



# Families for Natural Living

## Finding Our Way To Heart-Centered Parenting

By Lisa Reagan

There we were. Nine holistic practitioners and parents gathered in a circle, excited, hopeful, passionate and committed to our children's futures.

“So what exactly are we about?” asked the chiropractor, attachment-parenting father, and one of the nine first board members for Families for Natural Living in 1999.

Blank but expectant looks exchanged in the donated practitioner's office lobby.

“Well, we've changed our name from Virginia Peninsula Families for Natural Birth and Healthcare to Families for Natural Living so we can go the gamut and help other families create their own support groups,” one board member summed up. “But what does

that mean? What are we trying to do, besides change the world? How's that done again?”

At this pivotal moment of group self-reflection and setting our intentions, it would have been glorious if the time-space continuum could have allowed for Paul Ray, PhD, or Sherry Ruth Anderson, PhD, to appear and explain to us who we were and what we were doing... or if anyone in our group had read their book *Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*. Instead, we dove into the creation of our new nonprofit flailing and unclear but swimming forward like sock-eyed salmon intent on using whatever tools we could find to get to a place that we felt was familiar and right, but perhaps had ever been.

Could FNL have been spared the growing pains of a grassroots organization over the next seven years by a time-warp visit from Paul or Sherry? Could they have shed some light onto the path we were searching for in conservative Virginia - where homebirthing parents and midwives wouldn't be decriminalized for another six years? (see story page 12)

What if... what if Sherry had floated across the Middle America shopping center parking lot, through the large store-front window, into our circle and announced, “Wake up people! You are Cultural Creatives! You are intent on finding wholeness, integration, and community because you do not want to live in an alienated, disconnected world!”

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## When the Crying Is the Healing

By Pam Leo

“There, there it's O.K., don't cry.” “There's nothing to cry about.” “Don't be a sissy.” “Big boys don't cry.” “Stop that crying or I'll give you something to cry about!”

When an infant cries he is using the only language he has to communicate to us that he needs something. He may be telling us of his physical need to

be fed or changed or of his emotional need to be held. We must always respond to the crying by figuring out and meeting the need. As children get older they cry for other reasons and parents and caregivers often don't know what to do. When our attempts to comfort or “fix it” don't stop the crying we become frustrated and even angry with the child.

Crying that is not a communica-

tion of need is the release or outpouring of emotional hurts that we all experience. We heal emotional hurts by pouring out the feelings that result from those hurts. The outpouring may take the form of talking repeatedly about the hurt, crying, screaming, shaking, laughing, and even yawning.

When we experience an

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FNL's Celebrates Its  
10th Anniversary at the  
Whole Children  
Whole World Expo  
Earth Day, April 22, 2006  
Los Angeles, California  
*See page 3 for more info...*

# President's Letter

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As FNL celebrates our 10th Anniversary this year there are many milestones to recognize and many more on the horizon. We have lived for ten years near to the form in which we began, an underground homebirth community of hundreds of families who we're too keen on letting people know we were here.

There were good reasons in the past for laying low, and many of those reasons no longer exist. In fact, as many of our community groups prove, the courage to use what is left of our freedom of speech and self-expression is leading to a new level of awareness just at the moment that it is needed most.

As the book *Cultural Creatives* states: "we care deeply about ecology and saving the planet, about relationships, peace, social justice, and about self actualization, spirituality and self-expression. Surprisingly, they are both inner-directed and socially concerned, they're activists, volunteers and contributors to good causes more than other Americans. However, because they've been so invisible in American life, Cultural Creatives themselves are astonished to find out how many share both their values and their way of life. Once they realize their numbers, their impact on American life promises to be enormous, shaping a new agenda for the twenty-first century. What makes the appearance of the Cultural Creatives especially timely today is that our civilization is in the midst of an epochal change, caught between globalization, accelerating technologies and a deteriorating planetary ecology. A creative minority can have enormous leverage to carry us into a new renaissance instead of a disastrous fall."

FNL families have created this "by parents, for parents" grassroots organization as a means to bridge the gap between their biological

needs for health and the cultural norms of toxic living choices. By creating our own community groups and networking with single-issue organizations, we have created the means to practice our healthy, holistic choices with the purpose of modeling for ourselves, our children, and our extended communities the possibilities, benefits and healing potential for our selves and our planet.

Some of these holistic choices include: conscious conception, natural birthing, bonding, attachment parenting, extended breastfeeding, whole foods diets, eco-conscious purchasing, home-schooling and alternative education, media literacy, and the right to make informed health and healthcare choices.

Many parents look to their pediatrician to provide answers to questions and for guidance on how to care for their children. Unfortunately, pediatricians get their information from traditional medical training and are tragically uninformed when it comes to brain development, breastfeeding, nutrition, naturally strengthening a child's immune system, environmental toxins, and emotional bonding.

Parents are questioning the safety of giving potentially toxic pharmaceutical drugs to their children and are seeking safer, gentler alternatives. Parents who question or reject conventional medicine often feel alienated and isolated. They are sometimes coerced into conforming to the current standards of conventional medical practice when those methods conflict with their own personal philosophies of health and wellness.

Parents who are informed and who are trying to give their children the holistic, nurturing care they need, are constantly challenged by mainstream influences on their children. These parents may continually deal with peer pressure, isolation, and

are sometimes ostracized for doing what they know is right for their children. According to the Holistic Pediatric Association, "These issues can be resolved with the education of large numbers of parents and the development of support networks."

In ten years, FNL has not promoted or advertised itself to the public, so our facilitators have "found FNL" through their own internet searches or by word of mouth. FNL offers parents a variety of community group models to choose from, including playgroups, single parent groups, book clubs, cooperative learning communities, and practitioner lead or sponsored groups. FNL helps parents to create their own self-directed community group/support group through our passcoded, online *Gathering Guide*. The *Gathering Guide* contains step by step instructions to forming a group as well as pdf files for sign-in sheets, brochures, flyers, bumper stickers, contact cards, etc. FNL provides support for the facilitators through a hotline to the FNL office, and through a yahoo group email list where facilitators have contact with one another and the members of the board of directors.

As we grow up, at ten years old, we have entered a new phase where we ask our facilitators and members to support their community groups financially with annual dues of \$25. We also have a sliding scale and scholarship monies available. As we work with our new nonprofit developer, get ready to launch a new website, and go to print with our *Gathering Guide*, we are building our foundation to meet the great demand and need for strategies for building community for ourselves.

Together, we truly are, "**Raising the Re-Generation!**"

In Peace,  
Lisa Reagan  
FNL President

# FNL CELEBRATES ITS 10th ANNIVERSARY



## Highlights of the weekend will include:

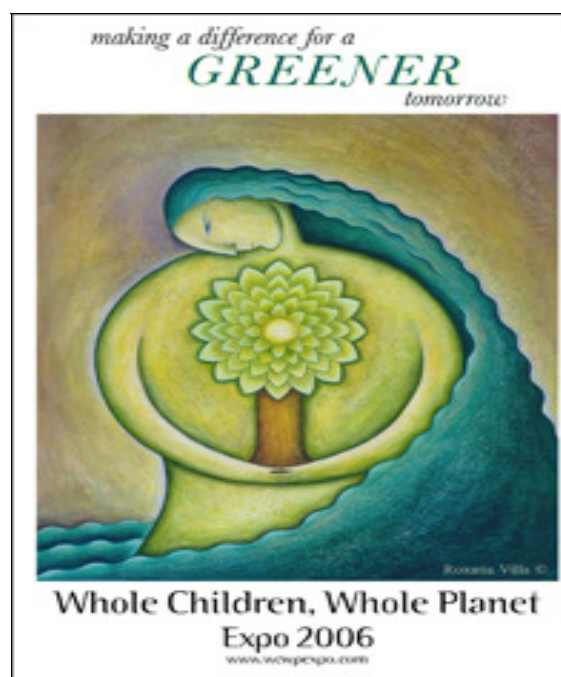
- **Natural Foods Kitchen** – Enjoy food preparation demos and tasting events with celebrities and natural gourmet chefs.
- **Natural Medicine Community** – Come meet doctors and experts in the field of holistic pediatrics. Find out what are the most reliable natural products – homeopathic remedies, herbs, flower essences, aromatherapy, vitamins and minerals and more.
- **Children's Village** – Learn sustainable living practices, recycling, enrichment programs, positive self-esteem, stress coping skills, healing with music, art, animal therapy and more.
- **Healthy Home Zone** – Learn about environmental invisible pollutants, toxic products and their effects on our children and the planet and what you can do to keep them safe – now and in the future.
- **Birthing Section** – Learn about the latest in natural fertility options, pain-free delivery techniques, birthing options, products, etc.
- **Interactive Lectures** with celebrities, doctors, health and environmental experts, holistic practitioners and authors.
- **Yoga and Reading Stage** – Demonstrations of yoga and other types of exercise programs, as well as story-telling, children's books and theatre groups will be featured
- **Other Areas** – Natural Product Exhibitors; Food Court; Spas and Family Getaways; Teen Awareness Stage and much more.

Join us on this Earth Day weekend 2006, for fun, entertainment, and an unforgettable education for all ages!

**JOIN FNL  
AS WE CELEBRATE OUR  
TENTH ANNIVERSARY  
AT THE WHOLE  
CHILDREN  
WHOLE PLANET  
EXPO 2006!!!**

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# Baltimore FNL Creates New Natural Foods Buying Club

**From Healthy Choice magazine...**

**By Ericka Blount Danois**

When Skai Davis went to visit South Carolina's Gullah Islands--home to the descendants and traditional culture of West Africa's Rice Coast--last February, she was hoping for a spiritual and cultural awakening. What the U.S. Virgin Islands-born Baltimorean hadn't anticipated was that, in just 24 hours, she would gain the inspiration to change her life's path.

While eating falafel at the No Pork Café on the St. Helena Islands, she and her friend Oluku Lennon experienced a moment of epiphany. Amid the smells of sweet-potato soup and freshly boiled plantains, they came up with the concept for Empress Catering, a personal-chef and catering service that specializes in vegetarian foods. And ever since, Davis has also been using the natural-foods experience she's gained from her Empress Catering business to support a new food-buying club run by the Baltimore chapter of Families for Natural Living.

The Newport News, Va.-based nonprofit group, which is made up of families who have banded together to support healthier, more natural lifestyles, was formed locally in March 2001. Members of the group, frustrated with the high prices of natural foods sold at traditional retail establishments, started the food-buying club to purchase organic and health foods in bulk at wholesale prices. Currently, the group has its bulk shipments of organic foods, health-care products, and cosmetics delivered to a vacant commercial space in the 2400 block of St. Paul Street. But Davis and the group's other members hope that the club will generate enough interest to become a full-fledged natural food co-op--a member-owned and -operated food store that offers its members and the general public alternatives to the profit-oriented food-buying experience.

Davis, who has honey-colored dreads that hang to her waist, was eight months pregnant when she decided to endure the 12-hour road trip to see the Gullah Islands. A month after she came back, she went on maternity leave from her job and began operating Empress Catering out of her home with the intention of eventually opening a café like the one she saw in South Carolina.



**Baltimore Families for Natural Living facilitator Skai Davis outside of the building her uncle donates to FNL for community group meetings and events.**

"I have always wanted to do a restaurant," she says. "My mother owned a seafood restaurant called the Lobster Hole in St. Croix [U. S. Virgin Islands] . . . so I know how to run a restaurant from beginning to end."

**Davis, who was a member of a food-buying club in the Virgin Islands where she grew up, says the fledgling food-buying club is long overdue in Baltimore.**

Her restaurateur dream will come true in January when she expects to open the Yabba Pot--a combination vegetarian café and gift store--in the St. Paul Street space where the food-club deliveries are shipped. More than a personal business

venture, according to Davis, the restaurant will give Families for Natural Living a stronger foundation and identity in the city. The group's members hope that other families who share their philosophies will find the group through the café.

Ricquel Ricks-Cumbo and Jamillah Nasir were part of a "sister circle"--a group of women who share stories, ideas, spirituality, and food--with Davis, and they decided to form the local Families for Natural Living chapter as a support network for their ideologies and needs.

"We were all living natural lifestyles and we had no one to talk to about it," Davis says. "Some of us don't vaccinate our children. We don't eat meat with drugs and chemicals. Some of us are holistic practitioners. Some of us nurse our children until they are three years old."

Finding affordable foods and goods that fit their lifestyles was another matter. Ricks-Cumbo, who was a member of a food co-op in New York when she lived there, says she was surprised that she could not find one like it in Baltimore--especially, she says, because the prices at local health food stores are "astronomical." It seemed fitting, she says,

that Families for Natural Living should start its own co-op.

Families pay a one-time fee of \$25 to join the club (and the term "family" is undefined so as not to exclude anyone from potential membership). Families place their orders weekly from a catalog. The club buys the products in bulk and passes the savings on to members.

Members can purchase a wide range of health foods, natural soaps and oils, organic foods, natural cleaning products, and earth-friendly feminine hygiene products. Members of the buying club do not have to be part of Families for Natural Living to participate, and so far, 10 families have joined the club.

Joseph Holtz, a co-founder of the nation's largest food co-op, the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn, N.Y., says that the concept has its origins in the Great Depression. People banded together then to save money on food and other products. After the Depression, the co-op movement quieted, then experienced a resurgence in the late '60s and early '70s (Holtz's co-op started in '73), a time when people were becoming interested in exercising greater control over their communities, products, and services. Food co-ops became popular once again in the '90s, due mostly to a revived interest in healthier living.

Davis, who was a member of a food-buying club in the Virgin Islands where she grew up, says the fledgling food-buying club is long overdue in Baltimore. "Going to the health-food store is outrageous," she says. "Organic apples are \$1.99 a pound--going to a buying club, you can get them for 79 cents a pound."

More than a lower grocery bill, Davis says Families for Natural Living gives her a feeling of community she didn't have before its formation. "It is important for me to be in this type of group," she says. "I only have one family member here in Baltimore."

At the group's monthly meetings, topics of discussion may include natural childbirth, home birthing, breast-feeding, vegetarianism, holistic health, homeschooling, natural health practitioners, sugar, food preparation, alternative schools, organics and genetically engineered foods, and vaccinations and immunizations.

"Our goal is to inform as many people as possible about their choices," Davis says. "You are sometimes given one-sided information. We try to give you all the choices so you can make the right choices for your family." Lisa Reagan, national president of Families

*Continued on page 17...*

## FNL Voted Top 6 Most Worthy Nonprofit Causes in America

The March 2004 issue of the magazine *Delicious Living* nominated FNL as a nonprofit organization that was "Making a Difference" under "Six Causes Worth Your While". FNL is listed as number three on



the impressive list. The number one most worthy cause according to this magazine is the New American Dream; number two is the Endangered Species Coalition; four is the Healthy Foundation; five is Organic Advocates; and six is Vitamin Angel Alliance. *Delicious Living* can be found in many health food stores nationally. The article can be found online at <http://www.deliciouslivingmag.com>.

## ABC News Asks FNL Family To "SWAP" & Fox TV To Meet Paris

In March 2004, FNL was contacted by ABC News producers and asked to participate in a new television show that would be a "documentary" about how families "survive" when the moms change homes for 10 days. The executive promised that it was not a "reality show" even though their website proclaimed otherwise. The offer prompted Ellen Hamblet, and original FNL mom, to write this response to the producers. No, FNL did not participate in the show, but Ellen had a good time envisioning what it might be like if we had:

Dear Swap Producers:

When we first got your offer to have a natural living mom switch places with a mainstream mom, we were intrigued. We thought about all the things the mainstream mom would get to experience, depending on the family she switched with. She might learn what it's like to: enjoy life without battles over TV, because there is no TV in the house; feel healthy after eating food that's really food, and not just sugar + preservatives + food dye; have a relaxing start to each morning because the kids are homeschooled and there's no need to rush for the bus; not have to drag a razor over her legs (and other spots) every day (every other day? every week?); calm a screaming baby or toddler in under two seconds by ask-

ing "wanna nurse?"; float on air for days or more after being part of a friend's peaceful, joyful, gentle home birth; not worry about the kids getting into what's stored under the kitchen sink because all the cleaning supplies are non-toxic; connect regularly with other like-minded moms who know how important it is to make time to visit and help each other and play together.

After ten days of this, it might be hard to get mainstream mom to go back! But then we started thinking about what a natural living mom might experience living in a mainstream house: weight loss because there was no food to eat that was organic, vegetarian, preservative-free or grown without hormones or antibiotics; distress over having to treat people in ways she wouldn't want to be treated, like spanking them or yelling at them in the name of discipline; anguishing over letting a little baby "cry it out" in the name of teaching good sleep habits; frustration at having to bite her tongue and not expound on proven health and developmental benefits of breastfeeding babies a year and longer, in the name of "not pressuring" anyone; exhaustion at watching a friend's hectic, medically man-

"...you can probably see why we choose to decline. After all, most of us were mainstream at one time, and chose to leave that way of life for one we're much more content with."

aged birth, with a one-in-four chance it would end in a c-section; severe headaches from the incessant noise and disturbing images emanating from the blaring TV; constant worries about feeding the kids food that has no nutrition (sugar is not a food group, neither

is red dye #6 or blue dye #3); "cleaning" the house with chemicals that could kill them · laundering clothes with detergents they're allergic to, and more.

So thanks for the offer, but you can probably see why we choose to decline. After all, most of us were

mainstream at one time, and chose to leave that way of life for one we're much more content with. Why would we want to go back?! At the same time, we do see the benefit of more people getting a close look at "natural" living. They'll find it's kinder and gentler for everyone: parents, children, communities and the earth. They'll find it's fun, fulfilling and self-sustaining in so many ways. Once they see what they're missing, they'll never want to go back...which will benefit us all.

Love,  
Your Friends at FNL

# When The Crying Is The Healing...

**Continued from page 1...**

emotional hurt our thinking shuts down and we cannot think well until we pour out the feelings caused by the hurt. If we don't pour out the painful feeling we store those feelings inside us. As long as the painful feelings stay inside us the pain keeps us from having rational thinking and behavior in regard to that hurt.

A stored hurt is like a splinter. When we have a splinter in our finger it is a tender spot that hurts when something touches it and the finger can't heal until the splinter comes out. The outpouring of painful feelings is a natural and spontaneous response to hurt. Young children cry immediately when they experience emotional hurts. We all did until we learned to control that outpouring. Just as we learned bladder control we learned to control the outpouring of our feelings. When we learned that it was not acceptable to release our bladders spontaneously in response to them being full, we developed control over the muscles that would hold it until we were in the appropriate place.

When we learned that the people around us couldn't accept the outpouring of our painful, we learned how to hold them in. At least with bladder control we always find some acceptable place to release in a reasonable amount of time so we don't have to "hold it" for too long. Unfortunately when we control the outpouring of our painful feelings we often end up "holding" them for years. Young children have not had the time to develop much control over releasing their feelings and the smaller they are the less capacity they have to store hurts. In spite of their best efforts, when they try to store too many hurting feelings, they run out of space and the painful feelings either leak out a little at a time or come pouring out all at once when they've reached their storage limit. This overflow is commonly known as a temper tantrum.

Temper tantrums are simply spill over. Some little hurt happens and to our bewilderment a child explores with crying, anger, frustration and rage. All of our efforts to reason with the child, comfort him or "fix it" are useless. We don't know why the child is behaving this way and we don't know what to do about it. The hurt we "did" see certainly didn't seem to warrant this intense response. It was all the other hurts we "didn't" see that got stored up until this final one was the last drop that caused the spill over. Any parent who has ever been with a child after the child has completed emptying out a full-blown tantrum has probably experienced the delightful natural nature of the child. The child is usually calm, cheerful, affectionate, and cooperative. When children are

allowed and encouraged to pour out each hurt as the feeling arises they have to don't store them up until they explode into a tantrum.

When we were children, most of us were interfered with when we tried to free ourselves from our emotional hurts. When we realized that the people around us couldn't accept the outpouring of our feelings we learned to "store" them instead of "pour" them. Since we were not allowed to release our hurting feelings, we still carry that pain and we can't stand it when our children try to express their hurts. We, in turn, interfere with their outpouring and the cycle continues. Crying and tantrums are not "misbehaviors"; they are healing behaviors.

Children's natural behavior is that of enthusiasm, curiosity, intelligence and goodness. Whenever children are not behaving in those ways their behavior is telling us something. Children express themselves through their behavior. Their unacceptable behaviors are usually telling us of

their unmet needs and of their unreleased hurts. As long as children's needs remain unmet their needy behaviors will persist. As long as their unreleased hurts stay stored their best thinking and rational behavior will not be available to them.

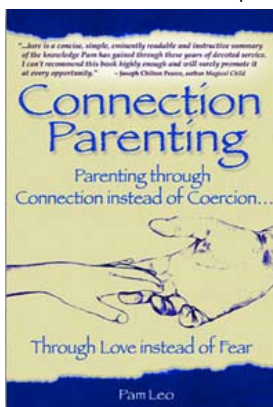
Once we understand the purpose and process of allowing children to pour out their painful feelings we can assist our children in freeing themselves of the hurts that interfere with their behavior. In order to use this new information to assist our children when they are trying to heal their hurts, we will need to change of how we see crying and we will need to change our automatic response to crying. The most important change will be accepting all feelings as valid.

There is no such thing as no reason to cry. When a child is told no, the hurt feeling the child experiences is disappointment and sometimes anger. The child has a valid feeling he needs to pour out. This doesn't mean that parents are hurting their children when they must set limits or that parents shouldn't ever say no. It means that when we must say no we must also accept and allow the child's outpouring of feelings about being told no so the child can recover his clear thinking and behavior that got shut down when the child experienced the hurt of disappointment.

Accepting all of a child's feelings does not mean accepting all behaviors. It is not acceptable for a child to hit people to express anger. It is our job as our children's first and most important teachers to teach and model acceptable ways of expressing anger. Since most of us were not allowed, much less encouraged, to express our anger, we too may need to learn acceptable ways of expressing



**Pam Leo in Williamsburg, VA in April 2005. Pam came to VA to present a one-day conference on Connection Parenting at Christopher Newport University as part of FNL's 2005 Springtime Series. Buy Pam's book, *Connection Parenting* on FNL's website, and visit her at [www.connectionparenting.com](http://www.connectionparenting.com).**



**Join Pam in our monthly FNL Tele-Gatherings on Connection Parenting beginning this June.**

anger. We can teach our children to hit a pillow or whack a table with a rolled up newspaper to pour out anger. Most of us fear anger because someone being angry usually resulted in our being hurt physically or emotionally. We also fear shouting because the shouting was usually an attack that hurt us emotionally. Shouting only hurts when it is an attack. If I shout "I am angry!" I am not attacking anyone. I'm just releasing my anger. We can learn to express our anger without hurting anyone and so can our children.

We often say that children act "worse" with their parents. When our children are out in the world, it's not safe to pour out their hurts because that outpouring is considered misbehavior and unacceptable. When our children come home, they feel safe, because they know we will love them, no matter what, they pour out everything they've stored all day.

It is not easy to change from seeing crying only as hurting to seeing crying also as healing. When someone, especially a child, is crying we feel pulled to help. However, when our efforts to "help" don't relieve the hurting, the crying is the healing. The best help we can then offer is our acceptance of the feelings being expressed and our caring attention which provides the safety needed for the child to release the hurting feelings and heal them.

We can't protect our children from all the hurts in the world, but we can help them heal from them. When children grow up being allowed to empty out their hurting feelings, they aren't as likely to grow up into adults who are carrying so much pain that they feel driven to try to distract themselves from their pain by excessive shopping, TV watching, smoking, drinking, and drug abuse.

*Pam Leo, author of Connection Parenting, is an FNL Advisory Board Member, and a founding board member of the aTLC, at [www.atlc.org](http://www.atlc.org).*



## Getting a Leg Up On the Path To Natural Living

**By Jamillah Nasir**

When I decided to change my life-style, there was no one in my circle of friends to which I could turn for an understanding ear or tips and pointers on what it was I was doing. I started out wanting to develop a better diet and learn how to live simply in a world where more is the goal. I also wanted to get involved in saving the environment—maybe plant a tree, save the bay, save a whale or two—you name it. I was more than willing to do my share. I quickly discovered that in order to be more conscious about what I ate, I needed to know what *exactly* was in my favorite foods that made them not so good for me. I wanted to know what labels like “organic” and “non GMO” meant. I

was quickly learning so much and I was so enthusiastic about what I was discovering, yet I had no one with whom I could exchange information.

Consequently, I made a great deal of missteps along the path to natural living. Initially, the most difficult thing I faced was the feelings of isolation from mainstream society. How was I supposed to make my family feel safe and nurtured in a world where they are the minority as holistically conscious people? Where could I take them to eat while we are traveling on the road where they can still get good, nutritious food? How should I explain to everyone who is around my children regularly that they do not eat certain things anymore and quietly assert my right to be their dietary and

nutritional advocate until they are ready to take that role over?

I recently met a young woman at one of the local health food stores who is in pretty much the same predicament I found myself in just seven short/long years ago. She was there on the advice of a woman who had recently given her and her husband some insight into their lifestyle and dietary choices. They decided that they wanted to make the necessary changes, but like most people, had no idea what to do first. She had never eaten tofu before, but was advised to try it along with some of the other meat substitutes on the market after following a strict diet of fruits and vegetables for at least one week. I understood the bewildered look she

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## Enough Is Enough!

**By Kylie Loynd**

I listened to the women around the table run themselves down. It was our monthly Mom’s Night Out. As we traded mothering stories, each woman received praise for courage, dedication or strength. Yet one after another demurred, seeing only an unattained ideal.

This time the conversation revolved around breast-feeding. One mother, who had nursed for 18 months, lamented that she hadn’t held out longer. Another had pumped with deep regret that she “hadn’t really *nursed*.” I had nursed for several years, a mothering milestone in many eyes, and yet I had often resented my daughters’ seemingly insatiable needs. Our conversation played like a mad hatter’s tea dance: compliment, denial; compliment, refusal; compliment, escape.

It rang a bell — a discordant one. *I do this all the time.* Women do it all the time — grandmothers, mothers, aunts, female cousins and friends. *But not our daughters, not yet...* As I thought of our girls, I realized that they were still unfailingly proud of whatever they did. On the rare occasions when they did compare or belittle their efforts, I could be certain something hurtful had happened out in the world. They were confused, and needed my help to

get back to their natural state of amazement with themselves. Discounting ourselves is clearly a habit, not a birth trait. Somewhere along the line, we learned to believe that we are never enough.

The traits that compel our little ones to pick themselves up and keep on trying after they tumble — curiosity, tenacity, assertiveness and the propensity to insist upon rights — bring attention and praise. As children mature, they develop cooperation, patience, nurturing and sensitivity to the needs of others. These traits, along with a child’s unique strengths, form the basis for a balanced person — forthright and compassionate.

At some point, adults begin to interfere with that natural process. Following societal cues, young girls learn to hide their forthrightness while young boys discover that compassion is not manly. It is a hollow victory for our “good girls” and “strong boys” alike, and they ache for the level of approval that their whole beings once garnered. Insisting upon a fuller expression of personhood requires healthy adult role models and sup-

port that is often unavailable. As a child, I couldn’t help but notice that “boy” traits gained boys a lot of approval and that “girl” traits

were encouraged for girls, but brought little appreciation. I hid my candor and began to obsess about how to fit in. The combination was exhausting.

When expectations are clear but the results do not satisfy, doing it *better* is one answer — perfection is the

next. Approaching adolescence unsure of how to transition from “good girl” to “good woman,” we amp up the volume instead. We redefine the feminine in unhealthy ways: over-emphasis on looks (where achieving beauty can require a surgeon’s knife), shame for natural cycles and placing more importance on being liked than on liking ourselves. By adulthood, women cannot feel satisfied with all that they have accomplished. Stay-at-home mothers expect themselves to have a beautifully kept person, immaculate home and gifted children. Working mothers start there and add the demands of outside income as well. Single women often feel that their lack of a life mate overshadows their achievements.

*Continued on page 17...*

***“As I thought of our girls,  
I realized that they were still  
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# Heart-Centered Parenting...

"We're what?" we most likely would have stammered.

"Cultural Creatives! You are taking on the task of redressing the 'bio-cultural conflict' (see glossary page 18) inherent in American culture by pioneering ingenious and practical means to provide yourselves with the support and education to confidently go against the grain of the status quo, mainstream medical model, corporate-profit driven media messages and misinformation!" Sherry could have explained.

Would we have been able to take in this big picture observation and explanation? At the time most of us were parents of young children, tired and strained but driven by our need to find practical resources for day to day living and our desire to integrate our knowing of what was best for our individual children with the scarce resources and nearly non-existent support for our holistic choices.

Our responses to Sherry's big picture revelation may have been welcomed or may have been questioned as relevant.

"I don't know about all that. I just want to find doctor who will talk with me about alternative treatments for my son's allergies."

"I just want to attend a playgroup where I don't have to worry about my child eating junkfood."

"I want to be able to talk openly with my patients about vaccine risks and alternative choices."

"I want to know how to connect with my seven year-old."

"I want to know more about alternatives to antibiotics."

"I just want support to nurse my toddler."

"I want to share my family's attachment parenting experiences without being ridiculed or shamed."

"I want to know what I can do to make environmentally sensible choices for, well, everything."

And there it is. The personal is planetary. We sensed it. But forming a nonprofit to create artificial communities in the absence of authentic ones, knowing these communities of holistic parents were facing isolation and social rejection, well, didn't feel very natural - or safe.

What if we could really go back and hold the meeting all over again with as many floating wise guides as we could cram into the circle of lobby room chairs? Here goes:

"That's just it!" Sherry would point out. "You are not alone! Approximately 30 percent of the adults—one in four—in the U.S., or 63 million

people, are Cultural Creatives.

"But you *do* lack one critical ingredient: awareness of yourselves as a whole people, because in American culture, you are invisible.

"However, it is a now a global imperative for you to become a more organized movement. If you could see how promising your work is for all of us, if you could know how large your numbers are, many things might follow. You could lead the way toward an Integral Culture!

"Okay, since I'm here because of a time-warp, I will go ahead and tell you that once you realize your numbers your impact on American life promises to be enormous, shaping a new agenda for the twenty-first century. Your appearance is especially timely today as our civilization is in the midst of an epochal change, caught between globalization, accelerating technologies and a deteriorating planetary ecology. A creative minority can have enormous leverage to carry us into a new renaissance instead of a disastrous fall." Sherry graciously presents the bottom line of her book, that none of us had read, yet.

"Wait, okay, I get this big picture idea, but I want to know how I am supposed to live on a day to day basis in a culture that does not support the basic healthy choices I want to make for my family," pops in Michele Kobayashi, savvy Los Angeles mom and future board member. "What's the first step?"

"Waking up!" a chorus of floating responses shout.

"This question is a good one. How to connect to our hearts? People like yourselves are a part of a tribe that is growing in size AND self-awareness: those who grasp that we live on a planet in crisis, our communities are in turmoil, and our hearts are in danger of breaking when we pay attention to the darker side of the world we've helped to create. Hi, everyone. I'm Melissa Everett and I wrote a book to help Cultural Creatives leave jobs that have not been designed to take either the environmental or human well-being into account and instead, devote their lives to tangible, positive change—according to their heart. My book is *Making A Living While Making a Difference*."

"Hi Melissa!" the group chimes cheerfully.

"Greetings! In my book the first step for cre-

ating the meaningful, holistic life you want is to wake up! In summary, listen, question, listen; wake up to the story you tell yourself and others; wake up to the interconnectedness to everything; wake up to the beauty and pain of the world. Seeing, caring, and connecting to the planetary drama in all of its

forms is also a path to seeing ways out of conflict, stepping out of limiting frames of reference and finding unexpected solutions to problems."

"Hello, Michele, this is Joe Pearce, and I answered your question in Santa Cruz. I told you that parents need to bond to their

own hearts in order to transcend our current culture." (See aTLC highlights on next page)

"I also spent three hours illustrating the intelligence of the heart that has been studied by the Heartmath Institute. Go read my book *The Biology of Transcendence* with a supportive community of like-minded parents."

"Read everything Joe has written, and remember, our children are not the problem, we are as parents. Hi, this is Michael Mendizha." (MM is the author of *Magical Parent, Magical Child*.)

"Yo Mike!"

"As I was saying, children enter this world already bonded to the planet and that bond is obstructed by adults have lost theirs. The challenge is for individual adults, who are themselves the result of this cultural conditioning, to perceive and model in their daily lives a quality of awareness and creative intelligence that lies outside the habitual model, and to do so in relationship with children. Only in this way will the next generation evolve the worldview and capacities needed to meet and solve the challenges we have placed before them. The next generation can't do this without our example and we can't survive the mess we have created without their help.

"Parents can restore their own connection to their hearts through something as simple as Play. You're going to have to read the book—and work together to form nurturing communities."

"Hey, that sounds like our original purpose here. I think we are following our hearts..." Blank stares turn into focused connections.

"Yes you are!" affirms Sherry. Bless her, and all of our wise guides.

To put the world in order,  
we must first put the nation in order;  
to put the nation in order,  
we must put the family in order;  
to put the family in order,  
we must cultivate our personal life;  
and to cultivate our personal life,  
we must first set our hearts right.  
- Confucius



## aTLC Summit Highlights....

**By Ellen Miller**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Summit on Bonding and Attachment: Healing A Nation's Trauma was held April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 2<sup>nd</sup>, at Mount Madonna Center. The Summit convened people as close as Santa Cruz, California and as far as Australia to meld under one roof to engage authentically with each other. What gave the Summit particular credence was the fact that the program was born out of a six month appreciative inquiry process by a dedicated team. The initial attentiveness given to the process of program assembly set a tone of intention and thoughtfulness throughout the Summit. The Summit provided participants with a unique opportunity for harvesting the present collective wisdom which will enable Summiteers to return to their respective communities for further seeding and tending to the new growth.

There were a mixture of keynote presenters such as Katsi (pronounced Kudgy like fudge) Cook, a Mohawk midwife and healer, and Joseph Chilton Pearce who inspired tears of compassion resulting in healing deeper bonds of connection, understanding, mutual trust and love within ourselves and in relationship with each other. Beth Austin took us to our core physiological roots utilizing Trauma Releasing Exercises ( [www.traumaprevention.com](http://www.traumaprevention.com)) that literally shake out trapped biochemical energy held in the body. Kali Wendorf, Creative Director of Byronchild magazine ([www.byronchild.com](http://www.byronchild.com)) invigorated us with a potent spiritual message inspired by her personal seeking.

Participants sat four per round table creating an intimate and supportive atmosphere encouraging people to share insights within the context of an appreciative inquiry process called the World Café ([www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)). A series of structured World Café conversations between participants served as an exploration for further inquiry into daily themes framed as questions. A sampling of some of the questions were as follows: How are we building community among those who care about optimal development in children? What questions help us to bring value and meaning to our personal and/or collective traumas? How are the realized gifts of our trauma primary resources for creating a nonviolent planet? These potent seeds of thought and conversation set into motion a powerful current for participants to carve out their own impressions throughout the Summit. The insights gained during the Summit will continue to source people for many months to come with a felt sense of strength and inspiration.

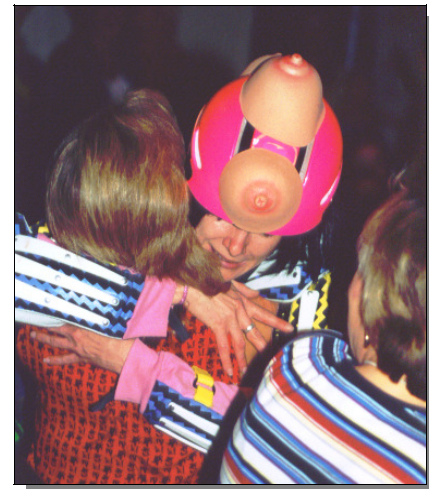
In the evenings we basked in the day's accomplishments with a May Day may pole fiesta, song, dance and a birthday cake to celebrate Suzanne Arm's 60<sup>th</sup> and others including the Alliance for Transforming the Lives of Children. Sunday was truly a cumulative burst of magic that gushed forth springing us into the creative potential with presentations from Michael Toms of New Dimensions Radio helping us to not just bear but perhaps to embrace the pain of the living paradox by relaying the message that insecurity is our only real security.

David Issacs, World Café facilitator, as usual spawned our minds to ponder yet another multifaceted inquiry into how aTLC is creating a flourishing model for collective health and wellness in the lives of children, family and community. Our final day together was indeed bittersweet as we all knew the separation of the bonds we formed over the previous days would be stretched in distance yet remain unbroken. The final closing ceremony brought everyone together in a circle surrounded by an outer ring of redwoods to further deepen the imprint of essential Summit themes such as community, connection, appreciation and recognition of the sacred.

My personal prayer is that each person in attendance at the Summit touches the lives of their family and community in a way that evokes the support needed for each of our life work to blossom and flourish such that we are living the change we wish to see.



Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of *Magical Child* and *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, speaks at the Summit.



Super Breastfeeding Heroine and performance artist Bonnie Davis of *Mamas Remember* gives a comforting hug to someone who was never breastfed.



Liberty Libscomb and son Arden in the tearful closing circle at the end of the summit. Liberty is the treasurer on FNL's board of directors.

# How You Can Get Involved, and Help Families Connect



## Don't Forget! Register With Your Local United Way

Facilitators, you can register your community group with your local United Way office and potentially receive funding from their annual drives. To find your local United Way office, visit them at <http://national.unitedway.org> or call (703) 836-7112. Once you are registered, the United Way will contact FNL's main office and verify your approved status and you will be eligible to participate.

## Donate Your Recipes!

We need your help, your support, your ideas, your artwork and especially your home-made family recipes to submit to our FNL cookbook. We have hopes that this book will be professionally published.

Are any of you familiar with the cookbook "Uprisings Whole Grain Bakers' Book"? It is a great cookbook that is broken up into different sections from each co-op bakery. Each bakery would write out their own recipes as well as add their own artwork. It is beautiful to look at, the recipes are brilliant and the book gives off a warm and communal feeling. We are hoping to capture a similar feeling with our own book.

We are asking each facilitator to collect the recipes from their group members. I will then be working with each facilitator to help organize this book. The quicker the recipes come in, the quicker this book can happen. Below is a list of sections that we will offer in this cookbook. -Hand written recipes and hand drawings from each group -a short paragraph history of each group -quotes from our natural kids -Food Sections within each group section: -First Foods -Toddler Treats -Mama quick meals -Stone Soup -From the Meadow -Salads & Dressings -Main Meals Vegetarian/Non-vegetarian -The Bread Bin -Deserts and

Natural Sweets -On the Road-food for traveling -Natural Craft Recipes. We ask that these recipes be original or changed so much that they have become your own. - And that they would be free from processed cane sugar and colorings.

Please start sending in your treasured recipes to your facilitator. If you are not sure who they are, then please email me, [cm\\_selena@earthlink.net](mailto:cm_selena@earthlink.net), and I'll make sure you have the correct person to send them to. Please ask friends and families to donate a healthy recipe too. Thank you so much for your help and support.

*Selena Mordue, Bainbridge Island, WA*

## Contribute Your Stories, Poems, ART and Articles

Contribute your stories, poems and articles on natural living issues to our website, e-newsletter, or print letter! Writers guidelines for submission is that the writing is your own, not published elsewhere, or with permission reprinted, and in a Microsoft Word document. FNL will be opening online art gallery this spring. If you would like to submit art—paint, photo, or sculpture—to this online gallery, you may be able to sell copies of your work, with FNL keeping a modest commission. Send all inquiries and submissions to [FNLemail@aol.com](mailto:FNLemail@aol.com).

## Make Referrals To FNL's National Natural Living Directory

The national Natural Living Directory is an online resource for families who want to find local practitioners, services, or products.

These resources are listed according to

modality, product, geographic area, and practitioner or business name.

You can submit your own written listings to this directory for \$30 a year. Banners and ads are also available. Check the website for

prices and submission instructions.

Community Groups are encouraged to use this directory and to make referrals to it as a way to compile resources for your group and also raise funds for FNL.

## Support FNL's Online Book and Merchandise Stores

You can support FNL by visiting our online bookstore where we have compiled the best books on natural living issues, both classics and current titles listed through Amazon.com. All of the titles, and other merchandise that you purchase through our online bookstore will be counted toward our Amazon Associates fundraising program.

Don't forget us at birthdays and

holidays. We make it easy to keep up with the most current books by featuring a Book of the Month on the front of our website. This webpage will keep you informed of the latest titles and allow you to support FNL when you purchase them.

The Online FNL Merchandise Store features clothing (including organic t-shirts!), baby clothing, totes, posters, buttons, bumper



*Our FNL logo, created and donated to us by FNL member Vickie Carper in 1999, is featured on products in the FNL Online Store. Thanks Vickie!*

stickers, hats, clocks, mousepads, and more!

The store is managed through CafePress, who can create bulk orders and ship them express to your door. Purchase of these FNL products will help to raise funds for our organization. If you have a product suggestion, let us know and we will try to find or design it for you!

# Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

We started our group a year ago in October of 2003 with ten women who called themselves "Main Line Moms". We knew that we wanted a group to support families who choose to live their lives simply and parent their children in a natural way. Each of us felt isolated in our



Visit the FNL Philly online at:  
<http://www.fnlp.org/index.php>

parenting styles and hoped that we could build a strong community around us of people who made similar choices to our own.

Our primary goal has been to encourage people wherever they are within the spectrum of natural living, whether they adopt all or only some of the perspectives associated with this movement. We began the group as one based on attachment parenting, but quickly found that all of our members were interested in alternative health, home birthing, midwifery, whole foods, informed consent to medical practices,

organic farming and CSAs, positive discipline, alternative education practices, holistic health, vaccination issues, and many other items within the scope Natural Parenting and Living.

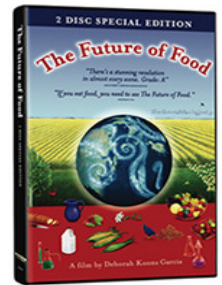
Our group has grown from our

original group of ten women in October of 2003 to almost one hundred families when we joined FNL in October of 2004. We are enjoying the growth and the camaraderie that the group provides, both through our active on-line list as well as our full-social calendar.

We are happy to have found a home with Families for Natural Living and be a part of a larger network of families around the world who are with us in the Natural Living movement.

Sincerely,  
Heather Mariano and Marie Goodwin,  
Facilitators FNL Philly

FNL Philly sponsored a SOLD-OUT public showing of the documentary on Genetically-Engineered food by Deborah Garcia on January 29, 2006 at Bryn Mawr College's Carpenter Library.



FNL President, Lisa Reagan, moderated a question and answer discussion after the film with panelists that included scientists, celebrity advocate Shepherd Ogden, sustainable agriculture farmers, and activists groups. Our thanks go out to our co-sponsors who include, the

- Citizens Alliance for Progressive Health Awareness,
- Arrowroot Natural Market ([www.arrowrootorganics.com](http://www.arrowrootorganics.com)),
- Awesome Foods ([www.awesome\\_foods.com](http://www.awesome_foods.com)), and the
- Mariano Holistic Life Center.

Read Lisa Reagan's interview with Deborah Garcia at [www.byronchild.com](http://www.byronchild.com) and visit the movie's website at [www.Futureoffood.com](http://www.Futureoffood.com).

**NOTE: Other FNL groups are staging public screenings of the Future of Food. If you would like to borrow our public showing copy, call FNL at 1-888-FNL-GRPS.**

# Michigan Community Group Gets Grant for Library Books

*Greater Livingston County (FNL-GLA) in Hartland, Michigan facilitator, Rachel Ernst shares her experience obtaining a local library grant:*

I responded to an ad in the local school districts newspaper which said that the District's Foundation was going to award grants to applicants in the community with project ideas. The criteria were that the project benefit children in the local community.

Fortunately the grant application process was fairly simple. There was a form which I filled out and used our local group's vision/mission statement (our language is based on FNL's core principles).

We stated in our application that anyone in the community would be allowed to borrow books from our library, which would have a "gentle discipline and natural living focus."

We stated that we would advertise the existence of our library on our flyers, website, etc. The application asked if the project was approved by the Board of our organization, to which we answered that we have no Board, in accordance with the FNL guidelines. The application had a space for how much money we were requesting. I requested money for books, magazines, crates, materials and six months worth of meeting room fees, with a range of \$200 to \$1,000 for just books.

The total requested was \$1,270. We were awarded \$500 with one year to spend the money. Since we don't have a local bank account, I had to write a letter stating this and that I needed them to pay me directly. I will turn in receipts at the end of the school's fiscal year. I am personally responsible

for overseeing the library for as long as we have it in existence. If I should ever have to divulge the responsibility, the books purchased with this grant money will be donated to our local library and if the library already has a particular title we will give that to a different group (such as La Leche or another parent group). The grant stated that the funds must be used to support the local community, so we will keep the books in the community (rather than give them to another FNL group). I specified in the grant that a check-out log would be kept to track the library's use. I keep a spreadsheet of the books I'm purchasing and plan to put labels stating the source of each book in our library.

**For more information, contact Rachel at 810-513-1253.**



# Richmond Group Helps VA Celebrate Midwifery Legislation

On May 21, 2005, the FNL Richmond Community Group hosted midwifery advocates from around the state of Virginia for a breakfast discussion of Virginia's new legislation legalizing Certified Professional Midwives to attend homebirths. The day-long celebration also included honoring the Virginia legislators who helped to pass the bills, a performance of the play "BIRTH", a testimonies play about childbirth in America written by Karen Brody and performed by Jax Birth Company. The celebration ended with a Q&A discussion between the audience and an expert panel comprised of the playwright and renowned authors and activists on birth issues. As a 501C3 nonprofit, FNL could not and did not participate in helping to pass the legislation, but we were happy to host the party to celebrate its victory for natural living families! Below are some highlights from the event:

— Delegate Phil Hamilton accepted an award for his efforts to pass the CPM legislation. On March 29, Virginia Governor Mark Warner signed into law two identical bills, HB 2038 (Hamilton) and SB 1259 (Quayle), that provide for the licensure of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). The CPM is the only national credential that requires knowledge about and experience in out-of-hospital settings to attend out-of-hospital birth. Delegate Phil Hamilton, Newport News, and Senator Frederick Quayle, Suffolk, were honored as the primary patrons of this historic legislation.

— Brynne Potter moderated the Question and Answer discussion between the playwright, experts and audience Phil Donahue style with her remote mike. The panelists, were: **Sharron Humenick, MPH, PhD**, the Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Perinatal Education and the former Chair of the Maternal Child Nursing Department Medical College of Virginia at Virginia Commonwealth.

**Ida Darragh**, CPM is the Chairman and Testing Director for the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) [www.narm.org](http://www.narm.org). NARM is an international certifying body whose function is to develop and maintain certification standards for the CPM credential. **Blair Conger, CNM**, from Depaul Midwifery Center, Norfolk, Virginia. **Karen Brody**, Birth's playwright. (see her story on the next page) **Robin Weisbrod**,

**CNM**, practicing midwife in Newport News, Virginia. **Henci Goer**, award-winning medical writer and internationally known speaker, is the author of *The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth*. Her previous book, *Obstetric Myths Versus Research Realities*, is a highly-acclaimed resource for childbirth professionals. An independent scholar, she is an acknowledged expert on evidence-based maternity care. Goer has written consumer education pamphlets and numerous articles for magazines as diverse as *Reader's Digest* and the *Journal of Perinatal and Neonatal Nursing*.

FNL would like to thank all of those people behind the scenes who worked so hard, while being parents, to make this event a success:

— Thanks to Glenda Turner, FNL Richmond Community Group Facilitator, for saying yes to producing this event while pregnant with Jax, who inspired the formation of the acting troupe Jax Birth Company.

— Thanks to Jenny Stevens, Richmond Community Group Facilitator — and Kate Semp for pitching in while Jax was being born and Glenda was recovering! Jenny put together the quilt to thank Brynne Potter and Kate designed all of the print materials, including a beautiful playbill, for the day's event.

— A big thank you to Jack Parrish, director, and the actors who pulled together to perform the play - Kelly Kennedy, Sonya Baines-Corey, Stacy Dowd, Susan Saunders, Harriett Traylor, Holly Gems Timberline - especially Jackie Jones who orchestrated the rehearsals and organized the acting troupe and whose energy carried us all!

— Thanks to Amara Minnisa and Newport News Community Group Facilitators Sara Neuser and Tracy Chai for running our registration and day-of event duties.

— Thank you to these groups for raffle donations and in-kind support: Flutterby-Baby; Full Moon Baby Gear; Theater IV for audition space; Beth Sholom Home of Virginia for rehearsal space; Virginia Commonwealth University for set pieces; PostNet at John Rolfe Parkway, Richmond, VA, for print work; and Jasmine Jones, Madison Jones and Clay Parrish.



Brynne Potter, far left, is presented with a quilt made by Jenny Stevens, FNL Richmond Community Group Facilitator, second from left, from squares designed and contributed by midwifery advocacy groups from around the state—including an FNL square! The quilt was in appreciation for Brynne's hard work - including "camping out in Richmond in hotel for a month and using her gift of gab" - to work with legislators to pass the CPM bill.



Ida Darragh, CPM -- the Chairman and Testing Director for the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) [www.narm.org](http://www.narm.org) -- addresses representatives of midwifery advocates and birth options groups from around the state of Virginia. The group gathered to discuss the new Virginia legislation legalizing Certified Professional Midwives to attend homebirths. NARM is an international certifying body whose function is to develop and maintain certification standards for the CPM credential. Thanks to these midwifery organizations for attending the morning meeting: Commonwealth Midwives Alliance; Harrisonburg Advocates for Midwives Model of Care; Virginia Friends of Midwives; Midwifery Options for Mothers; Motherwise Birth Resources; Childbirth Solutions; Informed Birth Options; International Cesarean Awareness Network; Virginia Chapter of the American College of Nurse Midwives.

## BIRTH, the PLAY

**On Labor Day weekend, September 1 to 4, 2006, join BOLD—Birth on Labor Day—as people gather to read aloud the play Birth. For more information on the play, dates of performances, and on BOLD, visit the website, [www.birththeplay.com](http://www.birththeplay.com).**



**By Karen Brody**

Perhaps I am a pioneer. Someone had to go first. I couldn't believe there wasn't a mainstream play depicting childbirth. Women got *The Vagina Monologues*. But somehow child-

birth has been left out of the dialogue about women's bodies. Nobody wants to touch birth.

Believe me, in the fall of 2003 I knocked on every door of every editor of every mainstream magazine. The response? Lots of shut doors. Either they were all deaf or somebody wasn't interested in hearing the details about childbirth. A prenatal yoga article? Yes. A hypnobirthing piece? Absolutely. But the act of giving birth? The door was shut tight.

"Please don't tell me about the baby coming out," one editor told me.

That made up my mind. I was going in. Women all have vaginas. Maybe that's it. Women have vaginas, but not every woman gives birth. I can't figure it out. I can't figure out why when a woman's vagina opens wider than she ever imagined and another human being comes out this is not something people want to hear about? Someone I know once told me childbirth was "gross and animalistic." Maybe that's it.

So I called everyone I knew and I asked them to call everyone they knew to tell me their birth stories. I sent out requests for birth stories to listservs, alumni magazines, midwifery newsletters. I approached women in supermarkets. The response was overwhelming. I needed a secretary. My days were booked solid with two and often as many

as three phone interviews. I could have scheduled interviews every day for years and not have gotten to all the women who wanted to talk to me.

I'm sorry if I didn't get back to you.

First I thought the birth stories had to be turned into a book. Two weeks later I was convinced they were a series of New Yorker-style articles. Two weeks after that I was planning a documentary film. My head was spinning.

I had never written a play, never thought about writing a play, never wanted to write a play, had no idea how to start writing a play (thank you, Playwrights Forum), but one day I woke up, saw my dead grandfather and great aunt sitting on a couch in my mind, sun shining through a basement window, screaming: This is a play, idiot.

I've chosen seven women's stories. That was the hardest part — choosing only seven. An impossible task. What about women who give birth to stillborn babies at seven months? Birth from a blind woman's perspective? Women who give birth in prisons? Some birth stories had to be dropped. I chose the most typical ones I heard; the most common themes. Namely: epidurals, cesareans and natural births.

I wish I could have included Jodi's story. I spent over three hours on the phone with Jodi in February 2004. Her words touched me deeply. "The day after giving birth," she told me, "I looked like a war victim. Crusty blood all over my body. They didn't even clean me up. Nobody tells you that after birth you look like you were shot from the waist down. People think you're a woman — just deal with it. But if a man had his genitals ripped apart would he be told to just deal with it?"

Jodi, this play is for you.



**Birth's playwright, Karen Brody, front and center, with the actors backstage at FNL's Christopher Newport University showing on May 21, 2005.**

And this play is for Eden, who insisted I didn't want to interview her because she had a quick "uneventful" planned epidural birth. Three hours into the interview I had to politely ask Eden to stop talking. Thanks for your honesty, Eden, for telling me that you are no "earth mother," that you happily chose the epidural so you could "focus on the mission at hand," and that your biggest surprise in giving birth was how much you liked the OB who screamed like a soccer mom at your birth, "Come on, Eden, you can do it!"

I learned a lot from Audrey, a 5-foot-2 body builder, who had the courage to scream, "Get out of my vagina!" at her fifth and last birth. And Kris, who after her second cesarean, tenderly confessed, "I would have told you before I gave birth that if anyone could push a child out it would be me."

And, finally, Beth, a feminist social-worker-turned- childbirth-educator who used a midwife at a birth center for her first birth despite being laughed at by her co-workers. Beth believed so much in birth, that birth "is the one thing only women can do." Yet even with this strong belief her first birth ended up being medicated. "I felt like a failure to the birth movement," she told me. Well, all that changed with birth number two, a feet-first, breech baby that she delivered naturally in the hospital. She sent me Noah's birth announcement: "What a miracle! His birth was the most amazing experience of my life, everything I had dreamed of birth, everything I ever hoped for!"

Rock on, Beth.

Writing *Birth* was a calling. It needed to be written so I wrote it; many days I would say it wrote itself. The seven women you meet in *Birth* are the most typical stories I heard across America. Everything they say was told to me by the mothers I interviewed. I hope their stories crack open a door into a world few of us really, truly know. Birth.

*Karen Brody is the mother of Jacob and Aden, both born at home with midwives in Arkansas. When she's not busy writing or mothering, Karen is a doula. She is a graduate of Vassar College and has a masters in Women and International Development from the Institute of Social Studies in The Netherlands.*

## FNL Partner Profile

**The Alliance for Transforming the Lives of Children or aTLC** envisions a world where:

- Every child is wanted, welcomed, loved, and valued.
- Every family is prepared for and supported in practicing the art and science of nurturing children.
- Adults respect children and honor childhood.
- Children joyfully participate in the vital life of family and community.
- Dynamic, resilient, life-honoring cultures flourish.

**At the heart of aTLC** are our Proclamation and evidence-linked Blueprint of Principles and Actions. These documents synthesize age-old wisdom and leading scientific research supporting optimal human development from preconception through early childhood.

An interdisciplinary group of experts and parents volunteered more than 8,000 hours of dedicated, consensus-based collaboration to create these living documents.

### aTLC's Family Support Network Warmline

The aTLC WarmLine's phone mentors offer consistent, ongoing, and evidence-based guidance, support, and inspiration to enhance effective and conscious parenting.

**To schedule a session call 800-460-6105  
For more information call 888-574-7580  
or email connect at [atlcwarmline.org](http://atlcwarmline.org)**

We are disseminating our findings (and those of our Affiliates) via our website, online discussion group, and electronic newsletter. We also have a guide to children's and parenting books, public presentations, and a summit meeting of leaders in the field. We hope to soon have a downloadable slide show, a speakers bureau, local networking groups, regional conferences, and an international congress. In addition, we continue to compile data supporting the Blueprint of Principles and Actions and will be sponsoring research in areas where none exists.

**Recognizing that our world** is facing unprecedented challenges, we gather and disseminate wisdom

from many different cultures, recommend standards, and inspire research. Together with our affiliates, we promote innovative and progressive educational programs, services, products, and public policies that are committed to transforming the lives of children.

**Serving as an umbrella organization** for its Affiliates, aTLC is supported by an internationally recognized Board of Advisors, generous Contributors, and a growing list of endorsers.

**Please explore** and make use of what is offered on their website at **[www.atlc.org](http://www.atlc.org)**, and support our common vision and mission in whatever ways you feel moved.

**We invite you** to join us in honoring, celebrating, and transforming the lives of our children, our families, and our communities. Together we can begin to heal our world.

**Contact** aTLC at 901 Preston Ave, Suite 400, Charlottesville, VA 22903. 1-888-574-7580 or email

## Our Partnering Organizations

FNL is:



An affiliate of the Alliance for Transforming the Lives of Children, [www.atlc.org](http://www.atlc.org). See above for more information on aTLC.



A partner with the Partnership for Children Health and the Environment, a project of the Institute for Children's Environmental Health, at <http://www.partnersforchildren.org>.



A Partner with the Turn the Tide Foundation, a part of the Center for the New American Dream. Turn the Tide is a program of nine simple actions you can take to have a measurable, positive impact on the environment, and it features an online calculator which will show you that impact right away. Visit online at <http://www.newdream.org/ttoffline/faq.php>.



**Barbara Loe Fisher**

President and Co-Founder  
National Vaccine Information Center,  
Author, *A Shot In The Dark*

**Gary Lushin**

Executive Director  
Commercial Alert

**Jack Travis, MD, MPH,**

Alliance for Transforming  
the Lives of Children  
Author, *The Wellness Workbook*

**Jan Hunt, M. Sc.,**

Natural Parent Project,  
Author, *Parenting from the Heart*

**Jane Sheppard, CMT**

Executive Director  
Holistic Pediatric Association  
Author, *Super Healthy Kids*

**Jeanne Ohm, DC**

International Chiropractic  
Pediatric Association  
[www.icpa4kids.org](http://www.icpa4kids.org)

**Joy Johnson,**

The Centering Corporation,  
Author, More than 100 books on children  
and loss, grief recovery

**Michael Mendizza**

Co-founder of Touch the Future  
CEO, Nurturing Project  
Author, *Magical Parent, Magical Child*

**Kali Wendorf,**

Publisher/Editor, *byronchild magazine*,  
Australia

**Kathi Williams,**

Executive Director  
National Vaccine Information Center

**Larry Palevsky, MD,**

President, American Holistic Medicine  
Association

**Marilyn Milot, RN,**

Founder and Director,  
National Organization of Circumcision  
Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC)

**Pam Leo,**

Alliance for Transforming the Lives of  
Children and Connection Parenting  
Writer and speaker

**Philip Incao, MD,**

Anthroposophical Physician and Writer

**Ted Spence, DDS, ND**

## National Advisory Board Featured Member

**Michael Mendizza**, the CEO of Nurturing, Inc., is an author, educator, documentary filmmaker, and founder of Touch the Future, a nonprofit learning design center found online at [www.ttfuture.org](http://www.ttfuture.org).

The inspiration for *Nurturing* emerged from personal relationships with a wide range of scientists, authors and educators. *Nurturing* delivers the latest and best information on human development to the people who are guiding and mentoring the future of humanity: parents, caregivers, educators, and amateur athletic coaches. *Nurturing* is a true social venture, blending the very best qualities of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, with integrated "systems" approach that will Touch the Future for generations to come.

The future of humanity is being defined today, as the developing human brain meets and is sculpted by the environment/culture. We call the period when this interaction is most obvious childhood. For millions of years human development emerged in harmony with the natural environment. Today human artifacts, beliefs and behaviors, what we call culture, shape the developing brain. Neuroscientists call this reciprocal-dynamic between body and environment cultural biology.

### Touch the Future's Philosophy:

Inherent within each child is the entire evolution of life on this planet. This vast history, with its limitless potential, senses the environment and expresses only those capacities needed to adapt. Nature, including the human brain, is profoundly creative and lazy. Innate potential clearly plays its role; it is, however, the model-environment that predetermines to an indeterminable extent what kind of adults will emerge from childhood. Adults, being shaped by the model-environment, become that model-environment and impose their limited set of skills on children, a cycle that repeats generation after



**Michael Mendizza**

generation. Being distracted by cultural constructs, comparison, contests, competition and entertainment, this conditioning unfolds and habituates seamlessly beneath the child's and adult's awareness.

Human development has reached a turning point. Mounting evidence from a wide range of fields demonstrates that the culture-environment now shaping the human brain is not developing the specific capacities needed by future generations to solve the contradictions inherent in the current model. More of the same, at home, in school, in business and in government, will only compound our problems.

The challenge is for individual adults, who are themselves the result of this cultural conditioning, to perceive and model in their daily lives a quality of awareness and creative intelligence that lies outside the habitual model, and to do so in relationship with children. Only in this way will the next generation evolve the worldview and capacities needed to meet and solve the challenges we have placed before them. The next generation can't do this without our example and we can't survive the mess we have created without their help.

This is what we mean by Touch the Future. All of our efforts are designed to awaken and support this alert awareness and creative intelligence in adults, and by implication, to transform all of childhood.

## Metro Richmond, VA Hosts Sally Fallon



On December 3, 2005, Sally Fallon, author of *Nourishing Traditions* and president of the Weston A. Price Foundation, spoke at the Edible Garden restaurant in Richmond, Virginia. The event was sponsored by the Richmond FNL Community Group, and the Sustainable Agriculture Club of J. Sargent Reynolds Community College. The following is a review of her talk by Lisa Dearden, president of the Sustainable Agriculture Club @ JSRCC. For more information on the club, contact Lisa at [LDearden@lp-networks.com](mailto:LDearden@lp-networks.com).

### By Lisa Dearden

Wow! FNL and the Sustainable Ag Club had a great turn-out for the lecture that we sponsored. We had nine club members, along with many family members and friends. The dinner/lecture was sold out with 40 people attending, and there was still a waiting list. There were many interesting people, some of whom were local, organic farmers. Sandy Fisher from Brookview Farm was there with his daughter, Jane (more about that later). There was grass fed beef/lamb/pork farmer and also a guidance

counselor from a private school – she has been instrumental in turning around their school lunch program and helping the kids to change negative behavior by getting their parents to examine what's in their lunchboxes.

Sally signed books for just a few minutes before we were served a wonderful dinner of a lovely green salad with goats cheese and for the main course, a (local, grass-fed) pork chop with smashed potatoes and greens. Jim (a club member) had been baking all week to prepare for us, apparently, and we were not disappointed. We were offered an assortment of gorgeous desserts, which were all beautifully presented. Lisa Reagan, Cindy Conner (JSRCC professor of sustainable agriculture) and I were fortunate to be able to sit with Sally and her husband during dinner. She is delightful. She was surprised and I'm sure very pleased to hear how much we use her book in our classes and how much it has helped everyone.

Sally gave a wonderful lecture after dinner on "Splendor From the Grass"...all about the benefits of grass fed animals, particularly cows, lamb and pork. It was eye opening for many, and even for those of us in the

club (I think I can speak for all of us) I think we learned a few things about the benefits of drinking milk, especially from animals that are pastured on fast-growing grasses. We saw pictures of people who ate traditional diets, rich in dairy products, and their bone structure (as compared to those who did not eat a traditional diet) was amazingly different. I found myself today looking at people differently and wanting to go ask them what kind of food their mother ate when she was pregnant with them! One of the things that I learned was that grass fed animals need to be fattened up so that their meat actually contains some fat, as the fat (along with the meat) is what makes the grass fed meat so healthy for you. Go figure! Please go to [www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org) for more information about Sally's work. She is president of the Weston A. Price Foundation.

I think everyone really enjoyed the evening. We are making a difference, one person at a time. As we start to bring more people to lecture to our community, more and more people will start to listen. Then, hopefully, we can start our own "localvore" program! Great job to all involved!

## Getting a Leg Up On Natural Living

*Continued from page 7...*

wore as she perused aisle after aisle in search of something she'd never seen and wouldn't even recognize if she were standing right in front of it anyway. My daughters and I immediately befriended her and took her through the maze of natural food offerings and shared with her some of the things she could use as a jump off point into a new way of living. She was happy for the assistance and I could see her visibly growing more comfortable with her choice to change.

Anytime you decide to do something new, it always helps if you have someone or something by which to

gauge your self. What do you do if you are the only person you know that lives the way you wish to? That was a question in need of an answer. The answer has arrived in the form of a non-profit organization known as Baltimore Families for Natural Living, which is designed to provide the supportive, nurturing environment that is so essential and beneficial to ones decision to "go natural".

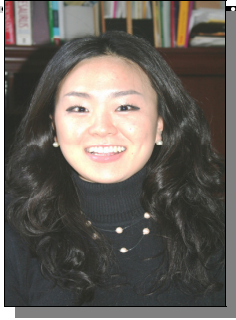
We are an educational organization and community of diverse people who share the belief that we, as individuals, are responsible for our own health. We claim the right to choose how we care for ourselves and we believe that each of us must make informed choices

about how we give birth and raise our families. BFNL serves as a source of information, both for our supporters and for the wider community, about more natural methods of birth and health care.

We offer a network of support for families who wish to educate themselves and take charge of their own health, and we respect the independent choices they make.

Anyone interested in joining our organization, or making a donation or love offerings to support our efforts, please feel free to contact Jamillah Nasir, Ricquel Ricks-Cumbo or Skai Davis at 410-366-4879 or e-mail us at [BaltimoreNatural@earthlink.com](mailto:BaltimoreNatural@earthlink.com).

### Behind the Scenes Support



***Our gratitude to our Spring intern, Leanne Cho, from the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, for all of her hard work for us this year. Thank you Leanne!***

***Our love and gratitude also goes out to Dawn Jolly, a Montana Momma and FNL community group facilitator who works as our website editor! Thank you Dawn! And thank you Rachel Ernst for editing our new brochures!***

### Enough is Enough!

*Continued from page 7...*

At our table that night, as in the rest of our lives, we'd lost the ability to express pride. When compliments came our way we mitigated, made a joke out of it or tried to redirect the focus to someone else. How could we revel in the praise? When achieving the impossible is supposed to be attainable, we see our difficulties as our failings and we are too ashamed to demand the changes required to get the help we need. "It takes a village" is reality, and nowhere is it built into the fabric of our society — access to affordable childcare, quality education, healthy food, help at home and the time to develop deep relationships.

As I sat there that night, I noticed what was beautiful about each of those women. They had forgotten their beauty — self images distorted by the larger society and their own expectations. However, habits are replaceable and culture can be counteracted. Breaking the

cycle begins with us.

***Celebrate your strengths.*** Remember who you are. Make a list of your gifts and explore them. If your self-awareness is so beaten that you can't even form a list, ask a woman you trust to help you begin.

***Practice pride.*** A monthly circle I attend has a seemingly simple exercise: sharing a mothering success story. Listeners offer no prompting — the desire to rescue is unbearable at first — and they cheerfully squash the speaker's attempts to slip in a qualifier. It is comical how often each of us has to struggle to find one thing worthy of pride.

***Support your sisters.*** Encourage them to tell their stories and share their successes — loudly, with a big high-five. Let others witness your glee. Stay in the moment of acknowledgment long enough to feel it fully and enjoy it.

***Reach for realism.*** As new opportunities

come along, weigh your choices and let go of what no longer fits. If things get overwhelming, ask for help.

***Guide the next generation.*** Like canaries in the coalmines, our kids serve as an early-warning system. The contrast between children's natural, healthy selves and the distresses we pass on to them are unmistakable. There is nothing like hearing one of your own negative phrases tossed back at you. If we want the next generation to be free of the prison of perfectionism, we have to let them see us break out.

***Take a deep breath and let go the lie. What you are right now is absolutely enough.***

*Reprinted with permission from the Polishing Stone magazine. Visit them online at <http://polishingstone.com>.*

### Baltimore FNL Creates New Food Co-op

*Continued from page 4...*

for Natural Living, says people who choose to raise their families outside the mainstream do not receive much support, except from one another. "When you make these choices you are considered an oddball," she says. "You need support to do this kind of thing. You need the support of other people in the community, it can be daunting."

"I was a mainstream mom that came into the group. It wasn't like I had to change overnight to be accepted. We've had people bring Happy

Meals for their kids to meetings, and it was just like, 'OK pass the fries.'"

Reagan says that Families for Natural Living does not tell its members how to run their lives. "We don't say that in order to be in the group you can't vaccinate your children," she says. "We just want to empower parents to realize that they do have choices on these issues."

Each Families for Natural Living chapter varies in its beliefs, methods, and practices, but all follow the general philosophies of "conscious

parenting".

She says she looks forward to the growth of the organization here. "The Baltimore chapter is really doing a lot of great things," Reagan says.

Contact Baltimore Families for Natural Living at 410-662-8638 or their website at <http://groups.msn.com/BaltimoreFamiliesforNaturalLiving>.



## Natural Living Glossary Sampler

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**Full Online Glossary at [www.familiesfornaturalliving.org](http://www.familiesfornaturalliving.org).**

**Anti-Career** is a term coined by spiritual teacher and religion professor Rick Jarow to emphasize the importance of decoupling our lives from habitual reward systems and learning to be true to our own ways of thinking about success.

**Attachment Parenting** - is a philosophy based in the practice of nurturing parenting methods that create strong emotional bonds, also known as secure attachment, between the infant and parent(s). This style of parenting encourages responsiveness to the infant or child's emotional needs, and develops trust that their emotional needs will be met. As a result, this strong attachment helps the child develop secure, empathic, peaceful, and enduring relationships. From Attachment Parenting International.  
<http://www.attachmentparenting.org/index.html>

**Bio-Cultural Conflict** - refers to a relatively new field called Cultural Biology. The brain is constantly, moment by moment adapting to the environment. For most of life on the planet, the environment was nature. In the past few hundred years the natural environment has been replaced by artifacts of human culture. Now the brain (and everything it affects) is adapting itself to culture. The brain created culture which is now cycling back and creating the brain. This reciprocal dynamic is what is meant by Bio-Culture. Obviously there is an implied conflict between the billions of years of nature being the primary stimulus for brain development, with its genetic history and memory and the extremely new affect that culture is having on the system. This is the Bio-Cultural Conflict. By Michael Mendizza, <http://ttfuture.org/services/>.

**Bonding** - The word bonding has always been misleading. The real challenge is penetrating through the false perception that we are separate entities-objects that need to be artificially glued together. What we call bonding is a state in which this false perception of separation is dissolved, for a moment or a lifetime, with our children, with nature, with a kite, a kitten, surfboard, mother, husband, neighbor, or presumed enemy. Optimum states of relationship, Flow, The Zone, Original Play, Enlightenment are all "bonded" states. Life is one, unitary, whole movement. The mother and her unborn baby share the meaning of every sensation, of every hormone, every emotion, every environmental encounter, every thought. And were it not for a gross distortion in perception and consciousness we and our children would continue to share this meaning with the entire universe as we unfold and embrace ever expanding states of relationship. We are not separate individuals. We live in a uni-verse, one song, not two of ten billion. The child is born into the bonded state, and would remain there if it were not for the false fears that we adult's impose, with the best of intention, on ourselves and them. Imagine a bonded baby encountering and being mentored by a truly bonded adult/environment. This is what nature expects and has invested billions of years to achieve. By Michael Mendizza, <http://ttfuture.org>.

**Code of Justinian** — "Ancient Rome's Code of Justinian guaranteed to all citizens the use of the 'public trust,' or commons – those shared resources that cannot be reduced to private property, including the air, flowing water, public lands,

wandering animals, fisheries, wetlands, and aquifers... Until 1870, a factory releasing even small amounts of smoke onto public or private property was operating illegally, and courts had no option but to forbid the activity. As late as 1913, the US Supreme Court declared that it was 'inconceivable that public trust assets could slip into private hands.'" From *Crimes Against Nature* by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

**Deep Ecology** — is a term coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess to describe the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life on earth. This recognition calls on all of us to find new ways to live and work that restore the natural environment and human communities.

**Heart-Centered Parenting** – A phrase coined by Families for Natural Living to explain that holistic living begins with cultivating a heart-centered awareness, that is not parent, child, or expert, culture-centered. FNL advocates parents making holistic choices for the benefit of themselves first, then their families, communities and planet. FNL helps parents who want to become heart-centered to find the support, resources, and networking they need to address the Bio-Cultural Conflict (see previous column).

**Holism**— is an attempt at synthesis, an attempt at bringing together many currents of thought and development. It is not a system of philosophy. Holism embraces INTERDEPENDENCE which TEACHES US THAT THERE ARE NO SINGLE ISSUES because it's one whole that can be addressed only by gathering all the parts, which never were separate, through a practice of personal awareness.

**LOHAS** — Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability describes a \$228.9 billion U.S. marketplace for goods and services focused on health, the environment, social justice, personal development and sustainable living. The consumers attracted to this market have been collectively referred to as Cultural Creatives and represent a sizable group in this country. Approximately 30 percent of the adults—one in four—in the U.S., or 63 million people, are currently considered LOHAS Consumers. The emergence of the Cultural Creatives as market drivers is unparalleled in U.S. history. Cultural Creatives are the basis of the LOHAS market. The interconnections between global economies, cultures, environments, and political systems play a large role in the holistic worldview of the typical LOHAS Consumer, but equally important are the interconnections of mind, body and spirit within individuals. (from [www.lohas.com](http://www.lohas.com))

**Sustainable living** - is an approach to social and economic, indeed, all activities, for all societies, rich and poor, which is compatible with the preservation of the environment. It is based on a philosophy of interdependence, of respect for life as well as non-living parts of Nature, and of responsibility for future generations. There is no single path towards a sustainable future. Each person, community, ethnic or religious group, region, country, or culture can search for its own unique approaches based on historical roots, technologies, population dynamics and specific natural conditions. Sustainable living choices support an informed, democratic and healthy citizens.

## **Our Mission Statement:**

Families for Natural Living,  
A 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization,  
Provides Resources, Education, and Support  
To Inspire The Creation of Communities  
Seeking Wholeness Locally and Globally.  
  
We Welcome All  
Who Wish to Make Informed Choices,  
For Holistic Health Care, Conscious Conception,  
Birthing, Breastfeeding, Attachment Parenting,  
Schooling, Nutritious Whole Foods,  
And Environmentally Conscious Living.

## **IF YOU WANT TO START YOUR OWN COMMUNITY GROUP OR TO MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO FNL:**

Mail your check to:

**Families for Natural Living,  
P.O. Box 3653  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-3653**

To see a **complete list of national community groups**, or  
for more information about FNL, visit our website at  
[www.FamiliesForNaturalLiving.org](http://www.FamiliesForNaturalLiving.org)  
or email us at [FNLemail@aol.com](mailto:FNLemail@aol.com)  
or phone us at OUR NEW HOTLINE:

**1-888-FNL-GRPS**

**(1-888-365-4777)**

**Editor's Note:** FNL encourages its supporters to share their informed and unique natural living decisions with other families in the pages of our newsletter. FNL hopes to present diverse and personal experiences to other parents as a means of connecting our group and educating the public about the benefits of natural living choices. The publication of these diverse experiences does not mean that FNL endorses the personal views presented within these articles. FNL is not affiliated with any political or religious organization.

## **FNL's Board Of Directors**

**Lisa Reagan**, President, is a co-founder of Families for Natural Living. Lisa has worked as an investigative journalist for 16 years and is the US Contributing Editor to *byronchild*. She currently serves as the parent representative on the board of directors for the Holistic Pediatric Association ([www.hpakids.org](http://www.hpakids.org)). She is a Reiki healer, organic gardener and lives with her family on their farm in Toano, Virginia.

**Patty Ogden Gillette, RN**, Vice-President, co-founder of the Southside, VA, community group, that was originally named "Mothering Friends". The Southside Community Group celebrated their 10th anniversary in 2004. Patty is a Bradley Method of Natural Childbirth instructor, doula, and an aspiring midwife. She is active in women's rights issues, and works actively to legalize direct entry midwifery in Virginia. Patty is the mother of three children, Marley 11, Natalie, 9, and Quinn, 6. Both Natalie and Quinn were born at home.

**Marie Goodwin**, Secretary, is the community group facilitator of the FNL Philadelphia Community Group.

**Liberty Lipscomb**, Treasurer, is a Bradley Childbirth Instructor and mother to two boys. She has an Education degree from Brown University but finds her time better used at home unschooling, reading and writing. Motherhood and parenting has opened an entirely new way of life and thinking for she and her husband and she loves nothing more than to assist other mothers in finding the doorway to their own female/family empowerment and joy. She lives in Harwinton, Connecticut.

**Theresa Collier, ND**, is the president of the Virginia Naturopath Association and facilitator for the Metro Richmond Community Group in Virginia.

# Find Your Community or Create Your Own

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FNL began in 1996 as an underground, grassroots support group for hundreds of home-birthing families in the location of the *first*

American Revolution, the Historic Triangle of Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown in southeastern Virginia.

On the advice of a direct-entry midwife, we created our own supportive community by sharing our experiences, sources of information, and offering our respect to one another for our individual, informed and loving choices for our children through weekly meetings, speaker events, online cybergroups and our newsletter.

In 1998, FNL was granted its 501 (C)3 nonprofit status and in 1999, we began to receive requests from families outside of our area who wanted our help to start their own

community groups.

As parents who understand that we are Cultural Creatives, we realize it is not always possible to practice the healthy ideals of natural living in our current culture (see page 18 for a glossary of terms), but having a community for support helps! Hence our Guilt-Free Parenting motto!

It is with great empathy and respect for parents who want to make healthy choices, we have created for ourselves this volunteer, grassroots organization, with the intention of empowering ourselves to be the best parents we can be.

We strive to do our "best" parenting by beginning with ourselves and practicing self-nurturing as a way to model our choices for our children. While FNL does not advocate specific modalities, we do encourage parents to make their own unique conscious, compassionate and informed choices.

To help facilitators get started, FNL now has a *Gathering Guide* that contains pdf materials like flyers, posters, press releases, bumper stickers, contact cards, and complete instructions in a step by step format. You can also find meeting topics, brochures, handouts and past group's suggestions for discussions and event planning. The *Gathering Guide* is passcoded for facilitators who have submitted an application to start a group, but will also be available in May 2006 in print and CD format.

Facilitators also find support and direct contact with board members and other facilitators through our yahoogroups and hotline support. Existing groups, facilitator applications, FAQs and group guidelines are all accessible from links on the front page of our website at [www.familiesfornaturalliving.org](http://www.familiesfornaturalliving.org).

Or call us at 1-888-FNL-GRPS.



## "RAISING THE RE-GENERATION!"

Families for Natural Living  
P.O. Box 3653  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Phone: 1-888-FNL-GRPS  
Email: [FNLemail@aol.com](mailto:FNLemail@aol.com)

FNL is an international grassroots, 501C3 nonprofit educational organization, by parents for parents who wish to make conscious, compassionate and informed choices for their children. We welcome your tax-deductible donations!

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