

Circle of Grandmothers

Volume 11

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April 2005

Weaving a New Direction

By Terry Helwig, Founder of The Thread Project: One World, One Cloth

"Some say our world is hanging by a thread. I say – a thread is all we need."

Grandmother Spider plucked silken threads and began weaving the four directions. Since the beginning of time, weaving and thread have been metaphors for creating new life and new worlds. For me, thread and weaving have become more than metaphors for weaving the world together; you might say they have become materially real.

For the past three years, I have been overseeing the weaving of threads, gathered world-wide, into a large tapestries called World Cloths. This summer, the first World Cloth, Hope Materializing, is on exhibit at the Colorado Springs Airport. Undoubtedly one of the most diverse cloths ever made, this tapestry has been woven from individual threads, sent by people from around the world. Fishing line, guitar strings, yarn, shoe laces, thin strips of cloth, ribbon, and dozens of other fibers -- including a piece of bicycle tire -- have been woven into cloth.

The World Cloths are about "materializing" the vision that we humans can learn to live in compassionate community with one another. They celebrate diversity, promote tolerance, and offer a rich and compelling visual of weaving our differences into a unified whole. The transcendent theme of the project implies that we are all tied together and, just as every thread makes a difference in the cloth, every person makes a difference in the world. Sometimes, we wonder what difference one person can make. When you see this cloth, made one fiber at a time, you begin to see that every thread, be it kindness or cotton, can and does make a difference.

The stories people write about their threads create the heart of this international project. Excerpts from some of the letters can be read in the Story Threads section on the website www.threadproject.com Many threads are sent in memory of loved ones: the tag from a beloved father's tee shirt, the

collar of a child's deceased pet, the ribbon from the neck of child's favorite stuffed toy. Some threads celebrate new beginnings: a strip of a wedding veil, the lace of a baby bootie, a tassel from graduation, a thread brought with belongings while immigrating.

People send threads because they care, because they want to live in harmony, because they have hope for a better world. What makes this cloth so special is that, in addition to being woven from threads sent by thousands of individuals, it's also woven with their love, hopes, prayers, good intentions and, sometimes, even their pain.

Single strands of thread are continually being gathered from individuals world-wide, with over fifty countries represented to date. Weavers from Guatemala, India, Greece and Laos are joining weavers from across the United States to weave seven World Cloths to hang in nations throughout the world. Each cloth is being woven with a different warp color and given a different name. The purple cloth is called Hope Materializing, the red cloth Threaded Harmony, the blue cloth Ariadne's Prayer and the green cloth Weaving Reconciliation. Three more cloths will be woven to complete the project.

Upon completion of all seven cloths, the United Nations will be approached about hosting a circular exhibit called "Behold and Be Held." This exhibit would allow

viewers to stand in front of the World Cloths, to Behold the awesome sight of tens of thousands of diverse threads woven into a single cloth of unity. The exhibit also would allow viewers to stand inside the 80 foot circle of cloth to Be Held and enfolded into a cloth of humanity, one that incorporates the goodwill of people from around the world and represents the rich and varied fabric of all human life.

These cloths, made with deep intention, are meant to inspire hope, healing and peace in all who gaze upon them. They are meant to demonstrate the significance of a slender thread, especially when joined to others. What better way to symbolically mend our world than with a thread?

The modest thread, as Grandmother Spider illustrates, is an archetype for the genesis of new life, resonating powerfully in the human psyche. Thread imagery appears in physics, biomedicine, astronomy and myth. From the subatomic Super String Theory of physics, to DNA, which is commonly referred to as the 'Thread of Life,' to the astronomical observations of cluster galaxies forming threadlike filaments, it seems life, as we know it, hangs by threads. Countless creation myths tell us that the stars, clouds, sun, earth and moon sprang forth from a heavenly shuttle. Realizing, too, we all slipped into this world, threaded to our mother, one begins to sense that life and thread are close companions.

What better way to symbolically mend our world than with a thread. If life and threads coalesce, then, perhaps, thread by thread, heart by heart, we can weave a world cloth mighty enough to hold us all. That's the beauty and power of metaphor. I see these cloths on Grandmother Spider's loom, as she weaves for us a new direction to the heart.

If you are interested in learning more about The Thread Project, how to contribute a thread, or in weaving a panel, please visit www.threadproject.com



When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Harvest of Years

Reviewed by Joanne Reichlin

Reading the booklet "A Harvest of Years" by Cynthia Trenshaw I discovered that it is the fifth in an ongoing series that introduces specific applications and aspects of PeerSpirit Circle Work. Having used this work in my seven years with the Council of Grandmothers, I have increasingly come to appreciate how well this method of gathering together can work. When thoughts and emotions are engaged, perhaps charged, this circle work can allow communication to rise to new levels for the group which in turn gives new insight to the individual.

Cynthia made many changes after becoming a widow and found herself "hungering to talk about issues she feared no one else wanted to listen to." "Who will listen to me when I am old?" "Who cares about who I have been, who I am now, and who I am becoming?" "How can I pass on the wisdom I've accumulated through my life's experiences?" Questions like these brought Cynthia and several friends to recognize that the yearning is not so much for the answers but for a way to explore these concerns out loud.

And gradually, looking for some kind of community, the realization came that it had to be created and their "Circle of Caring" came into being. This circle used the circle guide many of us are familiar with, PeerSpirit Circle but the emphasis is on proactive aging. Many of the questions entertained by this circle are listed as well as "kitchen table," common-sense-type considerations for anyone wishing to convene this kind of circle. Basic guidelines of PeerSpirit interactions are included with Cynthia's circle's individuality. Cynthia's circle is both men and women.

After reading this booklet several times as well as having the confidence of my personal experience with PeerSpirit circle work I can gladly recommend this booklet as one to assist one in setting up their own community, their own circle, with guidelines suggesting how to look for others interested, who to ask, how to proceed for the good of oneself and of others desiring of sharing the aging process. What an adventure! Booklets can be sent for at: PeerSpirit, Box 550, Langley, WA 98260



Editor's Corner

By Kit Wilson

This month I'm writing from Jackie Blue's magical home. Picture me sitting in her comfortable chair listening to the tinkle of multiple wind chimes. A giant translucent red vase to my left is lighted from within by a myriad of tiny Christmas lights. In front of me, on the floor guarding the TV - a lighted turtle. Two large stars, intricately designed and glowing from within grace the windows and candles burn on the coffee table. And this is just the beginning. The walls in this wonder-room are covered with a mind-boggling array of art and artifacts! Wangle an invitation some time when you're on your way home from the Gathering in Amado. Meanwhile I love the ambience and am grateful for the warm hospitality that provides both shelter and feast for the eyes.

I'm in Tucson for our monthly meetings - the Planning Circle on Friday afternoon and the Facilitator's Circle on Saturday. Together we plan and set the container for the October Council of Grandmothers which will again take place at the Rex Ranch, south of Tucson Arizona. You will find the registration form included in this issue.

I hear your reasons for procrastination - in past years my excuses were just like these: Yes - it's true the Gathering is a long way off - not until October. And yes, the deadline for registration is July 15th. But consider yourselves warned! If you are planning (or even hoping) to come to the Gathering I strongly urge you to get your registration in ASAP. The ranch has limited space and word travels fast. If last year is any indication we could be "sold out" well before July.

Meanwhile, reports from the Illinois Heartland seem as if that branch of our "Network" is thriving. And as I write several of our Arizona Grandmothers are on the way to the mid-south to our sister Gathering on the Gulf Shores. I am sure wonderful stories will emerge from their time together.

News from our area: Shirley Tassencourt, one of our "original" Grandmothers, has been having a challenging time! She quite suddenly lost the vision in one eye - a condition that continues and may not change. In search of a diagnosis for this frightening turn of events - which turns out to be a blockage to the optic nerve, reasons un-

known - she had the unsettling experience of being told that she had 1. a broken neck and 2. that she would probably lose sight in both eyes. Fortunately neither of these predictions has turned out to be true. .

I had a long conversation with our Shirley last evening. She wanted me to thank all of you who reached out to her with prayers, phone calls, visits, cards, letters, and help. As of last evening she was enjoying being home on her beloved land. Allegra, Liz, her other land partner, and her Dragoon community are all relieved. And Shirley told me she feels very loved which, of course, she is!

Meanwhile, another Grandmother from the first Gathering, Nancy Masland, and her partner Wilma Huggett also need our prayers. Health and (for Nancy) family difficulties continue to be a challenge. I think one of the things we do best as a Grandmother Council is support each other with prayers for healing. So let's get behind Shirley, Wilma, Nancy, Robbie Lapp and all those in our network who are experiencing loss, grief, or pain. Go gently, my friends.

Happy spring from all of us here in the Wilson household. Whidbey and Max, the two new orange tabbys, have moved from kittenhood to adolescence, streaking through the house in their wilder moments in what my massage therapist calls their Insane Cat Posse. At these times Shadow continues to look at me with doleful eyes as if to say "What have you done, Mom??" John's back is healing and the geraniums are flourishing in the back yard. What more can you ask for?



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When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Grounding Stephanie

I challenge the thunderstorm outside my home.
Wind howls, hail beats, jagged energy flashes,
But I stand firm.
I am the lightning rod,
Shielding my teen daughter from fierce bolts,
Taking hit after hit from the flashing angry sky.
I am Mom.
I am her ground.

And I am afraid.

Each new jolt jangles me, weakens my resolve.

Zing!
I took LSD Mom, help me.
I can't stop crying.

Zoof!
It's no big deal Mom,
just shoplifting,
just breaking curfew,
just ditching school,
just beer just pot just sex.

I'm never sure I will survive the next strike.

Zap!
Yeah he's 24 and under house arrest for dealing, but he's so hot
Mom isn't he?

Zowie!
Mom sure he's in jail for the drive by, but it's not fair--no one
got hurt.

KaZam!
He's a nice guy Mom he really is,
but at the party last night he brought a gun and shot and killed
another boy.

She looks grown.
She is beautiful.
But in my dreams I can't find her.
In my dreams she needs me, cries out, Mommy! Mommy!
In my dreams she is lost in an underground maze of cold
concrete staircases,
Dark seedy hallways, shadowy corners, slamming doors.
In my dreams she is still a child.

Shaking pulsing shattered rattled electrified
I stand my ground.
I absorb the strike, the heat, the current.
I am the conduit,
Allowing only the light to pass through me into the earth,
A beam to guide her through the labyrinth,
Her only way out.

And when the thunder stops, the storm wanes, the skies clear,
I slump to earth, spent, dazed.
She steps over me on her way out,
Shakes her head at my tattered clothes, my electrocuted hair,
my twisted mouth,
Then smiles.
Thanks, Mom.

*Janine Weyers
March 2005*

*Janine is an aspiring novelist and a Grandmother-in-Training. She
lives in Phoenix, Arizona*

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Heartland Grandmothers Dream Together

By Marti Beddoe

On a crisp winter weekend, 18 grandmothers walked across the snow-dusted Bridge of Hope at the Warrenville, Illinois Cenacle to sit together in circle for a retreat called Connecting Our Dreams. We opened with a large PeerSpirit circle modeled after the Arizona Council opening circle. During this time, we honored the five elders with gifts and song. We were blessed to have Sister Virginia Mary Barta join us for the morning. She spoke fondly of the very first Council of Grandmothers at Cielo en Tierra in 1994, and her smaller circle that met for a weekend each month to “play, pray and faith share together.” Sister Virginia expressed great joy that we were following in the footsteps of our Arizona sisters. She said that our gathering together was changing the consciousness of the world.

In small and large circles, we deepened our bonds as we shared soul stories; viewed Connie Spittler’s superb video on the very first Grandmother Council; used Angeles Arrien’s Maori process to create a sacred drawing (thank you Joanne Reichlin for all

Legacy statement in response to the question, “What dream would you gift to future generations and why?” (see accompanying article.) The Giveaway Ceremony brought a sense of awe at the synchronicity of our gifts as well as shrieks of delight at seeing



L to R: Anna Sayles, Margaret Clark, Edna Groves, and Sr. Virginia Mary Barta

your coaching on that!); savored the sacred chocolate and some silence and solitude in the midst of one another; wept, giggled, hooted, laughed and feasted together.

Sunday morning each of us offered a

Jeanie Frattallone’s unique bra, custom made for her 60th birthday. We closed our time together in circle with equal measures of solemnity and hilarity, a sure sign of hope that the speaking of the Heartland Grandmothers is lending healing to the Earth.

The Illinois Grandmothers are now gathering monthly with up to 12 women dialoguing, visioning, and sharing wisdom with one another. For more information, please contact Marti Beddoe at 630/369-2802 or at martibeddoe@msn.com. ☯

Heartland Council Gathering

January 8-9, 2005
The Cenacle, Warrenville, Illinois

Talking Piece Circle Legacies

On January 9th in response to the question: “What dream would you gift to future generations and why?” 17 women offered the following statements.

Irene Kustush, IL: To my children and grandchildren and to future generations I would give them peace and the ability to be non-judgmental, to see people as they are, not their skin color, dress, customs, etc.. It doesn’t matter what you have, but what you are.

Diane Lucchese, IL: I would give the girls the dream of possibility, to know that many things are possible and there are women who can support them in finding

their true selves. But I would wish it for both girls and boys; boys to know they can love, be open and share and not feel they have to be stronger than girls. To be able to open their hearts to love and compassion.



Back L to R: Irene Kustush, Eleanor IxChel, Marti Beddoe, Hannah Rees, and Edna Groves
Front L to R: Lois Coldewey and Gracie Rogers

Hannah Rees, IL: My dream is for children to live lives filled with love, truth, acceptance and understanding - lives lacking in deception and deceit.

Jeanie Frattallone, MI: I would give them the gift of everyone realizing that they cannot be content with what they have until they are content with who they are. To be able to do the best they can with where they

Heartland Gathering cont. on 7

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

Last Name _____ First _____

Council Of Grandmothers Twelfth Annual Gathering

October 15 to 19, 2005
at Rex Ranch, Amado, Arizona



"Ripening to Wisdom"

	Amount
Lodging: Double, Meals, Events 4 Nights, 5 Days	\$440 _____
Private Room, Meals, Events 4 Nights, 5 Days	\$640 _____
One RV/Motorhome Space available per person: \$340	_____
Scholarship Contribution: (Your early scholarship contribution assists in timely distribution to recipients)	_____
Payment due with Registration, US \$ only please	Total _____

Early arrival date _____ **and/or late departure date** _____
(See asterisk * on bottom of reverse side for arrival/departure at Rex Ranch)

Volunteer: Help at Event Assistance to an Elder Present a Workshop*

***Work/play-shop:** Your 1 or 1½ hour workshop is welcome for submission and review. We appreciate additional talents or ideas *contributing to the theme* for this year. **Please submit workshop suggestions with Registration Form by July 15, 2005.**

Theme: "Ripening to Wisdom"

Use separate piece of paper to send us the information on your work/play-shop offering.

Cut above here and Return Upper Portion.

Retain this bottom portion for your records.

Return registration form by: **July 15, 2005**

Please remit to: **Council of Grandmothers**

Mail to: **Judie Garnet**
 707 W. Las Lomas Rd.
 Tucson, AZ 85704

Questions: Call Paula Olch at **520-323-2502** or e-mail Judie Garnet at jkgwildcat@aol.com
For e-mail, please put in subject line: **GM Council**

Age on Oct. 26th _____ Actual Birthdate and Year _____

Lodge me with: _____

Address: **Winter** _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone/Fax _____ E-mail _____

Address: **Summer** _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone/Fax _____ E-mail _____

Needs/Concerns/Questions (Note: Wheat free, vegetarian and soy selections available for meals and snacks. Refrigerator available in rooms for your personal supplies.)

Rate (1=low, 5=high): _____ Need smoking area _____ Avoid smoking area

_____ Avoid stairclimbing _____ Avoid walking

_____ Your snore level _____ Tolerate others' snoring

Other: _____

If you are unable to attend, please do pass this to a friend!

**Council of Grandmothers Twelfth Gathering
October 15 to 19, 2005
Rex Ranch, Amado, Arizona**

Refunds: (less \$50 processing fee) when requested in writing by September 15, 2005.

Cavalier Transports Airport Shuttle to Rex Ranch: **Make Reservation at 520-625-1055**

***Early arrival, late departure:** Rex Ranch may be able to extend the group room rate (subject to availability). Please call Rex Ranch for room rates and meal costs. **Make reservations directly with Rex Ranch if you plan to come early or extend your stay.**

Rex Ranch
Phone: **800-547-2696**
From Tucson: **398-2914**
Web: **www.rexranch.com**

Questions: E-mail Jackie Blue at jackieblue3@cox.net or call Paula Olch at **520-323-2502**

When the Grandmothers speak, the world will heal.

The Wizard of HandLand

By Sarah Thomasetti M. Div.

Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) provides their school community and the Tucson community a special treat each year in the way of Theater for the Deaf. On March 9, 10, 11 of this year I was in attendance when the Arizona School for the Deaf High School Students put on a play called The Wizard of HandLand. This year's Deaf Awareness Performance was a take off on The Wizard of Oz, complete with music, choreography, sign language, and voice interpreting. Instead of the ruby slippers, they wore ruby gloves.

The language of the deaf is primarily with one's hands although it is body language as well. I am always amazed at the talent of this group as it is some of the best Theater for the Deaf that I have seen in the country.

It was exciting for me to take my adult Pima College American Sign Language (ASL) Students into the deaf community.

Heartland Gathering cont. from page 4 — are at the time. Also, I would wish for them the elimination of greed and the ability to live in the now.

Diana Wells, MI: I would give them the ability to act, think, and see love and the best in others. To be non-judgmental and to be responsible in how they live.

Marti Beddoe, IL: My wish for future generations is that the birth of each and every baby girl will be heralded with as much joy and reverence as the birth of a baby boy. It is my hope that each and every baby girl grows into womanhood being as valued and honored and empowered as her brother.

My mother often told the story of my father's reaction to my birth. He went around the hospital exclaiming to his colleagues what a "perfectly formed" newborn I was. It took me 52 years before I was able to glimpse my own perfection, to comprehend my father's joy, and to echo his reverence for my female life. Thank you, Dad!

Gina Golding, WI: I would give every child enough food, clothing and shelter

What an awesome experience to sit in Berger Performing Arts Center at ASDB with an audience that is predominately

deaf. You would think that it would be quiet, but it was full of rich guttural sounds and laughter. It is a world full of magic and wonder, sensation and sound, visual imagery, movement and music.

Have you ever seen a deaf person dance to the vibration of sound? Hold a balloon in your hands and turn up the music so you too can feel the vibrations. It is a wonderful kinesthetic experience! If any local Grandmothers are interested in classes through Pima Community College or Genesis Healing Services and Ministries (my private practice) please feel free to be in touch. Here's to the wisdom of the Grandmother's as we speak, dance, sing, and sign from our souls.

Love and Blessings to you all. 

and someone who cares for them.

Juanita Seavoy, IL: I wish that the children of the future can grow up in an egalitarian world, without values based on gender alone.

Edna Groves, IL: "When a soul wishes to have an experience of herself she creates an image of that experience and then steps into it" (14th century Catholic mystic Meister Eckhart). I've been learning about love and I want for my children and future generations to come from a soulful place, to have images within and to live from that place. I want my grandchildren to remember me as love and then live from peace.

Margaret Clark, IL: I would want future generations to know who they are; that they are all star stuff; that they are not separate from creation therefore all is sacred. All they do is sacred. They are connected to all that is so act with that knowledge and there will be peace and justice for all.

Gracie Rogers, IL: My wish for future generations is that they are totally awake and aware; that they understand the conse-

quences of their choices and decisions from this awake place, this state of mind.

Chris Belding, MI: I feel the same as Gracie so my dream for the world and for future generations is that each individual stay awake to what is around them; that they stay connected to their dreams and keep their psychic eyes open.

Hope Bulger, IL: My dream for future generations is based on a world of people coming to accept and respect and understand each other, what each believes, their culture, their color, their spiritual practices. The lack of respect and honoring of our differences creates the havoc we now have, the wars, the starvation, the hatred.

Pat Clancy, IL: My dream is that our children will inherit from us a new way of living on the land in a way that will preserve the land. That they will protect our beautiful resources and not treat the earth as a commodity; that they will include nature in their communities. A model community would be one in which there are trees and plants circling each home and connecting each piece of land so they feel connected to each other and provide homes for the animals.

Lois Coldewey, IL: To future generations I would say "do no harm" as your intention. When you know that you are perfect, precious, human and divine, you will know this truth about every other person as well. This knowing motivates us to do no harm. I would want to say to my children's children, "Do all the good that you can, for all the people that you can, in all the ways that you can, for as long as ever you can." (On the lighter side, Plato said, "To DO is to BE," Aristotle said, "To BE is to DO" and Frank Sinatra said, "DO BE DO BE DO!")

IxChel, IL: My wish for future generations is that they have an earth that has not been ecologically destroyed and a culture where Mother Earth is revered; that they have forests, prairies and animals and the beauty of nature to nurture their souls.

Anna Sayles, IL: I wish future generations to dream knowing that what they dream affects those around them. That they fulfill their dreams so they harm nothing in the universe and bring them great joy. 

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