

Chepang girls – if we do our part, they will do theirs!



Fifth-grade teacher and student Ruk Mani and Ajina

Ajina’s family, and those of four other fifth-grade classmates in their mountain village in southern Nepal, could not afford the \$250 each needed to attend secondary school, a 2-hour walk to the valley below. Not going to school can lead to early marriage to an older man, or even being trafficked to nearby India.

NCP was able to keep them going to school, so now they gladly make the hike down and up every day. However, on-going support for them and for 11 others graduating this year will be a stretch for our Give a Girl a Chance fund. See our Alternative Gifts page to involve a class, Bible School, or others in keeping these girls on the trail to a brighter future!

Backyard Fence—conversations about the new community

Email message received with Subject line: “Anna from Denali”

My name is Anna and I went on the Learning Tour to Denali with NCP in August of 2021. I just wanted to reach out and let you know how much that trip changed my life and ask for your advice.

Right after going on that trip, I realized how important taking care of our earth was to me, and knew I wanted to use my life and career to make a difference. I have since graduated high school, and am about to complete my first year at Virginia Tech, in pursuit of a degree in Mechanical Engineering, with a minor in Green Engineering. I am really intrigued, challenged, and excited to continue learning and begin working in this field, because I know how urgent and important climate action is right now.

All of that to say, it is now March 2023 and as I look forward to this summer, I am realizing how little time I have left before I begin a full-time job and will no longer have Christmas, spring, summer and Thanksgiving breaks. Last summer I worked at the local Italian restaurant in Botetourt, Virginia, and lived with my parents. This summer, I know I cannot stay working a regular old minimum wage job in my hometown all summer, as I have the desire for much more meaningful and spontaneous experiences than selling pizza inside all day. I have researched many summer jobs across the U.S. the past couple weeks and none of them have felt like the right opportunity for me. I was wondering if you would have any advice or information for a nineteen-year-old looking for meaningful summer employment for a few weeks this summer. I just thought with all the exciting things happening at NCP and all the connections you have with people in cool places, you might know of someone who could use some help.

- Anna Hoover, Daleville, VA

[Follow-up: Anna will be spending several weeks at each of our Sustainable Living Centers this summer!]

New Community Project Advisory Board: Robbie Miller (chair), Taona Makunje, Steve Brady, Jerry O’Donnell, Greg Davidson Laszakovits, Kim McDowell, Linetta Alley, Hope Steele, Timothy McElwee, Alex Murphy

Newsletter printed on 100% post-consumer content, saving 1.5 trees & 35,000 gallons of water with this print run of 6702 pieces

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 78
ROANOKE, VA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

New Community Project
117 Nature Road
Blue Ridge, VA 24064

As the World Turns...



“...turning the world upside down...”

Newsletter of the
New Community Project

Ideas that challenge us.
Experiences that change us.
A community that gives us hope.

Spring '23 • Vol. 20, No. 1

Vol. 20...?!?!

Yep, you read that right. If it’s the 20th volume of our newsletter, that means NCP must be turning 20 this year! It all started in the fall of 2003 and a lot has happened in the meantime. We’ll tally up all the goodness of these two decades in the autumn edition, but for now, thanks to all of you for helping us reach this milestone!

Namaste, Nepal

While we normally alternate January visits to Nepal and Myanmar, the military coup in the latter meant a return to Nepal for the second year in a row. Our Learning Tour group of 12 had an excellent adventure as we met schoolgirls and women’s groups supported by Give a Girl a Chance, saw fledgling reforestation efforts funded by *If a Tree Falls...*, had amazing encounters with big critters in Chitwan National Park, and got a dose of Annapurna Awe on our overnight trek. More on page 2.

AND thanks to the \$30,700 raised by our Keep ‘em Safe campaign last spring, the protective wall is right now being built around the shelter for young trafficking survivors. YES!

Never a dull moment

NCP staff have many goals, but a big one is to try to avoid dullness. Here are some of the ways we’ve been working on spicing up our game.

NCP’s Vine & Fig Sustainable Living Center in Harrisonburg, VA is hosting people in need from around the world, including a recently arrived mom and son from Nicaragua fleeing violence. Through NCP’s Education and Outreach program, we will be collaborating with three farms to grow fresh organic produce that will be donated weekly to 230 families struggling with food insecurity.

Our Jubilee Climate Farm is creating ecological agroforestry systems that include silvopasture, alley cropping, and syntropic farming. Tom Benevento leads a team there that includes co-workers from Kenya, Mexico, Guatemala, and the USA who share their knowledge and passion for truly “green” farming.

At NCP Vermont this winter, we helped community members with firewood and heating bills, and in partnership with the Vermont Gleaning Collaborative supplied 5000 pounds of produce to the Food Share Program. This is in addition to providing 50-60 food boxes to needy families and 100 prepared meals to the elderly per week. Pete Antos-Ketcham welcomed four college interns and will receive summer workers from VA and KS, and is involved with food and energy issues on the local and state-wide level.

Over the past six months, director David Radcliff led the Nepal Learning Tour and gave 60+ presentations in schools, colleges, congregations, retreats and conferences in PA, VA, MN, IA, CA, IN, KS, MO, MI and WV, including several first-time settings.

2023 Learning Tours calling...

...gonna pick up!? This year NCP groups will head to South Sudan; the Ecuadorian Amazon; Lybrook, NM; Yellowstone & the Tetons; Denali & Kenai Fjords; and then back to Nepal next January. Answer the call! See page 3 for details.

Taking it global

NCP has begun partnering with the East Africa Regenerative Network along with the Jane Goodall Institute, Restoration Agriculture Development and others to support subsistence farmers, as they are most impacted by climate change. The goal will be to build agroforestry systems that increase food security, draw down carbon, and create biological diversity. NCP’s Tom Benevento will serve as a field consultant in Africa and Latin America, carrying out this work during the slower winter season, with the partners picking up his costs.

Love your neighbor

The NCP network responded to two recent flash fundraising campaigns to assist our global neighbors. The first coincided with International Women’s Day for – naturally – Give a Girl a Chance. With a \$10,000 matching grant as an incentive, we more than met that goal!

Next up was a request from the Cofan native community in the Ecuadorian Amazon with whom we have had a relationship for 15 years. They asked that we support a young man in receiving training to follow in his grandfather’s footsteps to become a shaman. The needed \$3900 was raised and sent – and we’ll hope to see both Franklin and his grandpa Aurelio on our June Learning Tour.

Can’t buy me love...

...but your financial support can keep our Centers running, send our staff around the country to speak, provide oversight for our international partnerships, pay someone to keep our books straight, give scholarships to students to take the trip of a lifetime.

We appreciate it, whether by check or electronically, IRA distributions, donations of stock, estate bequests, or \$10 in cash from a student.

“Thank you for being so passionate that you’ll cry in front of a bunch of highschoolers. You have inspired me in so many ways.”

- Kaitie, Souderton Area HS (PA)

As the World Turns is published by the New Community Project, a nonprofit organization. Contact NCP at: 117 Nature Road, Blue Ridge, VA 24064; 540-855-1199; directorncp@yahoo.com; Website: www.newcommunityproject.info

Justice – or Just Us

Seeking fairness for people everywhere

NCP hopes to provide a kind of ground-level view of our world that is often lacking from other sources. We do this here at home and abroad, working through our partnerships and relationships to see, hear and feel what life is like for them – and then share this widely.

Case-in-point: Vermont Along with robust food production, recovery and distribution efforts, Pete Antos-Ketcham has met with his state senators and



representatives to offer a “report from the ground” to share examples of the struggles facing the rural poor and discuss potential policies that could help. A main focus has been on reducing the energy burden and carbon emissions through increased funding for the statewide weatherization program.

In testimony before the Committees on Natural Resources and Energy, Pete shared his ideas for priorities regarding pending legislation, as some lawmakers may not fully understand their constituents’ difficult realities.

Case-in-point: Nepal Our decade-long relationship with the anti-trafficking group Shakti Samuha has been an eye-opening experience not only with regard to the sex trade but also of the lives of women and girls there.

On our January visit, we learned that rates of trafficking have increased almost three-fold over these 10 years. A key reason is the explosion of social media as a recruiting tool of the perpetrators, luring girls into leaving Nepal with promises of a better life.

We have recently had direct experience of the challenges facing a particular group – ethnic Chepang girls in mountain villages in southern Nepal. Unable to continue school past fifth grade, they can face early marriage or worse. See back page to help.

Yet we can also see the good that can come of being “on the ground” long-term. Our team had an on-the-roof meeting with a group of trafficking survivors in Sindhu-palchok that NCP has supported for seven years with microloans. One of them used hers to open a shop, expanded it, and then bought the building. We met with them on its roof! “It is because of Shakti Samuha and NCP’s support that we’ve been able to do any of this,” they told us.



Earth in the Balance

Caring for the earth—as if our lives depended on it

Our earth also needs people who will pull back the curtain to reveal its beauty, intricacies and changes, all of which are too seldom recognized and appreciated.

Who knew? A recent study found that protecting or restoring nine wildlife species – marine fish, whales, sharks, grey wolves, wildebeest, sea otters, musk oxen, African forest elephants, and American bison – could collectively facilitate the additional capture of over six billion tons of carbon dioxide annually. This happens via foraging, nutrient deposition, disturbance, organic carbon deposition, and seed dispersal.

Who knew? Our Learning Tours to Alaska encounter these and many other creatures. Sea otters spotted on our Kenai Fjords NP cruise are keystone predators, protecting kelp forests (which sequester CO² at 20x the rate of land forests) by controlling sea urchins. Caribou in Denali NP use their antlers to dig through the



snowpack to graze on lichen in winter. Rangers say that these days freeze/thaw cycles are forming a crust on the snow, inhibiting this access. In the Arctic,

streams now sometimes reach 70 degrees, impacting salmon runs and the natives who depend on them.

Who knew? Rapidly melting ice from Antarctica and Greenland (photo: circumpolar flight) is dramatically slowing down the flow of water in the world’s oceans as this freshwater dilutes the saltwater and disrupts the “overturning” of the oceans. (At the end of last summer, Greenland was losing 12 billion tons of meltwater per day.)



This could have a disastrous impact on global climate, the marine food chain and even the stability of ice shelves, new research has shown. Should the Gulf Stream’s 1000-year conveyor belt stall due to dilution with fresh water, no longer bringing warm water and air northward, England – at the same latitude as Hudson Bay (which has polar bears) – will find itself with greater worries than palace intrigue.

Who knew? NCP is helping preserve forests in Ecuador and Malawi; plant trees (200,000 this year) there and in Myanmar, South Sudan, Nepal, Congo and Nigeria; and support native communities in the Americas as they defend some of our last wild places. It’s all part of our If a Tree *Falls*... program. Pitch in! Every \$10 plants 100 trees or 20 mangrove saplings.

Truth...or Dare!

What we don’t know *can* hurt us – especially in the long run. NCP doesn’t shy away from facing the truth about our world, challenging all of us to dare to act for something better. Thus, this Truth...*or Dare!* segment: *MIA: lifestyle choices to address climate change*.

The Problem: In spite of the USA having one of the largest per person carbon footprints of any country (14 tons, not counting the emissions of the US military), no one in leadership dares suggest that individuals make lifestyle changes as one way of addressing the bad-now-but-much-worse-later threat of climate change.

To wit: A recent NPR segment on nuclear power focused solely on maintaining and increasing energy supplies (and didn’t take a call-in comment from NCP suggesting conservation), climate guru John Kerry promised that we can keep “the comforts of modern life” as we see solar farms and electric cars spring up around us with no mention of personal changes, and politicians warn apocalyptically of higher gas prices (exactly what we need, while helping the poor adapt).

Why is this? Surely politics, corporate influence, denial of science, etc., but perhaps at the root of it all is our sense of privilege: the feeling of American exceptionalism that exempts us from responsibility.

One Part of the Solution: So what might we do if we took our role in harming and healing the climate seriously? Seeing the photos of Greenland from the previous page, someone asked “what are some things we can do in our own homes to help the climate?”

In no particular order we suggested: drive our **cars** as little as possible (1 mile = 1 pound of CO²); eat lower on the **food chain** (going vegetarian can save 1.5 tons of greenhouse gases per year); adjust the **thermostat** and use sweaters and lap blankets in the winter and nighttime cooling in the summer; install **solar** panels if this is feasible for your home; set your **hot water heater** at only as warm as you really need it; plant **trees** (when a tree matures the shade provides as much cooling as two window air-conditioning units); in general, consume less **stuff**, because energy goes into everything that we purchase; really work at reducing **food waste** (if food waste was a nation, it would be the world’s third largest emitter of greenhouse gases); hang onto **clothing** as long as possible, as that industry is responsible for 6% of our greenhouse gases; **wash clothes** in cooler water and air dry them (90 percent CO² savings); **alert others** around us to what’s happening, letting them know what you are doing personally, and how we need to **change the system** to allow for more climate-friendly behavior, like getting our communities to put in bike lanes, setting community goals for carbon emissions, and incentivizing good behavior (handy recharging stations, deposits on aluminum cans, BYOB [bring-your-own-shopping-bag] discounts); tell **politicians** you care about this issue and ask them what they are doing about it. *Those are a few ideas...do we dare?*

Experiential Learning

Go. Meet. Learn. Grow. Be renewed. Change—yourself and your world.

Experience of a lifetime

Experiential learning is NCP’s way of helping us see ourselves and our world in a different way via Sustainable Living Centers, speakers & Learning Tours.

2023 Learning Tours

South Sudan (May 14-26) Experience the culture, vitality and resilience of a long-suffering people. Visit schoolgirls, returned refugees, women’s groups and reforestation programs supported by NCP; learn about the impacts of climate change and Covid.

Ecuadorian Amazon: Deep Jungle (June 1-7) Explore places deep in the rainforest guided by native shamans, see all manner of amazing plant and animal life (monkeys, sloths, pink dolphins!), learn about threats to the forest, visit NCP preservation projects. *[We honor the passing of 107-year-old Cesario (right), a renown Secopai shaman. He welcomed us into his village and offered cleansing ceremonies for our groups. He died in early April. His son Cesar carries on his work.]*



Lybrook, NM (June 23-29) Work alongside Diné (Navajo) on community projects, visit a medicine woman, talk with and learn from local artisans. Explore the culture and current challenges facing the Diné, including hydraulic fracking and climate change; visit Chaco Culture National Historical Park, one of the best-preserved examples of pre-Columbian native life.

Yellowstone/Grand Tetons National Parks (July 20-27) Visit two of the crown jewels of the National Park system. Explore these beautiful landscapes via camping, vehicle, and through daily hikes. Waterfalls, thermal springs and geysers, bison, bears, elk – we’ll experience them all!

Denali/Kenai Fjords National Parks, Alaska (August 6-14) Camp and hike in the Denali National Park, see bears, moose, caribou, a sled-dog demonstration – and hopefully Denali, the highest mountain in North America. FULL this year – see you in ’24!

Looking ahead: (Nepal) (January 5-16, 2024) Travel to this beautiful but impoverished Himalayan country, hosted by NCP partner Shakti Samuha. Visit shelters for survivors from the sex trade as well as girls and women receiving NCP support. Take an overnight trek to be wowed by the Annapurna Range and explore Chitwan National Park (rhinos, elephants, crocodiles – and maybe a tiger!).