A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-FOUNDERS

Co-Founders Emigdio Ballon, and Lorraine Kahneratokwas Gray are working together to help our organization become more sustainable.

Dear Four Bridges Members & Supporters,

As we settle in to a new year, we are working diligently to build a strong foundation for Four Bridges Traveling Permaculture Institute. Our 501(c)(3) application is nearly complete. Achieving our own non-profit status will help us to be more flexible, and have more control over our operations.

We are also working on ideas to make our organization more sustainable, and less reliant on outside funding. We are working on several ideas, including a more stable agricultural plan which will include selling at local farmers’ markets, and developing value added products. Another idea which we are giving great consideration to is developing eco-tourism, or service learning trips. Details for this plan are highlighted in this newsletter.

We also have been offered a $5,000 Challenge Grant from Kalliopeia. For every dollar donated, Kalliopeia will match the donation up to a total of $10,000 in matching funds! Please help us meet our goal.

We thank everyone who continues to follow and support our important work.

Emigdio Ballon
Lorraine Kahneratokwas Gray

OUR WEBSITE HAS CHANGED! As part of our reorganization effort, we have developed a more efficient website. Visit us now at www.4bridges.org. Some pages are still under construction so please visit often.

In this issue…

- Matching Grant, Website Change, Goat Raffle
- News From the Farm
- Sacred Garden Project
- Santa Clara Day School Collaboration
- Eco-Tourism/Service Learning
- Conference Information

Lorraine & Emigdio at GAIA, in Navarro, Argentina
NEWS FROM THE FARM

Spring is just around the corner, and we are preparing for many exciting projects on our Educational Farm in Santa Cruz, New Mexico. We have ordered our 60’ X 20’ greenhouse kit, which will arrive any day. Plans are to have it fully constructed by the end of the month. After inspection by the USDA, NRCS for structural perfection, most of the cost will be reimbursed through our pre-approved grant.

SACRED GARDENS

We are also continuing our Sacred Gardens Project, including spiral, waffle, terrace, and three sisters gardens. The soil will be fertilized with compost prepared on our farm, and new seeds saved from last year’s harvest will be planted in April. We will be working with a local 4-H Chapter on this project. If you have a story to share about a gardening tradition, please download the questionnaire from our website and submit it to us for possible consideration in our research book; “Sacred Gardens – Wisdoms From Our Ancestors.”

SANTA CLARA DAY SCHOOL COLLABORATION

We are now working with teachers and administrators at Santa Clara Day School to organize the school garden, and seed ball projects. The seed balls will help restore their pueblo lands destroyed by the Los Conchas wildfire. Seed balls will be made at the end of the month, and released with a ceremony the week of Earth Day. The garden area will be tilled and plotted, and seedlings will be planted in pots in March. We will open the garden in April, and continue to plant and cultivate until the end of the school year.

GOAT RAFFLE!

Support our fundraiser to support our programs in South America. Tickets are $2.00 each, or 3 for $5.00. All three goats are pedigreed Nigerian Dwarfs, and will be awarded as one prize in order to keep the family together. Donations to this raffle qualify for the Challenge Grant!

Many Thanks to our funders & supporters:
Coonridge Organic Goat Cheese
Earth Care
Galeria Santa Cruz y el Espresso
Honor the Earth
Kalliopiea Foundation
Tides Foundation
USDA, NRCS
Eco-tourism Program Under Development

Our co-founders recently traveled to Argentina on a fact finding mission in an effort to establish an eco-tourism/service learning program. They first visited GAIA Ecovilla in Navarro. GAIA is a non profit organization. Its mission is the promotion of sustainable societies, mainly by creating human settlements based on the practice of permaculture systems and methods.

Visitors to GAIA, are housed in a lovely round pink adobe hut topped with a grass roof. The bathroom comes complete with a compost toilet, sink, and shower with running water warmed by the sun. The lights are powered by solar. Everything in this village is sustainable, and developed within the permaculture model. The entire village consists of several private huts, a community kitchen and dining house, and a large hut that is used for classes and community meetings. Several gardens, and wooded areas are scattered throughout the property with sustainable innovations that collect or transport water, create energy, provide food, offer shelter, or pose entertainment opportunities. Sylvia and Gustavo co-founders of this wonderful organization act as hosts.

From GAIA, they traveled back to Buenos Aires for a connecting bus to their next destination. The city offers historical sites, cultural activities and of course, Tango halls. After a brief tour of the city they boarded a bus for the 10 hour overnight ride to Cordoba, birth place of Ernesto “Che” Guevarra. They arrived in Cordoba just as the sun was rising on a new day. There was no time to enjoy this charming city, as there was work to be done, so they directly boarded a bus of lower means for a four hour ride to the next destination, San Marcos.

The ride took them up in the Mountains to a village of unpaved roads, and modest architecture. There is no terminal. Passengers embark on a dusty path in front of a small shopping plaza. “Hippies,” as the locals call them, are performing, painting, and selling their wares in the village square. A cloud of dust arises as the bus departs, and when it settles, they catch a glimpse of their friend Alejandro.

Ale is eager to give a tour of the birthing center that his mid-wife sister, Anna is building up the road. It is a hopeful place, with lush greenery, rocky paths, a babbling brook, and an unfinished building begging to be completed. Mothers, ripe with child, are meandering about, sharing in their sisterhood of maternity. It is a beautiful site indeed. They take notes, and promise to return another day with whatever support they can muster.

After 24 hours taking in the flavor of San Marcos, another bus takes them to their final destination; a permaculture camp in Buda Traslasierra, near the village of Nono. Another charming eco-village, run by Ivan and Clarissa, Buda offers a jungle setting in the mountains blessed with amazing colorful parrots, countless wild herbs, and a refreshing waterfall.

Courses provided were similar to those at GAIA. What they took away from Buda, were strong new friendships, and many ideas on sustainable practices. They learned how to make a flashlight from an old tin can, a candle, and a piece of wire. Petroleum sucking hot water heaters can be placed outside to reap the benefits of the sun. With the mechanical components removed, there is a space to build a wood fire to heat the water on cloudy days. An outside oven was built from an old 50 gallon drum, and adobe bricks and mud. Outside showers and compost toilets are easily built with some reused plumbing supplies, a few well placed stakes, and bamboo panels.

In an effort to become more sustainable, and less reliant on grants and donations, Four Bridges is exploring ways in which we can help support the non-profit work we do at home and abroad. Our trip to Argentina was a maiden voyage to explore possibilities for student exchange, service learning trips, and eco-tourism. We are now working out the details for our first group trip to Buda Traslasierra in August of 2012. Information will soon be available on our website at www.4bridges.org.
Traditional Agriculture & Sustainable Living Conference
Oscar Olivera Keynote Speaker

We are actively planning the 7th Annual Traditional Agriculture & Sustainable Living Conference. This year’s conference will be held on October 12th & 13th. We are pleased to announce that Oscar Olivera has agreed to be one of our keynote speakers. Oscar Olivera was one of the main leaders of the protesters against the water privatization in Bolivia. The result of these protests was an event known as the Cochabamba Water Wars. Now he is one of the main leaders of the protests in the Bolivian gas conflict. Oscar Olivera was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2001.

Four Bridges Traveling Permaculture Institute
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TANGO NITE!
Come support our international projects by joining us at the Galeria Santa Cruz
May 12th 7 to 10 pm for Argentine food & wine, live music and dancing! Tickets are $20 in advance, $25 at the door. More details can be found at www.4bridges.org.