



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
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## **MEMORANDUM**

**Date:** May 3, 2006

**To:** David Ramsay, City Manager

**From:** Paul Stewart, Deputy Planning Director

**Subject:** Northwest Earth Institute – Special Presentation

Margaret Schwender representing the Northwest Earth Institute will be making a special presentation at the Council meeting on the Institute's discussion courses. They offer six discussion courses on a variety of topics related to individual responsibility for ecological principles and sustainability. The six courses include:

- Voluntary Simplicity
- Exploring Deep Ecology
- Discovering a Sense of Place
- Choices for Sustainable Living
- Globalization and Its Critics
- Healthy Children – Healthy Planet

A synopsis of these courses and the format for the discussion groups are attached along with a sample description of one of the courses – “Choices for Sustainable Living”. Many of these topics are pertinent to the upcoming City Council study session on Environmental Stewardship on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

The home page of the Northwest Earth Institute's, (Seattle Chapter) web site is attached. Additional information can be found at [www.nweiseattle.org](http://www.nweiseattle.org) or through Ms. Schwender at 425-828-0741, [margschwender@comcast.net](mailto:margschwender@comcast.net).

# NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE DISCUSSION COURSES

## VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

This course explores the personal and environmental benefits of simplicity. Topics covered in eight sessions include: *The Meaning of Simplicity* ♦ *Living More With Less* ♦ *Your Money or Your Life* ♦ *Do You Have the Time?* ♦ *How Much Is Enough?* ♦ *Swimming Against the Tide* ♦ *The Practice of Simplicity* ♦ *Celebration*

## EXPLORING DEEP ECOLOGY

*Deep Ecology* is a term coined in 1973 by Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess. It describes an approach by which an individual reflects deeply on her or his relationship with the earth and responsibility for it. Participants discuss how personal values affect the way they view and treat the earth. Topics covered in nine sessions include: *Deep Ecology* ♦ *The Gaia Hypothesis* ♦ *Spirituality and the Earth* ♦ *A New Story From Science* ♦ *Native American Wisdom* ♦ *Ecopsychology* ♦ *Simplicity* ♦ *Bioregionalism* ♦ *Celebration*

## DISCOVERING A SENSE OF PLACE

Until modern times, survival of a human community depended on an intimate understanding of and respect for the distinctive geography, climate, plants, and animals located in their region. This course considers the potential benefits of knowing and protecting our place. Will a commitment to the local bioregion affect our willingness to accept responsibility to care for the earth? Topics covered in eight sessions include: *A Sense of Place* ♦ *Responsibility to Place* ♦ *Knowing Your Bioregion* ♦ *Living in Place* ♦ *Mapping Your Place* ♦ *Building Local Community* ♦ *Empowerment* ♦ *Celebration*

## CHOICES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Each of us makes choices that have an impact on the earth. We can choose options that are more sustainable than others. Participants consider steps toward ecologically sustainable lifestyles, communities, and organizations. Topics covered in nine sessions include: *A Call to Sustainability* ♦ *Ecological Principles* ♦ *Sustainable Communities* ♦ *Sustainable Business and Economy* ♦ *Sustainable Food* ♦ *Sustainable Buying* ♦ *Sustainable Living* ♦ *Visions of Sustainability* ♦ *Celebration*

## GLOBALIZATION AND ITS CRITICS

Globalization involves the increased movement of goods, services, and capital across borders. The course explores how globalization is affecting the environment, local economics, and social and cultural customs throughout the world. Topics covered in nine sessions include: *Globalization Overview* ♦ *Questioning Free Trade* ♦ *Transnational Corporations* ♦ *Food in the Global Marketplace* ♦ *Globalization and the Environment* ♦ *Social Equity* ♦ *Shaping Opinion* ♦ *Homogenization of Cultures* ♦ *Celebration*

## HEALTHY CHILDREN - HEALTHY PLANET

To understand the pervasive effects of advertising, media, and our consumer culture can influence a child's view of the world. Topics covered in eight sessions include: *Cultural Pressures* ♦ *Family Rituals and Celebrations* ♦ *Advertising* ♦ *Food and Health* ♦ *Time and Creativity* ♦ *Technology and the Media* ♦ *Exploring Nature* ♦ *Celebration*

# EARTH INSTITUTE DISCUSSION COURSES

## FOR THE HOME, WORKPLACE, OR FAITH CENTER

The Earth Institute Network offers six discussion courses for groups that meet in homes, workplaces, schools, and centers of faith: **Exploring Deep Ecology** (9 weeks), **Voluntary Simplicity** (8 weeks), **Discovering a Sense of Place** (8 weeks), **Choices for Sustainable Living** (9 weeks), **Globalization and Its Critics** (9 weeks) and **Healthy Children – Healthy Planet** (8 weeks). Please refer to the other side of this sheet for a detailed description of each course.

### STEPS TO GET STARTED

1. Call the number below to schedule a time for an introductory presentation. Reserve a space for the presentation, usually an evening gathering at home or center of faith, or a brown bag lunch at work.
2. After the date and location are set, invite others to the meeting. A minimum group size is eight. A personal invitation is often the most successful approach. You are encouraged to invite co-workers, friends, neighbors, and people from nearby workplaces. A sample flyer will be provided at your request.
3. At the introductory meeting, a representative will describe the course and explain how it works. Everyone who wants to participate will sign up. The date for the first session is set based on the time availability of participants. If more than 14 people are interested, a second class will form. Each class will have its own coordinator.

### DISCUSSION GROUP FORMAT

Classes of 8-12 participants meet for a 1 to 1-1/2 hour session each week, in homes or other locations convenient for participants. There is no cost for the course itself, although we do charge for the course books.

Participants read material for the first session. A volunteer will attend to facilitate the first session only. For the remainder of the sessions, the role of facilitator rotates among participants.

The last session of every course is a potluck or some sort of celebration to reflect on what has been learned. A volunteer will attend to describe follow up programs if the group decides to continue.

**For more information contact:**

# CHOICES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

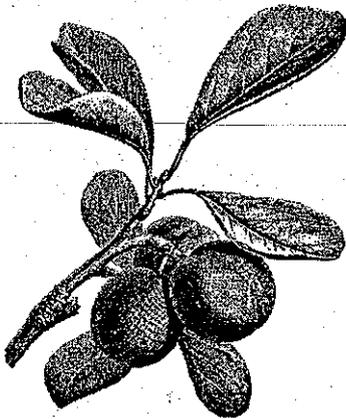
A NINE-SESSION COURSE FOR THE WORKPLACE, FAITH CENTER OR HOME

## PURPOSE

- ∞ To explore the meaning of sustainability.
- ∞ To consider the ties between lifestyle choices and their impact on the earth.
- ∞ To learn about steps that can be taken to move toward ecologically sustainable organizations, lifestyles, and communities.

"I find that I think about things more – things I buy, things I eat, things I throw out. I see a much larger picture now, and I realize more than ever that I am a very important part of that picture."

- Architect,  
Portland, Oregon



## SESSION THEMES

**A Call to Sustainability:** The goal of a sustainable society is popular, but difficult to define. How does the way our society functions affect the earth, and how can we be "a blessing to the planet"?

**Ecological Principles:** Some argue that the earth is the best teacher of sustainable practices. How can nature's organizing principles be applied in design, production of goods, and everyday living?

**Sustainable Communities:** The more resources we use in the course of daily living, the larger our "ecological footprint" is. By looking at our actions within the framework of communities, we can learn to shrink that footprint—and gain a simpler, more balanced lifestyle.

**Sustainable Business and Economy:** Is a *growing* economy equivalent to a *healthy* economy? What are other ways of measuring success, and how can we encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices and perspectives?

**Sustainable Food:** According to one author, our food travels an average of 1,300 miles before reaching our plates. How can we lessen our impact on the earth through choices about the way we eat?

**Sustainable Buying:** Daily messages tell us to buy, buy, buy. How can we escape from these cultural pressures, and instead only purchase what we truly need, from the most sustainable sources available?

**Sustainable Living:** The spaces and buildings we inhabit influence our lives and the earth. How can we build, work, and live together in greater harmony with the natural world?

**Visions of Sustainability:** Choices we make today are shaping the world of tomorrow. How can we create the most sustainable society for our future?

Motivating individuals to examine and transform personal values and habits, to accept responsibility for the earth, and to act on that commitment.



# CHOICES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

## READING LIST

### I: A CALL TO SUSTAINABILITY

Definitions of Sustainability ♦ "Easter's End" by Jared Diamond ♦ "Putting a Price on Mother Nature" by Richard Hill ♦ "No Simple Answers" by Robert Gilman ♦ "The Great Turning" by Joanna Macy

### II: ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

"Design, Ecology, Ethics, and the Making of Things" by William McDonough ♦ "The Natural Step to Sustainability" by Mary Jane Burkardt ♦ "Scandic Hotels Thrives with The Natural Step" ♦ "Interface, First U.S. Natural Step Company, Proclaims a Vision" ♦ "The Laws of the Earth and the Laws of Economics" by Donella Meadows ♦ "Bear River's Living Machine" by Dave Redwood and Sean Kelly

### III: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

"Our Ecological Footprint" by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees ♦ "Cities of Exuberance" by Sarah Van Gelder ♦ "Working for the Planet in the Neighborhood" by Patrick Mazza ♦ "Meet Your Neighbors" by Patricia Long ♦ "How One Couple Saves Big Bucks Every Month" by Steve Gutmann

### IV: SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

"Money vs. Life" by David Korten ♦ "If the GDP Is Up, Why Is America Down?" by Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead, and Jonathan Rowe ♦ "Natural Capitalism" by Paul Hawken ♦ "Bill Ford Has a Better Idea" by Martin Wright

### V: SUSTAINABLE FOOD

"Community-Supported Agriculture: Rediscovering Community" by Jack Kittredge ♦ "Reclaiming Eating as Sacred Relationship" by Jeremy Rifkin ♦ "A Bite Felt 'Round the World" by John Robbins and Jia Patton ♦ "The Great Hunter-Gatherer Continuum" by Jim Mulligan ♦ "Top 10 Reasons to Buy Organic" ♦ "Leading the Delicious Revolution" by Peggy Knickerbocker

### VI: SUSTAINABLE BUYING

"American Excess: Are We Shopping Our Planet to Death?" by Alan Durning ♦ "What Do We Need? Some Lessons from the Third World" by Joanna Macy ♦ "Getting from Here to There" by Vicki Robin ♦ "Sustainability: The New Benchmark for Evaluating Everyday Products" by Debra Dadd-Redalia

### VII: SUSTAINABLE LIVING

"The Obligation of Care" by Wendell Berry ♦ "Building Green Community on a Budget" by Liz Walker ♦ "Small Is Beautiful" by Matt Holland ♦ "Built to Own: A Straw-Bale Story" by Jean Miller ♦ "Living Off the Grid" by Sarah Thomas ♦ "Learning to Live in Place: A Set of Queries" by Gregory Smith ♦ "In Praise of Idleness" by Jay Walljasper

### VIII: VISIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

"Beyond the Limits to Growth" by Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jørgen Randers ♦ "The Seven Sustainable Wonders of the World" by Alan Durning ♦ "Crossing the Threshold: Early Signs of an Environmental Awakening" by Lester Brown ♦ "The Common Life" by Scott Russell Sanders

For more information contact:

Motivating individuals to examine and transform personal values and habits,  
to accept responsibility for the earth, and to act on that commitment.

NWEI Seattle Chapter

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# Welcome

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The Northwest Earth Institute is recognized as a national leader in developing in empower individuals and organizations to protect the earth. These programs emphasize responsibility, the importance of a supportive community, and the dual need to walk action for the earth. By reaching out to people in their workplace, home, faith center community, NWEI provides easy access to tools for individual and cultural change.

The Northwest Earth Institute is based in Portland, Oregon. It has spawned satellite communities throughout the country. This, the Seattle branch of the Institute, offers and follow-on engagements around the Seattle area.

For more information on our courses, our current schedule, or how to get involved links at the left.

*"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to it's old"*

*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

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## Discussion Courses

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NWEI discussion courses provide an enjoyable, supportive setting in which to exchange ideas, form new habits, engage in stimulating discussion, and make personal changes if desired. Thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations have been involved in NWEI discussion courses.

Courses consist of 7 to 12 people who meet weekly for about an hour to discuss a recommended book. Course books, each about 100 to 150 pages in length, contain a diverse collection of articles, and book excerpts organized around weekly themes to create lively discussions. Questions and a suggested meeting format are included as well.

NWEI volunteers periodically offer presentations focusing on each of the available topics. Presentations, which last approximately one hour, are a wonderful way to learn how to live more sustainably as well as acquaint yourself further with the philosophy of the Northwest Earth Institute. Presentations as well as classes currently in session are available. If you would like to attend a presentation for your group please contact us at [info@nweiseattle.org](mailto:info@nweiseattle.org).

- Voluntary Simplicity, an eight-session course addressing the distractions of modern life that keep us from caring for ourselves, our relationships, and our environment.
- Exploring Deep Ecology, a nine-session course addressing core values and the way we view and treat the earth.
- Discovering a Sense of Place, formerly called Bioregional Perspectives, a nine-session course focusing on knowing and protecting our place.
  - Choices for Sustainable Living, a nine-session course exploring the meaning of sustainable living and the relationship between lifestyle choices and their impact on the planet.
  - Globalization and Its Critics, a nine-session course exploring the impact of globalization with respect to the environment, food, social equity, and justice.
  - Healthy Children - Healthy Planet, a nine-session course exploring the impact of our modern culture on children's health.



Each meeting consists of two parts: an opening and a facilitated discussion. Except for the first session, sessions are opened and facilitated by members of the group on a rotating basis. The non-didactic format encourages a process which:

- Establishes trust, respect, and a sense of community among group members.
- Allows participants to seek personal clarity without group consensus.
- Creates a supportive environment for personal change.

*"The course has made a difference in my life because it got my attention and woke me up to the current state of the earth. It ignited a passion to spread the word about the need for change in the way people think and live in order to survive as a species and as a living being. I made a commitment to change the way I live to be more accountable for my impact and to be an example for others."*

--FPA employee Seattle