



The Nor'easter

Newsletter of the Northeast Region of the Association for Experiential Education

Volume 11, Number 1

Spring 2004

Notes from the Editor:

Spring is upon us and so is the long-overdue newsletter. Thank you to those who lent support, found lost laptops, and helped articles trickle in. Since the last newsletter, I have gained a new perspective of the importance and of the influence of experiential education. After teaching and trip leading for several years in the giant classroom of the outdoors, I accepted a classroom teaching position. At first, I felt claustrophobic and overwhelmed by the massive amounts of paper the students and I generated. My customary outlets and techniques seemed out of place standing in front of desks. Not the students, but the blackboard intimidated me. Since recovering from the week or so of the initial shock of taking over a class mid-year and entering the (seeming) confines of a classroom, I have ever so slowly begun to blend my experiential background with what I felt was expected of me by my peers, by my department head, and by the students. I earned many smiles and laughs, when I marched my environmental science class up to maintenance to collect every shovel they had. My students then proceeded to dig up campus taking soil samples. I incorporated reading the *Grapes of Wrath* into our study of soil and *Hiroshima* into our exploration of alternative energy.

I suppose this is preaching to the choir, but I was amazed at the reaction from students and from fellow faculty members that came from looking to create different ways of experiencing and thus, hopefully, learning about something. Instead of just reading in their text about the potential devastations of wind erosion, they read first hand accounts of it and became attached to characters whose personalities they were later challenged to take on.

I guess this transition to me has really been an experiential learning experience about experiential education and some of its benefits (as well as challenges). I hope that both through the list-serve (see information on this later in the newsletter) and through the forum of this newsletter that we as a community can share some of our experiences with experiential learning be it observations from afar or tricks of the trade for the classroom, or for therapy, for outdoor pursuits and beyond.

In this edition of the newsletter you will find a review of the International Conference, teasers for our regional conference (hope to see you there!) and several new features in addition to our regular wonderings. You will also find a new research section which was introduced as a means of keeping everyone updated on the current goings on in the academia of our field. Hopefully (we need your contributions for this) this will become a regular section. Don't miss the scholarship information from the North East Regional Advisory Committee for the next international conference in Virginia and information on the project fund. These monies are out there for members of our community to forward experiential education. I encourage you to take advantage of them by applying.

Until next time,
ERA

Notes from the Chair:

What a year so far! January was 7° below normal here in Maine, but every time we had a big snow fall, the temperature rose to melt it all away. Here I am at the beginning of April with another fresh fall of 4 inches that will, no-doubt, be gone by the time I leave my office tonight.

What a year for AEE and its Northeast Regional Council (NERAC). The 31st Annual AEE Conference was held miles away from our region in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia. This was my first conference as your regional chair and it was quite an experience. Things are, I suppose, always a little confusing for a first time chair and so I spent considerable time getting used to new names and faces and accustoming myself to all the acronymic shortenings used by seasoned veterans. My overall impression was one of excitement. The new Executive Director of AEE, Kris Von Wold, was very upbeat about her recent appointment and often told us how much she loved her new "job." Conversely, I must have heard the phrase: "never, in my time with AEE, have things been so exciting" (or some facsimile thereof) a dozen times from board members, regional chairs and council members as they expressed their feelings about the new, energized Executive Director. I am very up-beat about what is happening in AEE at the national level.

Regionally, I feel equally excited. We have five new members of the regional council whom we welcomed aboard last newsletter. It is always exciting to draft in new blood while at the same time a little sad to see some of our former members move on. I would like to thank

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From the Chair

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the outgoing members for all their sterling work over the past four or five years. Ben Woodward and Barbara Fiore joined the council in the years 2000 and 2001 respectively and served the council as Program Coordinators, Maro Hall joined in 2001 and immediately jumped into a Membership Services position. Thanks to all three for serving the council and its members with enthusiasm and enterprise. A very special thanks goes out to Stephanie Speicher who also comes off the council this Spring. Stephanie joined the council in 1999 and jumped into the role of Member Services Coordinator. In 2001 she was the convener of the very successful Camp Kieve Regional Conference and shortly thereafter became council chair. Thanks, Stephanie, for all your work in these positions. It has been a joy for me to serve under you last year and alongside you in your position as past chair this year. In addition to thanking all these representatives for their work on the council, I would be remiss if I did not offer my personal thanks to Maro and Stephanie for their quiet but enthusiastic encouragement in urging me to serve on the council. To Stephanie, not only do we offer our thanks, but also our congratulations as she leaves the council with an extra addition to her family. Wow! Way to go, Steph. We are all so happy for you and your husband, Tim.

I am sure the enthusiasm of the new members will compensate for the loss of the outgoing ones, and I am sure they will do a good job in making the transitions seamless. I know I am thrilled we managed to

recruit such vibrant additions to the council last Spring and look forward to doing the same this Spring as we look to replace some of the outgoing members with equally committed new ones.

We completed our two NERAC meetings with our new members this past Fall and Winter. It was difficult to arrange a time for the Fall meeting and we had to resort to a conference call to accomplish this. Some of the reasons for this difficulty were pleasant ones. Our congratulations go out to council members Jennifer Payne and Ben Woodward (who married each other) and Lisa Davis (who is now Lisa Warstler) on their recent nuptials, and to Era Aranow who completed her NOLS instructor training course. Way to go folks!

The conference call did achieve some important business. Although it was great to hear folks voices, something was lacking, and so the council made a strong move to prevent this happening again by standardizing the dates for all future such council meetings. The Spring meeting, which took place — as usual — at this year's Regional Conference site, was a different matter entirely. It was great to achieve solid council business while reacquainting ourselves with each other face to face. Meeting at Sargent Center even on a cold wintry February day really psyched me up for the Spring Conference. What a great place Sargent Center is.

This brings me round to the final topic of conversation from the Chair; this month's Regional Conference. We are extremely fortunate to have Kristy Swenson, as the Conference Convener, at the helm once again. I am sure you all remember what a GREAT job she

did last year at Camp Jewel and how smoothly everything ran as a consequence of her organizational ability and her straight-forward hard work. We are also fortunate to be hosted at a place with such connection to Northeast's Adventure Education heritage as Sargent Centre. I am sure this year's festivities will be just as memorable as last. We are convening the conference as late as possible this year in memory of last year's mid-April cold spell. Hopefully we will reap the benefits of such prudence by having glorious sunshine for the duration of the festivities. Calls for proposals for the conference went out in early December and hopefully members will, as they have always done in the past, provide us with the presentations that ensure this year's conference will be as successful as those of previous years.

Many people in the US spend this time of the year preparing for Easter/Passover celebrations. I, on the other hand, am preparing for an early season sea kayaking trip to Booth Bay Harbor. So next weekend, if I can get this Chat from the Chair completed in time, I will be the envy of many as I enjoy the seclusion and tranquility of Southern Maine's glorious coastline (Not if the weather doesn't warm up at least to above freezing). While I am paddling to my heart's content, I hope you will all having a good Spring Holiday with not too many chocolate eggs and, perhaps, doing some equally invigorating and enjoyable outdoor activity. Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing everyone at the Regional Conference at Sargent Center later in the month.



Why We Are Critical

By Brent Bell

This article was previously posted on the AEE list serve and is reprinted with the permission of the author.

Dear Peers, Colleagues, Mentors, and Curmudgeons,

I would like to follow up on the questions posed by Julie Clemons concerning our role in a lawsuit (expert witness) and the community issues of being without friends from the OE community after a tragedy. This is how I make sense of it:

I believe that one of the reasons is because criticism can help us “feel” safer by trying to convince us that program X is so different from our program. I believe that this often leads us to unconsciously rush to vigorously critique a program—in what we used to call a Monday Morning Quarterback here in New England before the rein of Tom Brady and all things good (please tolerate the football references).

It is possible to do everything correctly, to take every reasonable precaution, and to still have an accident. It would be much easier to live in a world where we felt we had more control. So, when something goes wrong, we look at the mistakes that could have been avoided in the previous incident and, with the hope of comforting ourselves, say “they made some really big mistakes that led to their downfall” rather than “wow, this could occur at anytime.”

I first heard of this phenomenon from a philosophy instructor at Dartmouth who was the victim of a sexual assault that occurred in a parking lot when going to her car. This is a strong example, and I use

it because it comes from this professor’s direct experience. Not to grab at folks emotions, I think we can all agree that sexual assault is wrong and wish that it did not occur. I assume that we all share feeling of sadness for any victim of sexual assault or harassment. In this victim’s experience, beyond the horror of the crime, she was met with criticism from her female colleagues who blamed her for being alone in a parking lot at night, for not carrying her keys in a certain protective way, and for not having mace or other defenses, etc. She interpreted this critical reaction as a defense mechanism. Women she knew tried to differentiate themselves from her, and, if successful, could believe the world is safer for them than it was for her. I understand that there are things we can do to reduce or manage our risks and I think we should be vigilant in seeking to control those things that we may be able to control, but when we criticize a program, I wonder if we are just trying to create a world where we may “feel” that we have more control.

An OE example: I have three friends who got lost in the Maine woods and nearly died. They planned to canoe for a weekend, but a miscommunication while paddling led to the loss of a canoe in the Maine woods in November. They told one person where they were going in a general fashion, heading up to canoe this lake and this river, but did not leave a detailed route plan with any type of timeline, planned campsites, etc.

Fortunately, they were found after a fearful event, but the community of friends and outdoor enthusiasts was nasty. By the time they were found, the local outdoor community had

come down harshly on the fact they had not left a detailed route plan with anyone. So it begs the question “have you ever done this?” Have you ever gone on a trip and not left a detailed route plan, or changed your route and not notified an on-call person of the change? Most people I challenged with this question could not live up to their own standards. I think our criticism often is based on trying to alleviate our own fears.

I have been contacted twice to act as the professional witness for the prosecution in a lawsuit. I must admit that it was tempting to jump on board, but easy to understand that the leaders being sued had not done anything egregious. We need to think carefully about being Monday Morning Quarterbacks, lest we create the expectations that all incidents can be controlled.

Are You Part of the AEE LIST-SERVE?

Why not? Join the dialogue. Stay up to date on current questions and proposed answers in the field. Interact with peers regionally, nationally and globally.

How do I get on the AEE list?

To subscribe, go to <https://new-lists.princeton.edu/listserv/aeelist.html>.



Reflection: A Parent and Child

Contributed by Jennifer Pubentz

One of the reasons that the field of experiential education is so appealing is that it offers people the opportunity to see themselves, other individuals, a group, or the world in a different way. Below are poems written by parent and child during a reflection exercise at a therapeutic adventure program for families with children with special needs.

I've never loved you more than when
You took us rowing on your beautiful lake.
Bounding down the dock with sparkling eyes
Impatient to show us that you could do it,
I'll never forget the pride written all over you
As you grabbed the oars and set our course
Across the lake.
Keep that pride in yourself going, son –
That unbounded enthusiasm for life
I'm so proud to be your dad.

How

It's amazing how I never noticed how beautiful a hawk is
When it's making lazy circles in the sky,
Or how green and fresh and clean a forest smells after the rain,
Or how pretty the morning fog looks on a lake in the fall,
Or even how wondrous a summer sky can be.
It is kind of hard to notice most days
In my concrete world.

I Wonder...

By Keith King

I WONDER...how does the use of the INTERNET influence the experiences kids are having? If only because of the time spent at the computer, we know that kids are getting fewer real world experiences. We know that it takes time away from playing with other kids and learning to relate with real people. We know learning is happening, but it is in an unreal world.

I WONDER... how these false (vicarious) experiences "infect" the real world experiences they have?

Since one of the practices of good teaching is to know where the kid is and begin there,

I ALSO WONDER...if we consciously consider the influence of the INTERNET when we plan our lessons and get ready to work with kids?

I WONDER... why more people don't wonder more often. After all, isn't being curious the first step in learning?

The AEE Accreditation Program

By Brent J. Bell

Deciding how to best manage the inherent risks of outdoor programs is an oft-considered topic for outdoor leaders and program directors. In the short history of outdoor program development, different theories of industry standardization have emerged. The philosophical umbrella contains three main choices or paths for programs. The first choice is to reject standardization and to allow programs maximum freedom to design experiences using the judgment of individual programs. A second method of standardization is to certify leaders, much like a person would be certified for first aid or CPR. The third choice, advanced by AEE, is to provide program accreditation.

The support of program accreditation over individual certification rests on the recognition that risk management is a systems issue, not one contained only in the training of individual leaders. Certification is meant to signify an individual's level of training, but, to use a metaphor, may put a great and competent airline pilot (leader) in a poorly designed plane (system). Accreditation is about certifying the design of the plane and the overall system in which the plane operates. This includes the pilot training. Accreditation through AEE is a comprehensive process with standards on ethics, staffing, transportation, educational philosophy, and program management.

Programs who have completed the accreditation process have found the experience to be very valuable for their programs. My own experiences with accreditation have

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AEE Accreditation

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been positive, providing professional growth spurts both for me and for my program. It also brings a deadline to tasks which motivated me to follow through on low priority changes which I knew the program needed, but were neglected out of a variety of excuses (kind of like cleaning your house before company arrives).

The reasons programs do not seek accreditation tend to be a lack of time, money, or desire. As a program director, seeking accreditation means prioritizing an internal review of your program at the expense of other projects. One way around this barrier is to enlist outside support. A seasonal staff member or college student may be interested in conducting a review of your program for their own professional growth. An OE student may especially enjoy looking at program management from a consulting perspective. When I was at the Biking Expedition, a student from Prescott College helped with the internal review and gained a deep understanding of program management while conducting much of the program's internal review.

Money is a more challenging issue because it is difficult to suddenly create money. When compared to the expense of a lawsuit or simply not improving your program, the cost of accreditation from AEE is inexpensive and could bring great "bang for the buck." Just sleeping better may be enough of an incentive. Intangibles I have seen include a sense of pride among program staff and respect from other campus departments who value accreditation.

As much as accreditation may be a positive venture for programs, some critics resent the restrictions that

could potentially grow out of accreditation. Freedom to run outdoor programs without outside interference or critique is our industry norm. Whether it is the establishment of Wilderness First Aid classes as an industry standard or restrictions on the use of 15-passenger vans, restrictions in our profession will continue to change. AEE's Accreditation program attempts to maximize freedom in setting standards that are less prescriptive (telling what you have to do) and more descriptive (you explain how the program meets the standard and why it makes sense). Although we may see great value in practicing freedom, such a freedom should make sense to our colleagues. We should never resist openness to professional feedback and growth.

Our future in this industry depends upon our ability to work together, to improve practice, to manage risks, and to change. Accreditation is one method to engage in a process of continued review and change with a committed group of outdoor professionals. If you are interested in joining in such a process, please do not hesitate to contact Bill Zimmerman at bill@ae.org or me at bell@harvardfop.com.

The Uncertain Life of a Contract Facilitator

by Anita Reithoffer Tucker

It has been one year since my life as an adventure facilitator completely changed direction. After leaving my full time therapeutic adventure position to concentrate on finishing my graduate degree, I was faced with a new challenge. How could I remain sufficiently involved in the adventure field so that my facilitation skills did not become rusty? In addition, what type of

work would provide me with the flexibility that I needed to be able to concentrate on school? What I found and soon entered was a whole new world of adventure facilitation – the world of the contract facilitator.

What is a contract facilitator you may ask? That my friends, is not an easy answer. We are all so different, yet in so many ways similar. Some of us have recently graduated from college, some are right out of high school, and others have master's degrees. Our places of origin range from the inner cities of New York and Boston to the farmlands of New England and other countries like Africa and Australia. Our race, ethnicity, sexual preference and religion differ as widely as hometowns. We may travel at up to 3 hours including a ferry boat ride to provide one day of programming for a local middle school, only to drive home at the end of the day. Others of us are nomads who live season by season to find out where we will lay our pillows next. Sometimes, our home may be the pull-out couch of a supportive friend or, if we are lucky, a 6 by 8 foot concrete dorm room provided by one of the programs we work for. For many of us, our cars are our warehouses. On any given day we may have enough gear for a 2-week expedition including our pack, sleeping bag, clothes, stove, and food. This does not include the large hockey size bag full of props for experiential games and initiatives which we have slowly accumulated piece by piece from crafts stores, other programs, and toy store sales (we must not forget the rubber chicken without which, our bag of tricks would not be complete).

For most of us, we do not have allegiance to a single program. On Monday we may provide a day of low and high ropes to a college group in Connecticut. Tuesday we may be in New Hampshire

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Facilitator

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facilitating a day of cooperative games for a group of 3rd and 4th graders, while Friday through Sunday we may be facilitating a three-day expedition course for 8th graders on an island in the middle of Boston Harbor. Depending on the program, we may be working with another facilitator we have known for years or meeting our co-leader for the first time an hour before the group arrives. Unlike the consistency of a full time position, our income is dependent upon each program soliciting groups to come to their site. All too often, we are faced with cancelled days or groups rescheduling for a different date on which we already have another commitment. In addition, we are faced with the dilemma of what to do in the off-season. This is problematic as the winter months approach and available days to work dwindle down to none.

Why we do it? To this question, I can only speak for myself. Of course there are times that I do miss the security of a full-time position including the benefits of medical insurance and sick pay. However, the experiences that I have had during the past year are richer than any financial gains I may have made in a full-time position. Coming from an agency that had five employees, I entered a world in which I was surrounded by hundreds of wonderful and talented people. No matter where I worked, each program promised that I would learn not just a new game, but a new way of assessing a group or a new perspective for debriefing an element. More often than not, I would learn a little bit more about myself. Whether I learned about my good, my bad, or my ugly, I was always better off for knowing and learning from the feedback that I received from my colleagues as well as from participants.

In addition to facilitators, the variety

of groups with whom I was privileged to work was remarkable. Whether it was a religious group, a school group or even a corporate group, I saw each meeting as a new possibility for growth and empowerment. Of course, the rough days often outnumbered the smooth ones. However, if at the end of a program I could honestly say that I had been an active part in helping individuals confront their fears or challenge old behaviors, or that I had worked with a group to find resolution after a conflict, or that I had simply provided a safe space for individuals to be playful, all of my efforts had been worthwhile. To sum it up, I do it because I have found no other job so rich with learning opportunities or so full of possibility - the possibility to always be better than we are while at the same time helping others to recognize their own possibilities.

So if you like to travel, do not mind living out of your car, and do not need to know for certain how much your next pay check will be, come join us! Be a contract facilitator. To use a cliché, the possibilities are endless.

NERAC Research Updates

This is a new section of the newsletter intended to give updates on the topics that people in the Northeast are presently researching. Experiential Education is always in need of researchers. It is through thoughtful analysis that our programs grow. If you are a researcher working on a project, please e-mail it to brent@harvardfop.com so we can include it in our next Nor'easter.

The social construction of adventure: a sociocultural/ interactionist analysis

Jayson Seaman, Ph.D. candidate,
University of New Hampshire

Studying how learning and "small

group culture" develops in adult adventure programs, using a Grounded Theory approach. Looking especially at how learning is social rather than individual, how novices participate in adventure practices, and the role of multiple discourses in shaping the adventure experience. The theoretical basis for this study lies in symbolic interactionism (e.g., H. Blumer, P. Hall, G.A. Fine) and sociocultural studies (e.g., J. Lave and E. Wenger, J. Wertsch, L.S. Vygotsky).

University pre-orientation programs and the development of social support among college students

Brent Bell, Ph.D. candidate,
University of New Hampshire,
bbell@fas.harvard.edu

Presently analyzing a quantitative study of 1100 college students who took an adapted measure of the Social Provisions Scale (Campus-Focused SPS), a multi-factor measure of social support. The study hopes to begin to uncover one of the processes related to wilderness orientation programs—access to social support. The study is looking for relationships between CF-SPS scores and a participant's pre-orientation experiences, such as wilderness orientation, pre-season athletics, pre-orientation service programs, or no pre-orientation experience.

Outdoor Education and the Development of Self-Authorship (SA).

Taras Ferencevrych, Masters student, University of New Hampshire, tarasf@unh.edu

Presently analyzing quantitative data collected from approximately 150 UNH students and 150 north American members of the PLAST (Ukrainian Scouting Organization). Quantitative data was collected using the Self-Authorship Questionnaire (SAQ) which is a hybrid measure created by combining elements of several other measures (i.e. LEQ, Empowerment

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NERAC

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Scale, LOC). Elements included in the SAQ were decided upon based on qualitative focus-group interview data and a review of SA literature.

The Existence of Ecopsychology and Sense of Place in Experiential and Outdoor Education

By Garrett Hutson

Experiential Education has many applications and is the oldest form of education. It is the natural way of learning from direct experience. We are all born with the innate ability to learn from our experiences through a variety of avenues. Through out life, it is Experiential Education that shapes and forms each individual at some level. Unfortunately, the direct experience that has shaped modern day humans has become increasingly unsustainable and is anything but natural. Industrial society has always and continues to widen the gap between humans and the natural world.

Ecopsychology explores the implications of this gap. Ecopsychology is a relatively new field of study that integrates the principles of Ecology and Psychology. John Davis of Denver's Metropolitan State University describes Ecopsychology as "bringing psychological principles and practices to environmental education and action, bringing the contributions of ecological thinking and the values of the natural world to psychotherapy and personal growth, and fostering lifestyles that are both ecologically and psychologically healthy." Ecopsychology explores why humans have lost their connection with the earth, the implications of this loss and how to reunite humanity with the natural world. Theodore Roszak, who wrote *The Voice of the Earth*, contends that the

scare tactics and statistics used by many environmentalists will not help to solve our world's ecological devastation. He insists that humans must experience a deep felt love for the earth. It is then and only then, that humans will stop destroying it. Humans must establish an understanding of their "sense of place" within the natural world. In this context, sense of place explores the interrelationship between humans and nature and their sense of connection to it or lack there of. The Northwest Earth Institute states, "that there is a difference between living on the land and dwelling in it-understanding its rhythms, its potential, and its limits. Those who develop intimacy with a place over time, tend to accept responsibility for it." It is this deep felt emotional connection and understanding of place that leads humans to live with the earth as opposed to attempting to dominate it.

Outdoor educators have long played a role as leaders on the path back towards a sustainable planet. They are part of the small percentage that can connect many individuals with the natural world through direct experience. David Abram, author of *The Spell of the Sensuous*, says that, "it is only at the scale of our direct, sensory interactions with the land around us that we can appropriately notice and respond to the immediate needs of the living world." Outdoor educators are in a unique position to empower others to examine their relationship with the earth. Outdoor educators can provide a learning environment that gives individuals the time and the support to develop their own personal sense of place. This can occur during a one day field trip to a local state wildlife area as well as on an extended wilderness expedition. It is up to the Outdoor educator to make sense of place an educational priority.

I have spoken with many outdoor educators who make sense of place

a large part of their outdoor curriculum. The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) now recognizes the importance of sense of place and has included a section on it in their latest Environmental Education Notebook for instructors. However, it still seems that many outdoor educators have left this topic out of their curriculum. Some that I have spoken with have told me that they feel it is something that happens naturally. They insist that it doesn't need to be discussed and that it cannot be forced. In some cases, I agree that a deep sense of place can happen naturally. However, I firmly believe that its importance can be magnified with just a little guidance and care. Outdoor educators can facilitate the process to a deeper understanding of all things through interactions with the natural world if they choose to.

It is through experiential education that humanity learned to believe that it is separate and apart from nature, and it is only through experiential learning that humanity can learn to foster a loving and prosperous relationship with the natural world. Outdoor education is the perfect place for this relationship to begin and to grow. The valuable life skills that can be taken away from outdoor experiences have long been known and practiced by many programs. Ecopsychology and sense of place can enhance every outdoor education curriculum. Outdoor educators can open the doors of nature to many, helping them to understand that in taking care of and connecting with the natural world, they are also taking care of and connecting with themselves on a much deeper and compassionate level.

Garrett recently completed NOLS Instructor Course and I currently continuing his research on sense of place at the graduate level.

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HOW TO GET AEE MONEY:

Conference Scholarships and the NERAC Project Fund

Conference Scholarships:

The council will be awarding two \$500 scholarships for the 2004 Annual Conference in Norfolk, VA. The scholarships will cover the conference registration and some, if not all, travel expenses.

So you ask who will be awarded these wonderful opportunities? Scholarship qualifications are pretty simple and go as follows:

- Applicant needs to live in the Northeast Region.
- Applicant needs to be an AEE member (if you work for an organizational AEE member that does not count as membership, we are looking for individual members).
- Applicant needs to be an active member (examples of an active member could be workshop presenter, past Service Crew member, practitioner in the field, author or publisher of experiential education pieces, research in experiential education, etc.)
- Applicants can apply for a regional and international conference scholarship but will only be awarded one.
- There is no application form but we do want to know why you would like this scholarship opportunity.

Applications of your choice (we are leaving the door open for creativity) should be submitted to: Jennifer Payne, Sterling College, Craftsbury Common, VT 05827, jpayne@sterlingcollege.edu, 802-586-7711, 126) by September 8, 2004 for the 2004 Annual Conference. Decisions will be made at council meetings soon after this date.

Project Fund:

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council (NERAC) has a goal of improving the fields of experiential education by developing and supporting a community of practitioners and experiential

programs. NERAC manages a structure that helps our members receive these benefits. As a council, we are continuing our initiative of years past. The NERAC Project Fund is money that has been put aside for projects that will bring a positive benefit to the region and AEE as a whole. This NERAC Project Fund gives money to groups who are working on initiatives that help out AEE and experiential education. The money is to encourage our members to continue to work on projects that are beneficial to the field. We encourage any member working on organizing an event or project that works to strengthen experiential education, and we mean EE in the broadest of strokes, to apply for support through NERAC.

How to apply for the funding:

The NERAC Project Fund asks that all applicants who want to receive support write to NERAC with a proposal that clearly describes the project and or event and answers the following questions:

1. What is the nature and scope of the project?
2. Who and what will be involved?
3. How the project will be communicated to AEE and the EE community?
4. How will the program impact AEE or EE?

Part of the obligation to receive funds is to follow up in a manner that shares the project with the experiential education community, such as an article for publication, a workshop at a conference, or a new activity or program.

The NERAC Project Fund will be evaluated based upon the *whole of NERAC's needs*. That means that funding will be adjusted from year to year.

Please send questions and applications to: Jennifer Payne, Sterling College, Craftsbury Common, VT, 05827 jpayne@sterlingcollege.edu

Sea of Diversity – Mountains of Knowledge: A Report on the 31st Annual AEE Conference

by Mac McInnes

Another year has come and gone and another AEE Annual Conference has been successfully convened. What are the lasting impressions from the Hyatt Regency in Vancouver, British Columbia? The word "excitement" sums things up.

Of significance for the whole association was the excitement that bubbled through this year's entire conference proceedings. These gatherings always seem to create their own excitement, but this conference seemed to corner the excitement market. People were very excited about the new appointment of Kris Van Would as the association's Executive Director. She does seem full of energy and always had a cheerful personal greeting for the delegates. She feels like a breath of fresh air and may indeed blow some refreshing changes into the association.

There was also increased excitement about the financial solvency of the association. It wasn't too long ago that finances were of real concern. However, with Kris at the helm, things have been occurring quickly and there was a much greater feeling of confidence regarding the benefits we can expect from being members of The Association. Additionally, excitement centered on the new organization of the professional groups. There are now three Professional Based Groups (PG's) — the Schools and Colleges Group, the Experienced Based Training and Development Group and the Therapeutic Adventure Group — and three Professional Affiliation Group (AG's) — the Natives, Africans, Asian, Latinos and Allies Group; the Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Allies Group; and the Women in Experiential Education

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Diversity

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Group. This new organizational structure should see renewed commitment to a wider diversity of interests within the association.

Personally, I was very excited about the Northeast Regional Meeting. We had 21 delegates in attendance, 21 regional members who made the long trip, all the way to the other coast. I would also suggest that, due to happenstance, some delegates missed this meeting. Perhaps these meetings need greater visibility and publicity. Anyway, it was nice to meet some new faces and I would like to thank Brent Bell for his introductory name game (which I always enjoy) and Jennifer Payne for covering all the important technical and financial information. Thanks to these two and, indeed, to anyone in the NE who made the day long journey out to Vancouver and attended the regional meeting.

If all that wasn't already enough, on to my three most exciting moments of the conference. First, the chair of the LGBA-AG, "TJ" Zmucki, announced, after recalling a time of preliminary doubt, that "Yes! The Association of Experiential Education was the right place for him." He said he feels safe at these conferences and accepted by the association and its people. He also said he feels it is through his work in the LGBA-AG that he can make a real difference in the world, as the members of his AG promote the global acceptance of diversity.

Second was the keynote speech by Craig Dobkin. I was not struck as much by what Craig said as by the way in which he said it. His speech was a great mandate for maintaining a positive attitude. Here is someone who has paraplegia as a result of an accident and yet shows no sign of bitterness. Craig has come to terms with his disability by working hard to function as effectively as possibly within its confines, while never accepting the limitations this imposes as being inevitable. This keynote speaker was indeed an inspiration to us all.

Third and finally, a real highlight for me, as NE's regional chair, was the Awards Ceremony. Deb Sugarman of the University of New Hampshire was honored as AEE's Outstanding Experiential Teacher of the Year, the University of New Hampshire itself was awarded the Organizational Member of the Year, and Thomas Shearer was the Karl Rohnke Creativity Award winner for his innovative work at Center Point School in South Burlington, Vermont. So we in the NE can be very proud of both our individual and organizational members. Thanks also go out to all those who went to the conference; "Well done!" The journey was, hopefully, worthwhile. To those who could not make this year's conference, perhaps because of the distance and corresponding expenses involved, there is always next year at Norfolk, Virginia, which is a heck of a lot closer.

Hope to see you there.
Mac

Conference Service Crew "Movie"

By Lisa Warstler

Think of a recent movie you have seen; it could be rented, on the television, or in the movie theater. Now, try to remember the main characters. Several months ago, I saw *Matrix Revolutions*, with a group of friends. The same main characters from the previous two *Matrix* movies were back; Neo, Trinity, Morpheus, and Agent Smith. The *Matrix* trilogy would not be such a success without the hard work of the directors, make-up artist, computer graphic designers, and many others. These senior staff members were not the only ones dedicating time, energy, and creativity to the movie's production. Behind the scene staffing, set extras, prop movers, film students, and hundreds of others helped to create the magic of *The Matrix*.

Using movies as a metaphor for the work that goes into an AEE Northeastern Regional Conferences, the "movie" itself would be the conference. All the "main characters" would be the workshops and speakers that set the tone

for the conference. All the conference committee members would be the "senior staff" working to produce the "movie," without their continuous dedication it would never get into the theaters. The "set extras," would be the conference service crew, those who do most of the behind the scene transformations at any conference.

Having been the Service Crew Co-Director and member of the crew itself, I know the vital part members play at the Northeastern Regional Conference. Service Crew members move tables and chairs within workshop areas and dining/entertainment facilitates. They also help with registration, introduce workshop speakers, administer evaluations, assist at the book store and silent auction, clean up after the conference, and take care of other "minor" details that are always needed and sometimes forgotten at the last minute. Benefits of being on the Service Crew are plentiful; first dibs on workshops, free t-shirt, reduced conference fee, ability to have inside housing (really makes a difference at the conferences when it pours), chance to network with people in several different concentrations of Experiential Education, and countless others. Being on the Service Crew is a very exciting way to be part of the conference magic, just like in the movies.

If you are interested in more information e-mail Lisa Warstler at lisa_warstler@hotmail.com.

Editor's Note:

A plea for contributions and special thanks:

This newsletter is made possible by YOU the Northeast AEE community. Please contribute any and all musings you have for our next edition. DEADLINE: August 15. Early submissions are always appreciated. Please send submissions to Aranow@post.harvard.edu or to ERA Aranow 45 Cottage Road, Oakdale, CT 06370.

A special thanks to Brent Bell who contributed many articles to this newsletter rounded up several more. Thanks Brent.



AEE AWARDS

There are many outstanding, often unsung, experiential educators and organizations whose contributions have inspired others to dream, to act, and to reach for and continue to maintain a high standard of excellence.

The Awards process is the Association's way of recognizing those who have contributed so much. The process begins with you. This brochure describes each award and provides guidelines to help you submit a complete nomination. Please, take the time to nominate someone for one of AEE's Awards. You'll be glad you did!

The Michael Stratton Practitioner's Award

- Must be a current individual, family, or organizational member of AEE.
- Must have worked as an experiential educator for at least five years.
- Must have demonstrated consistently high levels of performance as a daily practitioner of the experiential education process.
- Must exhibit the highest level of ethical practice.
- Must be actively committed to the AEE organization.
- Must be an experiential educator working directly with students and/or clients. (Person's working primarily in an administrative capacity would not be considered to be working directly with students or clients.)

Outstanding Experiential Teacher of the Year Award

- Must be a current individual, family or organizational member of AEE.
- Must have demonstrated an active passion for experiential education principles and theories in teaching practice.
- Must have practiced innovative, experiential educational methodologies in a public or private school system(s) for at least three (3) years prior to nomination for this award.
- Must have consistently practiced the highest ethical standards in working with students.

Karl Rohnke Creativity Award

- Must be a current individual, family, or organizational member of AEE.
- Must have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to experiential education principles.
- Must have designed, created, and/or produced one or more of the following experiential education

resources and/or events: video, book, workshop/seminar, newsletter, artwork, article, play, electronic-media resource, program, or educational materials.

Servant Leader Awards

(Up to three awards given per year)

- Must have demonstrated active, excellent servant leadership to AEE and its members for at least five (5) years previous to nomination for this award.
- Must have consistently acted within ethical practice.
- Must have demonstrated a passionate commitment to furthering experiential education principles.
- Exemplifies that the "how and why" of doing something is as important as the "what will be done."
- Open to non-members. However, only one award per year will be given to a non-member.

Organizational Member of the Year Award

- Open to current AEE Organizational Members only.
- Must have maintained innovative and outstanding programming at consistently high standards for at least five years prior to nomination.
- Must have demonstrated consistent commitment to and support for the work of AEE.

Nomination Process

Upon receipt by the Awards Committee, your nomination narrative is read by a group of impartial Reviewers. Reviewers compare your narrative against the criteria for each award. Providing thorough statements that address the criteria, including specific examples, puts your nominee in the best possible light. Original, supporting nominations from others strengthen your nominee's case for being the recipient of the award. Nominations received by May 1 are considered for awards in the same year; if received after May 1, they will be considered in the following year.

How to submit a nomination

1. **Tell us about yourself.** Include: your name, relationship to nominee, your address, phone, e-mail and best way to reach you (in case we need clarification.)
2. **Tell us about the person you are nominating.** Include: Nominee's name, title, organization, address, phone and e-mail. Pronunciation tips helpful.

3. **Tell us the award you are nominating for.** If you want the person considered for more than one, you must submit a complete nomination for each award.

4. **Write a narrative that shows Reviewers how the nominee meets the criteria.** Use your own experience and provide specific examples. Encourage others to submit original, supporting nominations for this person, too.

5. **Submit by e-mail** awards@aee.org
Subject line: Award Nomination (preferred) or mail by May 1 to

AEE Awards Committee
c/o Kirke Mahy Hestad
2517 Utter Street
Bellingham, WA 98225 USA
(360) 676 7778

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the Awards Committee tell nominees who nominated them? No. But we encourage you to tell the nominee what you are doing. Who knows what great conversations you might have.

Can I submit a nomination if don't have all the information? Yes. But all things being equal, a narrative that has all the information is stronger than one that does not. The solution? Talk to the nominee directly and/or get another person (who has the missing information) to submit a complete nomination for your nominee.

How long will my nomination remain in consideration? Two years, provided that, in the second year, the criteria are still being met.

Can I nominate someone for more than one award? Yes, but a separate nomination, addressing the specific criteria, must be submitted for each award

Can I nominate myself? No.

Can I submit this by email? Yes. The Awards Committee would appreciate it if you would.

Is there someone I can talk to about a nomination? Yes. While we cannot serve as writing coaches, we may be able to answer your questions and help you with your submission. E-mail the Awards Committee at: awards@aee.org

Watch the Web

Soon you will be able to submit your award nomination on-line. Check AEE's website – www.aee.org – for updates.



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The Mission of the
Association for
Experiential Education
(AEE)

is to develop and
promote experiential
education.

The Association is committed
to support professional
development, theoretical
advancement, and evaluation
of experiential
education worldwide.

Please send questions, comments,
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most of all, articles to:

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Please send articles electronically.

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Right now
or
at least by
June 1, 2004

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