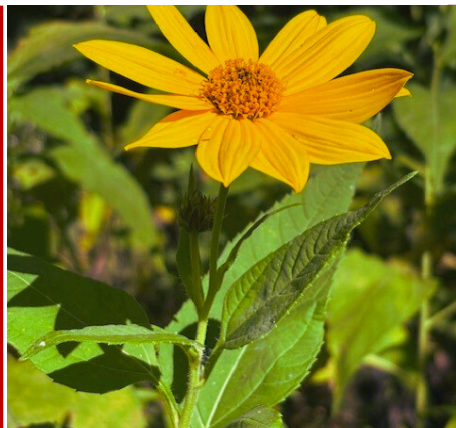


Inner Fire Mission

Inner Fire, a healing community, offers a *choice* for adults to recover from debilitating and traumatic life challenges with minimal or no use of psychotropic medications.

We believe in the power of choice.



inner fire

Fall/Winter
Newsletter 2025

Beatrice Birch Founder & Executive Director

10 Years at Inner Fire

Perhaps I do not reflect often enough, "Life is busy." We all know this, but when I do pause, I am filled with wonder and gratitude. In these past ten years we have had our share of challenges, birthing pains, surprises, awe-inspiring moments, laughter, tears, and profound joy. We are always learning. It is ever so real; actually, "dynamic" seems to capture life at Inner Fire. Never have I lost sight of those individuals who "spoke" to me through their suicides, and I have kept my promise: "I do not know how, but drawing from my Anthroposophically inspired and varied life experiences, I say 'Yes', I will find my colleagues, and we will simply offer a choice, an alternative to the dehumanizing, medical model which leads too often to suicide."



I am so incredibly grateful for my colleagues, for without them we would not have Inner Fire. I cannot do this work alone. Being-a-Team, like being-human, is a verb. We encourage and support each other because we care deeply for each other and in turn, we serve the Seekers in their healing journey.

The word "colleague" should not be taken for granted. It can be appreciated as "Soul-Friends who find each other so as to manifest a common vision reaching beyond personal gains." Work at Inner Fire certainly tests every one of us. Honestly, it is not a "job" but rather a "path of self-knowledge and self-development," and we acknowledge that we cannot ask anything of a Seeker that we are not working on ourselves. Indeed, we have all come together, playing our roles, carrying the vision

and the understanding that the human being has a body, soul and spirit. We are all Seekers. We witness that healing is about balancing. We are daily revealing that one has a better chance of reclaiming one's life by tapering slowly off the debilitating, psychotropic medications so as to more consciously work with what can be some pretty horrific life challenges.

But all of our challenges belong to us. This work is also humbling, for despite our wise insights and our love, we cannot make anyone do anything...nor should we. Healing is a journey and arises out of freedom. Here's to the years ahead and the wonderful constellation of Guides who will join the team and create other Inner Fires thereby helping to manifest choice for each striving Seeker who longs to reclaim their life.

Sam DeMello ~ Former Seeker

'A Home for Healing'



My name is Sam DeMello, and I arrived at Inner Fire in April of 2025 following an arrest due to a 'mental health crisis'. As a result of this arrest, I lost my job and only source of income. I was lambasted in the local media and was involuntarily admitted to the crisis center of a hospital for a short stay. I was made aware of Inner Fire by former colleagues of mine, who suggested

"Playing hide and seek with our goats"

Sam deMello, continued

it as a place for healing while I began the process of rebuilding my life.

At Inner Fire, I found a community who recognized me as a human being. This was in stark contrast to the dehumanizing treatment that I had suffered in the previous months, both at the hospital and at the hands of the local media. Not only did I find a supportive community of compassionate people, but also a rhythm of life that aided in the rebalancing of myself.

The rhythmic nature of the weekly schedule offered consistent opportunities to care for the land upon which we lived, to explore creativity through a myriad of artistic endeavors, to forge connections with fellow community members and to unravel challenging life experiences through the therapeutic offerings.

During my stay, I was able to dive deeply into traumatic moments of my own childhood and into the emotional, thought and action patterns that manifested along with them. Although I had been previously aware of these events in my life, I had found it immensely challenging to unpack everything while working a full-time job and navigating the responsibilities of everyday life.

In a sense, it became easier to avoid facing deep inner suffering by allowing life's other responsibilities to take center stage.

After spending time at Inner Fire, I feel balanced and at peace with the traumatic experiences of my childhood. I have been able to openly speak about these moments with my family and friends, to acknowledge the ways in which these events have created great suffering in my life and to process the emotions surrounding these traumas. I am grateful for the opportunity that I was granted at Inner Fire. While it is clear to me that Inner Fire provides the setting for one to engage in deep inner work, ultimately, it is one's own choice to walk along that path with the guidance and support of the community and the program.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please feel free to contact me through Beatrice if you would like to speak further or hear more about my experience.

Tom Kavet Inner Fire's Board Treasurer



FINANCIAL BLESSINGS

In reviewing the past 10 years, I know it is only through the miraculous generosity of literally thousands of people that Inner Fire exists.

Some gifts have been for a few dollars, some have been for hundreds of thousands of dollars, all are meaningful and tangible expressions of alignment with Inner Fire's mission; supporting seekers in financial need; creating the buildings, gardens, landscape and infrastructure that provide a safe and nurturing environment for healing; and encouraging the expansion of this model into our society and the larger world.

Over the past decade, we have been blessed with more than \$3.2 million in gifts of cash, equities and other property. We have also benefitted from tens of thousands of hours in volunteer work and extraordinary contributions by employees that often go well beyond the call of duty.

In September, we received donations of stocks totaling nearly \$600,000 for the purpose of paying off the entire mortgage on our 47-acre property, including all buildings. This will lower fixed costs and put Inner Fire on a firm foundation for sustained future growth. We now aim to raise funds sufficient for completion of the remainder of the campus, which would require an additional \$2.1 million. These miracles are a reflection of the spiritual intent behind the many gifts we have received and rely upon. I am filled with awe and gratitude for all who have made this possible.

If you can help us with gifts of any size or form (stocks, bonds, real estate, legacy gifts, etc.) to reach our goal so we can offer retreats, trainings and additional seekers the opportunity to heal, please feel free to contact me with any questions at tom@kavet.net

Tom Kavet has been Inner Fire's Board Treasurer since its inception, is President of the economic and public policy consulting firm, Kavet, Rockler & Associates He has been the State Economist and Principal Economic Advisor to the Vermont Legislature for the past 29 years,

is a member of the Capital Affordability Debt Advisory Committee for the State of Vermont, and a member of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank New England Public Policy Center Advisory Board.

Inner Fire's 10th Anniversary Celebration

Reclaiming Lives

On Saturday, September 27, Inner Fire celebrated its 10th Anniversary. Over 80 guests, some of whom had traveled several hours to attend, gathered on the warm fall afternoon to hear an array of speakers along with some singing by the Inner Fire Chorus. Some guests came out of gratitude for what the program had offered them, their loved one or a friend. Others came to support the program which they recognize as trailblazing a new approach to addressing "soul" challenges aka mental health issues. And yet others came out of curiosity to learn what the Inner Fire program is all about. The program opened and closed with lovely choral singing. The first speaker was the Chairwoman of the Board Mitzi Montague-Bauer who shared a personal story about her young son's experience in the traditional medical model of mental health care, where his input was routinely discounted by the "professionals" eventually causing such deep despair that he took his own life. Then Beatrice Birch, the visionary founder and Executive Director, spoke of her experiences as an artistic therapist in US prisons and mental health treatment facilities, as well as in several treatment programs in Europe. In one of the US rehabs, she encountered sensitive, thoughtful people who stated: "I hate being medicated". Isn't there a choice?" The eventual suicides of 6 of these individuals, along with the contrast in outcomes between the very successful alternative programs in England and Holland where she worked and the traditional medical/pharmaceutical approach favored in the US, became Beatrice's inspiration for the creation of Inner Fire.



Inner Fire's 10th Anniversary Celebration

Reclaiming Lives

As the name suggests, the intensive program aims to help the "Seeker", the name given to program participants - to discover their own "inner fire" by gradually replacing medication with holistic healing practices; addressing the core issues precipitating soul pain; and then developing skills for growing beyond these issues to become an enthusiastic and vital member of their community. Beatrice was followed by Robert Whittaker, an investigative journalist and author of [The Anatomy of an Epidemic](#). He also went on to create a website called Mad in America which hosts podcast interviews with mental health care professionals from around the world who are interested in creating new approaches. Robert gave a comprehensive overview of mental health treatments over the decades, citing statistics and clinical trial results of copious scientific studies, some of which have never been shared in the mainstream media even though more and more prescribers and medical directors are acknowledging that the system is broken. His talk was rich with information and comprehensible. Two Seekers who completed the program shared their experiences of deep emotional change and transformation through engaging in the daily physical activities, the alternative therapies, the creative activities built into the program, all with the support of insightful and caring "Guides" e.g. staff members and therapists. Their testimonies corroborated the long-term studies cited by Robert Whittaker which have repeatedly demonstrated that recovery results are best when no medication or the very minimum is used. Inner Fire's doctor, Clif Steinberg, spoke of his own journey, first as an organic farmer experiencing the healing power of working in nature, and later as a naturopathic doctor who began learning about deprescribing in response to requests from his patients. He brings both of these passions to his work at Inner Fire. Next, Mary Holland of Children's Health Defense League emphasized the importance of informed choice.



The final speaker was Tom Kavet, one of the founders and current Board Treasurer. He announced two recent generous gifts of stocks, one that would allow Inner Fire to pay off the mortgage and the other that would go toward the capital campaign to finish constructing the remaining two buildings in the original building plan.

The program ended with an open mic. One speaker spoke of his intention to open a home in the area where Seekers could live in a supportive community while transitioning from the intensive Inner Fire program back into the "the broader community". The other speaker gave a riveting account of his personal journey of having been put on psychotropic medications as a child simply because he couldn't focus on schoolwork and after 30 years on a host of prescriptions, he began the challenging journey to come off them, a journey including several voluntary hospitalizations which he described as dehumanizing experiences. He finally found a primary care physician, Clif Steinberg who would help him as he went through the agonizing process of tapering and then withdrawing from all the medications. He now lives an active life with a wonderful family, free of all psychotropic medications!

Mike Cancellieri, Counselor & ED front Line Foundations of North America

Why I Volunteer at IF

For the last few years, I have facilitated a verbal de-escalation and personal safety training at Inner Fire. I have extensive experience in managing behavioral emergencies in an inpatient hospital setting and training others to do so in a safe, effective, and compassionate manner. I am largely proud of the work that my team and I have done over the course of many hundreds of serious interventions. That being said, there were times when we were unable to meet our standards for safety, efficacy, and compassion.



In those cases, structural and procedural obstacles which have their root in the cultural paradigm under which mental healthcare is delivered, was almost always the root cause of our failures. Our current mental health system labors under the philosophy of Scientific Materialism. This is the idea that the only things which we can hold to be true are descriptions of matter, energy, and their interactions as revealed by the application of the scientific method. Basically, if we can't cut it apart, measure it, and manipulate it, we as a society no longer believe in its existence. While this methodology is responsible for tremendous technological leaps forward (perhaps especially in the treatment of infectious disease and physical injury) it has largely resulted in the amputation of the human spirit. Science is a method of inquiry. When we make it into a worldview and the basis for our standards of care, the results are dehumanizing.

Under this paradigm, many lenses of subjective experience and ways of interacting with reality that historically marked one as a potential medicine person, healer, artist, or sage are now pathologized. Latent talents and abilities of those we now dismiss as "mentally ill" would have been nurtured and developed for the betterment and enrichment of society. Instead of trying to eliminate the causes of an atypical subjective experience of reality, we should teach discernment, mindfulness, and other skills that honor the value of the person and give them an indispensable role in the community. I feel that these ancient principles drive the model of care at Inner Fire. I feel that Inner Fire is making steps toward recapturing something important society has lost. I feel a sense of obligation to support this work. I pray that my contributions may be, in some small way, redemptive of the times when I have been an instrument of a system that has lost its way. That is why I volunteer at Inner Fire.

The Power of the Sunflower A Seeker's "Random" Poem

I was skiing on the mountain slope~
The temperature was freezing.
I saw a tall sunflower that was looking healthy and happy.
The sunflower was 7 feet tall.
How can a sunflower survive and thrive in below freezing temperatures? I am intrigued.
I decided to go up to this sunflower and ask why it was so strong in the below freezing temperature.
I smiled, and I hit a tree.
I lost 100% consciousness.
I heard heart monitors beeping, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep....
"He's not going to make it".
I realized I was in the ER, getting sicker and sicker.
"I want to make-it!" I thought of the tall, healthy sunflower....
The next day, I was perfectly healthy and happy.

Fencing as part of the healing journey

During the warmer months we are fortunate to have Ian Bigelow offer our Seekers archery. Now with the days growing shorter and winter setting in, the Seekers will be meeting indoors with Ian to learn and hone the martial art of fencing. Ian describes fencing as his favorite game which lends itself to storytelling. It is a "good way to learn how to be a peaceful warrior." One learns how to "keep oneself on one's game and not be walked on by the world". It is not about being the best swordsman but rather "having fun with one's own mortality" and "wrestling with and harmonizing one's own demons".



One can have the sobering experience that if this were real, how terrible it would be. Fencing helps with the desire to not harm. Ian quoted O'Sensei, the founder of Aikido who stated: "When you hurt someone you hurt yourself."

" Not only is the inner heroic side of oneself awoken, (the sword is the symbol of the hero) as expressed from Shakespeare to Star Wars but the activity of fencing also keeps one grounded, in shape, alert and focused, it helps develop good reflexes and the ability to adjust to the moment.

MARI YAMAGUCHI Eurythmy

Therapeutic Eurythmy is an artistic movement therapy established in European clinics and hospitals where anthroposophical medicine is practiced. Eurythmy movements address the physical, emotional and spiritual being of the individual. Most forms of physical disease, emotional distress, and mental illness are treatable with this modality.

Here at Inner Fire, Eurythmy is one of the proactive therapies offered in which Seekers take an active step in transforming their conditions. Eurythmy, harmonious, rhythmical movement, offers the Seekers unique opportunities and experiences to enliven and reintegrate different parts of themselves which they have been disconnected from by the use of psychotropic medication and their debilitating life experiences.

From the very beginning of one's year at Inner Fire, the Seekers are introduced to Eurythmy in such a way that their life/etheric body is activated within the physical body. They gradually experience that the physical movement happens because the physical slides into the life/etheric body, and that this blending together is "my integrated body". They feel this whole process as healing and comforting.

Seekers are guided to engage in Eurythmy through the activation of their imagination. Imagination is the activity of their soul forces. The inner activity of the soul guides the limbs as they move along with the etheric body; their movement becomes more and more ensouled.

During this process with Eurythmy there are opportunities that the Seeker would even touch and be touched by their higher and deeper soul spiritual Self. Thus, Eurythmy helps support the Seeker gradually to become capable of recognizing their inner, unique Self. It supports them to gain control over themselves inwardly as an empowered body, soul and spirit being.



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Online at: innerfire.us

POEM CREATED BY A SEEKER 🌟



Give yourself to this moment.
Don't think too much
Throw yourself in... Trust the process.
The work will heal you.
The work will set you free.
I planted a seed...
It is growing and flourishing.
Trust the process,
And your recovery will unfold.
My guitar beckons me.
Play me, Uncle B, let your callist fingers lull me to sleep.
For I am your maker.
The one who gives you abundance.