

# Learning the Ways of Self-Governance

By Christine Loughlin, OP

In the autumn when the last of the leaves have fallen from the oaks and maples in our neighbor's yard, from our third floor window we can see the Old Mill Brook flowing past. It is easy to follow the path of rivulets of water that run off the high hills behind our house as they trickle over and under Everett Skinner Road, across the field, and into the Brook. During heavy rains the rivulets become streams meandering down the hills noted as 600 feet above sea level on the geological map.

As we walk through the woods, we can see the place where Old Mill Brook empties into Turnpike Lake. We wondered about the path the water took from there. Since learning our watershed and coming home to our own backyard are the focus of this year's work, we decided to ask the local resource folks where the water goes after it leaves our backyard.

On Halloween night two representatives from Ten mile River Watershed Alliance came to Crystal Spring and showed their wonderful multidimensional slideshow. Before Mr. Clyde Sprague turned on the projector, he informed us that Turnpike Lake flows into Lake Mirimichi, out into Wading River and on into the Taunton River before it empties into Narragansett Bay. All this time we thought we were in the Ten Mile River Watershed!

In this small town of Plainville the hills formed from the receding ice age have grouped the inhabitants into three water sheds—Ten Mile, Blackstone and Taunton Rivers—all depending upon which hill or valley one lives in. The three rivers flow into Narragansett Bay, on into the Atlantic, to begin the water cycle all over again.

The programs of our fall calendar have been about learning to live in place. "We begin to understand that the way to the world of the sacred is through the place of our dwelling." (T. Berry) We continue on in our learning of Earth's self-governance and seek the ways to make our decisions here integral with the natural systems of this place. It is this task that gives new meaning to our thanksgiving for all that is provided here. Join with us in the programs that draw you as the year unfolds in our common learning of coming home to our own backyard.

May the season of thanks and renewal bring abundant blessing. Let us encourage one another to live fully into the paradox that only those who walk in darkness shall see the great light. We anticipate celebrating the Winter Solstice with you whether in community here or in spirit.

Blessings

## One Sunday Afternoon

We had spent the afternoon exploring the rocky shoreline: skipping rocks, poking into eco-systems (or neighborhoods of species" as 8-year old Tim explained), crawling under the great rock formations of the Atlantic coast.

At last, the sunset! We turned to the west, scrambling over barnacled rock to the highest point we could find. There, for the last five minutes of daylight, the sun loosened its silken colors across the sky, the water, the granite cliffs. Ten-year old Krista whispered, "I feel like I'm the most important thing in the world." "You are," Tim's frosty breath in the evening light affirmed, "and so is this rock, and the water too."

On the path home, I felt dynamically alive, awakened into deep pools of wonder by these two children, racing ahead, eager for the promise of hot chocolate and a re-hash of the day's favorite moments. How did they know that "every thing" is the most important thing in the world? Imagine! To feel yourself the center of the universe with all the other centers!

We are all destined to be involved with wonder...old, young and in-betweens. To be involved with wonder is the purpose of the inter-generational program at Crystal Spring. Inter-generational and "inter-special" participating in the Universe Story.

■ CL