



The Center for Environmental
Transformation

2011 Annual Report

Introduction

This past year saw many things come to fruition at the Center. This report will detail the fruits of our labor, fruits which are possible only because of the tremendous dedication, hard work, and generosity of many people, particularly the members of the Board of Trustees and the Operations Group. With each of us doing our “bit” we have been able to accomplish great things at the Center.

The Mission

Although founded out of a faith community, rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition, the Center directs its efforts to all people, particularly those who live in the neighborhood of Waterfront South and the City of Camden, NJ. We seek to educate people into a more environmentally responsible way to live on our planet, Earth. Equally important, we seek to engage in sustainable modes of food production, storm water management, and waste recycling for the benefit of the people of our neighborhood and the residents of the entire city.

The Center

In 2010 we were able to finish the renovation of the old convent at Sacred Heart Church, making it ready to house people who would come to our neighborhood to participate in the “great work” of the Center. In 2011 we were able to welcome six different groups to our space. A group came from Neumann University. Another group came from Bishop Eustace Preparatory School. A third came from



The common room of the Center

Villanova University. Another involved a group of young people from Sacred Heart Church. During the summer we hosted two sets of students from Loyola-Blakefield High School in Baltimore. This past fall we hosted a group from King's College. In total, 100 people spent either a weekend or a week with us.

The staffing of these retreats was done by members of the board and the operations group. Andrea Ferich, Director of Sustainability Initiatives at the Center, was responsible for most of the work that the groups did as they did a tremendous amount of work in the Greenhouse, Eve's Garden, the fruit orchard and the community gardens. These groups also worked in Sacred Heart School, tutoring children after school or assisting teachers during the school day. There was also collaboration with the Heart of Camden in the demolition of the old firehouse on Broadway, which will be home to an artists' collaboration. Our visitors also worked in the demolition of a house on the corner of Broadway & Ferry which will be home to a writers' house. In addition, there were plenty of empty lots that were "greened" by our eager visitors.

In addition to the service rendered by our visitors to the Center and the greater



Waterfront South community, there was also programming done in the evening or during the day, depending on the work schedule. This programming was coordinated by the Programming subcommittee of the operations groups. The goal of the programming is two-

Bishop Eustace, at the Center

fold. On the one hand, we want to educate our visitors on various aspects of sustainability and environmental justice. On the other hand, we hope to facilitate a personal transformation for each visitor, so that they return to their homes different people in terms of their sense of responsibility for the earth and all those who live on it. To these two ends, visitors are often given an eco-tour of the neighborhood, so that they can see face to face some of the costs of the lifestyles we all live. We watch the DVD "Poet of Poverty," which tells the story of Fr. Michael Doyle and the neighborhood of Waterfront South. We engage various groups in carrying capacity simulations to understand the tension between the unlimited reach of human desire and the limited supply of resources to satisfy those desires. We ask them to reflect on the work they do each day, as well as to reflect on their experiences with the people of the neighborhood whom they meet and with whom they work. We explain the notion of sustainability, challenge them to think about their own consumer choices, about the waste they create, and about the food they eat. At the end of their time with us, we ask them to make a commitment to do something in their lives that is a reflection of what they've learned with us. Finally, we bless them, and send them home, as ambassadors for the Center, but more importantly, for the earth we all call home.

It has been a powerful affirmation of the dream we had back in 2005, that our neighborhood of Waterfront South might be the perfect location for people to come face-to-face with the consequences of the way we live and how to make a difference. We record the comments that our visitors make at the end of their time with us.

Remarks made by Center retreat participants

We hung out with these kids who are bright and energetic, but they don't have the same opportunities that we have, so we ought to be appreciative of what we have.

This week helped me to become simpler and to appreciate what we have.

Learning goes both ways. All of us who have more, and are privileged, and have wild ambitions, and the people around here have simple ambitions. One of the things I can take away is to live simple, not asking for what I want, but for what I need.

Camden helped us grow together as a group.

What impacted me most on this trip was Sacred Heart School. The classes were overcrowded and the building was a bit old. The teachers had passion for their students' success and for the future of Camden. The children all loved Camden even if it has flaws. It truly inspired me when Fr. Doyle said the work to beautify the neighborhood was for the children.

There are hidden gems in every corner of the world. Stereotypes are usually wrong... that's what I take from my time in Camden.

On the eco-tour we saw the burnt out factory down the street, then later that day we were taking bricks strewn from that destroyed building to make the foundation for a new shed at Eve's Garden. From destruction and despair comes a new foundation and life. That's the lesson I take from Camden.



King's College, October 2011

I'm struck by how much the city of Camden has changed since what's depicted in the Poet of Poverty movie, and how everyone is working together to make it a better place. I'm also struck by how much we take things for granted while other people are wishing they had it.

It is clear that the experiential learning we build into the retreat experiences at the Center have had an impact on those who have spent time with us. We encourage them to build on that in their home communities or at their universities. We recognize that a retreat experience can create a wonderful sense of commitment and inspiration in the participants, but that it can quickly diminish unless there are ways to keep that commitment and inspiration strong.

To that end, a goal we've set ourselves is to invite those who have made a retreat with us to return to staff a retreat for another group. The Center

operates through volunteers, so we hope to have future retreats that are staffed, in part, by those from other communities.

During the summer we had an intern with us. William Stehl, a member of the campus ministry staff at Villanova University, spent two weeks with us. He was the resident staff for the two weeks that Loyola-Blakefield was with us.

He provided wonderful supervision to the work the students were doing, as well as facilitation of the reflection the students did during the week. His presence was a blessing.



There are still renovations that need to be completed at the Center. The original porch must

Loyola-Blakefield HS, July 2011

be torn down and rebuilt. A capital campaign is currently underway to make that possible. We also want to redo the front entrance, something we hope our capital campaign can make possible. Finally, we have still to replace all the windows on this old building. We are very close to the next installment of windows, which will reduce number of windows to replace to 12.

This past year we did finish the remodeling of the last inside room, the former Sacred Heart Clinic. It is now called the Wangari Maathai Room after the late 2004 Nobel Prize winner from Kenya who started the Green Belt movement which has planted more than thirty million trees in sub-Saharan Africa, the Green-Belt movement. This room will be multi-purpose, but the main purpose will be to a quiet space for prayer and reflection.

We also winterized the front entrance which had no insulation whatsoever, making it highly inefficient in terms of heating and air conditioning. That has been rectified for this winter, though as stated above, we want to renovate the entire front entrance.

from the Director of Sustainability, Andrea Ferich



Waterfront South Farmers Market

The Center has reached a tipping point in its work in South Jersey. After years of building and chiseling away at its mission, now like a stable and healthy forest, the Center has brought together the resources needed to see the mission of environmental justice coming to fruition. Through empowering youth and community residents in green infrastructure and environmental justice initiatives, completing the 24 bed retreat center, and solidifying with partner organizations in the city and region, the Center is seeing this mission of environmental justice achieved at an increasingly exponential rate.

It is lovely to look back at the moleskin calendar of 2011 and see all the seeds, youth, young adults, neighbors and organizations from upstream and downstream who came together at the Center to do their part for environmental justice. Growing a farmers market, teaching groups that stay at the Center, giving environmental justice reality tours, standing beside once vacant lots to see the manifestation of a dream for beauty and healing of the earth: we are all loving our neighbors better. This tipping point is real in that a critical mass of people from inside and outside Camden now know and see it rising from the ashes. During 2011 110 individuals came to Camden to stay overnight for a weekend or week, to do their part in this transformation, and to learn to better love their neighbors. Nearly one thousand more people came during the first Saturday work days, volunteering during the week, or with their school group to learn about sustainability and the ways in which we can create jobs that help to heal the environment, and the little things that can be done to make a difference. Together the volunteers who worked at the Center contributed 14,110 hours of labor.

Part of what sets the Center apart is our ability to address systemic problems through alliance building and collaborative networking. Organizations such as the Rutgers Water Resource Department, Sustainable Cherry Hill, Sustainable Jersey, the Cloud Institute, the Environmental Leadership Program and Rutgers Center for The Arts have helped to bring necessary resources for sustainability to Camden City.

From March 2003- December 2011 the number of people murdered in Philadelphia and Camden combined (3,474) nearly equaled the amount of Americans killed during combat in Iraq (3,517). Seeking environmental justice through sustainability takes on a different meaning in this context. Yet 2011 saw significant progress in this city in regards to green infrastructure development with the advancement of the Camden City Food Security Advisory Board, the Camden SMART (storm water management and resource training) Initiative, the Camden Green Team and many achievements by the Waterfront South Environmental Network. The Center strengthened its relationship with individuals from Sustainable Cherry Hill, launching regional map making initiatives, charting the food system, building rain gardens, providing native plants for these rain gardens, as well as educating people upstream as to the interconnected relationships within the Delaware River watershed. Having taken an active role in alliance building this year, I was appointed co-chair of the



Waterfront South Farmers Market

Camden City Food Security Advisory Board, the Waterfront South Environmental Network, and founding member of the Camden Green Team. This great work, joined with the “ground” work of planting seeds and knocking on doors, suggesting best practices for local industries, and partnering

with other food system and green infrastructure organizations, earned the Center the US EPA Environmental Achievement Award in 2011.

This past year over 500 youth have participated in Center programming focused on education for sustainability in the Camden school system and on site at our



Neighborhood children after a hard morning's work in the garden

greenhouse, orchard, and garden locations. The most important thing we accomplished this year was the hiring of eight Junior Farmers who worked in the greenhouse and gardens, assisted in running the Farmer's Market and helped with the Friday afternoon nutrition and cooking sessions. Working closely with their parents, we provide opportunities for them to become financially literate and establish savings accounts at Susquehanna Bank, located on the river in downtown Camden.

Below is a list of Camden organizations the Center worked with during 2011; they worked with us at Center in significant numbers.

Urban Promise: 80

Molina School: 90

Waterfront South Youth: 23

Soul of Camden: 25

The Butterfly Program: 12

Clues: 12 community leaders

BioBlitz: 35

Sacred Heart School: 175

Bees Pr: 120

NJ Workgroup: 50

Camden Watershed

PRUP

Rowan's Upward Bound: 25

Respond Seniors 15

The youth were educated for sustainability and learned how to connect and create with the possibilities around them. The youth learned valuable leadership skills and were trained in financial literacy. Neighborhood



Neighborhood leaders at bread oven

leaders prepared slow food and developed a nutrition curriculum. We gardened together, made movies, led cooking classes, made our own maps (greenmap.org), helped to grow over 2,000 pounds of chemical free produce, over 12,000 heirloom seedlings, and learned what we can do to create and increase the demand for healthy food in Camden. In addition we grew 2,000 native pollinator plants that are available for rain gardens.

Parents are invited to all the events that we do. They participate in growing the food, planting the seeds, teaching cooking classes, bringing vegetables home from the farmers markets with recipes and addressing financial literacy. The mandatory establishment of the



The Center's Greenhouse, May 2011

savings accounts for the Junior Farmers greatly impacted the parents. Almost none of the parents had established a culture of saving prior to the mandatory creation of the savings accounts for their children who were Junior Farmers. 15% of what each Junior Farmers earns goes into their savings account.

Additionally the opportunity was made available to all residents of Camden to receive a stipend for working with the Center and gardens city-wide. The Rutgers Social Work Department was awarded a large grant from Americorp to hire local Camden residents to grow food in various locations around the city. The Center was a major location for this initiative, working with 7 resident women in the various gardens around the neighborhood from June-November. This program was quite successful, with the women taking on the role of garden mothers connecting with the youth in the Center's programming, helping with cooking instruction of the neighbors about the role of food in healthy lifestyles.

As stated above, we grew over 2,000 pounds of chemical free heirloom vegetables and herbs. This produce was distributed to neighborhood residents who work in the garden, sold at the Waterfront South Farmers Market at affordable prices, and the rest was used during weekly cooking classes to demonstrate tasty in-season cooking techniques. The goal of this last activity is to increase the demand for healthy food.

We raised 9 egg producing chickens, distributing those eggs to the Junior Farmers and to neighborhood children who came to Center programming. We also used the eggs in our Friday cooking classes.

In addition to our garden production, we made and sold 30 rain barrels. Some were completely finished; others were ready for finishing by the buyers.

We teamed up with GreensGrow, a non-profit local produce aggregator, to create a weekly farmers market at the Center. One of the things we came to learn is that the people in the neighborhood are quite unfamiliar with fresh vegetables, particularly the variety, and that we need to do more preparation.

We filmed, edited, and produced 9 videos for education and promotion of our mission. We built a new garden at our sister organization, Fellowship House, and laid the foundation for a new shed to be built in 2012. Finally, the Center continued to build an ecological liturgical calendar, a creative calendar begun several years ago connecting eco-agricultural principles to religious themes and celebrations to create new traditions of sustainability.

The Center helped to organize community gardens around the city, as well as brought together an array of groups from a generous investment from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, including the Soul of Camden, Comienzos and Art-of- Fact. The Center was certified as a rain garden landscape installer, as well as an Educator for Sustainability through the Cloud Institute. Andrea was selected by the Rutgers Center For the Arts



Preparing the community garden for planting

as an Artist in residence at Molina School and Respond Senior Center in the collaborative installation of 2,000 native plants with mural artist Pedro Ospina.

I look forward to 2012 and working with all those who join us at the Center.

Andrea

Communication, Media & Outreach



Neumann University, spreading mushroom soil



Watering the seedlings

It is critical for our success that people throughout the region learn about our efforts. To address that need we can report the following accomplishments:

1. The monthly e-newsletter was sent each month of 2011. This newsletter includes a reflection from the President of the Board as well as a list of announcements about upcoming events, accomplishments by the Center, as well as alerts about events sponsored by our sister organizations.

Our email distribution list now has 450 members. This newsletter is also posted on our website and on our Facebook page.

2. In August we sent out letters, along with a brochure on our environmental retreats, to 700 faith institutions, secondary schools and universities/colleges throughout the region and country. Our goal was to alert these institutions about the resource we have to host their students and/or members for experiential learning retreats.
3. In December we sent a capital campaign letter out to 350 people on our mailing list, encouraging them to support the capital campaign outlined later in this report.
4. A website has been maintained for the Center which is often a first stop for people discovering us. This has generated some traffic, but not nearly as much as we would hope. This is an area that needs attention in 2012.
5. We created a Facebook page for the Center. This has become the main online presence for the Center, with 340 members to date. We use Facebook to alert people to events, to report on past events, and to connect people to groups and information related to our mission.
6. The Center was featured in an array of newspapers and magazines this year including the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Courier-Post, Jersey City, the SJ Magazine, and the U.S. Catholic Magazine. Additionally the story of the Center and sustainability was published in numerous books and magazines including: Conspire Magazine, Widening the Circle, Education for Justice, Mennonite Weekly Review, Liberating Biblical Study: Scholarship, Art and Action in Honor of the Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice. Additionally the story of the Center was shared in over twenty speaking engagements around the region.

Governance

In September the governance structure of the Center changed. Prior to September, the board of the Center consisted of those identified in our legal documents as well as a variety of people who are dedicated to the mission of the Center. In fact, without these people much of what we do would never be accomplished. However, this larger group is open to anyone who would like to come, which makes for challenging decision-making when something must be voted upon. Upon reflection by the officers of the Center, a Governing Board has been established which will meet five times a year and engage in all the legally-binding work that is set out in our by-laws, including strategic planning, approval of the budget, hiring of staff, signing of grants and collaborative agreement and providing oversight and assessment of the Center's work. There is also now the Operations Group which continues to meet monthly. This monthly meeting is open to all those interested in the Center's work, and it is the meeting at which operational decisions are discussed and decided upon. The members of the Governing Board participate in this monthly meeting. We have also created a committee structure so that detail work is accomplished outside of the Operations Group meeting. The committees are Fundraising, Programming, and Facilities.

The members of the Governance Board are: Mark Doorley (President), Rosemary Hally (Vice-President), Ted Fox (Treasurer), Eileen Borland, Fr. Michael Doyle, Cathy Fox, Cathy Nevins, Susan Cedrone, Jim Hally, Bill Harden and Felicia Biles. Felicia Biles and Bill Harden are new to the board as of Fall 2011. We are very pleased that they have agreed to join this effort so fully.

The members of the Operations Group, in addition to the Governing Board members, are: Sue Hitchcock, Barbara Hopkins, Betty Musetto, Cheryl Heatwole-Shenk, Andrea Ferich, Fr. Dennis Bajkowski. The members identified here are key people in the work of the Center. There are more people who attend this monthly meeting but they are not regular attendees.

As a result of receiving a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, two members of the governing board and the director of Sustainability Initiatives participated in a two-day training session on board development and strategic planning. This was a tremendously valuable learning experience that will impact our development into the future.

Partners

The Center is blessed to have wonderful partners in the work that it does in Waterfront South and the city of Camden. We could not accomplish all that has been done, or that can be done, without their support.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church	The Heart of Camden Housing, Inc.
South Camden Theatre Company	The Nick Virgilio Haiku Association
Neumann University	Rutgers University/New Brunswick
Moorestown Friends School	Urban Promise
Sacred Heart School	Eco-Poets, University of Pennsylvania
Villanova University	Rider University
The College of New Jersey	M’Kor Shalom Synagogue, Cherry Hill
Sustainable Cherry Hill	Camden Catholic High School
Waterfront South Environmental Network	St. Augustine Preparatory School
Bishop Eustace High School	PRUP
Hopeworks	Respond Seniors
Donna Cashman Vacation Bible School	The NJ Work Group
Rutgers Law School	Soul of Camden, Inc.
Gloucester Catholic High School	King’s College
Fellowship House	Camden BEES
CLUES	Bioblitz
Greensgrow Farms	The Camden Children’s Garden
The Delaware Rivers Keepers	Urban Trekkers
Urban Boatworks	The New Jersey Tree Foundation
Rutgers Water Resources Department	Camden Aquarium Academy
Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority	Camden Eco-Charter School
The Camden Catholic Partnership Schools	Camden School Board
The District Collaborative Council	

Revenue

Grants

We received several grants from institutions who see value in the work that we do. We appreciate their support and hope to collaborate with them well into the future.

Peter Scanlan Trust	\$2,500
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation	\$10,000
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (matching grant)	\$1,000
Danellie Foundation	\$5,000
Lourdes Hospital	\$1,500
Children Can Shape the Future	\$3,503
Community Foundation of South Jersey	\$3,175
Elmo Foundation	\$1,100
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$27,778</u>

We also applied to the following foundations for support:

Prudential, EPA Environmental Education, EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant, USDA People's Garden Grant, St. Elizabeth Capital, EENJ, Ben and Jerry's, US EPA Urban Waters

Fee for Service

Andrea Ferich was hired in her role as the Director of Sustainability to consult on various projects throughout the city of Camden.

Capital Campaign

We have begun a Capital Campaign for 2012 to raise \$50,000 to finance the complete renovation of the side porch and the front entrance. This campaign will also enable us to complete the replacement of the original windows that remain.

Events

- A. Fair Earth Day: After the two Sunday masses on a Sunday close to Earth Day, we host a large Fair in the church cafeteria. We feature information on sustainable living, including info on compost tumblers, worm farms, fair trade coffee and chocolate, fair trade clothing, etc. This is a significant fund raiser for us. This fair was held on May 16, 2011.



Judy Wicks

- B. Thomas Berry Lecture: This year Judy Wicks, founder of the White Dog Café in Philadelphia and of the Philadelphia Sustainable Business Network gave this year's lecture. It was a great success. This year we charged \$10 for a ticket to attend. Prior to the event we had a meet and greet with Judy in the Center. About 45 people attended this pre-talk event and about 100 people were in attendance for the talk.

- C. The Center was the beneficiary of the annual Sacred Heart Affair of the Heart, at which members of the parish bring home made arts and crafts to offer for sale. 75% of the proceeds went to the Center. We are quite grateful for this generous contribution to our work.

Contributions

Many people have made financial and in-kind contributions to support the operations of the Center. We cannot fulfill our mission without the support of individuals who find value in the programs that the Center sponsors. We are pleased to recognize this in this venue. A profound word of thanks to everyone!

Abby Cofsky	Ted & Cathy Fox
Eileen & John Borland	Kathleen Dzura
Michael & Josephine Giacchino	Rosemary & Jim Hally
Maria & Bob Esche	Nancy Weber
Anthony Damato & Susan Cedrone	John Marmarou
Matthew P. Scanlan	Paul & Doreen Holmgren
Ray & Joanne McCracken	Susan Kohler Reed
Sue & Burt Hitchcock	Janet S. Coccozza
Dawn Gillespie	Debra A. Italiano
Fran & Dom Cicali	Frances M. Cassidy
G.C. Marable	Joan T. Riley
Jose S. Troche, Jr.	Mary Costello, Inc.
Michael A. C. Devlin	Patricia & Steve Sandrow
Paul & Rochelle Ricci	Sharon & Ron Helfrich
Theresa P. Boyce	Bill & Jean Harden
Michelle Budd	Randa Michael
Alloy's & Metal Powders, LLC	Francine Grabowski
Betty Musetto	Tim & Gail Gooney
Joe Coppola	Frances Bree
Francina V. Deshong	Mary K. Newcomb
Sharon DeRouanna	Patricia Saltzman
Anne P. Remetz	Darrell Ann Britton
Susan Nevins	Anamaria Vergara
Ann Marie Finn-Cusack	Frank J. Fullbrook

Linda Delengowski
Michelle Caporale
Joseph Bower
D Y Cash
Alice Carr Sandmeyer
Mark & Cathy Doorley

Mary T. Zubrzycki
Suzanne E. Brennan
David L. Scanlan
Robert A. Bingaman
Robin Anne Palley

2012: Coming UP

In 2012 the Center looks forward to its continued work with Camden Children's Garden, the Camden City Garden Club, Greensgrow Farm in the food network with Campbell's Soup's Healthy Eating initiatives, and the Cathedral Kitchen Culinary Arts School. The Center will be organizing and hosting a CSA in collaboration with Greensgrow Farm, and growing thousands of rain garden native plants with the Rutgers Water Resource Department for the twenty-six planned rain gardens in Camden. Phoenix Park, a five acre waterfront parcel, will be established as a waterfront park in Waterfront South. The Center will play an integral role in the design and community corridor planning and mapping. The Center will collaborate with various local graduate level courses in land restoration, urban planning, landscape architect, and sustainable marketing at UPenn, Temple University, and Rutgers. The Center will continue its great work of regional food system collaboratively mapping Camden's Food Assessment and regional native plant corridors for pollinators.

Dependent upon grant funding the Center will plant fruit trees in various pre-existing neighborhood gardens, as well as grow and establish edible perennials and natives. The Center would like to pay stipends to young adults from the community as Environmental Justice and Eco-Agricultural coordinators, operating the farmers market, leading community organizing, map making, and eco-reality tours, and managing our sustainable solutions. The Center aims to fill the retreat space with retreats nearly every other weekend.

Development Needs

- A. The Center needs to hire an Executive Director to take over the responsibilities which have been falling, more or less, to the President of the Board. In order to do this financial support must be identified to support such a position.
- B. The Center will be taking on the full cost of salary and benefits for the Director of Sustainability. A secure source of funding for this must be identified.
- C. The website for the Center needs to receive considerable attention to make it a more user-friendly experience.
- D. As the Center matures as a non-profit, the Governing Board will continue to identify its role and to assess its performance.
- E. We need to raise the money to finish the capital projects which include the demolition and rebuilding of the Center porch, a renovation of the front entrance and the completion of the replacement of all Center windows.