

Voices

We see the connections between the exploitation and brutalization of the earth and her people and the physical, economic, and psychological violence that women face every day.

We want to understand and try to overcome the historical divisions of race, poverty, class, age and sexual preference that have kept women apart and politically powerless. Our concerns are many, but understanding the problems that confront us helps us imagine how we would like to live.

*Women and Life on Earth 1979
From the "Unity Statement from the Women and Life on Earth Conference" held in
Amherst, Massachusetts in 1980.*



The
Nokomis
Foundation

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Creating a stronger voice

for women and girls.

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Inside Story



Women and our environment . . .

I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, so I had a ringside seat for the newly-emerging environmental movement. I remember reading about the banning of DDT in my *Weekly Reader* at school. I remember being absolutely astonished that rivers could catch fire. I remember the haunting television commercial featuring the Indian with a tear running down his cheek. I celebrated the first Earth Day with my class at school, and I hung “Fight Pollution” posters in my room at home.

These images and messages early in my life stuck with me. I became a grown-up committed to the environment – doing my part to support environmental issues. I recycle, I make conscious decisions about the products I buy, I support environmental organizations. But I never really made the connection between the environment and women’s issues until I had the chance to hear Dr. Sandra Steingraber speak last year at the Women’s Funding Network conference. As a biologist and a poet, Sandra Steingraber speaks eloquently about WHY there is such a strong connection between women and the environment.

This issue of *Voices* was inspired by Sandra Steingraber’s presentation. Full of “tidbits” about women and the environment, I hope this newsletter will help you understand this connection, too. I also encourage you to read one of Sandra Steingraber’s books (her newest is *Having Faith*) and be inspired yourself!

Check out the **loose change** technical assistance insert included in this newsletter. This issue includes information about strategic planning — and an article about financial management during uncertain times. Be sure to visit the **loose change** page on the Nokomis website where you’ll find useful information on a variety of technical assistance topics, plus great links and resources.

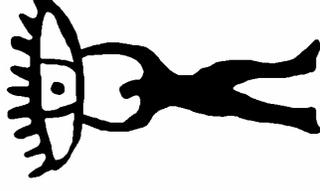
Kym Mulhern, President/CEO

Celebrate!

Red carpets, paparazzi, and Mario VanPeebles!

That’s what our Creston High School grad, Leona Whitney Beatty, has been experiencing since earning the 2003 Student Film Award from the Directors Guild of America for her film, *Last Chair*. Along with the award, Whitney received \$2,500 from the DGA, product grants including 2000 feet of film . . . AND an invitation to attend the Cannes Film Festival next year in France. Speaking with her mom, Toni Spencer, prior to the awards ceremony in L.A. on November 11, Whitney has not only been overwhelmed by the honor, but also the number of phone calls and invitations by muckety-mucks in the film industry . . . even an invite to an exclusive party thrown by Mario VanPeebles!

The Nokomis Foundation is honored to have been part of this film project. With the help of local talent and local venues like Creston High School, Whitney completed this film as part of her master’s thesis for Loyola Marymount. Her story of a young girl in the 1960’s struggling with racism and segregation is certainly reflective of the Nokomis mission . . . *Creating a stronger voice for women and girls*. The voice of a young girl and the voice of a young woman making her place in the film industry. You go, Whit!



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Herstory

Rachel Carson, Environmentalist (1907 – 1964)

Rachel Carson is perhaps best known as the author of *Silent Spring*, an urgent warning about the poisons pumped into our water, soil, and atmosphere by industry and agriculture. She earned a master's degree in zoology from Johns Hopkins and went on to become a junior aquatic biologist at the United States Bureau of Fisheries in Washington, DC. She wrote in her free time, and in 1951 earned great success for her book *The Sea Around Us*. *Silent Spring* was published in 1960, giving birth to the modern environmental movement. Rachel Carson's work inspired the government to curb the use of DDT and other chemicals. Rachel Carson died of breast cancer in 1964. Find out more about Rachel Carson at www.RachelCarson.org or www.silentspring.org.

Wangari Maathai, Activist/Environmentalist (born 1940)

Wangari Maathai is known as the leading environmentalist of Africa and the Third World in general. She is a founding member of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, an environmental initiative of reforestation designed to stop oil erosion, provide cheap and available fuel, and to employ and empower Kenya's rural workers who are—almost exclusively—women. In addition, she is a strong vocal activist for civil rights, the rule of law, free speech, and public political responsibility. Dr. Maathai has received numerous international awards, including the United Nations Environmental Program Global 500 award and the “Women of the World” award from the Princess of Wales. Find out more about Wangari Maathai at www.greenbeltmovement.org/wmbio.html or www.context.org/ICLIB/IC28/Sears.htm.

I don't really know why I care so much. I just have something inside me that tells me that there is a problem, and I have got to do something about it. I think that is what I would call the God in me. All of us have a God in us, and that God is the spirit that unites all life, everything that is on this planet. It must be this voice that is telling me to do something, and I am sure it's the same voice that is speaking to everybody on this planet - at least everybody who seems to be concerned about the fate of the world, the fate of this planet.

—Wangari Maathai



Point to Ponder

Blacks are more likely than whites to live near areas polluted by power plants and suffer adverse health consequences as a result, civil rights and environmental activists said yesterday. Several U.S. groups, including the Atlanta-based *Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda* and Washington based *Black Leadership Forum*, released a study showing that 68 percent of blacks lived within 30 miles (48 km) of a coal-fired power plant, compared with 56 percent of U.S. whites. Thirty miles is the distance within which people experience the maximum effects of smokestack emissions, the study said. Nationwide, 71 percent of blacks live in counties that don't meet federal air pollution standards, compared with 58 percent of whites, the study said.

-Karen Jacobs, "[Blacks hurt more by power plant pollution - US study](#)"

Reuters News Service, 24 Oct 02

Did You Know...

- Every year, we make enough plastic film to shrink-wrap the state of Texas.
- Every day Americans use enough metal cans to make a steel pipe running from Los Angeles to New York and back again.
- Americans throw away enough used motor oil every year to fill 120 supertankers.
- The average American throws away about 4.5 pounds of garbage a day.
- Americans receive almost 4 million tons of junk mail every year. Most of it winds up in landfills.
- A dripping faucet can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water each month.
- If you stacked all the refrigerators Americans buy in a single week, you'd have a tower more than 80 miles high.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the U.S. has lost about 60 acres of wetlands per hour for the past 200 years.
- Seventy-six percent of Americans consider themselves environmentalists.

Information provided by the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District in Bloomington, Indiana. You can visit their website at www.mscwmd.org.

Women, the Environment and Reproductive Rights



A woman's body is the first environment. If the world's environment is contaminated, so too is the ecosystem of a mother's body. If a mother's body is contaminated, so too is the child who inhabits it. These truths should inspire us all—mothers, fathers, grandparents, doctors midwives, and everyone concerned about future generations — to action.

—Sandra Steingraber in *Having Faith*

Within the last 10 years, scientific research is making the link between synthetic chemicals and infertility, early puberty, lowered sperm counts and other problems associated with normal childbearing and child development. While these chemicals are diverse, they share tendency to accumulate in the body, interfering with normal hormonal signaling — a central building block to healthy reproductive function. The harm from chemicals in an adult's body, today, may cause development problems or reproductive dysfunction in the next generation.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency claims that of the 87,000 synthetic chemical released into the environment through manufacturing or waste disposal, 200 have been identified as hormone-disrupters. Chemicals with hormone-disrupting properties (these are also known as endocrine-disrupters or reproductive toxins) cause a syndrome like that triggered by diethylstilbestrol — or DES — a medication prescribed to pregnant women in the 1950s and 1960s to prevent miscarriage. As adults, some daughters of women who took DES had a difficult time bearing children of their own.

According to *Physicians for Social Responsibility*, a public policy group in Washington DC, many chemicals, including organochlorines (used in plastics, paper, pesticides, and industrial chemicals) and phthalates (a softening agent used in toys and beauty products), may harm women's and men's reproductive abilities.

Take Action In Your Office



Reduce the waste you produce in your office!

"More than 150 million Americans recycle at home or work - more than vote in national elections... But at the same time, the amount of trash in garbage cans at homes and offices increased by 4.4 million tons - or 6% - from 1996 to 1997 ... while recycling leveled off, increasing just 1% during that period." —Erin Kelly, "Americans recycling but garbage piles up" USA Today 26 Mar 00

- Save important email to your computer or backup file instead of printing them for filing. Email saves paper only when messages are not printed out.
- Circulate one copy of a memo, or distribute it via email to save printing a copy for every person in the office.
- Reuse one-sided paper. Reuse preprinted copies in the printer or copier for work drafts. Reuse one-sided paper in the fax machine for printing faxes. Collect one-sided copies to make note pads.
- Use the duplexing feature on your copier to use double-sided copies whenever you can.
- Share magazines and other publications with coworkers before recycling them. Purchase only one copy of each publication to be shared among employees in the office.
- Recycle used ink cartridges from printers by sending them to a facility that accepts them. Contact the manufacturer for more information.
- Recycle old computers. Computers of most kinds can be remanufactured and used again. Donate the computer to a non-profit organization or local school.
- Purchase products made of recycled, post consumer content whenever possible. Look for products made with recycled content and ask for them if you do not find them.
- Use paper with post consumer content. 35% is the minimum post consumer content recommended.
- Use a printing ink alternative such as soy ink.

Information provided by the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District in Bloomington, Indiana. You can visit their website at www.mscwmd.org.

Connection

Women and the Environment

By Elizabeth Sturuss

The environment is everyone's issue, but women in particular should be concerned with the environment because women and the environment are often valued in the same way.

Karen Fox elucidates this idea in *Negotiating in a World of Change: Ecofeminist Guideposts for Leisure Scholarship*, an article published in the *Journal of Leisure and Research* in 1994. In her article, she explains that the dominant western opinion is that science is greater than nature because the purpose of science is to control nature.

Men are valued more than women in our culture in part because women are likened to nature and emotions and men to science (the control of nature) and intellect (objective lack of emotions). An example of connecting women with nature is the term 'mother earth,' commonly used to describe our planet. Whether or not these comparisons are accurate, the oppression and attempts to control nature also oppress and control women.

If we treat the environment not as supply for our demand, but as a place to care for and that cares for us, we will respect it. Likewise, if we see women and men in terms of what they humanly are instead of dividing them into unequally valued gender roles, we embrace them as whole people.

There are fifty different cancer causing agents in the average person's fat, urine and blood. These agents come from our every day exposure to items like lawn chemicals, dry cleaning fumes, and other carcinogens.

Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D. Ecologist, author, and cancer survivor, Sandra Steingraber is an internationally recognized expert on the environmental links to cancer and reproductive health. Visit her website at www.steingraber.com.

More and more women's activists are extending their concern about reproductive rights — including the right to bear a child — to the environment. *Health Care Without Harm*, a Washington, DC nonprofit organization that promotes environmentally responsible health care, asks, "Who decides whether babies are born full of toxins?" *Planned Parenthood Federation of America* predicts that hormone-disrupting chemical will become a major reproductive concern in the future. While it might be "easier" for women to adapt their behavior to the environmental threat (not eating fish caught in the Great Lakes, for example), true solutions need to come from those who introduce the chemicals into the environment. Women should not be expected to adapt their behavior to the threat.

Physicians for Social Responsibility calls for removing all chemicals from use until they are proven to be safe and harmless at low-level exposure. This is the approach taken in Sweden, and recently adopted by the city of San Francisco.

For more information, check out these websites:

Health Care Without Harm
<http://www.noharm.org>

Our Stolen Future Information Center
<http://www.ourstolenfuture.org>

Environmental Working Group
<http://www.ewg.org>

This article was adapted from "Reproductive Rights Fight Moves to Environment," a Women's eNews article by Cynthia L. Cooper and Margie Kelly (8/24/03).

Ecofeminist Art

An Artist's Perspective:
by Jenna Weston



As an eco-feminist artist, I am dedicated to promoting awareness, reverence, and ultimately, preservation of the natural world through my work. I create sculptures from handmade paper and natural materials gathered from the woods, fields and creeks surrounding my small Missouri Ozarks farm. Stones, pods, bark, grasses, roots, twigs and vines are some of the organic components of my pieces. Because sustainable harvesting is important to me, I am careful to leave more than I take from wild plant communities. The fact that my supplies are abundant, nearby, renewable, non-toxic and biodegradable supports my ecological values.

Although I refer to the wild things I incorporate into my art as “materials”, it is a term of respect for me, as the word is derived from “mater”, meaning “mother”, and related to “matter”. I consider all organic matter, including that of our human bodies, to come from the same sacred source. In respecting the natural materials I utilize, I feel it is important to somehow preserve their essence throughout the changes they must undergo in the art-making process. Even when a material is radically altered in form, as when making a plant into paper, I want something of the identity of the plant to come through. The texture, color, or perhaps the smell must evoke its origins.

My intention is to collaborate with nature, to give voice to it as well to my own human sensibilities and perceptions. I wish to promote balance, rather than domination, deep appreciation, rather than exploitation. It is my desire that the people who view my work will absorb the energies of the natural elements within it, strengthening their personal connection to nature.



The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

— Rachel Carson

What's Happening

Check out the [Calendar](#) on the Nokomis website for up-to-date information on events of interest to women and girls in the Grand Rapids area. You can find the calendar online at www.nokomisfoundation.org/calendar.htm

If you'd like to recommend an upcoming event for inclusion on our calendar, send an email with event details to Libby Sturuss at the Nokomis Foundation. (esturuss@nokomisfoundation.org).



New Voice

Welcome, Libby!

Hello. I am a Sagittarius; a daughter, sister, thespian, twin, white, upper-middle class, bi-sexual woman named Elizabeth Sturuss and I am the newest employee at the Nokomis Foundation.

One of the greatest aspects of working for The Nokomis Foundation is that they value my voice, and my youth. Creating a stronger voice for women and girls is what Nokomis does best. I wanted to be a part of that mission, and so I applied for the job.

I've had the opportunity to share a bit about myself just now. I realize this is a privilege because not everyone is asked to tell even part of their story, rather there are some people our culture deliberately ignores or refuses to see. I work for the Nokomis Foundation because they give voice to women who may not have the resources or privilege to speak alone. Now I can ask questions of invisible people, and be part of the answers.

Libby joins us at the Nokomis Foundation as our new Program Assistant. She'll be wearing many hats in her new role — we hope you get a chance to meet her soon!

Web Wise



Browsing the Web with a Gender Lens

Check out these sites for information about the environment:

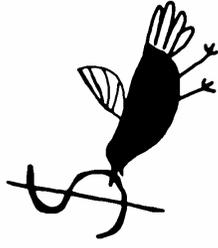
- www.scorecard.com
This site gives you access to environmental information in your community. Just enter your zip code and get a local listings and relevant information.
- www.theorganicreport.com
This site is a great resource for making organic everyday life choice and includes articles on organic household products, agriculture, and food.
- www.rachelcarson.org
A great source of environmental links and resources, this site contains a brief bio on Rachel Carson and information on current scholarship and conferences.
- www.steingraber.com
This site includes links to interviews and articles by and about Sandra Steingraber, internationally recognized ecologist and author. The site also includes a rich list of links and resources.
- www.ucusa.org
The Union of Concerned Scientists site offers information on new environmental legislation, new advancements in ecology, green tips, and ways to get involved in environmental advocacy.
- www.wmeac.org
The West Michigan Environmental Action Council site has a list of environmental news sources, opportunities for community involvement, education on local environments, and contact information for local elected officials.
- www.obviously.com/recycle/
This site features the internet consumer guide to recycling and includes basic guides on how to recycle household products.

A long involvement with the nature-based Women's Spirituality movement has influenced the content in my work. My sculptures explore relationships between the rhythms, cycles, patterns and biological structures of both women and the natural world. Much of my imagery celebrates the female. The sensual forms of pods and shells, undulating decks of handmade paper, and swelling, rounded shapes used in my sculptures all speak of women's inextricable connection to the life-force. Pieces I am currently working on incorporate visual references to moon phases, gestation, birth, crone-hood, and female empowerment.

Jenna Weston is a Michigan native now living and working as a full-time studio artist in Ava, Missouri. Learn more about Jenna and view her work at www.jennaweston.com.

Grab this land! Take it, hold it, my [sisters], make it, my [sisters], shake it, squeeze it, turn it, twist it, beat it, kick it, kiss it, whip it, stomp it, dig it, plow it, seed it, reap it, rent it, buy it, sell it, own it, build it, multiply it, and pass it on--can you hear me? Pass it on!

- Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*, 1977



Grants

The Nokomis Foundation has recently awarded the following grants:

General Grantmaking

- ACLU of Michigan**, Dearborn, \$50,000 for education campaigns and community outreach targeting low-wage women and immigrant women
- Center for Women in Transition**, Holland, \$25,000 for *Girls on the Run* infrastructure project
- Dégagé Ministries**, Grand Rapids, \$50,275 for the *Open Door* women's drop-in center
- Family Planning & Women's Health of Allegan County**, Allegan, \$5,450 for staff training for HIV/AIDS testing and counseling
- Grand Rapids Women's Chorus**, Grand Rapids, \$7,000 for Black History Month 2004 collaborative event with Giwayen Mata
- The Leaven Center**, Lansing, \$14,000 for *Doing Our Own Work* facilitator training development and implementation
- Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan**, Grand Rapids, \$25,000 for the Healthy Choices program for the prevention of unintended pregnancy
- RunGazelle.com**, Grand Rapids, \$5,000 for *Girls on the Run* in Kent County
- YWCA of Grand Rapids**, Grand Rapids, \$30,000 for the *Girls, Inc.*® program

taking flight Grant Awards

- Community Media Center**, Grand Rapids, \$10,500 for *From Girls to Governors: Women in Public Service*
- Delta Sigma Theta Educational Foundation**, Grand Rapids, \$5,000 for the Dr. Betty Shabazz Delta Academy program
- El Centro**, Holland, \$9,000 for the *Latina* program
- Girl Scouts of Glowing Embers**, Kalamazoo, \$20,000 for the Girl Scout Lunchtime Enrichment program
- Grand Rapids Public Schools**, Grand Rapids, \$6,280 for *Odé Skinawe Anishinabe Kwewak (Heart of Young Native Women) program*
- GROW**, Grand Rapids, \$3,500 for the *GROW Girl\$ Week-End Getaway* program
- Positive Options, Inc.**, Grand Rapids, \$20,000 for the *Women Entrepreneurs Can (WE Can)* program
- Restorers, Inc.**, Grand Rapids, \$3,000 for the *Girls Like Me!* program

For grant guidelines and application information, or to request a copy of our annual report, please call our office (616-451-0267). You can also find our grant guidelines online by visiting our website at www.nokomisfoundation.org.

taking flight grants for girls

request for proposals

who can apply?

- Programs affiliated with, or sponsored by, 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations
- Programs that directly impact the lives of girls in Kent, Ottawa, or Allegan counties
- Programs that have not received **taking flight** grants in the past

The Nokomis Foundation is looking for proposals that . . .

- ⇒ are girl-centered, girl-developed, and/or girl-directed
- ⇒ challenge gender stereotypes
- ⇒ create and foster non-traditional opportunities for girls
- ⇒ reflect the cultural, socio-economic and ethnic diversity of West Michigan
- ⇒ create positive changes in the lives of girls

about these grants . . .

- For 2004, we've earmarked \$75,000 for **taking flight** grants. We expect requests to range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 with a one-year grant term.
- Completed **taking flight** proposal must be received by the Nokomis Foundation by 4:00 pm Monday, February 2, 2004. We anticipate that funding decisions will be announced no later than May 1, 2004.

For more information, or to receive a copy of the full RFP listing all proposal guidelines and requirements, please contact the Nokomis Foundation office at 616.451.0267. A copy of the RFP will be available on our website after December 15 at www.nokomisfoundation.org.

Proposals are due Monday, February 2, 2004