from the Calendar of the Soul:

*I can, in newly awakened inner life*

*Sense wide horizons in myself.*

*The force and radiance of my thought*

*Coming from soul's sun power*

*Can solve the mysteries of life.*

Now what is this? "The force and radiance of my thought" is "coming from soul's sun power"? This sounds quite different than, say, the back-to-nature credo that so many treatment programs employ, oftentimes quite successfully, to help people with mental illness or substance addiction.

At the weekly meeting of the Inner Fire therapists upstairs in the small barn across from the farmhouse, six candles are lit, for the six seekers, all of whom have moved here to find peace and balance, yes; but also to connect to something deeper inside each one of us, something which could be called holy, sacred. One by one, the practitioners tell stories of their work with each seeker.

Soon it becomes apparent that we are discussing an inner world that has a life of its own within the physical, yet is also distinct from what we see, hear, touch and taste every day. As Juliane puts it so eloquently in her wonderful piece, above, in this newsletter, working with P. on his music: "Thank you for this gift, P., for the inspiration you gave to me, the seeker, the one who seeks guidance to help you find your voice, kindle your spirit and set your soul free."

Surely this kind of soul work is very much what the world needs now, to engage our own free will in consciously encountering a spiritual world that has a life of its own, and that manifests itself in our physical world each moment. I am inspired by the words of Karl Konig, describing all of us seekers who are striving to unleash the healing powers of this spiritual world within us:

**There is a knighthood of the twentieth century whose members do not ride through the darkness of physical forests as of old, but through forests of darkened minds. They are armed with a spiritual armor and an inner sun makes them radiant. Out of them shines healing, healing that flows from the knowledge of the image of the human being as a spiritual being. They must create inner order, inner justice, peace and conviction in the darkness of our time.**



*Sensing the other nonverbally, learning to give and to receive while providing firewood to keep the Inner Fire home warm for the winter.*



*It's the process that counts: grounding and methodical action encourages deep breathing and focusing.*



*The beauty of the kora's tones, offered weekly, feeds our souls.*

[Give Now |](#)

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. So, if you act soon, your donation will be increased substantially!

[Donate Monthly |](#)

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!

**Sponsor a Seeker**

Unlock the potential of a seeker by giving to Inner Fire's Aponsor-A-Seeker Fund. 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.

**To keep up to date with recent developments, be sure to visit our website at:**

**[www.innerfire.us](http://www.innerfire.us)**

**and remember, if you order from Amazon - be sure to designate Inner Fire as your non-profit beneficiary by signing in at:**

**<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-1542395>**



deep healing without meds

Copyright © 2017 *\*|LIST:COMPANY|\**, All rights reserved.  
*\*|LIST:DESCRIPTION|\**

**Our mailing address is:**  
*\*|HTML:LIST\_ADDRESS\_HTML|\**  
**802-221-8051**

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

MailChimp

