



## JAPANESE 'LIVE AND LEARN' AT CRYSTAL WATERS

Tokyo's Chuo University recently sent its first group of students to the Ecocentre at Crystal Waters for a 2-week Living & Learning programme.

The concept of Living & Learning centres is a central plank in GEN's strategy to promote sustainable village principles within the broader community. The centres offer an environment where theory can be reinforced by practical experience – where 'muscle memory' is built.

Faculty heads demanded a rigorously structured course designed to impart meaningful knowledge that participants could then apply within the framework of their chosen discipline. Both GEN (Oceania

and Asia) and Crystal Waters' design consultancy, EcoLogical Solutions, worked closely with the faculty to tie these academic needs to the experiential components offered within an ecovillage environment. The result is a powerful learning experience where personalised, real life experience adds meaning and practical relevance to an academic system traditionally totally reliant on theory.

Many Chuo faculty members commented on the positive changes in the outlook of participants at the completion of the course – the gift travels. Student Kanako Suzuki said, "I'm using my mind, heart, and senses to make connections and learn something real".

## Water In The Desert: Good News From Africa

The heat of summer is now welcome in the Berg-en-Dal ecovillage, all thanks to the acquisition of a Solar Water Pump to pump water out of the new borehole. Up until this time the community had relied on a filthy, diesel belching pump and on refurbishing its old wind pumps. The pumping of water with the use of photovoltaic panels has proved to be a fine example of just how elegantly simple this technology can be (two Shell S115 PV panels and the pump itself is an SQF 2.5-2). Now the community can water its gardens, have big baths, and generally expand its agricultural and building activities.

The new borehole in itself was a milestone in that it hit

sweet water – just as the water diviner said it would. Sweet water is such a rarity in the area that it brought visitors from all over the surrounding district to check it out for themselves.

The community's autumn equinox meeting in March 2004 centred around building a new compost toilet, partially constructed out of conventional materials like brick and cement mortar, but also incorporating foraged resources such as invasive Australian wattle and bamboo for the walls. The finishing touches will be made with locally sourced cob. The ecovillage hopes to have its roof-wetting party of the first newly built house on the farm within two months.

## Nigerian Ecovillage Initiative Launched



February 2004 saw the launch of Nigeria's first ecovillage; the town of Odi in the Niger Delta state of Bayelsa.

Odi, a town of 60,000 inhabitants, was demolished during a military operation against a group protesting about the use of oil resources in the Niger Delta area. The plan is to redevelop Odi along ecological and permaculture principles. The leader of the initiative, Gordon Abiama, took part in the recent tour of ecovillages in Senegal. Gordon aims to 'reverse the fast

disintegration of our supportive socio-cultural structures and environmental degradation and create harmonious development without endangering nature.'

The next step required for the initiative is to study and develop an understanding of the land and to allow plans to emerge from this. Jonathan Dawson of GEN-Europe hopes to visit Odi during 2004 to help with the development of plans and the launch of a fund-raising strategy.

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## GEN visits the World Social Forum, Mumbai

Marti Mueller, Chair of GEN's International Advisory Council and member of the Auroville ecovillage in southern India, was one of over 100,000 people to participate in this year's World Social Forum in Mumbai, India. Tribal people from all over India danced in the dusty streets as delegates met in huge make-shift halls to discuss water and land issues, the impact of war and the hopes for peace, the vital concern over food security, the role of art in social action, the devastating effects of AIDS and other heated topics.

Among the many hundreds of workshops, seminars and events, Marti facilitated a panel on GEN that was attended by around 300 people. Contact was made with a number of potential partners in India, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, and Brazil. As always, interest in the more hands-on, 'can-do' initiatives that GEN represents was very high.

## GREEN 'GROW-OPERATIVE' RAISES THE BAR

In what could be a first for Australia, the green business accelerator ReGenesis has just launched a new agricultural opportunity that embraces the idea of sustainable enterprise and living. Headed by Elaine Seiler and Danielle Leonard, who between them have a total of 30 years experience in green business initiatives, the team has set aside twelve hectares of land for people with an interest in ecologically sustainable farming but who lack the land, resources and facilities needed to kick-start their own enterprises.

Located ten minutes inland from Byron Bay, 'Avalon Vale' will be the site of a suite of new complementary initiatives including ecosystems recovery, sustainable agriculture and farm forestry. The idea is to share resources, knowledge and infrastructure in a way that benefits private enterprise. For more about Avalon Vale, phone +2 66 848 162.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**COUNCIL PASS HUMANURE**  
After initial resistance, the County Engineer has given planning permission for humanure toilets in the new houses currently under construction at the Irish ecovillage, The Hollies. He has even suggested that the Council monitor the system to see how it operates. [www.theholliesonline.com](http://www.theholliesonline.com)

**COLUMBIAN PC COURSE GAINS ACCREDITATION**  
Colombia's first accredited permaculture course will take place in late 2004. Run by FUNDACULTURA, a local NGO, and accredited by the Universidad Católica de Oriente, Antioquia, the training will be jointly based on an ecovillage-inspired curriculum and on the wisdom of the indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.

**GERMAN STUDY MEASURES ECOVILLAGE IMPACT**  
A recent study by the University of Kassel shows intentional communities to have a significantly smaller ecological impact than mainstream communities. After comparing intentional communities with a sample of ecologically-conscious households and 'average' German homes, researchers identified communal approaches to food production and transport as important factors. For details, contact [simon@usf.uni-kassel.de](mailto:simon@usf.uni-kassel.de)

**L.A. ECOVILLAGE LAUNCHES PERMACULTURE GUILD**  
A recent urban permaculture course at the L.A.E.V. has seen the birth of a new permaculture guild. Camille Cimino, a permaculturist and ecovillage traveller is applying for residency with the community and will be on the Guild's Steering Committee, as will L.A. Ecovillager Dedan Gills. For details, contact [Luis Arkin: crsp@igc.org](mailto:crsp@igc.org)

## IS PEACE TRULY POSSIBLE?

From 1 May 2006 until 30 April 2009, 200 people will launch a social experiment in the Tamera ecovillage, Portugal. The goal is to establish a pilot model that could provide an answer to the ecological and political challenges of our time, as well as to the themes of community, trust and love. What does it mean to live in community today?

The aim is to promote the 'Healing Biotores' within which people can find ways of living with each other and with the rest of nature that promote harmony and a culture free of violence.

The project will build on experience already developed in a number of research areas, including peace work and conflict resolution, education and youth work, water and energy management, healing work through geomantics and ecology, sustainable architecture and the economy of future societies. The first orientation meeting for interested people and potential participants will be during Tamera's Summer University (5-15 August 2004). For more information contact: [igf@tamera.org](mailto:igf@tamera.org)

## FARM KIDS GO TO THE UNITED NATIONS

In February 2004, the Farm School (at the Farm ecovillage, Summertown, Tennessee, USA) participated in a 'Mock United Nations', a nationwide event in which high school students from each state pretend to be delegates from a chosen country. The students from the Farm chose Guatemala.

For one day, the students participate in activities typical of the United Nations. Allowed two delegates to any of four committees (Environment, World Health, Social / Humanitarian, and the Economic Council), the students from the Farm School chose Environment and Social / Humanitarian. Three resolution papers submitted by the School a month earlier were accepted for discussion and eventually developed into resolutions for passage by the

## Monastery To Host Ghana's First Permaculture Course

Ghana's first permaculture course is to be taught by Greg Knibbs and Dr Noah Owusu-Takyi in May and June 2004 at the Benedictine Monastery of Kristo Buase, Brong Ahafo region in Ghana. One of the monks, Dom Ambrose Flavell, said "Monks are not new to sustainable living: Benedictines take a vow of stability to a particular community which gives a great attachment to place. St Benedict wanted a balanced life of prayer, work

and study. Everything was to be within the monastic enclosure: water, mill, garden, craft workshops, libraries. Monks have been practising a form of self-sufficiency for nearly 1,500 years."

From the beginning, the monastery has had solar power, rainwater harvesting, and an ideal of a simple self-supporting life. Permaculture is a natural extension of this. For further details, contact: [kb@africaonline.com.gh](mailto:kb@africaonline.com.gh)

## 'Living Routes' Provides Answers For US Students

Michele LaPointe and Simon Abramson, both juniors at the University of Vermont, were looking for something more 'concrete and hands-on' than what they were doing on campus; they both wanted to make a difference. 'Living Routes - India: Sustainability in Practice' provided both the academic direction and experience needed for their educational growth. Michele did her internship in medicinal plants and habitat restoration at Auroville, but she found more than academic direction:

"I found my heart, my path, my career there," says Michele. "I would love to tell others how powerful this program is!"

Simon opened his eyes to a new way of living. He says: "Thanks to Living Routes, I now live life with vision and focus. Today, I am a 'doer' - life isn't just happening to me anymore."

Living Routes provides opportunities for accredited, ecovillage-based semesters for students in Australia, India, Scotland, Brazil and the US. For further details, contact: [daniel@livingroutes.org](mailto:daniel@livingroutes.org)

how the UN works. We related the UN to the Farm."

The Farm School has also applied to send delegates to the UN Environment Programme's Tunza International Children's Conference which is being held in New London, Connecticut, from July 19 to 23 2004. Organized by the International Coalition for Children and the Environment, the Conference is being sponsored in part by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

The International Children's Conference is the largest UN event dedicated to bringing children from around the world together in order to discuss the environment and learn about their rights and responsibilities as stewards. Further details can be found on the Conference website: [www.icc04.org](http://www.icc04.org).