



# GREEN REVOLUTION

*The Newsletter of the School of Living*

*215 Julian Woods Lane Julian, PA 16844 Volume 67 No. 1 2010*

## **Lexicon of Change: The Rise of Transition Culture**

by Judith D. Schwartz

A movement aimed at tackling the energy crisis with aplomb has been stepping on the gas since its formation.

You may or may not have heard of the [Transition movement](#) — described by its founder, Rob Hopkins, as “an exercise in engaged optimism”— yet Transition’s ideas are informing and even guiding the conversation of how communities confront the twin crises of peak oil and climate change.

The movement is driven by one simple idea: Rather than hand-wringing and lamenting dwindling energy reserves and climate change, Transition wants people to envision and create models for that future — and find much to be cheerful about.

A variety of activities take place under the Transition banner. Scroll around — the movement has had a strong Web presence from the start — and you’ll find numerous farm and food events, tree-planting get-togethers, launching a local currency, campaigns to install Smart Meters (through British Gas’ [Green Streets Energy Challenge](#)), and a program in which teenagers interview elderly people to learn about daily life before the era of [cheap oil](#).

“Transition is often seen as an environmental movement, but ultimately it’s about cultural change: enabling the shift from what’s appropriate for the upward net energy curve to what’s appropriate for the downward curve,” says Hopkins, who had been a teacher of [permaculture](#) — a holistic design system rooted in ecology — the principles of which underlie Transition.

“[The Transition movement] has become part of the cultural scene, especially in places like Vermont, Oregon and Northern California,” says author and environmentalist [Bill McKibben](#). “When he started this, Rob really understood that people needed to take their worries about the climate and do something practical.”

What began five years ago as a student project on lowering energy use in Kinsale, Ireland, has grown to 273 “official” initiatives in 15 countries, not to mention the thousands of “mullers” (as in thinking about it). The United States now has 55 active Transition [initiatives](#), the latest in San Francisco.

And while many Transition groups are in predominantly liberal areas, others have set up in more conservative areas, such as Houston and Louisville in the United States, as well as in working-class areas like Brixton and Penwith in the United Kingdom. In Penwith, residents’ memory of poverty and knowing that they were last on the supply chain made them receptive to Transition.

The movement remains low profile and unsung. One reason may be that it's so hard to characterize: Transition is at once local and global, high-tech and down-home, methodical and freewheeling. Awareness of the movement has also been confounded by its original designation of "Transition Town movement," since a Transition community might be an island (as in [Waiheke](#) in New Zealand), city (Los Angeles) or city district (London's Brixton and Belsize Park). It is now simply referred to as "Transition," and a Transition group is called an "initiative."

What follows is a lexicon of Transition terms, which will help explain the movement and where these ideas come from.

**Transition:** In Hopkins' words, "Transition" represents "the process of moving from a state of high fossil-fuel dependency and high vulnerability to a state of low fossil-fuel dependency and resilience." Transition "is not the goal itself — it's the journey," he says. Specifically, it's seeing this journey as an opportunity to embrace rather than a calamity to approach with dread.

"Transition" is predicated on the assumption that society cannot keep consuming energy and other resources at our current pace and that we're better off accepting this reality and choosing how to adapt rather than letting ourselves get backed into a crisis. The idea is that the adaptation process can harness creative and even joyful possibilities that until now have laid dormant in our towns and cities. As Hopkins has been known to say, "It's more like a party than a protest march."

**Resilience:** A community's ability to adapt and respond to changes, as well as to withstand shocks to the system, such as disruptions in food or energy supply chains. Resilience differs from "sustainability" in that the emphasis is on community survival as opposed to maintaining the structures and behavioral patterns that currently exist.

"Resilience is the new sustainability," says Michael Brownlee, a member of the Transition U.S. board and co-founder of [Transition Boulder County](#), the first Transition Initiative in North America. "It's been co-opted by almost everybody. Everybody is sustainable these days."

Marketing aside, Hopkins says the two are intertwined: "Sustainability only works if it has resilience embedded in it."

**Energy Descent:** The directional change from being on the energy upslope — designing our lives according to the wide availability of cheap energy — to making the most with less. When an individual shifts to lower energy use, this is known as "powering down." Central to Transition is uniting a community around developing and implementing an "energy descent action plan," or EDAP, sometimes described as a 20-year "[Plan B](#)" for keeping a place functioning and even thriving on a low-fuel diet.

As with all Transition efforts, each EDAP — to date only been a few have been fully developed — reflects the circumstances and flavor of the community it is to serve. Hopkins notes that [Transition Town Totnes](#), the South Devon market town where he lives, will shortly be publishing its EDAP, which he hopes will serve as a template for others.

**Unleashing:** A community breaking free from its dependence on fossil fuels. A "Great Unleashing," which takes place when an initiative has the momentum and organization to implement the EDAP, is a big "coming out" party that announces the group's strategy, commitment and enthusiasm to the broader world.

The Great Unleashing for Idaho's [Transition Sandpoint Initiative](#) in November 2008 drew more than 500 people to the Panida Theater for talks — including one by Mayor Gretchen Heller — music and dance. “The event is designed to be seen historically as the point at which the process began,” says Hopkins. “It’s a celebration of local culture. It’s an event that the next generation will commemorate by putting up a plaque.”

**Reskilling:** Reclaiming skills that previous generations took for granted but most of us have let fall by the wayside. “The Great Reskilling” refers to the community-wide mastering of skills that will facilitate the process of “powering down.”

For many, this is the entry point. Someone may attend a workshop in, say, sock-darning (now something of a fad in the United Kingdom) or mushroom identification, and begin to question aspects of a throwaway, shrink-wrapped culture. “People have an intuitive understanding that we’re much more vulnerable than our forebears,” says McKibben. “Today we’re so specialized, in that people tend to do one thing well enough to earn money and depend on the larger system to do the rest. People enjoy the feeling of becoming more competent in things.”

The range of reskilling events is vast: coppice forestry, heat masonry, beehive building, intro to beer brewing, 16-brick rocket stoves, nut drinks and butters (kid approved, of course), lye soap-making, making cheese with raw goat’s milk, essential oils for cleaning and healing, “pizza” (circular) weaving, using rain barrels, making your own wooden knitting needles — and these come solely from those posted for my home state of Vermont.

Will Transition culture continue its rise? Will the movement play a role in how people and communities greet the confluence of challenges looming before us?

McKibben thinks it’s likely. “Many people [involved in Transition] are willing to become politically involved,” he says. “In the [350 event](#) — the largest day of mass political action the world has seen — Transition Town people played a large role.”

He notes that while Transition initiatives focus on the local – creating food, energy and economic resilience on a community basis — the connection between global and local is not lost: “No matter how great your organic garden is, it still has to rain sometimes.”

*Judith D. Schwartz is a Southern Vermont author and journalist with wide-ranging interests and credits. Her latest book is [The Therapist's New Clothes](#). See her blog at <http://litadventuresinpod.blogspot.com>. (reprinted from [Miller-McCune](#): Mar. 12, 2010)*

**News Flash:** March 28, 2010 - two Transition Town initiatives are getting underway in Centre County, PA - Transition Town State College and Transition Town Bald Eagle Valley (near Ahimsa Village and Julian Woods in Julian, PA.).

To get involved with TT State College contact Bill Sharp at [bsharp@comcast.net](mailto:bsharp@comcast.net) To get involved with TT Bald Eagle contact Deb Fisher at [dflowersjulian@gmail.com](mailto:dflowersjulian@gmail.com)

April 21 Wednesday at 7:30, Transition Town State College presents film showing and discussion of "The Power of Community" at the Friends Meeting House, State College, PA. Contact Jackie Bonomo at [jabonomo@verizon.net](mailto:jabonomo@verizon.net)

## Pondering Cycles

I recently had a long dinner conversation with friends about the School of Living. We talked about the glorious past of the SoL as the leading “green” organization in the country and the fact that, in many ways, the SoL invented the whole concept of “going green” way before it was “hip.” Then the conversation drifted to the recent past and the current state of the SoL. We talked about what the organization is doing now – essentially supporting the activities of six land trust communities scattered over three states. I then proposed the question: What is the current purpose of the SoL, where is it heading, how does it fit in with the plethora of other “green groups?”

This opened up a discussion about cycles. Organizations like organisms go through cycles – the spring, summer, fall, and winter of life. They have a purpose, they do their thing, and then (sometimes) they exit. Often new organizations inspired by the old ones spring forth, adding new energy, insight, and direction to the original purpose or the old organization reinvents itself and starts a new life.

A good example of this is the Sierra Club, America’s first environmental organization. The Sierra Club was a radical idea – an organization dedicated to protecting the environment for future generations to enjoy. This may not sound radical but in 1892 at the height of America’s industrial revolution the land was thought of as an endless abundant resource that did not need preservation. The thinking was that there were enough wildernesses for everyone for all time. The Sierra Club did a magnificent job of putting environmental protection and preservation on the map. Through the tireless work of its founder John Muir, a new movement was founded. The Sierra Club continued to do groundbreaking environmental work under the leadership of many inspired leaders including David Brower and Dave Foreman. The Club was always pushing the envelope, examples include playing a key role in the passage of the Wilderness Act, blocking a proposed dam on the Grand Canyon, and helping develop and pass the Clean Air Act. The Sierra Club used to be a mainstay of the national news. However things have changed over the past ten years. No longer does the media go to the Sierra Club first for comments on major environmental stories, one is much more likely to hear the NRDC or the National Wildlife Federation quoted. Membership is down and the Club is in financial crisis. What happened?

Back to cycles. My thinking on this is that the Sierra Club played a key role in starting a movement – the environmental movement. It is the grandfather, the elder, of a large burgeoning movement. But what is its role now? Where does it fit in a movement it started but is no longer leading? What role does it play? How should it (re)define itself? Is it still needed in a field crowded with other environmental groups? I don’t know the answers to these questions but think they deserve serious thought and reflection. Similarly where does the SoL fit in the burgeoning green movement? In many ways the SoL is the grandfather/founder of this movement. Where do we go now? What is the future for the SoL????

- Bob Flatley

*The following is an excerpt from an editorial appearing in the March 1978 issue of Green Revolution:*

“Where do we go from here?...Where does the School of Living and the *Green Revolution* fit into all this? Do we have a purpose?...Are our efforts worthwhile?... The School of Living was one of, if not the first, modern organization to take a holistic approach to the problems that face us. Ralph Borsodi defined these problems in a manner that has never been duplicated either before or since.... Perhaps it was our mission to spawn and begin something that will carry on long after we are gone....”

## **Green Revolution**

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To join the School of Living, contact the  
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## **More Pondering (from the editor)**

Cycles are a part of life. Life is a symphony of ups and downs, of births and deaths, of beginnings and endings, of darkness and light. I'm seeing it everywhere – in the Quaker meeting I'm attending, in the trees and foliage turning green after a long, cold winter, in the School of Living as people step down from the board to pursue other endeavors.

Has the School of Living fulfilled its purpose? Was it to give birth to a variety of movements – spreading ideas and practical ways to create a healthier, saner, more beautiful way to live?

As I look at the 32 years since a former *Green Revolution* editor wrote the comments on the previous page, I see that a lot has unfolded. It can't be measured in membership or subscription numbers – these aren't impressive. That issue of GR was 50 pages – this one is 8. The board meeting at Seven Sisters in January of this year was small – there were many different reasons the usual core group of people did not attend.

What I see at the current time is six parcels of land in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia in the SoL Community Land Trust, each one unique. There are communities of some kind on most – all going through their own cycles. (to see activities taking place go to [www.ahimsavillage.org](http://www.ahimsavillage.org) and [www.heathcote.org](http://www.heathcote.org)) There are courses being offered – Permaculture, Integrative Facilitation, Community Living, events taking place – house concerts, yoga, meditation, to name a few, connections being made between people and ideas. Growing and learning are happening.

The question to me as we move forward into a new cycle, is how can the School of Living, using the resources it has, facilitate this growing and learning to the best of its ability? Besides administering the community land trust, how can we support the SoL vision? There are three areas that have been under discussion since the retreat last July. They are:

- Increasing SoL's web presence – making the GR available online, for example, a School of Living blog?
- Increasing the accessibility of the Community Growth Fund (formerly the Building Without Banks fund) to fund community projects, etc.
- To create the position of a School of Living coordinator to oversee and facilitate SoL's program in between quarterly board meetings, etc.

It is hard to measure the effect SoL has had over the last 32 years. Where will we be 32 years from now? Personally, I feel excited about the people and activities connected to SoL, and look forward to seeing what will unfold.

I wish all of you a beautiful spring and continual rebirth.....

- Ginny Green

## Reflections on Heathcote by Steve Favazza

“Hello and Welcome.” Such were the words spoken to me by Bob upon my arrival at Heathcote, which were a fitting epitaph for the months that would follow. The next eight months indeed proved to be a realm wherein I felt more “welcome” than at any other in my lifetime.

Within this community, from its loving and substantial people, their children, their pets, their beautiful land and water and even some visitors – through love, respect, perseverance, and ideology—the following are but a morsel of the many great experiences I shared here.

...was accepted and welcomed into the community from day one and made to feel “at home.”

...found a beautiful part of myself that I never knew existed, and resurrected other parts which had lay dormant for many years.

...developed a true feel for community life and how unity, with an emphasis on “common cause” (rather than “differences”) can still (& always will) hold the key to problem-solving in the “everyday” world.

...learned the value of self-sustainment (composting, Permaculture, etc.) and many different aspects of work that I had either never delved into or had done very little of.

...was able to re-acquaint myself with books, children and nature on a regular basis – these are precious aspects of life that carry perhaps the most satisfying of rewards.

...experienced the pure joy of maintaining and building upon the beauty and stability of a scenic and blessed land and homestead.

...enjoyed the freedom of discussing “real-life” issues with various community members and relished the exchange of diverse ideas, concepts, and thoughts.

...enlisted a great sense of passion and pride for community-related activities (retreats, shows, teas, celebrations, dances, projects, etc.) and the well-being of its members; as well as its history and traditions.

...was treated to delicious and healthy food, which not only took a “nice toll” on me physically, but also brought a smile to my face at 6:00 PM (I LOVE to eat!)

...was introduced to many spiritual realms – meditation, Hinduism, and Zegg Forum foremost among those.

...was always made to feel appreciated, loved, and respected, and reciprocated those same feelings to the others, also.

*Steve Favazza was a Community Life Intern at Heathcote from June 2009 to January 2010 (8 months). He worked 20 hours/week in exchange for his room on projects such as gardening, grounds keeping, renovating the bunk room, cleaning, building the cob hot tub, building the hoop house, building outdoor stairs, and others.*

## An Update on the Sierra Leone Shoe Project

On January 7, Glen Leasure from Common Ground Community boarded a plane for Sierra Leone, where he planned to teach a group of students to make shoes, as well as be involved in a project to build compost toilets. In his first reports, he wrote “*the Sierra Leoneans are warm and loving beyond belief*”.

His wife Peggy sent this soon after his arrival: *Glen goes on and on about how friendly everyone is. He told me that the day he arrived they had a parade with singing, dancing, drumming and speeches to honor him. He was very touched. Internet information about Sierra Leone has been inaccurate at best. We had read that there were 8,000 people living at Mile 91 but in actuality there are 35,000. Ten years ago there were only 1000.*

By February 2, Glen was seriously ill and went to a hospital to be treated for possible typhoid and malaria. Arrangements were made to fly him home, and he arrived in Charlottesville on February 7. He went to the University of Virginia Medical Center, where it was determined he has a form of leukemia, and he is now being treated. The current feeling is that Glen may have had a latent problem and that the stress of the trip and the original illness may have kicked the blood situation into the foreground.

This update from Glen came on March 19: *This turn of events has caused us to cast about for an alternative plan as giving up on the Shoe Project is not an option! The requests for a slot in my classes were just pouring in the whole time I was there; hundreds of people were begging for the opportunity both in person and through other means. However this is how it looks to be presently unfolding: We will establish an international scholarship fund into which anyone in the world can add value. When enough funds are in the pot we will bring two students at a time from SL to the USA to be tutored for two weeks by yours truly in the gentle art and craft of shoemaking all expenses paid. (Hint; we have nearly enough in the fund to bring the first two students over!)*

Glen and Peggy Leasure can be reached at [leasures@rockbridge.net](mailto:leasures@rockbridge.net).

## **Integrative Facilitation Training Program**

**with Laird Schaub & Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig**

**First Weekend: May 27-30, 2010 at Julian Woods Community in Julian, PA**

This is a proven program for making a quantum leap in your ability to run dynamic and effective meetings, and in understanding the nuances and challenges of how cooperative groups function. The training extends over two years, consisting of eight 3-day weekends, spaced about three months apart. You'll receive handouts, chances to practice the techniques and principles, and lots of hands-on experience facilitating live meetings. The cost is \$2800 for the full two-year training program, or only \$2400 if paid in full up front. You can audit individual weekends for \$250 each. School of Living members will receive a \$100 discount if they enroll for all 8 weekends or a \$25 discount for auditing an individual weekend for up to 4 weekends. For more information call 410-357-9523, email [education@heathcote.org](mailto:education@heathcote.org) or go to [www.heathcote.org](http://www.heathcote.org).

### **A Scholarship is Available**

The School of Living is offering one full scholarship of \$2,300 to fund one or more individuals to attend the two-year facilitation training program offered by Laird Schaub in the Mid-Atlantic Region starting the weekend of May 27-30, 2010. This scholarship may go to one person or it may be divided among several people.

Scholarship recipients must:

- Be a member of School of Living.
- Be willing to share what they learn at School of Living meetings by giving presentations as requested.
- Facilitate for School of Living board meetings for the next 3 years (during the two-year training program and for 1 year afterwards). If one person receives the scholarship they will be expected to facilitate for all 12 meetings. If several people share the scholarship they may also share facilitation duties.

Preference will go to applicants who plan to use their facilitation skills to support the mission of School of Living through work with the SOL board, SOL committees, or SOL communities. We will also give priority to those applicants who have the greatest need for financial aid.

The application is due by April 17, 2010 (the date of the annual membership meeting). Contact Karen Stupski at 410-357-9523 or [education@heathcote.org](mailto:education@heathcote.org) for more information.

## **The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AERO Conference**

**June 24 - 27, 2010      Albany, New York**

**There will be dozens of incredible workshops, numerous special events, and more entertainment than ever this year!**

**Workshops include:**

- \***Spirituality and Faith Development of Infants & Young Children**
- \***Tikkun Olam**
- \***What is EducacionAlternativa.org? / ¿Qué es EducacionAlternativa.org?**
- \***Moving Forward with the Struggle: What Can We Learn From the Alumni of the Open School**
- \***Cultural Inclusion: Honoring Each Child and Creating Cultures of Success**
- \***Influencing Education Policy: In your backyard and beyond**

Find updated information at [www.educationrevolution.org/workshop.html](http://www.educationrevolution.org/workshop.html)

Register online at [www.educationrevolution.org/registration.html](http://www.educationrevolution.org/registration.html)

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

**School of Living Quarterly Meetings:** (Contact Ann Wilken, SoL office manager at 814.353.0130 or [abwilken@verizon.net](mailto:abwilken@verizon.net) for more info)

April 16 – 18, 2010 Heathcote Center (Annual Membership meeting) Freeland, MD

July 23 – 25, 2010 Julian Woods Community Julian, PA

October 1 – 3, 2010 Common Ground Community Lexington, VA

January 14 – 16, 2011 Seven Sisters Community Cochranville, PA

**Characteristics of Success: An Investigation of the Factors Associated with Success in Intentional Communities.** April 30, 2010 Lecture by Bob Flatley For info go to [www.ahimsavillage.org](http://www.ahimsavillage.org)  
**Permaculture Workshops**, including **Forest Garden** and **Social Permaculture** workshops. For more information go to [www.heathcote.org](http://www.heathcote.org).

**Integrative Facilitation Training Program with Laird Schaub & Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig**

May 27-30, 2010 (first weekend) Julian Woods Community in Julian, PA. For more information call 410-357-9523, email [education@heathcote.org](mailto:education@heathcote.org) or go to [www.heathcote.org](http://www.heathcote.org).

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual AERO conference** (Alternative Education Resource Organization) June 24 – 27, 2010

For info go to [www.aeroconference.com](http://www.aeroconference.com)

**6<sup>th</sup> Annual PA Renewable Energy & Sustainable Living Festival** September 17-19, 2010  
Kempton Community Center Kempton, PA. For info go to [www.paenergyfest.com](http://www.paenergyfest.com).