Dr. Masaru Emoto’s Healing Prayer for the Gulf

Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist, has researched characteristics of water, including changes in the properties of water in response to human emotions. His prayer for the Gulf of Mexico is being offered by people around the world who desire to be in loving service to our planet and its life forms, especially at this time.

I send the energy of love and gratitude to the water and all the living creatures in the Gulf of Mexico and its surroundings.

To the whales, dolphins, pelicans, fish, shellfish, plankton, coral, algae, and all living creatures….I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.

Simply Living eagerly anticipates our new home

Beginning July 1st, our “home” will be the second floor of Maynard Ave. United Methodist Church, 2350 Indianola Ave. (University District). We look forward to sharing our suite with Compassionate Communication – Central Ohio, a local nonprofit with whom we share many values. Features include a large meeting area with several small alcoves, a welcoming congregation, and proximity to bus service. Many, many thanks to each of you who has helped with cleaning, priming, painting, and moving. We also thank Greenovate business for their generous discount on eco-friendly paint. Please be aware: our phone service installation may be delayed the first week of July, and our phone number will remain the same. Come see us!

Our Sixth Annual Summer Canoe Outing

Sun. August 8th – Enjoy a peaceful 2-hour canoe trip on the Mad River (an hour west of Columbus), followed by a potluck picnic at the nearby home of the Welkers. Canoe livery cost: $13 per adult (over 12); $31 - 2 adults and up to 3 children (12 or under) per canoe; $18/kayak; $8/tube. Please register with Becky Allen by Aug. 2nd at razwriter@yahoo.com or 488-7122. Include your name, phone, email, participant names, number of canoes, etc. needed. To carpool from Columbus, meet in the vicinity of the Get Go gas station in the Giant Eagle parking lot at 2801 N. High St. by 12:15 p.m. Canoeing at 2 p.m. and picnic at the Welkers at 5 p.m., 3538 W US HWY 36, Urbana 43078. Please bring a dish for six to share and your table service. Becky will email directions and details upon registering.

Lisa Kreischer helps prepare SL's new space

Simply Living’s Vision: Creating a compassionate and sustainable world through personal, community and cultural transformation.
Dear Friend,

When you’re trying to live sanely in an insane world, you need connection with others who share your values. We hope you’ll maintain your connection with the Simply Living community by renewing your membership today.

According to some of our members, the Simply Living community is “a group of eccentric misfits” and “a support group for activists”. Others describe Simply Living members as “my peeps, my tribe, my spiritual family, my Sangha, my best friends.”

We welcome more eccentric misfits in our tribe! Please renew your membership today.

You can now renew on-line at www.simplyliving.org/membership.

Membership levels: $35 - Individual; $50 - Family; $20 - Senior (60+) or full-time student.

Please note that we have implemented an annual membership drive to simplify the renewal process and reduce administrative costs. While we are grateful for donations or pledges you may have made this past year, these do not automatically renew your membership. Please act now to renew.

The sincerity with which we attempt to be the change we seek for the world brings me much hope. Thanks so much for your continued support.

Donna Sigl-Davies
Board President

Simply Living is a 501(c)3 organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

To receive your newsletter electronically…. Please contact Allison at 447-0296 or allison@simplyliving.org. You can access our current and past newsletters online at www.simplyliving.org/newsletter. We are currently publishing three newsletters/year.

Simply Living’s Mission: Simply Living of Central Ohio supports individuals, families and organizations in creating a more compassionate and sustainable world by offering learning opportunities which promote personal and civic responsibility, informed action and wholeness.

Simply Living Board
Donna Sigl-Davies, President, 268-7656
Randall Loop, Vice President 496-4595
Gwen Uetrecht, Secretary, 261-8399
Dan Baer, Treasurer, 343-0493
Stephanie Glass, 617-852-4668
Dominic DiBlasi, 679-1365
Marilyn Welker, Director, 937-484-6988

PLEASE SEND ALL CALENDAR SUBMISSIONS TO:
Phone: 614.447.0296
Email: allison@simplyliving.org

We welcome articles for our website:
www.simplyliving.org
Send submissions to:
Marilyn Welker: mwelker@ctcn.net
Dear Friends,

As I contemplate the implications of the continually unfolding Gulf disaster, I take heart from Joanna Macy’s understanding that our pain and our love for the world are inseparable. We all are affected by these events and their implications, whether consciously or unconsciously, and the pain is real.

My head and heart tell me that our responses must be grounded in love. This is a love imbued with fierceness and tenacity, empathy for self and for others. It is strong and responsible, also humble and deeply rooted in the awareness of our interconnectedness and interbeing.

A writer who understands this well is Barry Lopez. Be inspired by his interview with Bill Moyers, available at the following website: http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/04302010/watch.html. Bill chose Barry for his final interview on Bill Moyers Journal, which took place shortly after the Deepwater Horizon explosion, and they earnestly explore wisdom for our times.

And indeed, this disaster is yet another wake-up call that we may or may not heed. The dailiness of life is easily overwhelming, yet we can choose in our daily ordering to participate in what is life-affirming and life-renewing. Acknowledging that we no longer can assume “normal” weather, “normal” employment, “normal” food prices, etc. may be a huge step toward asking the real questions about who we are and what we need to be doing.

Whatever you do may seem insignificant to you, but it is most important that you do it. –Gandhi

Do join us in our learning groups, community events, and conversations as we commit to being the change we seek for the world. These are not trivial words, and I for one need to be reminded of them on a daily basis.

Marilyn Welker
Director, Simply Living

ACT NOW TO CONSERVE ENERGY

Programs for smart and affordable conservation in your home, apartment, or small business:

I. Home Performance Solutions, offered by Columbia Gas to its customers, provides a $500 value home energy audit for $50 ($20 for income-eligible customers). Included are a free low-flow showerhead and programmable thermostat. A trained energy auditor will analyze your home, then recommend a broad range of remediation steps and share a list contractors who are trained to do the work.

Rebates of up to 70% are available if you have more than one measure installed. Higher rebates are available for income-eligible customers. An extra $150 incentive is expected to be available for a limited time in July and August. Visit www.columbiagasohio.com for details.

Any home can greatly benefit from this audit, and homeowners can choose what work to have done. Renters can also benefit. Please check with your landlord.

To schedule an audit, contact Columbia’s service provider, Conservation Services Group, at 877-644-6674.

II. Warm Choice, for income-eligible customers, can provide most of the above services at little or no cost. For Franklin County and Columbus, contact the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) at 614-621-1171. If you are not a Columbia Gas customer these services are available from MORPC under the Ohio Department of Development Office of Energy Efficiency’s Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP).

III. Simple Energy Solutions gives rebates on qualified programmable thermostats and energy-efficient showerheads. You can shop for these products at local retailers or online at ColumbiaGasOhio.com/e-store. The e-store has many efficiency products and rebate forms, or you can get rebate forms by calling 866-542-4767.

IV. Small Business Energy Solutions offers instant rebates on qualified energy efficiency improvements. Visit ColumbiaGasOhio.com/SBES or call 877-644-6674.

V. Federal Energy Tax Credits are available for qualified energy efficiency improvements. Ask your contractor or speak with a tax specialist.

VI. To help Ohioans save money, create jobs and reduce Ohio’s carbon footprint, the Ohio Treasurer’s Department of Economic Development has instituted the Energy Conservation for Ohioans (ECO-Link) program which provides homeowners a 3% rate reduction on 5-year bank loans when completing energy efficiency projects in their homes. To learn more visit eolink.ohio.gov or call 800-228-1102.

Now is the time to take advantage of these programs, lower your heating and cooling bills, and reduce your carbon footprint!

Thanks to Pat Marida for summarizing programs highlighted by Jack Laverty in his presentation at SL in late May.
Simply Living Program Updates

Agent of Change Course
Are you itching to create some sustainability-related action but feeling a bit timid or unsure how to proceed? How to Be an Agent of Change in Your Circle of Influence is a 6-week course that enables individuals to begin planning, then taking first steps to implement or strengthen a sustainability initiative within a chosen circle of influence, such as a workplace, school, church, neighborhood, community, or family/friend group.

Register now for a new course beginning on July 28th, 6:30-8:15 p.m., 2350 Indianola Ave. Course dates are 7/28, 8/4,11,18,25, then skip to 9/22. Course cost is $35. To register, contact Allison at Allison@simplyliving.org or 447-0296. For more information, contact Marilyn at mwelker@ctcn.net.

Earth Institute Courses
I probably gained more vital knowledge in my Menu for the Future discussion course than in any other class I’ve taken. Its course book is dense with information about the food system, its impacts on the environment and human health, and meaningful options for change. Moviegoers who enjoyed (or were disturbed by) Food, Inc. will love this class! – Nathan Johnson, SL member and environmental lawyer

Nathan is referring to our most popular and recent course, which prompts many course participants to significantly shift their food purchasing and eating practices. We are currently scheduling Fall discussion courses and would love to talk with you about starting a course at your workplace or faith community. Please call our office, 447-0296, for more information

***New course available this Fall about Health and the Environment
The course will cover both how humans impact the health of the environment, and also how the environment impacts human health—positively and negatively.

We thank the Dr. Thelma I. Schoonover Fund of the Columbus Foundation for its generous support of the following Earth Institute initiatives:

***Our updated listing of local, regional and national resources related to conservation and sustainable living: http://www.simplyliving.org/links.

***Six new Conscious Voices programs, featuring interviews with several Earth Institute course participants and Central Ohio nonprofit spokespersons working on conservation-related actions. Produced by Tom Over, one of our outstanding WCRS reporters, they can be heard at www.wcrsfm.org.

Transition Central Ohio
Our core group continues to collaborate on local actions to strengthen our communities:

Recent events included a lively conversation in May on strengthening our local economy, with a working group now planning next steps.

We highly recommend joining the Small Business Beanstalk initiative. Visit www.thesbb.com to sign up at no cost. Take advantage of discounts and special offers from locally owned businesses, while supporting them, a win-win for everyone!

Special Film Series: Dirt! takes you inside the wonders of soil, telling the story of Earth’s most valuable and underappreciated source of fertility. It is also a call to action, emphasizing our connection with the natural world and capacity to heal what we have destroyed. Tues., July 27, 7:30 p.m., Drexel Theater, 2254 E. Main St. Free admission with donations requested. Co-sponsored with the Sierra Club COG, Free Press, and Col. Int’l Film Festival.

Our core group meets bi-weekly. Please contact Mary at renewableconcepts@gmail.com if you’d like to be added to our announcement listserv and/or to get involved!
Big changes with WCRS
--our community radio station

WCRS 102.1 and 98.3 FM is a broadcast service of Simply Living, currently broadcasting from 3-8 p.m. daily.

Approaching WCRS’s third anniversary of broadcasting on Central Ohio airwaves, we are in the midst of many transitions. Based on three months of focused conversation on Simply Living’s mission and the role of WCRS within that mission, board members decided in March that 1) we will request the transfer of WCRS to a community organization whose mission is aligned with community media in July (per FCC rules allowing a license transfer after 3 years of broadcasting); and 2) if the FCC denies our request to transfer, we will conclude broadcast operations by Sept. 30th.

Our decision was shaped by many considerations, including:

- One of Simply Living’s roles has been to serve as an incubator over the past many years, and we have successfully incubated many community projects.
- Simply Living has invested considerable resources of time, talents and finances over the past seven years to build this station as a community asset. Now is the time for another organization to grow the station to the next level.

In preparation for our anticipated transfer of WCRS, our studio is now broadcasting from the Carriage House behind 1021 E. Broad St. We are grateful to Suzanne Patzer and Bob Fittrakis for contributing housing for the studio, and to Eugene Beer, Josh Tulecke-Paulson, Robb Ebright and others who have successfully engineered the necessary technical set-up.

With much appreciation we recognize the contributions of a few of the extraordinary people who have worked tirelessly on behalf of WCRS and community media in Central Ohio:

Jane Haskins, J.D., has served as our legal counsel extraordinaire for two+ years, putting in untold weeks of research, meetings, phone conversations, correspondence and legal document writing relating to our timeshare partner and the FCC.
Kristi Lekies, Ph.D., working with area high school youth, has produced over 30 segments of Youth Beat Radio, a program by and for teens in Central Ohio.
Tom Over, journalist, has travelled to Wash. D.C., Pittsburgh, as well as the Ohio Statehouse and throughout Central Ohio, passionately covering underreported news stories to promote understanding and more engaged citizens.

We are also deeply grateful to the following businesses for their very generous underwriting support over the past year: Kitrick, Lewis & Harris Law Firm for Democracy Now!, and Used Kids Records for Yesterday's Top Secrets.

It takes a village to do community radio, and we celebrate and thank all who have contributed in a myriad of ways to create community radio through WCRS.

--Marilyn Welker

Jayme Richards and Robb Ebright at Earth Day 2010.
**Introducing The Simply Living Board**

Standing, L to R: Dan Baer, Randall Loop, Stephanie Glass, Dominic DiBlasi; Sitting L to R: Donna Sigl-Davies, Gwen Uetrecht, Marilyn Welker

Simply Living’s board provides a refreshing opportunity to participate in a group where commitment to relationships, compassion, and justice comes first. Our board has a reputation for cohesiveness, and our self-organizing philosophy allows us to be a learning laboratory for a new type of organization. As I despair about the oil spill disaster, I am grateful not only for this opportunity to contribute toward a more sustainable way of life but also for the philosophy and friends with whom I work.

Board members play a critical role in ensuring the well-being of the organization. This past year we’ve had to make decisions both delicate and complicated. I’m grateful for our current board members’ dedication and skills and honored to work closely with people of such integrity. Please thank them for their service.

If you are looking for a way to contribute meaningfully, to experiment with new models of organizational development, or to more fully engage in this special community, please consider serving on our board. Curiosity is most welcome. Let’s talk!

**About our Board Members**

**Donna Sigl-Davies**, Board. President - Husband Eric, daughter Arcadia, and I are part of the Intentional Community group and live in the Community on East Maynard. Professionally, I am a Licensed Clinical Counselor (PCC) in private practice at Wilbridge Consultation Center.

*dsigl-davies@columbus.rr.com*

**Randall Loop**, Vice President - Learning from SL’s courses, I discovered greater fulfillment through working less, saving more and being of more service to the planet and others. I am

---

**Allison Collins**
Why do we care for Nature?

...Sometimes because of places like Rush Run Park

Nature engages all of our senses, offers a lifelong learning experience, and inspires awe and spiritual reflection. Venturing into the wild can be deeply peaceful—and an exciting adventure. Backyard gardening can arouse curiosity about the natural world.

Many Central Ohioans share a passion for nature and a desire to conserve. Faced with the loss of scenic green space and possible relocation of the Olentangy River in 1966, voters nearly defeated the referendum to construct the SR 315 freeway, passing it by only 180 votes of the 51,170 votes cast. The City of Columbus promised to purchase compensatory park land, and Rush Run Park was acquired in 1968, with additional land purchased a year later.

The park is diverse, an undeveloped place, with an upland succession forest, a riparian forest, and flood plain. The creek is one of the larger streams in the Olentangy River watershed. Once straightened when the land was farmed, the creek has regained natural meanders and cut new channels.

It is also a case study of green space abuse and thankfully, failed attempts to develop it. Without management, it became a dumping ground for junk. It was said to be plagued with rats. Erosion was a problem. Walnut Grove Cemetery dumped landscape debris down the creek bank. Nevertheless, one park director declared Rush Run Park “a hidden jewel.” The final report of a 1993 OSU landscape architecture class’ site analysis encouraged use of the area as a natural science resource for schools and described it as a “dynamic place... (that) offers a natural corridor for wildlife and allows people to see the natural processes of our environment.” Friends of Rush Run Park, Columbus Audubon Society, and others were early advocates for the park.

In 1995 the Green Space Committee of the Priorities ‘95 Environmental Comparative Risk Assessment study documented the lack of adequate green space in the metro area. Recommendations were made to remedy this deficiency. Project volunteers organized Priorities Partners, Inc. (PPI) to ensure adoption of these recommendations. At the same time Worthington sought to acquire several acres of Rush Run Park to expand Walnut Grove Cemetery. PPI’s first resolution was to protect Rush Run Park from “loss of or any other use of its land.”

Many of us have learned first-hand that conserving natural areas demands persistent, coordinated effort from citizens, environmental professionals, organizations, and elected officials. We opposed the cemetery expansion and began to restore Rush Run Park in 1995. After years of meetings and letters to editors, Worthington’s attempt to expand the cemetery was finally defeated by the Ohio Supreme Court in 2002.

PPI organized the first cleanup effort in 1995. Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) a new organization, took on this task in subsequent years, recruiting volunteers from nearby neighborhoods, youth groups, and businesses. People always seemed happy while working in the woods, delighted by wildflowers and the creek.

FLOW members began removing Japanese honeysuckle in 2002. In 2004, with funds donated to hire a chipping service, more than an acre was cleared. At least six acres of honeysuckle were cleared in 2009 under a mitigation project. This work must continue here and elsewhere to enable native plants to recover.

Why do we care for nature? An innate desire to discover the real world? To redeem ourselves? How would you answer the question?

Joanne Leussing is a longtime Worthington resident, SL member, and indefatigable steward of Rush Run Park, who has worked tenaciously on its well-being for years.

Board Members (continued)

a licensed massage therapist and own Sustainable Wellness Services in German Village.

Gwen Uetrecht, Secretary – I joined Simply Living in 1999. With the support of new friends made in the SL community and with knowledge and skills learned from the Earth Institute discussion courses, I was able to simplify my life and quit my corporate job. I currently work at the co-op as office administrator and have a part-time business as a licensed massage therapist and drum circle facilitator.

Dan Baer, Treasurer – Despite assertions that I am an engineer, not an accountant, I serve as treasurer on the board and keep us on track financially. A recent and remarkable assignment from my former employer led to my wife and me living in China for six months in 2008, a most fascinating experience.

P. Dominic DiBlasi – I have a personal interest in working with others who are open to creating new ways of living together. Our systems are broken. The question is: together, can we open our minds, hearts and wills to co-create sustainable systems that will leave something for future generations?

Stephanie Glass – I recently served on the faculty of Fisher College of Business, The Ohio State University, and am looking forward to an intensive language study in Israel this summer.
Enriching the Lives of Self and Others

By Beth Mills

How to Be an Agent of Change in Your Circle of Influence, a course offered through Simply Living (see p. 4), enables individuals to begin planning, then taking first steps to implement or strengthen a sustainability initiative within a chosen circle of influence, such as a workplace, school, church, neighborhood, community, or family/friend group.

I recently spoke with two past course participants to learn about their experience in becoming intentional change agents.

Sheila Fox was inspired to initiate “Sustainable Delaware,” based on her knowledge of similar programs in other areas of Central Ohio. The class structure provided a natural progression from week to week, including small groups, guided questions and lots of idea sharing. As a result, group participants connected with their own capacity to lead and gained confidence in their own abilities. She found that the group’s support provided a sense of safety to take a risk, and further, an empowering sense of “Why not try?!”

Her group of 6-8 people set up their first meeting date, which happened to coincide with a group planning an Earth Day event in Delaware. They have met with city employees to begin forming partnerships and with Ohio Wesleyan students interested in Sustainable Delaware. While still doing much planning, they have made valuable contacts and set the groundwork for collaborative efforts to implement future projects and events.

Peggy Burger wanted to learn something new that would have practical results in impacting the environment and strengthening a community that was important to her. Groups that she considered creating a project for included work, aikido, and her spiritual community. As the course progressed she learned that many of the folks in her spiritual community were interested in the environment and wanted to do something practical other than recycling, reusing, and buying organic foods. Coincidentally, the church from which they rented space was beginning a community garden. She saw this convergence as a perfect opportunity to facilitate building community by creating a garden dedicated to 1) building community, 2) learning about organic gardening, 3) providing food for those in need, and 4) providing organic food for their own consumption. Five families were interested in participating.

Peggy faced some obstacles in carrying out her plan. Getting her group committed to the project was challenging, and getting organized took longer than she had planned. Once she facilitated communication between her friends and the church garden leaders, the church welcomed them warmly. A difference arose when the church group wanted the community garden’s produce to be donated exclusively to a food pantry, while her group wanted to grow produce for their own consumption and donate a generous portion to the food pantry. Peggy believed that they needed to take responsibility for themselves as well as others and that by donating everything they wouldn’t learn about self-sustainability. The church leaders did accept her perspective.

A second issue was that the five families had never gardened before. Fortunately, Peggy’s husband, an organic gardener for over 40 years, organized a small meeting for them that covered everything from how to prepare the soil to which crops needed to be planted at what time. He also grew plants from seed to give them! Her husband’s willingness to share his expertise about gardening and then his gift of plants to them to actually put in the ground made the experience very personal indeed.

When circumstances arose requiring Peggy to withdraw from further planning, she discovered a strong foundation had already been established. The families helped the church members build the beds, and then they were on their own. When Peggy attended the dedication she was delighted at how beautiful the gardens were. They were flourishing with all kinds of produce – from peas to broccoli and lettuce and so much more!

Peggy learned practical, concrete steps to organize a meaningful project. Throughout its planning and implementation participants focused on something exciting and important that would teach self-reliance and assist in tikkun olam (healing the world), the major tenet of the Jewish religion.

I am inspired by these women’s stories and commitment to be agents of change. Empowerment is a wonderful incentive when you feel you can take a risk to do something new, and it is best when you have the confidence to say to yourself, “Let’s do it ~ Why not try?”

Beth Mills has been a classroom teacher, inspiring and teaching students for many years.
Biomass Burning Threatens Ohio’s Forests and the Public Interest

By Nathan Johnson

If the phrase “biomass burning” does not now get much play in the public consciousness, it soon will. Several of Ohio’s coal-burning power plants plan to burn trees as a means of generating “biomass” electricity. In fact, Ohio is at the epicenter of a nationwide push by power companies to cut and burn the nation’s forests to generate power. According to Cheryl Johncox, Executive Director of Ohio forest advocacy group, Buckeye Forest Council, “Biomass in Ohio has the potential to be a huge sucking machine that will eat up trees across Ohio and the eastern U.S.”

Ohio’s Public Utilities Commission (PUCO) is currently considering permitting several biomass power plants in the 100-600 Megawatt (“MW”) range, totaling up to 2100 MW of power. In fact, the PUCO has recently approved some of the biomass facilities under consideration. The scale of the proposed logging and burning is staggering. For the proposed plants to generate 2100 MW from wood, 42 tons would need to be burned every minute or 26,280,000 tons of wood per year.

Wood products, including saw logs and pulp, now involve cutting 2 million tons from Ohio forests each year. These proposals could therefore mean cutting more than ten times Ohio’s current timber volume. To supply this much wood, all large and medium sized trees from one-tenth of Ohio’s public and private forests would need to be harvested each year just for burning. This would obviously be neither sustainable nor renewable.

Nonetheless, power companies in Ohio are arguing that trees are a “renewable” source of biomass energy. This is significant because Ohio is one of many states that have recently enacted renewable energy requirements. In Ohio, for instance, electric utilities are required to generate 12.5% of their energy portfolio from “renewable” sources by 2025. Ohio statute provides that “biomass” is an eligible fuel for renewable energy portfolio requirements. Ohio regulations define “biomass energy” as “energy produced from organic material derived from plants or animals and available on a renewable basis.” (emphasis added) In addition, the regulations list several examples of materials that may fall under the definition of “biomass,” including “tree crops.” Ignoring both science and the profound absurdity of their arguments, power companies have seized upon this last bit of regulatory language to argue that burning trees would be a “renewable” endeavor.

It gets worse. Woody biomass actually generates significantly more CO₂ than coal. In fact, carbon dioxide emissions from biomass are about 1.5 times higher than from coal and three to four times greater than from natural gas. These facts have not deterred the power companies, however. To the contrary, biomass plants are eligible for billions of dollars in state and federal subsidies. In addition, the U.S. EPA employs a perverse accounting methodology that does not count carbon emissions from biomass. As a result, biomass facilities could avoid paying billions in fees under proposed federal cap-and-trade programs.

At the moment, the legislative and regulatory landscape may be stacked against Ohio’s forests and the public interest. The facts, however, are not. Readers are encouraged to learn more and to spread the word about this new and serious threat to the environment and public health.

For further information visit Buckeye Forest Council’s website at: http://www.buckeyeforestcouncil.org. Readers may also wish to contact Cheryl Johncox: Cheryl@buckeyeforestcouncil.org; (614)487-9020.

Nathan Johnson is a SL member and environmental attorney volunteering with the Buckeye Forest Council.

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Volunteers of America®
Via Vecchia: Making wine the old way

Featuring SL Member Paolo Rosi and his artisanal wines

By Tuesday Trippier

You have only to listen to Paolo Rosi for a few minutes before his passion about winemaking becomes evident. He is a wealth of knowledge about making wine, particularly making it the way it used to be made long before the process became industrialized.

He and his two partners have created a company called Via Vecchia, which means “old way” in Italian. They have preserved a natural and simple process of making wine that draws from the traditional methods found in Tuscany, where Paolo traces his roots. His father handed down this method of winemaking that has been used for thousands of years. The result is a healthy product that honors tradition.

The artisanal uniqueness of this wine is multi-faceted. Because the wine is left undisturbed from chemical processes normally found in today’s winemaking, Via Vecchia wines contain very few sulfites and chemicals, have a cleaner taste, and are healthier. Their wines are all reds, made from Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot whole grapes. (See product descriptions at viavecchiawinery.com.)

They are made using a sustainable and natural process that results in a “genuine wine” as Paolo calls it. Explaining a much more complicated process simply, Paolo describes the labor intensive process which includes roughly 42 open vats and daily hand pressing for 2-3 weeks before transferring to closed vats for fermentation. The wine is then transferred to oak barrels where it will be monitored for one to two years. Doing so much by hand and aging in oak is a rare process these days.

“We are fortunate the wine industry in California is so wasteful,” explains Paolo, pointing to a long, two-layered row of oak barrels filled with aging wine. “They use these barrels only once then throw them away. They are basically for show in the tasting rooms. We get them for free; new they would cost between $1300 and $1600 each.”

Paolo explains that the large wineries would never take visitors from the tasting rooms back to the processing rooms because they are all just towers of stainless steel silos. He prefers the traditional way of aging wine in barrels because the oak is a living, breathing material which interacts with the wine. So how, you ask, do some wines still taste like they are aged in oak?

“Oh, they have added that taste,” Paolo says simply. Added? What else is added in?

Unbeknownst to many of us, quite a few things are added to wine, starting with a carbon dioxide soup to kill off the natural yeast. This is then replaced with an engineered yeast to give the wine a hint of flavor. Potassium and antioxidants are used to top off vats, along with coloring and flavorings.

I stare at him in disbelief. But wait, there’s more to the story. The wine industry, it seems, is largely unregulated, especially when it comes to labeling.

“There are no regulations on listing the ingredients on the wine label,” explains Paolo. “It is the only food product where ingredients don’t have to be listed. When people complain of getting a headache after drinking a glass of wine, or of getting hives or maybe swollen fingers,” he says, “it is most likely a reaction to the chemicals in the wine, not the wine itself.”

So with Paolo and his partners’ winemaking process, it isn’t about what they do to the wine that makes it so good. It is really about what they don’t do. Here’s the run down: they don’t use lab-created yeasts to manufacture a specific taste; they don’t use sulfites to kill naturally-occuring yeast (they sulfite at the beginning of the barrel ageing at only 40-80 ppm—the organic standard is 100 ppm); they never chemically or mechanically filter their wine (they actually rely on the lees in the wine and the phases of the moon to naturally settle out material over time); they do not add color or enzymes to make it look “pretty”; they do not add oak chips, oak dust or oak staves to their wines, and they do not produce a lot of waste.

“We find uses for our waste,” says Paolo. “Our grape skins are used in soaps, and our barrels have been crafted into soap dishes and display stands.”

An amazing product, a pure, simple and natural process… makes an easy sell, right? This is where the plot thickens.
Paolo and the winery have faced an unexpected challenge in finding a local market for their products. It seems there is a bit of what one could call “prejudice” against the wine because the grapes are from California. So, although the entire processing is done here, he has not been allowed to enter any Ohio wine competitions, or to put the Ohio sticker on his wine bottles, or receive any assistance from the Ohio Wine Producers Association, and the list goes on. The fact is, even Ohio wineries, with repeated grape crop failures, have used grapes or grape juice from elsewhere. Again, I am confounded with disbelief as he tells me tale after tale of trying to get the wines into local eateries and wine shops.

To understand more about that culture, you must understand a bit about how the wine industry operates in Ohio (and a few other states). It is a three-tier system with producers, distributors and retailers. There can be no discounts, deals or anything done to make it unfair to the other. Sounds good, right? Well, it would be except to mention that there are only two large distributors in the state, and they pretty much control it all—rather like a monopoly. It gets dicey here trying to explain how restaurants and retailers are swayed into using only a distributor who will only deal with huge quantity wineries, and if you choose to offer a wine not on their “list” it can be a little tough, or how discrimination against an Ohio-produced wine versus an Ohio-grown wine can take on new meaning, and how perhaps an elitist culture can produce misleading and questionable “rules of play.” It certainly gets confusing, and it doesn’t make much sense.

“I guess you wouldn’t call a local artist not a local artist because she gets her clay from Italy or his glass from Florida,” Paolo remarks. “Even local coffee companies…do they grow their beans in Ohio? I think not. But there are beacons of light around Ohio where retailers and restaurants have pushed back against the corporate structure and that is good. We are making progress.”

One thing is for sure, the international community and even other states have recognized and honored the efforts of Via Vecchia. Slow Food International included their wine label in a display of heritage wines, honored for preserving the process of winemaking, at a recent event in Milan, Italy.

“I have quite a few customers in the Cleveland area, also,” says Paolo in describing his broad customer base. “There is an Italian community there, and some of our customers there say they can taste and even smell the difference in our wines.”

In addition to small retailers and restaurants around the state, you can find these unique wines locally at Clintonville Community Market and Whole Foods in Dublin. You can also order by calling 614-893-5455 or orders@viavecchiawinery.com.

Despite these challenges, Via Vecchia is looking forward to moving into a new space in the Brewery District at 485 S. Front St. It is a historic property with plenty of production space and a marvelous area which can be used for special events, parties or even exhibits. They are in the process of refurbishing the building and hope to open in early July.

A member of Simply Living, Paolo and Via Vecchia adhere to the community values they have set before themselves: “to help others, simplify the community and deliver a product that is true and sustainable.”

It stands to reason that Via Vecchia’s motto is “a well treated wine is an untreated wine.”

_**Tuesday Trippier is a member of Simply Living and Sustainable Delaware and writes a column for the Delaware Gazette.**_
Who Is Simply Living?

By Tom Lasik

As members we may think we know what Simply Living is, but who Simply Living is opens up many intriguing possibilities. 

This is the second in the series of introductions to some of the wonderful people you may enjoy getting to know, people who bring life to WHAT Simply Living is. So we introduce to you:

Dale Hooper ...a practitioner of simplicity

Say hello to Dale Hooper, long time Simply Living member, and a man who, more than most of us, lives his philosophy. Dale lives in the city and spends a good bit of his time gardening and tinkering with various energy options. He also bikes everywhere: work, the store, Simply Living events – everywhere.

You may think his lifestyle is a bit extreme, but Dale unabashedly will tell you he practices an extreme form of voluntary simplicity. What brought Dale to this place in his life journey? Let him tell you himself.

Dale: It was back in the early 70s during the oil crisis. I was 16-years-old. The shortage started me thinking about energy and oil. At first I was terrified, wondering if it all was real. Americans were in what I call “the fog,” in the sense that you can see that there’s a problem but you just can’t do much about it.

By the 80’s it became clear that it wasn’t really a shortage of oil problem, but an oil extraction problem. Getting to the oil wasn’t cheap anymore. So in 2000, I heard a presentation by Pat Murphy who had developed something called “Plan C,” essentially posing that new types of renewable energy sources must be coupled with, not just energy conservation, but actual energy curtailment. We just have to find ways to use less energy in our daily lives.

So now I can say that my avocation is living a low-energy lifestyle.

SL: What’s your relationship with Simply Living?

Dale: I’ve been involved with the Clintonville Co-op since 1980 and with Simply Living from the beginning [1993]. I’ve met so many others with similar philosophies, and I’ve been introduced to other groups that have helped me learn more. I’ve been active in the Peak Oil Group and attended many discussions there. I’ve also become involved with Green Energy Ohio, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting environmentally and economically sustainable energy policies and practices in Ohio.

I’m an action type of person so I have to be “doing” something, not simply discussing it. So it’s been great to meet people with similar ideas and attitudes. Their energy supports me and lets me know that I’m not alone and I’m on the right track.

SL: Who inspires you?

Dale: My father. He was born in 1920 and survived the depression and World War II. He even told me once that as a kid one of his birthday presents was an extra spoonful of baked beans. He taught me that there are three kinds of wealth: financial wealth, social wealth and spiritual wealth. In the ‘30s and ‘40s, social and spiritual wealth was predominant. It’s easy to see if someone has financial wealth, but social and spiritual wealth only comes with living with people for a while. I’ve since concluded that a person is better off with less material wealth.

SL: If someone asks you what voluntary simplicity is all about, what simple living really means, what do you tell them?

Dale: It’s probably at least a dozen things. Maybe more than that. I feel like I have a little more control of my life, less dependence on societal things I don’t believe in. I like knowing that I’m using only my fair share of the planet. I’m an experimental type of person. I like doing research and trying to find out what the outer edges of this simple living philosophy look like.

--Tom Lasik enjoys exploring what simplicity looks like in everyday living through interviewing SL members.
Book Review: *The Long Descent*

Much writing about Peak Oil* inspires thoughts of “Oh My God! We’re going over a cliff!” John Greer, author of *The Long Descent*, doesn’t foresee cliffs. Like other writers, he envisions collapse, but the process takes over a hundred years. Instead of falling off a cliff, imagine a long bumpy sled ride down a series of undulating hills.

He compares the rise and fall of previous civilizations to ours. Civilizations typically spiral rather than fall down. Periods of crises are followed by partial recovery, before more crises. Islands of stability exist within collapsing empires. For 4000 years life has continued within Chinese towns, while empires expanded and contracted around them. Both World Wars subjected Europe to food and energy shortages without collapsing society. Tokugawa’s Japan experienced stability, and culture flourished. The ordinary person had the basics of life and education. Yet, Japan had few resources, and society was powered almost entirely by human muscle.

Greer offers advice, carefully distinguishing between problems and predicaments. Problems can be solved, predicaments cannot. We must live with predicaments. Many people push for government action; he explains why that’s unlikely. For the near future, change must come from individuals, families and communities.

Our culture has changed from a collection of communities to a mass society. He lists three things needed to rebuild communities, reversing the process. The community, not the individual, is the basic unit of human survival. He explains why survivalism and “lifeboat communities” aren’t viable. Success depends on skills. Community energy (food) production is essential.

“The difference between a lot of energy and a little is less important than the difference between a little and none at all.” A community is a group of people who pool their skills to meet human needs.

He has two goals: minimize the stress of transition and save the most valuable elements of our civilization; focus on surviving the next few decades (while preserving the legacy), after which we can expect partial recovery.

Greer says we won’t have enough resources to save all elements of our technology and culture. He poses questions to help us select technologies worth saving. In many cases these are considered “obsolete”. He emphasizes that the time to start is now! Once crisis hits, energy, information, and materials to revive or preserve technologies may not be available.

Greer discusses the importance of stories, which all civilizations use to guide people. While we pride ourselves as being modern and scientific, we still live by stories. Most of us live our stories subconsciously. One example: Our civilization says we are the culmination of thousands of years of progress, and that we, the ultimate civilization, are exempt from rise and decline. Greer cautions, choose your story carefully. It guides your response to problems. Worse, those who know only one story have only one response.

Most of us believe one of the following: Technology will solve all our problems; ours is the best of all possible worlds. Or, our civilization is hopelessly flawed: collapse is imminent (utopia will rise from the ashes). Both stories promise utopia. Greer explains why neither is likely. He fears that these blind us to more likely outcomes and practical responses. Beware of the Monkey Trap.

The last chapter discusses spirituality. While it’s a good treatment, is the central message explicit? I recognize three forms of wealth: material, social (community), and spiritual. Writers about Peak Oil address declining (material) living standards, and most assume life will be worse after Peak Oil. But with less material wealth to distract us, might we focus more on social and spiritual matters? If so, will our total wealth decline? Will life be worse or just different? Or, I wonder, could it be better?

Reading Greer’s book is like leaving a stuffy room and stepping into fresh air. Instead of doom and gloom, he offers hope along with direction and guiding principles.

I also recommend Greer’s second book about Peak Oil: *The Ecotechnic Future*, and his blog, “The Archdruid Report”.

*Peak Oil* refers to the bell curve of the world’s oil extraction, with the peak of the curve coinciding with the point at which the endowment of oil has been 50% depleted.

Dale Hooper is a civil engineer by profession and a dedicated cyclist, permaculture gardener, and practitioner of simplicity. (See interview on pg. 12)
The Simply Living Bookstore at The Clintonville Community Market (CCM)
200 Crestview Road, Columbus, Ohio 43202
Tel: (614) 261-3663

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