



September in Saskatoon with **Gentle Teaching International**

Saskatoon SK was the destination for this year's annual Gentle Teaching International (GTI) conference in September, graciously hosted by Saskatchewan Alternative Initiatives (SAI) at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel. Along with keeping everyone well-fed and everything running smoothly, the SAI crew also set up interactive areas welcoming opportunities for dialogue with a panel of thought leaders, sharing resources and inviting participation from all in the making of a Gentle Teaching 'quilt,' using provided art materials for creating messages that highlighted the enduring strength, beauty and gifts within our Gentle Teaching community. The 'quilt' will be displayed at next year's conference.

Nine sessions over three days time, with three workshops to choose from in each session, offered outstanding presentations that proved to be the best of *kindling*, stoking everyone's quest for learning more together and sharing stories about the Gentle Teaching journey.

"Just be kind. That's all I'm really sayin."
-John McGee, 2012

Living the journey, moment by moment, was the theme that collected thoughts and reflections from Gentle Teaching communities around the world and brought them together for a week of sharing, inspiring, strengthening, commemorating and celebrating. At least eleven countries were represented: Greece, Iceland, Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Africa, U.S., Puerto Rico, Mexico, Indonesia and the U.K.

John McGee was deeply missed and remembered by so many dear friends who attended the conference, with an evening of greeting one another and sharing wine and appetizers, stories and fond memories. As the days of the conference unfolded, John's absence was partially compensated for through the gentle presence that was held in the hearts of so many and through the endless gratitude for Gentle Teaching that was expressed by everyone.

GTI President Maurits Eijgendaal, set the beautifully resonant tone for the conference with the opening and closing remarks. In welcoming all of us, he also remembered John. "Living the journey, feeling the movement and being in the moment, I will always remember John as the person who made a trail for us, and now it's a trail for all of us to go on."

Maurits also talked about our changing times and discussed the usefulness and importance of the directive toward academic research to support the critical work of Gentle Teaching. "The introduction of some of David Stern's thoughts regarding mirror neurons and the idea of being in the moment, became integral parts of Gentle Teaching. It is great to see that a worldwide group of people will continue to highlight the evidence we need in order to continue the work we do."



Among the presenters was Globe Star Director Dr. Anthony M. McCrovitz, teaching how to exercise awareness of the moments shaping our own lives and the lives of others with whom we are working, and illustrating how one's direction and reflection, guided by the framework of Gentle Teaching, opens *the present* and cultivates wisdom for the journey of *Safe and Loved*.

How Do We Arrive in the Moment: Are We There Yet? was the title of his session that discussed: *where are we in this moment and how can we create meaning with the other person in this moment?*

Participants explored ways to expand awareness and more readily be able to identify opportunities that dwell in our gentle presence, moment by moment. Observing how we pay attention and present ourselves determines our capacity for awareness. This awareness functions as a lamp, reflecting insight into moments of the relationship and allowing us to see how new, meaningful moments can be created and integrated with one's ongoing experience. McCrovitz emphasizes: "We're losing out on the invitation if we're modifying behavior instead of using our tools (hands, eyes, words, presence) to invite and draw out one's intrinsic motivation for building the Gentle Teaching relationship that an individual can lean upon, learn from and grow."

Michael Vincent, Director of Training at MORC in Michigan, talked about the central purpose of caregiving. He began with McGee's early definition: "The central purpose of care giving is to teach the experience of companionship," and expanded this to say:

"The central purpose of our presence in the lives of others is to teach, nurture and sustain the experience of connectedness, companionship and community."

With this expansion, Vincent emphasizes the professional's role and that of a Gentle Teaching facilitator, which is to extend the collaborative relationship and relationship-building processes that we all seek in our own lives. For example, in understanding our purpose 'to teach' we can understand that "we offer this knowledge and these social skills to those who would reject relationships or those to who it would never occur unless we introduce it to them. This is the essence of *teaching*."

The days were rich and full and the evenings just as brimming with much camaraderie and enjoyment of the local culture. The conference concluded with closing thoughts by Maurits, 'weaving it all together and looking to the future' with our shared vision and the gifts of Gentle Teaching.

(see photos from conference on p.5)



From the Desk of the Executive Director



Journeying with Gentle Teaching...

Having the opportunity to listen to the many stories shared at this year's Gentle Teaching International (GTI) conference was truly amazing.

Individuals, whose lives have been affected by Gentle Teaching, were also present at many of the workshops. Along with their precious presence, they made some profound contributions to our learning sessions.

In a workshop moderated by Brenda Rossow-Kimball, who represented the Board of Directors at Creative Options Regina, individuals were invited to engage in a narrative inquiry with one another. The ensuing dialogue supported the theory that the best researchers for Gentle Teaching are the individuals themselves and the people who support them.

Another workshop presented Dave Lappin, Co-Executive Director of Supported Family Care Model, based at HOME Society, BC, Canada, illustrated how stability and sustainability become manifest through the strong relationships that develop as they are guided by the framework of Gentle Teaching. Dave engaged individuals in one-on-one dialogue, giving the rest of us in attendance an uncommon perspective, being able to listen in on their conversations and the sharing of personal stories, wherein they were able to relay the journey of their own awareness of Gentle Teaching and its impact in their own lives.

As I listened, I began to notice a pattern in the stories being told. As individuals shared their first-hand experiences of journeying with others through this framework of Gentle Teaching, a theme of contrasting pinnacles and pitfalls of the journey emerged: 'my life before Gentle Teaching, my life with Gentle Teaching, and what I'm learning right now through this framework of Gentle Teaching.

As the details of each one's story unfolded, I picked up on similar, shared experiences at the different stages of engagement with the Gentle Teaching framework.

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The Baker's House
is now open for business

Globe Star's well-established and acclaimed café in Miller Beach has re-opened its doors for business. *The Baker's House* is set up and managed by Globe Star, reaching out to the community with a menu and a mission to further opportunities that help individuals with developmental disabilities in feeling safe. At *The Baker's House*, they are valued in a workplace that is also a learning environment.

The Baker's House is staffed by Globe Star individuals and crewmembers. The menu continues to live up to the applauded reviews from local food critics, and was developed from a longstanding, family heritage that cultivated old world culinary arts with a contemporary flair and original style.

Current hours are daily, except on Sundays, from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm.

The Baker's House is set up for full service catering and for take-out, along with dining in the original, two-story beach home that was transformed into a variety of rooms with comfortable seating arrangements and urban retro decor. You'll find irresistible bakery display cases with freshly stocked shelves of salads and savory and sweet baked goods, while being served freshly brewed java and coffee drinks made to order.

Breakfast and lunch items are easy on the budget and big on comfort and quality. It's the perfect place for a change of pace, meeting friends, reading another chapter of your book with a perfect cuppa joe or just enjoying the wonderful atmosphere while supporting a culture of gentleness with the Globe Star community. ***Come visit us soon!***



Gentle Teaching

The Gentle Teaching approach teaches caregivers to embrace a "culture of life" over a "culture of death." What are the elements that constitute these cultures?

Culture of life...

- * Based on companionship
- * Leading to community
- * Centered on the person
- * Mutual change begins with us

A spirit of gentleness is about...

- * Our nonviolence
- * Our sense of social justice
- * Our expression of unconditional love
- * Our warmth toward those who are cold
- * Our teaching others to feel safe, loved, loving, and engaged
- * Our teaching a feeling of companionship with the most marginalized
- * Our forming community
- * Our sense of human interdependence and solidarity
- * Our option to be side by side with the most devalued

Culture of death...

- * Based on control
- * Leading to compliance
- * Centered on behavior
- * Imposed change under the guise of choice a feeling of companionship with the most marginalized

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-Bill Sexton, General Manager

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GLOBE STAR, LLC is a service provider that views caregiving through the scope of Gentle Teaching. Through this framework, we navigate with a compass of compassion on our course to Value, Teach, Protect and Reciprocate.

As navigators, we strive to facilitate the Individual's journey to destinations where they are able to experience and dwell in the destiny and dignity of being human.

-Dr. Anthony McCrovitz, Director

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GLOBE STAR Office Updates

Warsaw Office Social Skills Group meets on Monday afternoons for games, discussions, and making colorful, seasonal decorations. Everyone raves about the camaraderie and says they are really enjoying their time together. Thanks to Page and Teresa for their wonderful work!



Paula Haney won a gift at the Warsaw Public Library on Nov. 9. The library staff chose a number matched by a patron checking out a book or materials for the prize winner. Paula won 'the gold bag' which had all the makings for s'mores. She shared the s'more winnings with her sister and family over the Thanksgiving holiday. Congratulations Paula!

South Bend Office welcomed *Maverick Allen* to the Globe Star family on October 16, 2013. Congratulations to his parents Megan Allen and Robbie Olson!

And congratulations to *Denisha Barbary*, daughter of Bobbie Barbary, who was chosen to sing with South Bend Community School Corporation's All-City Choral Festival on November 19. She will be sharing her singing talents at Disney World in March, 2014!

Social Club continues to meet on Tuesdays at 4 p.m. Preparations continue for the South Bend office to become a **Snoezelen Center**. Offices will be moving upstairs soon, to make way for our new reception area.

The Giving Ship is Globe Star's recently established residence at 8060 Chapel Drive in Merrillville, designated as a place for respite services, and also the site for Globe Star community-building activities, teachings and workshops, retreats and dinners. It is open to our stakeholders and other community members.

The launching of The Giving Ship was official by September 17, celebrating with a well-attended, *Fall Game Night* on the premises.

October entertained a "kick-off" costume party at The Giving Ship, with a full fleet of participation by the Globe Star community.

Great costumes included a cow, a pumpkin, a bee, a pink lady, a French gentleman, a gypsy, a nurse, a glamorous witch, a scary maid, and a referee. Each attendee received an award specific to their costume.

Several games of Go Fish! were played and the reigning champion, Larry, was undefeated. Then all enjoyed an amazing and most entertaining **cake walk**, as much as the baked goods and prizes were much-appreciated.

The events celebrating the re-opening of The Giving Ship were inspiring for Globe Star's continued navigation toward building and bridging companionship and community.

*The Giving Ship coordinator and contact person
can be reached at: 219-921-5492*

The 6th Annual Pumpkin Golf Classic was held at the Brassie Golf Club in Chesterton on Monday, October 7. The chilly air didn't hold back Globe Star's awesome supporters and sponsors from turning out for the annual fundraiser. Well-timed sunshine and slightly warmer temperatures arrived for the noon tee time, with all enjoying a fun, fantastic day on the 18-hole course.

Globe Star is so grateful to the Brassie Golf Club and for all of our sponsors who contributed to this successful event!

(See the list of our sponsors on page 6)

From the Desk of ... *Journeying with Gentle Teaching*

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The stories all seemed to reveal that life before Gentle Teaching had been endured through compliance, correcting, and even providing a negative consequence. As we know, these behaviors frame the person as the core of a problem. 'It created a sense to devalue me as a person.' as one individual shared. It also made clear to these people, who were witnessing the journeying of individuals, that from the compliance, correcting and negative consequence, the individuals came to see themselves as the core of this problem. They believed that it was within them, and understood that they were then classified a certain way by all the experts who saw them on a day-to-day basis, who would come and fix and change them into something other than anything they were.

Through the stories about their journeys into Gentle Teaching and how it had come into their lives, they talked about how it filled them with unconditional love, and that people were now doing things with them and helping them, and then, listening to the many stories about what they were learning about themselves, and about doing with others and also for others.

The stories illustrated subtle differences and similarities that all contributed to the transforming of one's life. This got me thinking about how Gentle Teaching doesn't simply take away all of the struggles and difficulties in one's life. I began to wonder, 'how aware are we under the easy assumption, that as we work to create and enrich one's quality of life through this framework of Gentle Teaching, that we might be setting up expectations of few to no more struggles or areas of difficulty?'

In observing this, I noticed how the gentleness was still present in their lives as they continued with their struggles and difficulties, but that through their shared story, that became, too, a story about Gentle Teaching, was that what began as an individual story; a story about someone's new beginning, their invitation, and about being in this gentleness community, now carried an overriding theme for all of them now - that now they weren't alone.

The stories revealed that what Gentle Teaching gave them was trust...trust in themselves and in others; trusting that they could learn and grow in themselves with others, by realizing, through trusting, that people are here to help in this moment; not to take it away, but to enable the learning and show how to befriend these struggles, to be present with them. And realizing, too, through learning to trust his own ability, that this revelation about others also included himself.

They are also realizing that the learning about this gentleness, each and every day, provides this open opportunity for understanding that they are shifting from this old model about them having the problem, to now recognizing that it's just really this lack of acceptance and of respect for who they are, and that with this gentleness, it's not about who people want them to be with their compliance and consequential suffering and about what they feel the others need to be doing, but understanding that the core of the problem isn't them.

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**From the Desk of ... *Journeying with Gentle Teaching, continued from p. 3***

With Gentle Teaching, they are able to learn that the core of the problem is really the community and this institution that we're all a part of, and that this paradigm isn't so much to classify the individual anymore, but to empower and create supports to enrich one's quality of life. Now they can learn that the power isn't so much with us as the provider or the professional, but with each individual as they tell their story, understanding that the goal of Gentle Teaching is not the same as before, with the old way that wasn't about healing, but about trying to fix or to change. Through Gentle Teaching, it dawns on them that it's not about these old ways, but about something new; about building the relationships, and doing this collaboratively.

As we talk about this relationship, it's important to realize who we really are in our Gentle Teaching role. It is our vision to create this culture of gentleness, adhering to our own mission that we're a community that mentors the spirit of gentleness through the framework of Gentle Teaching, and that the practice and processes that allow us to achieve this, needs our accountability. To be accountable to the commitment to gain the knowledge that provides the point of reference of Gentle Teaching and its foundation, to cultivate gentleness with skilled practicing as we navigate, and to hold on to the promise to nurture and sustain the quality of gentleness by adding to and developing this relationship.

Our intent is to create the possibilities that can change the paradigm that can create a public conversation based on communal accountability and commitment and keep us accountable, among all other things, to act as an owner and co-creator of this framework that improves and enriches the quality of life for the individual and also for our community, and that this willingness to make a commitment is a promise with no expectation or condition of a return; a promise void of barriers or conditions on another person's action.

In the absence of this clarity, we are kept in the position of reacting to the choices of others.

The stories provided us with the invitation for many possibilities; to self-reflect, to engage in a sense of companionship, to develop a sense of ownership, not just for ourselves, but as a model for the individual to engage in with his own sense of ownership, to discover who he is.

As they discover, a natural path and sometimes part of the processing is *dissent*, the response that sometimes appears to be more of a negative reaction. It's a natural direction of the journey, but their knowing that 'I'm not walking the journey alone' paves the path for commitment and understanding. This understanding is a solid support for learning and growth.

As we see with this learning and growth, it provides us a return to what gentleness is all about. It's not being weak or only knowing what one needs, but also being aware of what is not needed. In being clear about this, gained through the self-reflection and inspection of our own practice and modeling of Gentle Teaching, we can stand firmly in our work of Gentle Teaching that is restoring a balance of wholeness to the individual.

The stories shared at the conference, now bound in our collective memory, are living proof of the volume and soundness of Gentle Teaching.

For us it's about being self disciplined as a 'disciple,' a student of learning. Learning, reflecting, observing ourselves as we are with them, and as we influence the lives of others as we live our own.

Yes, for us it's about demonstrating in our own lives and within ourselves, how we can model gentleness in the world and invite others to receive this gift of gentle presence.

Tony

Dr. Anthony M. McCrovitz, Executive Director

Gentle Teaching is...

PRESENCE. It is the greatest gift we can bring to an individual for enriching one's *quality of life*. It is a **PRESENT** opportunity entrusted to those who take up the role of navigating *safe and loved* with the framework of *Gentle Teaching*. It is an offering of *unconditional support* that invites an individual to engage **with** us on a well-lighted path of learning and valuing that guides one's awakening for developing a sense of self-worth, a sense of belonging, and a reciprocal level of social-emotional maturity.

The navigational framework of *Gentle Teaching* stems from a *psychology of interdependence*, shaping a collaborative relationship that is sustained by the daily leavening of *culture of life* values that pave paths of possibility for instilling connective arcs of gentleness that bridge brokenness with new moral memories, and inscribe new meaning for one's experience, adding recognizable value to the daily rituals of one's life.

The *Gentle Teaching* learning environment is relative to the conceptual framework, anchored by the navigator's daily discipline to *value, teach and protect*. This is the accountable, **given value** of the framework. This mainstay guides the direction for the collaborative relationship and the path of learning, indicating each step of the journey that is navigated, according to the design for the framework of *Gentle Teaching*.

All communication is spooled and spun from the guiding principle to *value, teach and protect*, composing a *language* that is articulated and conveyed through the use of one's *tools* (our *hands*, our *eyes*, our *words*, our *presence*), forming a *culture of gentleness* that enfolds the fabric of human relationships with elementary ties of *companionship*, all of which are woven around *four pillars* that represent the stand of *Gentle Teaching* to support and uphold its model that teaches *safe, loved, loving* and *engaged*, enabling an intrinsically motivated, *reciprocal response* from the individual, bringing **added value** to the framework.

Gentle Teaching is a scope of storytelling through an adjustable lens that aligns ratios of *value, teach and protect* and puts them in perspective with an individual's story. *Gentle Teaching* is a journey of wisdom, a way of following a **star** through the darkness so that one can feel *safe and loved*, welcomed and belonging to the community.

Gentle Teaching is a story, about an individual ONE and everyONE.

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a page from THE NAVIGATOR scrapbook...

Just a few of the MANY awesome attendees at the 2013 Gentle Teaching International Conference in Saskatoon! Wish EVERYONE was pictured, but ALL (pictured here and not pictured here) represent the work of unconditional love, at the helm and heart of Gentle Teaching, feeling safe and feeling loved.



**Photo credits: Kristinn Mar Torfason of Iceland and Maurits Eijgendaal of Denmark.*

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