

The Northfield GRAPEVINE

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March 1, 2002

Important Calendar Dates

Planning Meeting on 3/23
Big Party in NH on April 12-14
June 2002 Conference is June 16 - 22

Mark these in your calendar right away, and enjoy the Northfield Community year-round.

New Illegal Substances Policy

Dear Northfielders,

After a serious incident of the use of illegal substances by teenagers at last Summer's Conference, the Executive Committee has struggled with how to end the continuing violation of the community's prohibition on the use of illegal substances. This prohibition reflects the rules of the Northfield School and state and Federal law. With regard to that incident, the Executive Committee has required an adult, who has admitted providing alcohol to consumers under the age of 21, to miss the next Conference, but hopes that that person will continue to be a member of our community and return in 2003.

After discussion with the community members attending last month's MidWinter Conference, the need for an unambiguous, concise, and enforceable policy to protect both the community as a whole and its individual members is clear. Therefore, the Executive Committee has adopted the following policy effective immediately:

1. Any supplier of illegal substances, including the provision of alcoholic products to anyone under the age of 21, will be required to immediately leave the Conference at which that action occurs and not attend the next Midwinter and Summer Conferences.

2. Any consumer of illegal substances, including the consumption of alcoholic beverages by anyone under the age of 21, or any person present at a gathering where

illegal substances are consumed, will be required to immediately leave the Conference at which that action occurs and not attend the next Midwinter and Summer Conferences.

3. If a supplier or consumer of illegal substances, as defined above, is under the age of 18, that person's family or sponsoring family, will also be required to immediately leave the Conference. Such a family is welcome to attend future Conferences.

Given the seriousness of the consequences of violating this policy and its impact on the family or sponsoring family of violations of this policy, parents are urged to discuss this matter with their families and guests prior to registering for the Conference. To facilitate parental supervision, families and their guests will be housed in the same building.

We realize the severity of this policy, but see no alternative if we are to stop the illegal and dangerous violations of Northfield's rules and Massachusetts and Federal law. We hope that community members will understand the need for this policy and abide by it so that the consequences detailed above will never occur.

Sincerely, the Executive Committee

(Len Fleischer, Betsy Taylor, Peggy Andreas, Roger Bunker, Graceanna Hawley, Andrew Mason, Maeve Blackman, Jim Peters, Ron McClain)

Other Important News from the Executive Committee

In addition to the Substance Abuse Policy, the EC has been deliberating about some other issues that they hope you will pay attention to:

1. **Registration:** It is very difficult to plan for the June conference when it is undetermined how many folks will show up, and who those people are. Please help by registering early. This is especially true for families with children, so that can appropriate plans and staffing can be developed for the Youth Program. Last year we were surprised and overwhelmed by the large number of children coming to Northfield, and it is a high priority to solve this problem. As in the past, there will be a 20% discount on registration fees for early registration before 5/1. For families registering after 5/20, there will be a \$25.00 per child late registration fee. The late registration fee will be in addition to the cap on family registration. Please understand that

this late fee is not intended to dissuade anyone from coming, only to create an incentive for families to help us come up with a plan that makes the week work best for all the children.

2. **Linens:** On the registration form this year, there will be a separate line where each attendee can choose to reserve linen sets at \$9 per set. This is the cost to us for getting these linens from the school. To help you each reduce the cost of attending Northfield, families may save that \$9 per person if they bring their own linens (blankets, towels, sheets, pillow cases, pillows, bed pads).

3. **Exchange rate:** The Executive Committee is aware that the exchange rate between U.S. and Canadian currency may negatively impact the ability of some of the Canadian members to attend. In cases where the exchange rate is a barrier to attendance, please apply for financial assistance.

Planning Committee Report

The Program Chairs report that they are enthusiastic about the way this summers program is shaping up. Speakers for four of the five conference hours are confirmed. From our own conference "family," we have Pit Pinegar, as well as Ann Acheson and Jenny Kerns; then we welcome Bob and Nan Tannenbaum from Tucson, Arizona. The Tannenbaums are retired psychiatric social workers who now volunteer for Hospice and for the Red Cross where they are part of the Disaster Team ready to go wherever disaster strikes to work with the survivors -- they were at Ground Zero. Also agreeing to do a Conference Hour is Debbie Little, the priest in charge of the Boston Common Ministry, primarily to the homeless. I have to tell you that it was the fantastic web site that Peter Bloch created for us that convinced her to come.

Nancy Ramsden and Chantal Bassous are the Workshop Coordinators, and they have already arranged a great preliminary list that sounds enticing and nicely balanced between serious and playful:

- **Creating Permanent Name Tags**, the Peters family
- **Creative Play**, Lynn Runnels

- **Kids Workshop**, Peter Bloch
- **Drumming and Music**, Kathy Lowe
- **Egroup Training**, Frank Lombard
- **Violence and Me**, Dolly Tennell and Nancy Ramsden
- **Sex and Aging**, the Oshersons and Betsy Stout
- **Writing White**, Annie O'Brien
- **D.J. 101**, Frank Grillo

Nancy and Chantal have others in the works, and we will hear about those soon.

We are also hoping that anyone who has something they really want to share with a group will make use of Tree Sessions. These happen immediately after supper outside Gould, weather permitting, anyone interested in the topic simply joins the presentor. It is very informal and has been valuable in the past. You will be hearing more about this later.

The next planning meeting is at Julie and Bob Smiths in Newton Highlands, MA on March 23, starting at 10:00 am. For details and directions, call them at 617-244-9599, or Maeve at 603-798-5934. All are welcome!

We can't wait for summer! See you there, if not sooner.

Maeve, Andrew and Jim

MidWinter Chronicles

Lindsay Freese

The absence of snow at the Rolling Ridge Conference Center over Mid-winter week-end did nothing to dampen spirits at this year's annual event, although many familiar faces were missing as attendance was down from prior years.

After dinner, and lethal quantities of ice cream, the Troika and guests met for an Executive Committee meeting while others wrapped themselves in flowing scarves joining Nori Newman for sacred circle dancing followed by games, conversation, and music continuing into the evening. With more members of the community arriving on Saturday morning the week-end moved into full swing with singing in rounds led by Betsy Taylor and a wonderful workshop led by Betsy Stout and Annie O'Brien entitled "Shadow Play," an opportunity to peer into our dark shadow sides and out positive gifts. The workshop also played the role of preparing us for this summer's theme of "Shadow and Light." In the afternoon Jenn Andreaus shared her knowledge of labyrinths helping us to create small finger-size versions. A group met to discuss the Children's Program and the impact of rapidly increasing numbers of children attending the summer conference.

At night Nick Page joined us for "Power Singing." If it's hard for anyone to believe that this man could move singing at Northfield to new heights seek him out and join him for a "Power Sing," there is truly nothing quite like it. I for one would love to see him doing more at the summer conference. And, as always Frank Grillo's DJ talents rocked the rest of the evening away.

Sunday arrived with a community discussion centering on recent concerns with the use of illegal substances at Northfield last summer and during prior years. The Executive Committee and those attending discussed their thoughts the subject, and better ways to address this issue in the future including consequences, parental roles, and an increased role of the Community Council, among many other thoughts. The Executive Committee left the meeting with much input to aid in their difficult task of helping the community work with this important issue. We ended the morning gathering with Sacred Circle (Ah...Vespers, Reflections...) and departed looking forward to June, which if you check your calendar isn't really that far away is it! Register early!!

www.thenorthfieldconference.org

This is the brand new web site that celebrates the Northfield Conference. Not that it is easy to capture in words and pictures what really happens in June each year! Nevertheless, we hope it will help bring in more newcomers. Feel free to use it to explain Northfield to your friends and relatives. If you look at the web site and have any thoughts about things that you wish were included, or errors that need correcting, or any other thoughts, please contact me and I will work on it. Thanks, Peter Bloch

From Susan Connolly

Dear Friends, as some of you know and for those who don't, my daughter Maura crossed over on Dec. 09. She was 36. We had a memorial service for her on Jan 19 and flowers arrived at the church from Northfield. I can not begin to tell you how beautiful they were and how touched we were by their arrival. To know that a community of people is in my life that truly cares is awesome. Thank you so much for your support and love. Maura sustained injury to her brain on the 6 of Dec. On that day, my daughter, Rebecca, had a vision of Maura sitting in the center of a circle of elders and they put a white robe around her. She took that to mean that Maura would not survive. I believe that part of the community of elders were the relatives that our Northfield Community lost over the last year and that they had come to greet her and to welcome her. I also, through vision, saw them come one other time before to help a young man who had perished and who was terribly lost. They gently gathered him up in a circle of love and guided him. I hope I have not distressed any one by this admission because to me it is sustaining and causes me great peace to know they were there for both of these young souls. Blessings to them all and to our community.

April Party in NH

Does this sound like fun to you: a weekend-long party in the lakes region of NH, surrounded by many, many Northfielders, AND NO MEETINGS?

So go to your calendar right now and block off the entire weekend of April 13. It will be at our home, which is 2 hours north of Boston, 1 hour from Keene, and 4 hours south of Montreal. We have some extra beds, lots and lots of floor space, and camping is a possibility for the hale and hardy. Plus there is a wonderful B&B just 50 yards away.

What will we do? Chat, eat, play, drum and sing, massage each other's shoulders, eat some more, draw, walk, dream, and NO MEETING, really!!!

Contact us if you are coming, we will give you the crucial details. We hope you all can come.

With much love, Peter, Kathy and Tom Bloch