

Transition Culture

An Evolving Exploration into the Head, Heart and Hands of Energy Descent

12 Dec 2011

The Launching of Transition Northfield MA!

Here is a guest post by Judy Phillips and Joan Stoia from Transition Northfield in the US:

A year and a half ago, inspired and guided by [Transition US](#) and Northeast Regional Trainer, Tina Clarke, twelve adventurous and committed Northfielders embarked on a project designed to re-localize Northfield. They were armed with the following mission:

“Transition Northfield is a creative community-based response to economic instability, resource depletion (peak oil), and climate change. Its aim is to engage residents from all aspects of our community to work together in a positive practical process that increases local resilience and economic vitality. It is flexible and fun, encourages local creativity, and results in a stronger, more cohesive community.”

Referred to in *The Transition Handbook* as the “Initiating Group,” they focused their efforts on awareness raising, communications and community building in a manner that was welcoming, inclusive, fun and informative.



The Marketplace of Ideas.

Local foods maven John Cevasco provided consistency, commitment and healthy snacks, while research consultant Shirley Keech showed steadfastness, willingness to work the details and encouragement. Local jewelry maker Shay Wood kept information flowing to the non-wired community, calling and connecting with interested people and organizations by phone to make sure they weren't left out-of-the-loop. Full time professor Walter Jaworski shared what he learned in Transition training with the group and organized a film series at the Library. Veteran volunteer Don Campbell made us believe in the possibility of accomplishing resiliency one person at a time.

Judy Phillips, who recruited the original group, functioned as its heart-pumping oxygen when and where it was needed-as well as its hands - keeping the Northfield group connected with other email universes, cranking out beautiful flyers and posters, devising creative ways to manifest the Transition Town principles and organizing an amazing multi-generational Film Project that encouraged young and old to dream about a transformed and positive future. The goal of all this learning, communicating and information sharing was the launching, scheduled over three days, of projects that will bring those dreams to fruition.

While the first program, the Transition Towns Film Festival, *Looking Back to the Future - Envisioning Our Communities in 2030* had to be postponed due to the storm and electrical outages, the remaining two programs went on and were remarkable.



B Ben Hewitt speaking to the group.

The second event, author Ben Hewitt's talk ("*The Town that Food Saved*") set the stage for two days of activities for "Celebrate Northfield: Bringing the Community Together to Create a More Sustainable Future for Northfield." The principles that supported Hardwick, Vermont's revitalization clearly apply to all facets and systems needed for our own resiliency. Ben's reference to the 360-degree spectrum that acknowledges what one sector or individual or group does affects all of us. He encouraged us to come together (as family/friends/ neighbors/residents of Northfield) to rebuild trust, collaboration and interdependence as the real pre-condition for community vitality, economic prosperity and overall well-being. Many in the SRO crowd of 47 attendees left that evening seeing clearly that we are all connected and we can do this.



The scribes.

The final day of Celebrate Northfield saw the coming together of Northfielders interested in this theme:

“How can we as a community prepare for the uncertainties of the future?”

The day was an extraordinary experience. Based on the First Principle of such Transition events, *“Whoever comes are the right people”*, the assembled community of nearly 40 people created 14 working groups to help meet those uncertainties. The responses may surprise you, and we are not finished yet, for this was just the beginning. The Working Groups (WG) will continue to work and to meet during the weeks and months to come. And there will be more groups forming as ideas come forward.

So you have a glimpse into this special unfolding, here are the current working groups:

WG #1: **Tool Library**, to establish a tool lending library in Northfield

WG #2: **Third Place**, to develop events and a regular place for folks to meet/gather in Northfield

WG #3: **Waste Reduction**, to find sources of plastics recycling and other waste reduction

WG #4: **Regionalize town functions** to maximize economy of scale – multi-town consciousness, combining infrastructures for fire, police, senior center, and DPW

WG #5: **PVRS Resilient Land Management Plan**

WG #6: **Barter Bank**, “The Source” — create a cooperative or non-profit that provides a sustainable location to house: community kitchen, food pantry, prepared foods, outlet for farmers, and classes

WG #7: **Food, Nutrition, Cooking, Food Bank**, to establish new site for “Free Food,” one-stop shopping, for community needs, to obtain food close to home, for all seasons

WG #8: **How to Cut Firewood without Hurting Your Woodlot**, workshops/training offered

WG #9: **Regional Trails Network**, to develop a regional network of connecting trails to facilitate multi-day hiking trips without carrying a backpack

WG #10: **Low Voltage Radio**, to create a low wattage radio station especially for emergency situations

WG #11: Community Garden

WG #12: Contingency Planning without Fear

WG #13: Devotion to Thrive: Spiritual, Emotional Wellness: Self & Community

WG #14: Town Water, East Northfield Water Company to be publicly owned



The Community Garden working group.

This wonderful day manifested out of the residents' wishes to have a more resilient Northfield in the months and years ahead and with the support of many community businesses and organizations.

And now that TransitionNorthfieldMA is launched into the hands of the residents, the process of transition continues. On November 13, there was a meeting with the new working group facilitators and Initiators to pass the torch to a fresh group of leaders. That evening we dined (which is the correct word for the marvelous foods presented for the potluck), created an agenda, went around the room getting to know the 20 some folks there, each saying why they were there and what working group they were with. Then began the discussion of what's next for TransitionNorthfieldMA with the Initiators' role completed, specifically, who would hold TransitionNorthfieldMA as the group expands into various activities and still maintain a center. This is a worthy unfolding as the new TransitionNorthfield discovers how it will evolve.



People chatting at the Gathering...

Watch for information coming from the working groups and TransitionNorthfieldMA. In addition to the working groups are the events from this last year that we hope will become traditions. These include: the postponed Transition Towns Film Festival / Project, the Community Picnic (which was a huge success), the movie series and maintaining a presence at all kinds of community events.

The great unfolding continues!

Reference: <http://transitionculture.org/2011/12/12/the-launching-of-transition-northfield/>