

# Spiral Garden & Cosmic Bird Feeder

Annual Report 2004







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## Introduction

This year has been the twenty-first for Spiral Garden, the eighth for Cosmic Bird Feeder and the second season of program development for the Open Studio.

In the Gardens our work is a process that is ever unfolding. There is the ongoing joy of nurturing a community that comes together each summer to explore and celebrate. In the links locally, regionally and internationally there are new seeds of connection and reports on how seeds planted earlier are growing. In the stories there are glimpses of the events surrounding the gardens, the new construction, the changes in the sites, staff and children, and the remembering of those who are gone.

All that happens, joyful or sad, we celebrate together on our tiny piece of earth that we are privileged to nurture and dance on each summer.

## Acknowledgements

The staff, families and community of Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder gratefully acknowledge the continued support of the Bloorview MacMillan Children's Foundation and the many donors who contribute to the gardens. Our thanks also goes to the Senior Management team of Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre and the parents who advocate for the gardens. A myriad of others behind the scenes at the Centre who lend support in so many ways include - to name just a few - Helen Healy, Gloria Elliot, Karin Farkashidy, Grace Tutolo, Krishna Wint, Bobby Hancock, Augustin Kral, Jennifer Hiatt, Barb Donald, Marcela Gatica, Loretta McDonald, Gerald Hardy, Dan Costello, Milan Kostic for his sense of humour and computer help, the Recreation staff, the teachers of the Bloorview and MacMillan site schools, Nazir and the security staff, the cafeteria staff (who use the herbs we grow and provide us with compost) and all of the volunteers. There are also many people outside the Centre who lend their support - some of them are, Jutta Mason at Dufferin Grove Park who has inspired us to continue with our bread oven adventures, Julie Jarvis, who returns each year to help in numerous ways and both brings others to the Gardens and takes the spirit of the Gardens out to other segments of the community, Laura Berman of Foodshare and the Community Gardening Network and Collette Murphy of Urban Harvest.

Our gratitude extends as well to all of the visitors who pass through the programs in the summer. They give us feedback, encouragement and the opportunity to share ideas. After these many years, the friends of the Garden are all across Canada, in British Columbia, Winnipeg, Quebec, Hamilton and Cape Breton Island as well as in many other parts of the world.

## Philosophy

In the Gardens, our work is a process that is ever unfolding. We encourage the practice of being in the 'present', of responding to what comes to us from the world around us, from our environment, our community, our heads and hearts; to be in relationship with and therefore responsive to, events in the natural world, in our own lives and in the connections we have with one another.

We celebrate our interdependence with the natural world as a context for healing our children, ourselves, and the earth. Through gardening, the arts, and play we collectively explore and express our understanding of our place in this world. All aspects of the person - physical, emotional, spiritual, rational and intuitive - are integrated into the process. But at the heart of the process, at the center of the seed, is the conscious intention to bring the poetic back into our lives through the nurturing of relationships and creativity.

Art is the vehicle through which children make connections between the inner world of their imagination, the world of social interaction and nature. Within the complex web of forms (images, stories, and ceremonies) that emerge is the self-generation of culture that defines and nurtures our community

The Garden is central to the program's operating principles, which are rooted in the belief that the patterns, processes, and rhythm of the natural world provide the context for healing. Caring for our small organic garden quietly reminds us of our great work and responsibility as stewards of our wounded earth.

The Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder are open fields of Play where children and adults alike can enter into the continuous flow of creation. With a creative mind, an open heart, and a joyful spirit we surrender ourselves to the spontaneity of the moment. Through play we find and fulfill our place and role in the unfolding of the universe.

Each of these three aspects; Arts, Garden, and Play, are (re)united together in dynamic synthesis. The intentional way we use Story to bring these elements together is key to understanding our unique process. The creation and unfolding of the story is the mythopoetic axis, which brings depth and meaning to our efforts. The story's vertical dimension unites the individual, the community, and the cosmos as many cultures and traditions well understood. The mythopoetic is not to be understood as anthropomorphic explanations of natural events. Rather, it is meant to be experienced as the awe and wonder of looking up into a clear night's sky or down at the dazzling center of a sunflower.



## FAQs

### **How and when did the gardens begin?**

In 1984, Spiral Garden was initiated under the auspices of the Creative Arts Department of Hugh MacMillan Centre. The intention was to give the children in the Centre opportunities to be outdoors (to de-institutionalize their experience at the Centre) and to integrate neighborhood children into the setting. This would allow for a shared experience out of which new understandings might grow.

In 1996, with the merger of Bloorview and Hugh MacMillan, parents with their children at the Bloorview site requested a similar program for their children. A proposal was developed and the Cosmic Bird Feeder was created in the spring of 1997.

### **Who comes to the gardens? How many children take part?**

Spiral Garden began with 12 to 15 children and three artists. With its growth and the merger the demographics of Spiral Garden have changed. Presently, at Spiral Garden, children (with and without disabilities) come from the community. Children from other camps at the MacMillan site come for prearranged periods. We welcome families who are staying at the motel while receiving treatments. At Spiral there is also the Fountain of Youth program for 13 to 17 year olds. In July and August there are 60 to 75 children on site each day with 15 staff plus facilitators.

At Cosmic Bird Feeder children (with and without disabilities) come from the community and are joined by children from the Centre (inpatients, day patients, respite camp, arthritis camp) coordinated with the recreation staff. In July and August there are 35 to 50 children on site each day with 9 staff and 3 facilitators. Both programs run three days per week for four two-week sessions in July and August. Approximately 60 to 80 children from the schools on both sites participate in spring planting activities and fall harvest, art and music activities and the Harvest Festivals. Overall the children with special needs make up approximately 60% of the population.

### **How are the programs funded?**

Currently the programs are supported by the Bloorview MacMillan Children's Foundation and revenues from tuition paid by the community children.

### **What do families pay?**

The cost per child per session is presently \$200 (comparable to other day camps). There is an additional cost for facilitators and the possibility of subsidy for this cost both from government agencies and from the Centre.

### **How do you insure the inclusion of the children with special needs?**

A special needs coordinator communicates early and often with parents as well as with staff. Our staff includes an on-site monitor and a team of facilitators. We also give careful attention to the details of the site for example: different heights for planting areas and activity tables and open-ended activities accessible to a wide range of ability levels.

### **Who comprise the staff?**

We hire artists from a variety of disciplines, musicians, puppeteers, dramatists, storytellers, art and music therapists, educators, clowns, students, gardeners, facilitators and now (thankfully) an office manager.

**What do you look for when hiring?**

We seek out persons who have an understanding and practice of their own creative process. They have a desire to work in collaboration with other artists and especially the children to explore the myriad of ways that we can individually and collectively express ourselves. They are working to be present and support the children in their explorations. They appreciate the value of learning in an unstructured atmosphere of playfulness and caring and have a sense of the sacredness of the earth and all life.

**What does a typical day look like?**

The day begins with the staff coming together with exercises to ground themselves in the space and with each other, next they meet and then set up the site with tables, materials, puppets, the water transport system etc. When the children arrive everyone comes together for the music circle. Here we sing, play percussive instruments, get to meet one another and possibly tell the unfolding story. At the end of music circle the different artists tell about their activity. Then the children are free to choose which activity they wish to go to. They may stay as long or short a time as they wish at any one area, their only restriction being space and safety. Lunch and truestewies happen simultaneously, then the playground or the field. The afternoon has the same basic shape as the morning giving times for the community to come together and times to work individually or in small groups. On any day, at any time a play could happen or a zzaj festival or a procession of clowns or a ravine walk or a drumming session or just a gentle going about in costume with face paint. At the end of each session there is a closing that could include, amongst many other things, bread baking or applesauce making. At the end of the summer there is usually a day of celebration with the summer's story being the thread that weaves it all together.

**How will these programs fit within the new facility?**

In the initial stages (many years back) of the visioning process for the new facility we were asked to put forward our best case scenario for bringing Spiral Garden indoors to provide year round programming. The concept of the Open Studio was developed which consisted of a large, bright, inspiring indoor space and programming that would hold to the philosophy and approach of the Gardens. That space is well on it's way to being built. Some short-term positions over the past two years have also allowed us to begin to develop programming. While this programming is presently limited by the available space and staff positions, it is growing and will be readily transferable to the new space early in 2006.

Spiral Garden and the Open Studio will then become major components of the new "Centre For The Arts"

**The Butterfly Garden**

The Butterfly Garden is a peace and reconciliation project for children and their communities in the war zone in the eastern province of Sri Lanka. It was initiated by Healthreach (a project out of McMaster University) and Paul Hogan, one of the Spiral Garden founders. It uses the model of Spiral Garden as its starting point and has been successfully developed over the past seven years to meet the needs of its community. It is presently funded by HIVOS (a Dutch NGO). The children attend one day per week for a nine-month period. Well over 1000 children have attended the garden to date. The Butterfly Garden is widely recognized for its innovative approach and development a healing process to assist communities (children, staff and families) that have and are suffering from the effects of war and communal violence.





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## Community Links and Outreach

### Internal Links

#### Open Studio

The Open Studio project has been running for two years. Building on the philosophy and methodology of the Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder, we have been programming and building capacity to have in place when the Studio space opens in Spring 2006.

With the project we have furthered our ideas and practices from the Gardens and built relationships over an extended period of time beyond and before our summer programming. We run from September to June, which encompasses the Harvest Festival, the Winter Solstice and Spring Celebration as well as spring planting activities. The Harvest Festival and spring planting are activities that dovetail with Spiral Garden programming and staff. It allows for a flow, continuity and the ability to link the seasons and the rhythms of the natural world with social and cultural activities. Participants include the students of the onsite school and school groups from beyond the centre such as those from Park Lane and Northlea.

Because we work with the participants several times, the whole year or over several years, relationships develop and with it a trust and an ease of working. The children from the different schools have had a chance to meet and work with one another. It is as much a time to make art as it is to make friendships and to see diverse ways of being and doing. We build continuity and community through song, group art projects and celebration/observation.

Repetition of a song or poem every session allows the children to recognize or learn the words and/or tune. One child who was usually quite quiet jumped in singing the words he knew about three visits into the program. He had been taking it in all along. Another child hummed along after several visits, others lit up and grinned when they heard the song. Yet another time on our arrival the children started to spontaneously sing, creating an amazing round.

This same type of continuity applies to the art and garden projects. We have introduced techniques such as clay and beading and then do them in a different context at a later date to give the children time to master the activity. When we did clay for the second time around one child remarked, "I know this. We did it last year!" and he continued to confidently work and play with the clay. He had a sense of ownership. The same has happened with beading. One child surprised his teacher and educational assistant with his level of concentration, visual acuity and fine motor skills as he slowly strung one brightly-coloured bead after another onto a long wire. He was able to master the activity and create a thing of beauty within his own means and time frame.

Happily we have been able to collaborate with other Creative Arts staff. This spring Roger Knox joined us to create a song based on a story we told about the Squirrel, Owl and Oak Tree. The children contributed words and sounds and made "nut symphony" music during the song. They had made shakers with bamboo that they cut and filled with clay beads they had made and used the shakers in this song. The song was the musical anchor for the Squirrely Spring Celebration. Chi, chi, crack, crack, crack!

Park Lane School students were a part of this celebration. They had visited us once at the Centre and we had visited them once at their school. They then returned to share their artistic creations, sing and celebrate squirrels and Spring with us and meet the other participants. They are keen to meet other students and be part of the greater community beyond their school. It was an important connection to make and one which we are maintaining.

Sometimes being indoors doing our programming seems second best to being in the garden. There isn't the space to roam, wander and explore. Our current space, the art room, is small for even groups numbering ten and under, especially if they use wheelchairs. The limitations of the physical

has shaped, to some degree, what we can offer and for whom. We keenly look forward to the new studio, its large windows and floor space, plants, art objects and the opportunities it will supply. What we are able to offer and the way in which we work, especially within the school context, is very much appreciated, as feedback indicates.

Our programming enriches the curriculum and has created opportunities to simply see the world and the often-overlooked secrets of nature. With this they can also experience the joy and meaningfulness of creating and expressing within an art context with a group of peers. It has been noted that communicative and expressive language has been an important outcome of what we do with the children. They get excited by what they are doing: the new experiences with art and nature and all its attendant textures, tastes and scents. Children vocalize and verbalize their likes, dislikes, observations and insights freely.

Our time together has been one of innovation through doing. It has been exciting to dream up great activities that connect to a bigger picture that are accessible to all within their means. A lot of our solutions are quite simple but effective, like using long, wide tubes to roll tulip and garlic bulbs into the ground from wheelchair height or attaching brushes to bamboo poles to paint from a wheelchair onto silk stretched out on the floor.

We try to use everyday objects made for everyday tasks but modify their use or operational function. We've used cake decorating tools filled with butter to fill Indian-style ghee butter candles (spoons would be too difficult for most to use) or put the foot pedal of a sewing machine at table-top height rather than on the floor to be used by hand or arm rather than foot. We've utilized kitchen-use dough cutters for cutting clay; easy to obtain and use. We've also sourced tools that are fun for folks of all abilities to use like a hand-cranked grain grinder and a large corkscrew-like compost turner. When everyone uses the same assistive devices or tools it normalizes their use.

This fall and winter the programming will continue with BMCC school and outside schools. Other areas of focus/future directions include:

- Developing materials and strategies with Foundation staff
- Developing a process for accessing funding from the art and environmental sectors
- Conducting visioning sessions with a range of staff from the Gardens, the Open Studio and Creative Arts towards the development of the Centre for the Arts in the new facility.
- Developing presentation materials and photo archives
- Developing training materials

Within the Open Studio programming we have been able to experiment, deepen and expand our philosophies, relationships and methodologies and have had a lot of fun doing so. We will be able to use these experiences in the above mentioned points.

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At Cosmic Bird Feeder our most important connection is with Therapeutic Recreation and Playroom staff. Recreation staff are included in the Orientation week for the garden, familiarizing them with the Bird Feeder staff and the philosophy and workings of the program. Cosmic Bird Feeder's Special Needs Coordinator/Recreation Liaison Waleed Noor contacts the recreation staff daily to inform them of the activities offered that day and to ascertain how many children will be coming out as well as to ask if assistance is needed - Cosmic can send a few volunteers for the transfer to outdoors. Bringing the children outdoors, into an integrated setting has great value for everyone, especially for the clients and the community children, and also for the Cosmic Bird Feeder staff, and the Recreation and Playroom staff as we take advantage of this opportunity to build a sense of community. Participation for the children from the Arthritis Camp and the Respite Camp is also coordinated by Cosmic's Recreation Liaison and the internal Recreation staff.

Children also came to both programs during the summer through referrals from Creative Arts, the ABI program, the Psychology Department and Social Workers. This year many social workers were involved in working to see that families could access the many new funding opportunities available to defray the cost of attending or transportation or for a facilitator. This is much appreciated by both the families and the Cosmic Bird Feeder as we all work towards providing the children with a wide range of experiences.

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In the spring and fall both Cosmic Bird Feeder and Spiral Garden conducted gardening, art, music and Harvest Festival activities for all of the classes in the school at both sites. At Spiral these activities are now conducted in collaboration with Open Studio programming.

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Two of the Spiral Garden staff are members of the Special Installations Committee. There are also several artists from the Gardens who will be involved in the Special Installations projects for the new building.

### **External Links**

American Community Garden Association 2004 Conference: Gardens of Diversity, Growing Across Cultures

Jan MacKie, Shannon Crossman, and Micah Donovan presented an introduction to the workings of the Gardens for the conference delegates. Part of the ACGA conference in Toronto, the presentation included images from both Gardens, and explained the connections made between the various communities, gardening, working with special needs children from the Centre, from the surrounding communities and the importance of the integration of abilities and creative process.

A tour of the Spiral Garden grounds followed, with an opportunity to be joined by Robert Vine and Jane Hillary, to do a little gardening, baking in the bread-oven, and wreath building in preparation for the Harvest Festival

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One of the staff has continued a project that involves Market Lane school, the Royal Conservatory's Learning Through the Arts and a school in Nablus, Palestine.

### **International Links**

**Staff of the Gardens create and nurture links with organizations outside the Garden programs.**

Partnership with International Institute for Child Rights and Development 2003

The Gardens developed training and workshops for working with children overseas in partnership with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), the Palestinian



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Counseling Centre and support from Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre.

In Jan./Feb. 2004 two staff from BMCC - Spiral Garden conducted an assessment visit in Ramallah and Nablus towards creating an art, garden, play project in the West Bank. A proposal for this project is now with CIDA.

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One of the staff of Spiral is now traveling and has met with War Child Netherlands, the Pavorotti Music Centre in Mostar, Bosnia and a community group working with children, the arts and nature in Tuscany, Italy.

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During the summer a volunteer from South Africa spent time in and was enchanted by the Garden and has been communicating about how we could support her efforts to begin a project in her home country.

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Spiral Garden has for many years had a link to McMaster University's Centre for Peace Studies. It began with Healthreach through which the Butterfly Garden in Sri Lanka was initiated. In conjunction with the development of the Butterfly Garden, the first adult trainings workshop was conducted at BMCC to introduce people to the Spiral Garden approach. The current link with Centre for Peace Studies is through puppet making.

What, you might ask, could puppets have to do with Peace Studies?

A couple of years ago, Dr. Joanna Santa Barbara, Dr. Graeme McQueen, Dr. Saddiq Weera, Mary Jo Land and others began to develop 'therapeutic' stories to be used in schools in Afghanistan as all of the children there had and continued to experience the devastating effects of war and the ongoing damage from landmines. With the stories developed and ready to be used it was decided that puppets, used to animate the stories, could enhance the children's engagement with the stories. One of the staff of the Garden was asked to design and lead the first round of making the puppets. The stories and the puppets have been well received in pilot schools in Kabul. The project continues to grow with UNICEF participating in the publishing of the stories and communities such as the Mennonite women in the Hamilton area and a women's group in Australia producing more puppets to be sent to Afghanistan. For more information on this project go to [www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/peacestories.htm](http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/peacestories.htm) click on 'the latest'

## **Regional Links**

Many visitors came to the Gardens to enjoy the atmosphere of the spaces and to learn from the programs and staff. They came from communities engaged in gardening, education, therapy, and environmental issues.

Spiral Garden hosted the AGM of the Toronto Herb Society, giving the group a tour of and presentation about the gardens.

A visitor from the Arboretum in Barrie visited this fall to gain inspiration for a new Teaching Garden in Barrie.

Three Expressive Arts Therapy students from ISIS - Canada, worked at Spiral Garden as part of their

practicum requirements for their Expressive Arts Therapy program.

With two of the Garden staff - Shannon Crossman and Jan MacKie - now sharing a part time position to develop the Open Studio, there will be more opportunities to nurture the many links that are made during the summer, throughout the year.

### **Under the Willows**

Under the Willows programming, modeled on the Spiral Garden approach, continued again this summer. Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder Staff have continued our link with Lynwood Hall in Hamilton through Julie Jarvis who consults with and does training for the staff of the Willows Project.

Lynwood Hall is a residential facility for children in the community with emotional and psychological challenges.

## **Projects**

### **Spiral Garden Resource Book**

The Spiral Garden Resource Book continues to aid and inspire educators, artists, community workers, and parents around the world. Positive feedback continues to come in from all corners.

While it is good to have sales continuing, the greatest benefit of having the book available is the people that it helps connect us to. It gives people a very tangible way to sense, taste and gain some understanding of all that goes into making the Gardens come to life.

We have come close to the end of our supply of books and will soon be looking for opportunities and funding to create the next book.

Excerpt from an e-mail from a volunteer from South Africa who fell in love with the Garden.

"I wanted to let you know of some adventures I've been fortunate to experience in the past few weeks. I'm attaching photos of the kids from Joe Slovo squatter camp and from Alexandre township (Johannesburg). These kids are hungry for a Spiral Garden! The need is huge. The benefit would be immense and rewarding"

### **Stacey Rosen**



## Website

### Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder Web Site

The Spiral Garden web site ranks as the first hit on Google, now, when searching Spiral and Garden. When we started, we were several pages in. I've been developing web links and registering/linking the site with sympathetic organizations/listings in order to bolster its ranking.

The site averaged 5,818 hits each month over the last 12 months, with interest increasing to 8051 hits for the month of December. This made a total of 69,824 hits in the last year.

The Spiral web site was the only part of the BMCC web site to show an increase in hits for the month of December 2004.

Now that we have registration and order forms online, and scheduling info, the information is getting out making it easier for parents to register or others to find us:

*Dear Customer Service, [that's us]*

*Hi! My name is Lauren and I am e-mailing you from Stories Bookshop in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia. I have had a request by a teacher to track down and locate a title called:*

*The Spiral Garden Resource Book, which I have managed to find on your website...*

*...Thank you very much,  
Lauren Houston.*

An organization starting a garden-art-health related program in Seattle learned of us through our web presence, online. They consequently attended the American Community Garden Association 2004 Conference in Toronto to see us present, and arranged a visit to the Gardens. As a result of this encounter, the Gardens will be featured on the cover of the JAMA Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Magazine in February. The web site has provided increased exposure and fostered new relations.

The web site also serves as a vehicle for promoting upcoming events, and the distribution of the Resource Book and our music. People are often calling the office for information on what we do and when we run programs. Now they can download special needs assistance forms and registration forms, saving us time and postage.

We now post our stories from the Gardens so children and friends can see what happens even if they can't attend the entire summer. <http://www.bloorviewmacmillan.on.ca/Spiral/sub/Stories.html> If you haven't heard it yet, download an MP3 of Dragons, a Gregory Hoskins song from Cosmic Bird Feeder to see how quickly and easily you can get a taste of the Gardens. Go to <http://www.bloorviewmacmillan.on.ca/Spiral/> and click on Crow for a tour.

I look forward to on-line registration and e-books where people can readily and affordably access information we are developing.

**Micah Donovan**

## Galen

Galen was my introduction to the Gardens. It came up in conversations like you would bring up family or where you came from. Spiral Garden sounded like it was a place where all things were considered, and considerate.

He and I met over the course of a few evenings in the print-making studios at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1995. We bumped into each other at the lithography presses and his Booker T and the MG's tape kept us rolling up litho-stones until the early rays of the morning sun. It was Galen who would suggest climbing up onto the roof to watch the sun rise over Halifax Harbour, when I had never given the roof a thought before that particular morning. We would roll an English Red Shag cigarette and pass it back and forth as the sun broke through the frosty hilltops of Dartmouth, smiling silently.

After working in the studio one day, relatively early in the evening, Galen suggested we try going to the tops of all the downtown high-rises. We simply wandered into bank tower lobbies until we found ones that would whisk us to the twinkling top floors of the city. My fear of heights slowly became disarmed by his sense of wonder. You can extend that metaphor through the rest of our relationship. Here was somebody who knew how to make the most of the moment, of what was at hand, and for whom being in the moment was not an exercise or practice, it was simply his life.

I loved being with Galen; it meant everything to me when he invited me home for the holidays that year. Jan and Jim welcomed me into their home and we celebrated and I felt my family not so far away, for once. He had acquainted me so caringly with his past that upon meeting his old friends it felt like I had known them just as long. I remember Galen and I walking home New Year's Eve from the Horseshoe Tavern, to the Beaches, an over three hour walk, with a 30 pound truck spring we found on the roadside, through a foot of snow-so we could chat and see the city. Life had a different pace. We shared a lot of time, and I was sad when he moved from Halifax.

Then I got a job in the Gardens, as wood worker at Spiral. That summer was magical; I think Garvia Bailey called it the summer of love-and by that she meant there was so much caring and creativity going on. I had found a place where art and meaning intersected, where community development and personal development were on the same page, and where I felt I could make a contribution using most of my skills-something which is hard to find as a jack-of-all-trades. Galen and I had more time to think and hang out together. One night that summer we joked we'd ride our bicycles to Halifax from Toronto. A month later we began a thousand kilometre ride together from Montreal to Halifax. Baking a chicken under the sand on the shores of the St Lawrence south of Riviere du Loup, our bicycles resting on their sides, it was a joyous meal I will never forget. Everything was possible with Galen, and I learned this from him.

We lost Galen to an accident at the beginning of the summer, a day shy of his thirtieth birthday. I say we because he was shared pretty far and wide amongst many close friends and family. I struggle to understand this, and I face a challenge to find within me what I was so fortunate to find with Galen. He is missed beyond words. Dear friend, true love, Galen is a real beauty of a soul. I'm honoured to have known you this time around.

With Love,

**Micah**



## **Cosmic Bird Feeder**

### **Summer Site Development**

Spring arrived and we began to prepare for the summer with the grounded responsibility of preparing the garden and site, readying it for the arrival of children and staff. Galen had made his decision to not return to Cosmic prior to his death, to concentrate on making his art, but I was missing him, greiving. Through this difficult time I was struck by the beauty of our program, and all of the relationships we develop through it.

In the preparation of the site we turn soil, weed, move limestone, build new spaces, paint tables, and acknowledge the needs of thousands of little beings: the plants and creatures that support them. Through this acknowledgement life is affirmed. You can read about it, you can look at garden tools in a catalogue (I do), but until you are actually locked in step with the needs of the earth your rhythm is off. You feel it synch up when you step in with it. We get used to not noticing it for such long time that it feels 'natural' living in a city. This year, more than any year in my life, I noticed the relationship of time and space, plants and light, life, purpose and lunch-- not in the philosophical sense as the rational mind has no place for transitions like this-- rather it is something felt and understood best by doing. Caring for life whether a plant, child, or friend, is a form of doing that is rewarding in every sense. After my journey this summer I can testify to the healing nature of our work, its empowerment, the strength in lending ourselves and the children a context in which to build meaning.

**Micah Donovan**

### **Cosmic Garden Report 2004**

It was a very sweet year, this year at Cosmic. At the very beginning of the year I was happy to see a few of the bulbs had survived the winter and the squirrels and we were greeted with a few tulips and lilies. We had a very exuberant planting day; the garden became full of tomatoes, tomatillas, eggplants, peppers, corn, squash, beans, herbs and flowers. We also had a few mysterious vegetables appear, which we later found out were gifts of parents. The site was given a manicure, lots of pruning, raking, weeding and transplanting for the arrival of the kids.

On one of the first days with the kids April came by to say goodbye and we wished her well on her journey to Italy. It was then that we first heard about the sea of milk. The sea of milk sounded like paradise on earth (as long as you aren't lactose intolerant), full of itsy-bitsy totsies and prehistoric cows. There were also some very worried lifeguards and robots. We had many guests visit us including a gender ambiguous Percolator employee named Percolator and we received ongoing correspondence from the Milk Consulate.

The garden grew, providing us with tea and mint for ice-cream. We had a tree café in which we discovered a talking tree who had to be hypnotized to remember his name. The continuing rain provided an atmosphere of romance and imagination as we continued to dream about the Sea of Milk with its milky rainbows and chocolate streams.

One of my most memorable days from the summer was gathering a group of kids to search out the ever-elusive earwigs. The earwigs needed new homes, which we were building, but we needed to see the earwigs first before designing the new homes. On our journey we also discovered some seed rocks, rocks that were then planted in the grove to grow into rock trees. The earwigs continued to eat the garden, but a few found lovely homes outside of it.



The red beetles that had begun to attack the lilies and heliotropes were not my favourite, but some of the children were delighted to see both flowers and bugs and I must say that the colours contrasting between these lives were exceptional.

Puppets emerged and show-tune singing clams from the Sea of Milk arrived to make stars of themselves on Broadway. The puppets also put on a very interesting play for a new guest, the big brain. The brain arrived, but the answers to all our questions were very confused. However, to our great surprise a fox jumped out of the brain, explaining that they had always been co-dependent. This was my last day at the garden during the summer.

The lettuce, carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes grew and I've been happily munching away at salad as I put the plants to sleep for the winter. Unfortunately, the soil seems to need a great boost as some of the plants were extremely stunted. We are planning to plant Winter Rye this year to renew the soil and to look forward to a bigger harvest next year.

**Heather Davis**, Cosmic Gardener

Standing in for Heather in the last session at Cosmic was a wonderful thing for me to do; plunging into the amazing fertility of the story, and the enormous creativity and energy of the staff, it felt real easy to do. My theme for the first week was garden potions, and I had brought my collection of coloured glass bottles and corks, as well as old jars for that purpose. Since we had a brain to unfreeze, creating a remedy seemed the only reasonable thing to do. The activity was well received and accessible on many levels, and we documented all the recipes. On the practical side, I found this was the best chance I had ever had to introduce plant names, purpose, and location in the garden, to a much wider audience than is typical. Second week the focus was harvest, garden as food source, and seed collection, though in fact, our activities were taken over by the need to search for signs of the sea of milk and other outrageous activities; many children (and adults) took home seeds from our garden to theirs, something that always makes me feel warm and fuzzy....

**Jayne Walker**, Cosmic Gardener



### **Cosmic Lunches: Feasting on the Pleasure of Ethics**

At Cosmic we try to bring attention to all of life's details, and with a little effort and organization great pleasure, health, and satisfaction can be had. When we make connections through a narrative and play with children, the context we create can pose certain questions, even responsibilities, like where did that character go? or where did she come from? In play we invent meaningful answers that celebrate interconnectedness, causality, and even spirit. So at lunch, why hang it all up and eat something we don't even know where it came from?

Minimizing our environmental impact and using sustainable materials are part of our art program, why not part of our lunch? Some food for thought:

17% of all fossil fuel used in the U.S. is consumed by the food production system.<sup>1</sup>

the U.S. Department of Energy estimated that, on average, food traveled 1,346 miles (to

reach the consumer)<sup>2</sup>

Frozen peas require 150% more energy than fresh peas due to packaging and refrigeration.<sup>3</sup>

Numbers are for the U.S. but it can't be much better for Canada. So it wasn't just a matter of taste. We would eat from the garden when possible, buy local and organic when possible, but most importantly, we would prepare it ourselves (not some manufacturer). Any staff can participate. Six staff members participated, two per day. They were: Mondays: Daniela and Michaela Tuesdays: Micah and Amber Wednesdays: Liz and Heather and Jayne and Teilhard Frost

## A Sample Week Session B

### 7. Monday:

Gaspacho  
Tortellini with mozzarella and cherry tomatoes  
green salad with mango and avocado

### 8. Tuesday:

Pea risotto  
Crepes stuffed with vegetables and duck magret in a cherry bernaise sauce  
Pasta salad with genoa salami, vegetables, and Asiago  
Green salad  
A bowl of cherries

### 9. Wednesday:

Durian  
Hummous  
Pad Thai  
Pickled radishes  
Falafel  
Pita  
tabouleh  
lettuce  
grated carrot salad

1. Horrigan, Leo, Robert S. Lawrence, and Polly Walker. "How Sustainable Agriculture Can Address the Environmental and Human Health Harms of Industrial Agriculture." *Environmental Health Perspectives* Vol 110, 5 May 2002.

2. Pirog, Rich. "Checking the Food Odometer: Comparing Food Miles for Local Versus Conventional Produce Sales in Iowa Institutions." *Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture*. July 2003.

3. Norberg-Hodge, Helena, Todd Merrifield, and Steven Gorelick. *Bringing The Food Economy Home: Local Alternatives to Global Agribusiness*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. 2002. p.20



## The story of Cosmic's eighth year, 2004

### The Sea of Milk, or the Hilarious Epoch of Mr. King Funny.

Here is a story that began as a seed. As so many stories do. A little seed that might not even have been as big as a caterpillar's eye. And so it grows...

Long ago, when the earth held only one continent called Pangia, Cosmic Bird, who was older than even Pangia itself, was flying over the lush forests and thought to herself that she would be a gardener of sorts. So she plucked a seed from a maple tree (from where legend tells us the Cosmic Birdfeeder stands today) and held it firmly in her beak. The Cosmic Bird flew over land and lake, where she then dropped the seed where the sun shone like hazy peach overhead and the blue sky sung in whispers, into a beautiful, creamy sea of unpasteurized, 10% milk. This sea of milk, formed by the vast amounts of milk produced by the giant Pangiac, prehistoric cows was already teeming with life: singing clams, little red bugs with yellow spots and green stingers (which were a constant worry to the lifeguards) to name a few. But as this seed sunk deeper in the various flavoured layers of the sea of milk, steering clear of the giant ice cream glaciers and nestling itself into the sea-bed, it yearned for home, and began to grow.

Over time, Pangia gave into the forces of the continental drift and slowly broke apart, sending landmasses across the globe. And sadly, the land from which the little seedling hailed became North America, drifting farther and farther away from the songs of the singing clams, the moos of the prehistoric cows, and the whistles of the lifeguards. From the sea of milk sprung a unique culture, for anyone who drank from the sea came to speak a language of love and beauty called Italian, or at least, came to have an Italian accent. The Land around the sea of milk was called Italy and all of its inhabitants Italians. The seedling grew taller and wiser and though he was friendly with the creatures around it, he yearned for his northern home and its terra familia. So he grew and grew, until his roots intertwined with a tree on the other side of the world, a tree that grew in the Cosmic Birdfeeder. The maple tree in the sea of milk off the coast of Italy and the tree at The Cosmic Birdfeeder became as one.

This legend found its way into the ears of the children who play at the birdfeeder. Curious about such a beautiful and magical place, they hatched a plan. A milk bottle was to be sent to the Sea of Milk, filled with questions so that they could learn more. "Have robots ever investigated the sea of milk? Can you wear goggles while swimming in the sea of milk? What do the prehistoric cows look like? And what are the little bugs called? The lifeguards were asked. "

It was then that Perculator arrived to deliver the message. Many forms were signed, and the bottle placed in a box that was kicked and dropped. Be careful! We urged. The tired, blaze man guaranteed its timely delivery, and the bottle was off, sent to this address:

1% 2% 3%

4% 5% 6%

Sea of Milk

Off the Coast of Italy

Best before: 03/04/11, 004

The next morning, Perculator returned, much transformed by the journey. Was that an Italian accent we heard? Singing songs of love, bearing flowers and a displaying a loathing for forms, Perculator told of the wonders of the sea of milk to the wide eyed children. There were robots! Goggles would

definitely work! Prehistoric cows are difficult to see, and as for the little bugs, they are the itsy bitsy tosti dostis! Perculator was enraptured and was determined to be a citizen of the sea of Milk.

Even more exciting, a remarkable archeological find! While digging for artifacts, a time capsule was found bearing a diploma from 20,000 years ago that not only credited the Cosmic Bird with the planting of the maple tree in the sea of Milk, but also announced the arrival of visitors from the Consulate of Milk. Perculator was beside himself with emotion! An event planned over 20,000 years ago was going to take place. All the preparations befitting heads of state were prepared. The proper protocol and greetings were reviewed. And while a couple diplomatic gaffes occurred, it seemed that the very old, but very romantic, visitors had a marvelous time. So much so, that they announced that they would be staying for five years, and would search for the most beautiful tree in the garden, the tree that most likely has linked roots with their most beloved tree in their sea of milk of home.

A gracious thank-you card arrived at the Cosmic Birdfeeder. The visitors to the sea of milk had been absolutely delighted by the festivities, and they were setting out in joy on their journey across Canada. The end of their message bore cryptic advice: honour your trees and they will honor you! The time had come to ask the trees for their wisdom. Was it possible that the trees could help us learn more about the sea of milk? After all, they were connected within the earth.

To honour each tree, we had to get to know them. After all, how could we honour those we didn't even know? There was devised a gentle hum that tickled bark and stirred the sap within their limbs, while in the minds of children, a question brewed. When the stillness returned, each wise and gracious tree stirred with a response. And those who listened closely heard what the trees had to say. And they said this:

They told us that there was a family of trees with a father who worked in the family business. The grandmother was close by, and protected people from thunderstorms, while the grandfather was far away, and felt sad. Mister King funny, a 2060 year old tree told a secret that all the trees know, but only he is able to tell: That when all the people have gone off of the earth, the trees will come alive and live within our homes. This sober thought betrayed the nature of the name Funny; even the Joker tree who tries to tell jokes to the other trees is at a loss to make them laugh. "Why did the chicken cross the road?" said the Joker tree. Silence. "Because I don't like him!" he exclaimed. "Huh? What was that?" said all the trees. And no one laughed.

So as the trees seemed to have rich serious lives of their own, but yet were not revealing much about the sea of milk itself, we were left only to speculate upon the nature of the sea of milk. And so the questioning hum hovered, until met with another joyous sound that seemed to be neither question nor answer, but more like a rich belly laugh. Where did this laughter come from? Certainly it was not from the trees round and hollow, and not a little stinky came the breath of the Gourdfolk, Benne Lece and Gourdina, whose journeys, conversation, not to mention noses and limbs, took unexpected and entertaining directions. Inexplicable visitors from the sea of milk who possessed that Italian accent again... (had the gourds been milk fed to be so robust?) spoke of a strange image even they did not understand. "Seventeen cows swimming in a sea of milk!" was Benne Lece's curious vision, but what was its meaning? Were the cows coming to the Cosmic Birdfeeder? Dreams of our own were turned over; oracles drawn from cereal bowls, and a possibility was gleaned: The cows were hungry, and were searching for milkweed.

Meanwhile, as the sky blessed the garden with beautiful gushes of water and spectacular dances of light, we could only wonder if milk was falling from the sky in such abundance at the sea of milk. Through the thickness of the smur, we were graced by more visits by the curious Gordina, who soared with and upon the waves and twists of time to visit us at the Birdfeeder. She had fallen in love with the sounds of music and could be called by the simple intonation of the mosquito. If children put their hum together, she could be beckoned from far away...While at a loss to locate Bene Lece, who she sidestepped in a dance back to the sea of milk, or her marvelous twisted arms that were so caught up in pointing the direction through time, that they directed themselves away, Gordina came to love the garden and its beautiful songs. Even the hum of the lawnmowers had a special appeal...







Gordina intercepted a fabulous surprise that also took unexpected directions through space and time: a beautiful gift from the Spiral Garden sent by the Trans Spiral Vortex Communication Device ...cant remember the name of it. She held it and became lighter, and joyfully bore it to the children. It might have been a map to the stars, or the wing of bird, but whoever held it, became lighter and was in danger of sailing away. A most marvelous gift indeed. Gordina returned one last time, bearing an oracle from the sea of milk, a crystal cereal bowl that foretold the future. As she stared deeply into the ancient breakfast, the cereal swirling in the milk like clams in the sea, with the assistance of her sister Sophia, she foresaw a place of mirth and welcome for all trees: A tree cafe. This tree cafe appeared at the Cosmic Birdfeeder, and marvelous hosts to run it: Madame Ears and La La Lucia. Singing waiters showed children to their table, whereupon a silent opera was performed. A surprise guest arrived: Mr. King Funny! Seemingly delighted to be there he told jokes and watched the festivities with glee. Orchestras, tea, pizza and jokes all made for a wonderful time. These jokes were VERY funny, so funny, that a tree, well, laughed. "What was that?" exclaimed the children. And lo and behold, a tree was chuckling and coming to life, encouraged away from its worries. He said that the worry tree placed there by the children had made him feel braver, and jokes warmed his sap to giggling. A tree that did not speak in whispers! The tree told us that he had not spoken to anyone for eight years - this was the first time in the history of the Birdfeeder that the tree had spoken. What was his name? He eluded the question. The children pressed on. No answer was forthcoming. The tree, somewhat embarrassed of his amnesia, was forced to admit that his name had escaped his

memory. He chuckled and tried to reassure us, but the children could only feel a bit sorry. To have forgotten your name seemed a very sad thing. But the tree seemed happy enough, delighted to tears by all of the company, so the question of his name was left to rest, and a good time was had by all in the relaxing comforts of the tree café.

Once the café lights went out, and life went back to its daily turning, so the time passed, and the happy community of trees and children busied themselves contentedly. Postcards arrived from the Milk Consulars describing adventures about Canada. They had reached the Northern Tundra and had luckily befriended a polar bear named Harry, whose grin could lead them through the snow. Back at the Birdfeeder, life was becoming ever more sassy and filled with pizzazz. Singing clams, by means of the routes carved by earlier travelers, were coming to America, putting their sights on show biz and cheap North American underwear. "Canada is sexy!" they exclaimed, and who were we to say they were wrong. Our songs were richer with their marvelous show tunes and one could say that we were, well, as happy as clams.

But still a question tickled our hearts and left us restless. What was the name of our new tree friend? With great invention, a family reunion was arranged that gathered the tree's nieces and nephews around his trunk. Something to spark a memory, a familiar moment that might bring the tree's name to mind! As the nieces and nephews gathered 'round with their eyes a-goggle and arms embracing, eager to see their uncle, plenty of joy was shared between them. But as far as the name was concerned, nothing was forthcoming. What was to be done? "We could hypnotize the tree!" a child remarked. This was a brilliant idea. Yet this was no light request. Our mesmerizing efforts would have to effect the tree to the very ends of its roots to the very tips of its leaves. A journey to the tree's subconscious was planned. Through the act of spinning while singing a lullaby, the oscillation of objects and very gentle footsteps, the tree was to be returned to a deep sleep that was as old as time itself. While at first the tree seemed resistant, refusing to do as we asked, he suddenly clucked like a chicken, and proved to be in a deep trance. We captured his name, which was as stately and charming as the tree itself: Woodruff Loneoak! And other news came to light! Someone with a very large brain was to visit the Birdfeeder. And perhaps the prehistoric cows would visit. A Big Brain? pre-historic cows at the Birdfeeder? what could this all possibly mean?

So, the time has come to think. Thoughts scattered themselves across the plains of the gardens and the art tables, and then were gathered up again, compared, evaluated, contemplated, organized, sorted, folded, hidden and revealed, and remarked upon. Conclusions? Very few, but the flutter of thoughts had begun. The flocks of thoughts assembled into a formation, were gobbled and spat out again by a shockingly bloodthirsty goldfish named Bubbles and thus created the very science not simply of thought, but the act of thinking upon thoughts: Thinkonometry, the think of thoughting. In this deep state of thought, great questions of our time were dreamt up to ask the personage with a very big brain when it arrived. How did the first thing grow? Why can I not tickle myself? Where do rain clouds come from? What do stop signs think about?

Then, shockingly, into this world of deep and fluttery thinking, arrived a curious character from some place away, who seemed be thoughtless at every turn. "How thoughtless!" he said as he stepped upon your foot. "I don't think so!" he would respond when asked to stop painting directly on the table. He refused to introduce himself, or tell us where he was from. When he threatened to put out a fire that was going to bake some apple pies, the children realized that somehow "Thoughtless" had to be stopped. A team of "Thoughtfuls" came on the scene and tried to think of every thing. They introduced themselves so he would know their names, and asked him if he would like a massage. They offered water, seeing that it was rather warm that day. They asked him if there was anything that he would like at all. To no avail. He spilled water down his side, and stepped on nearly everyone's feet. The Thoughtfuls had no choice but to let him thoughtlessly wander along on his hapless way, thankful that we were no longer in his path.

Once that distraction had left us in peace, more postcards arrived from the Milk Consulate. Harry was accompanying the Consulars on their travels it seemed, and they were having a grand time in Montreal. And then, a curious note from the Milk Consulate Secretary. Apparently, we were not to feed the very large brain any ice cream, or allow it to ask us any questions. To do so, according to

the secretary, would change the future. Change the future! A ripple of amazement passed through the assembled children who very seriously considered such a mighty possibility.

So with our words and our ice cream well guarded, we prepared for our guest. Our thoughts seemed to be reaching a fever pitch. Would the brain's answers please us?

The Brain's security ushered the Brain to its seat. Luckily, having arrived in time to watch a puppet play, the Brain could rest before rising to the occasion and answering the children's questions. Amazingly, when the Brain attempted to answer the many thoughtful questions that the children had brought, it seemed at first brilliant (if not totally impossible to decipher) and then, well, hungry. The Brain bounced and begged for ice cream. It was a frightening sight, the desperate brain, the vulnerable ice cream tub. The children held it off with pleas of "No! Don't feed the brain any ice cream!" And then, lo! At exactly the wrong moment, with indisputably brilliant bad timing, Mr. Thoughtless arrived upon the scene. "Ice cream!" he exclaimed. And so, to the horror and dismay of all, Thoughtless brought ice cream to the Brain.

It is difficult to describe what followed. A tremour and a cry came from the Brain, of pain or of pleasure it was difficult to say. BRAIN FREEZE some one cried, and the children were dismayed. The Brain floated up and landed on the grassy plain. And there, before the children, having leapt from the brain, was a wily fox, who thanked the children for setting her free. The fox introduced the Brain as Bertie, and herself as Greta. Greta begged the children to feed more ice cream to the Brain.

"Something MARVELOUS will happen!" she crooned, her penetrating eyes adding to her mystique. "Wouldn't you like to change the future?" she implored. "Trust me, it will be marvelous." At first, the children were doubtful. Trust a fox? Change the future? Everything seemed so perfect just the way it was. Why should anything change? And then as if to join in a game, it was decided that changing the future might be fun. And what a better reason to do anything? More ice cream was brought to the brain and Greta laughed maniacally with joy. How pleased she was.

"What you have dreamed of will be just right--

It shall all be changed in a fortnight!"

And then Greta and Bertie the giant brain were gone.

We would just have to wait and see....

So we were left, with our hearts and minds tossing and turning the possibilities of the future that could be. What kind of NEW future could we hope for? Could the trees be reunited with the tree in the Sea of Milk? Could the Prehistoric Cows come and be with us?

To pass the time, the softest feathers were brought, and the most delicate fingers entranced, and were plunged into the garden. The garden was thoroughly tickled to send laughter to the very roots. And to see if the sea of milk could come to us, a rhythm and a dance of thunder and puddles called to the clouds. It circled and swirled. Let it rain milk! the dancers cried. But no milk fell. We could not encourage the future anymore, so we had to wait and see. The children stopped and waited, their eyes held with hope (and a little fear) towards the future.

Much to everyone's amusement, a rosy nosed fellow, named Bodger, arrived offering his expertise. A crafty man with the arts of potion making under his belt, up his sleeve and most certainly behind his back, he had many lessons for the children. Without a spot of trouble, they were off like a start, making potions of every variety. Then Perculator returned, spluttering and gasping. He looked winded. His boots were covered with milk, and goggles around his neck were dripping too. He told the children an amazing story, that he had to swim through a lake of milk, just outside Scarborough, to get to Cosmic Birdfeeder. He then produced the National Newspaper for the Sea of Milk, and

showed a feature article. According to the article, The Ice Cream Icebergs were melting, and the Sea of Milk scientists were trying to figure out why. Other mail from the Milk Consulate seemed equally mysterious. The Secretary sent an enigmatic message. "Ho HO Ho HO hee hee he ha!" it read. "What had happened to the Secretary to so fill her with delight? The last words were the hardest to understand: " Eet ees Commingg!!!!"

Then there was a whisper throughout the Garden. Who spoke? We looked above us, and below us, and the trees proved to hold many more secrets, in a place the children had not listened before. Every pinecone held a word within! The pinecones began to exclaim their singular and surprising words:

"Tickle!" "Parto!" "Puppet!" "Green Bean!" "Lighting bolt!" "Co co" "Seven Legs" "Hidden" " Mash" "Peaches" "Camuda Nimbus!" "Stinky!" "Mass!" "Flying!" "Rain dance!" This speaking chorus that hung in the branches spilled their secrets to us now like cream out of a pitcher. So sweet were their whispers, so clear to the mind, that it felt that the children and the pinecones were of one mind. A message floated up from the dancing sea of words, hung in colourful flags:

Rainbow thunderbolt thunderbolt falling  
the tree loved me.

What story did this tell? No one was quite sure. The pinecones were prolific, yet cryptic.

We would turn to the Brain again, for more answers, but we would hold it under control through the power of hypnosis. The Brain was lured by an alluring ice cream party dancers of chocolate, vanilla, tiger tail, strawberry, lemon and pistachio. The party dancers came along and gathered up the potion makers. Together, under the fine guidance of the shifty Bodger, one entranced the other. The giant brain stood amongst us again, and now we were prepared to hypnotize it with the proper potions in hand. Well, once we started putting the potions to work, Bodger seemed a bit more of a dodger, because nothing went as planned! Instead of bringing answers or our little Greta, the potions had strange side effects upon the crowds. Explosions of laughter, hiccups, uncontrollable hopping, sneezing, even a strange case of spontaneous pearl regurgitation all required the administration of antidotes. One potion even brought the brain to sing a cotton-picking song from the deep south, for which an antidote was most definitely necessary. It was not until the seventh potion poured on the Brain that the beguiling fox Greta was able to emerge. She cooed and smirked with delight and praised the children for their cleverness. Well there were many questions to be asked. When Greta was asked why the potions affected other people, and not just the brain, she explained that the brain was everyone's and thoughts were shared by all. Then, an interesting question was asked by the children. "Do you like living in the brain?" they queried. For the very first time since the children had ever met the fox, she paused for thought to answer. She even looked a little sad. "Well", she said after a sigh, "I must admit, I have wondered if ever another time would come, even though it is all that I have ever known." She sighed again. Is it possible that Greta was wishing that her future could be changed? As soon as it had come upon her, Greta shook off her melancholy, and gave the



children food for thought. A riddle:

What soars like an arrow

And is gone in the blink of an eye

What tastes like a penny

and fills the whole sky?

Once again, Greta had amazed us, and after a loving hug, she, and Bertie, were gone. What was the meaning of the riddle? Could she mean the Cosmic Bird? But does a Cosmic Bird taste like a penny? The Moon? How about a thunderbolt - that could taste like metal.

And as our minds churned the butter of our thought, a gentle song, sweeter than cream, rose from the garden:

Milk, Milk, soft as silk. Milk, Milk, soft as silk. Milk Cream Cream Milk Cream Cream Soft as Silk. This charming song, as soothing as the sound of wind through grasses, called our attention away from the riddle and into the here and now. And then, Milk poured from the Milkweed. It bubbled up from the grate. It lay in a puddle beside the recycling bin. It was pooling about our feet, coming up through the sewers. Milk detectors, big and small, steered and slung sought out the mysterious puddles. We wondered if the milk was left by visiting prehistoric cows who had swum across the sea of milk. There of course, was a second possibility, too astounding to imagine - that the sea of milk was rising through the earth and was making its way along the joined roots, and to the Cosmic Birdfeeder! It was decided that the song should be sung gently and not too often, just in case a flood might take place. This was difficult, because the song was catchy, and tended to circle under your tongue and come out just when you least expected it.

Greta returned to us just to see if we had solved the riddle. "The answer to the riddle is: A thunderbolt!" the children cried. At the very word, Greta became afraid. "A rainbow!" The children then cried. Greta was no longer afraid. And then, Greta remembered.

"How I came to be in the brain", she said, "I can now remember. It feels almost as a dream. I was laying beneath a pine tree, and a thunderbolt came down upon me. There was a terrible Flash! and the next thing I knew, I was within the brain."

No sooner had she remembered how she came to be in the brain, she had to be off again, because she could not leave the brain for too long. Poor Greta, we thought, when might she be free?

Perculator returned to cheer us up, and his mailbox held many delightful things - a mosaic the children had made of the Tree from the Sea of Milk and a sweet flyer that promised something cheery and beautiful.

## PEACHY FINE GREAT ESCAPES

Wishing you could leave your troubles behind?

Wishing you were as light as a feather?

Have you been cooped up in your head (or someone else's) for too long?

If you answered "yes" to any on these questions, it is possible that you are in need of the Peachy Fine Great Escapes solution!

\*Note: applicants can only be 15 pounds or less.

The children decided that this offer sounded perfect for Greta the fox, and as fast they could, they filled out the form and mailed it back with Perculator. And "CIAO!" He was gone. We could only hope that Greta was under 15 pounds and the pinecones had just whispered to us that it was Greta's birthday! What a fine present this would be!

In the meanwhile, there was the mystery of the milk puddles to be solved, and the children hatched a plan. A clever camera was hidden to take pictures in the night. Grass bundles were laid down and the ground smoothed to be ready for tracks. If the Prehistoric cows were coming, we could take their picture in the night, and see their glowing red eyes.

The sun set on our plan, and in the morning, a strange discovery was to be had. There were tracks, certainly, but they were the tracks of a large bird. The grass bundles were untouched, but garbage, pop cans, candy wrappers and a bus transfer lay on the ground. The camera was checked. A picture had been taken, and a shadowy figure seemed to be standing amongst the grassy bundles. Was it NO! Could that be the sulky shadow of Crow!? What was he up to? What a fat cracker! Leaving his mess around like that (it must be said, that even though he left a mess, I think we were glad to see him.)

Once we had gotten over Crow's nocturnal rudeness, we prepared for Greta's birthday. Presents were fashioned, music composed, bread baked, and all the beautiful and mysterious events of the summer laid out in a book. As well, the mosaic of the Tree in the Sea of Milk was hung, along with all the pinecone thoughts.

Greta laughed with joy when she saw her presents and all the children so beautiful ready to celebrate her long and mysterious life. She and the children paraded together, until they were met by a wonderful floating Peachy air balloon. As it hovered above them, the children explained to Greta that they had given her a Peachy Fine Escape. Greta could not have been more moved. She stepped into the hot air balloon, and with a gracious goodbye, tried to fly away. To her dismay, she was unable to even leave the ground. Her hat was removed to make her a touch lighter. Up, up and to no avail. Greta was grounded! Greta tried her best to hide her disappointment from the children, but it was hard.

Just then, a lovely song was heard. Milk Milk, Soft as Silk, Milk Milk, Soft as Silk. A most marvelous vision appeared before the children. A tall and queenly vision of dazzling and flowing milk, whose movements were as waves, floated before us. Silent and silky, the vision of the Sea of Milk promenaded about our party. She stared at the Mosaic of the Tree from the Sea of Milk, obviously remembering fondly. When her gaze fell upon the unfortunate Greta, marooned upon the ground, and she was moved to lift the peach, which so looked like the sun in her home of Italy, and Greta with it. Up, up and Away! Greta was to make her escape after all! With the grand hurrahs of the children, Greta floated away, borne by a vision of Milk, off to Italy, to the sea of Milk. She was going to miss it, but we were delighted to see her so happy. Good bye Greta! And so the children bid each other goodbye as well, for the summer had come to an end. A final good bye was given to the trees and to the earth below us that held the roots of the trees, and the many seeds we could not even yet see. For as we have learned by this tale, we know how a seed can sprout a story, a story one could never had imagined. But they are for the coming seasons and a future that we will delight to behold!

**Liz Rucker**

## Spiral Garden

### Spiral Site Speaks

The seasons continue to turn with the earth, the gypsies return to the Spiral to find change. Transformation, adoration, and affinity are theirs to work with and celebrate. The years and winters have weathered the site. Holding on and letting go are weighed daily. The spice of the new Centre's construction has begun to flavour every site decision. With this in mind let's hear what the site had to say this season.

The Spiral Garden is now the playground for the School at the centre. This has created new demands for the site, as well as a renewed need for flexibility amongst its inhabitants. Working together in a shared space is never easy, especially when a children's place is in the vicinity of a busy parking lot. This summer a variety of fencing and traffic blocking techniques were needed to ensure everyone's safety.

In the category of lemons-to-lemonade, we now have the Random Garden. It began with some sort of heavy machinery driving through the hedge and tearing up the side of the hill where the willows weep no longer. Over the course of the season it was turned over, garden relics and random seeds planted, arches built for the hole in the hedge, and pathways put through to create a lovely wildish space. Near the end of the summer a Wishbone Home sprouted up beside the new garden. Through the summer a large drainage pipe was dug far, far beneath the Garden as the children played. It is unknown at this time what new lemons will emerge from this endeavour.

The old costume cart was 'retired' and folded back into many new things. The upper frame turned into a "thought catcher" - useful for the older garden dwellers. The lower portion transformed into a new bread oven, complete with chimney. The costumes now preside on a semi-permanent spot just beside the bridge.

The most notable change to the site was the completion of the gate that enters the Spiral. It began with two tall, elegant cedar poles planted in the spring of 2001 by Galen. It was finished this summer in his honour. More cedar branches were added, candle lanterns hung, "the rock" moved in, elephant effigies placed, and a prayer flag and wheel for Galen and other relations installed. Many of the summer's gatherings passed through the gateway, exchanging the power of the moment together. There was a birthday in the Garden this summer - Mama Crow turned 10. She came down to be cleaned up, repaired, and re-adorned. She was unveiled at her party and treated to a well-deserved worm pie.

Such a large site could not be looked after alone. Everyone on the staff, including facilitators and volunteers (special thanks go to a group of volunteers from Unilever, who came to twice this season to tend the site) all helped to maintain the Garden's beauty and magic. The season is done, the Garden rests, awaiting the change that is tomorrow.

### Spiral Garden Gardener's Report 2004

The year's seasons have flown by all topsy-turvy it seems to me! At this writing, I'm experiencing an extremely hot, humid day, almost at the end of September, one the likes of which we could have enjoyed in the wet, cool days that Summer brought us! But no complaints here! Other summers I have spent a huge amount of my time watering the thirsty beds; not so this year, (until right now!) It's been a wonderful year, filled with warm and generous exchanges of gifts despite some unwelcome surprises like the huge fat-tracked monster wading through the hedge and Willow Garden, the strangling dog vines, the tent caterpillars' and the earwigs' triumphant onslaught of all things green and the almost negligible change from their point of planting of some of the vegetables due to the sun having taken frequent holidays behind clouds!

Back in January, in the Open Studio, we learned a song about Old Mother Earth who "feeds us...water and air, shelter and care..." and we shared in some giggles practicing a song with our



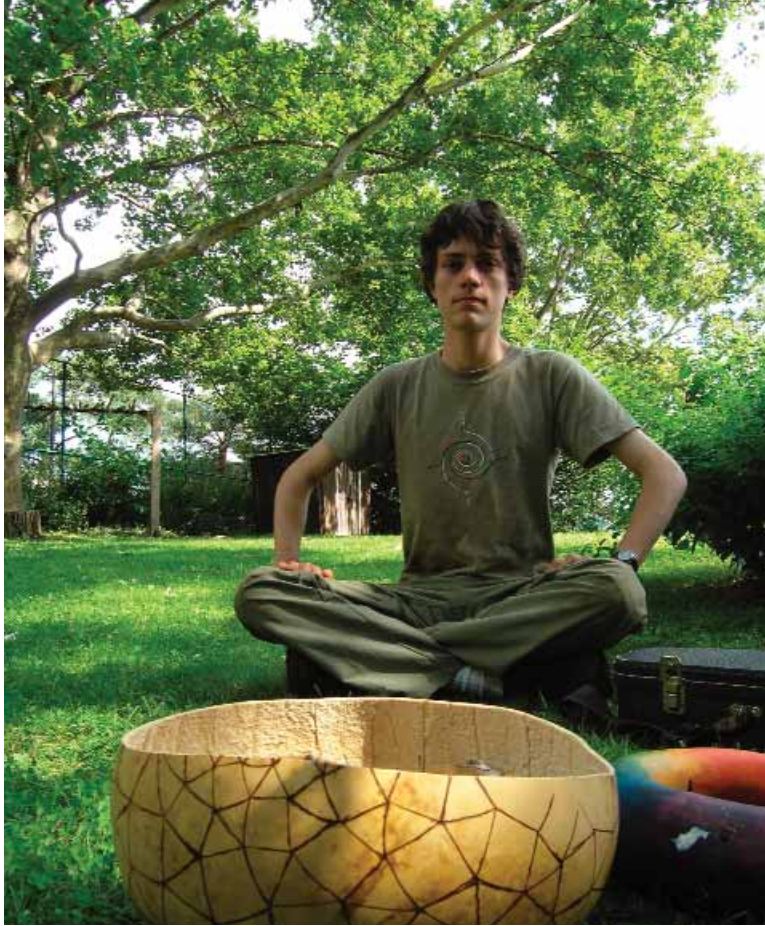


musical friend, Roger, who prompted the children's animated sounds to accompany the song during our Squirrely Spring Celebration about the forgetful Squirrel who learned to appreciate his importance in the life cycle of things in the Garden with the help of his wise friends, Tree and Owl. The sound of the Tibetan bells ringing three times became a favourite wordless ritual of our exchanging thanks and goodbyes with the classes. When it was warm enough to go out into the Garden, we had fun creating individual vermitoriums with each class (or worm condominiums, or wormatoriums as some were called) so the red wigglers could, as a natural exchange, eat our offerings from our lunches and snacks and then "feed" our garden soil with their nutritious worm castings. We also planted alfalfa on top for both the worms and ourselves to snack on, as well as seeding it directly into the garden as a cover crop to dig in to feed the garden this way, too. Another way the students helped take care of Mother Earth was to help Jan "sew" a giant compost tea bag from the decorated burlap skirting the teepee all last winter, stuffing it with our own compost, soaking it just long enough to be able to pour its health-giving elixir on to the earth surrounding the Japanese Maple we planted a couple of years ago in Dee's garden. (It has thrived since, touch wood! We will be doing this again this fall, but this time the nutrition will be poured towards our dear horse chestnut tree that we noticed is ailing, probably due to the stress of the parking lot paving...not one nut fell this year!).

The seasons quickly zoomed ahead, as they always do, with connections in the gardens spiraling and blooming like the morning glories in their prime. The gardens acted as living backdrops for spontaneous dramatic vignettes among the school children (who now use the Garden as their playground during play times since theirs is presently under construction) and summer's costumed performers in improvised or well-rehearsed movement and dance performances among shadow puppets and children and adults. There were generous offerings to help plant the new bed of strawflowers on Planting Day that thrived beautifully and have been enjoyed for their everlasting brilliant colours and to the surprised touch of many, as well as for crafts. There were offers to water, deadhead, collect seeds, gather flowers and herbs to help honour and remember our loved ones, and to inspire musical rhythms from the children and our delightful Sousiawan on his gamelan, to help us use our brilliantly painted snake sticks to brace up long, blossoming branches that were spilling over into the walkways of the raised beds making it difficult for wheelchairs to pass, and of course to add colourful accessories to merry vine costumes and feast presentations during our festive celebrations. Even the strangling dog vine, an uninvited, invasive vine species was gathered on ravine walks and lunch hour strolls to and from the park with anywhere from frantic to gleeful vengeance - all summer! - in efforts to help save the ravine from a total merciless takeover, as well as serve handily as inspiration for what became a favourite terrific song and to clothe various characters including one of the two sparring teams of the Strangling Dog Viners and the Fuchsia Factor!

Other activities in the Garden with the school children included planting carefully tended, classroom-grown giant sunflowers, morning glories and lavatera, a beautiful pink mallow, which became beautifully blossomed backdrops to our beds and new hedgegates, along with a lush crop of marigolds and bush and scarlet runner varieties of beans which we are just harvesting this week. (Those scarlets never cease to amaze either me or the children when we see those Easter pink beans inside! They made stunning additions to the seed snacks Robert is creating with the classes to be placed out in the Garden during our Harvest Festival to help feed our furred and feathered friends this winter.) The beans will join other families of vegetables (squashes, huge "Radishing, dahling!" white and pink radishes, green tomatoes!), flowers (the strawflowers are especially beautiful this year!), Chinese lanterns, and herbs (a bumper crop of sage) being gathered by the students to be wired on to decorate long grapevines that were pulled (and pulled! and pulled!) from the ravine. The garland will be hung over the school doors to welcome and cheer everyone through the long winter days ahead. Using the grapevines will also help those trees they were crowding as well as helping to act as a woven retaining wall in our Random Garden (what a "jahungalali!" that was! Thanks Robert for making a treasure out of a disaster!) so that folks in wheelchairs can roll through this garden. Gifts like these from Nature keep us so grateful!

As well as those events already documented above, other garden highlights of the year include:  
~ grand scale makeovers where some old beds were given major corrective surgery or a facelift (the lemon balm and mint beds were finally pruned and corralled!) and new beds were created to



complement Bohdan's graceful hedge gates by our faithful Unilever volunteers who have been coming twice a year. Having been touched by the work Spiral Garden does with children and wanting to contribute, they have given us generous fund-raising cheques towards Spiral Garden's programming as well as offering their time and effort and camaraderie through greatly satisfied grins while they dig and plant and weed and saw and hammer and lift and move and sew, finally refreshing themselves with our thirst-quenching sun tea and fruit snacks served by some of Bloorview's appreciative staff members from Volunteer Resources and the Foundation. Also Scotiabank donors came out to help, planting a wonderful crop of oriental salad and arugula greens, in the shape of a smile no less!) Our forever-blossoming gratitude to you all!

~ this year's wonderful team of volunteers who gave copious gifts of smiling effort (how many dozens of delicious grape leaf dolmades were stuffed with our

sweet mixture of sticky rice and ginger and locally grown gooseberries, blueberries, peaches, and mint!) and sensitive interactions with the children really lightened the staff's loads to help carry the programming and the philosophy of the Garden so well! Thanks so much!!

~ the decision by one of our oldest campers to give our beloved deceased lavender bush her own kind of makeover where she "blossomed" through devoted beadwork into the Lavender Queen!

~ the day the roving drumbeats lead the worms from the dangerous construction site through to meet up with our Red Wigglers and Earthworms Squadrons and through the Garden to safety without being noticed by distracted crows who were in the neighbourhood for Mama Crow's 10 th birthday ceremonial celebration (and, by the way, what a beautiful new birthday suit you have on, Mama!! The school children are really enjoying your new look!)

~ the Grand Move of the Big Rock to its new resting place at the Garden Gate

~ the ceremonial gathering around the Prayer Wheel for our beloved Galen, and the heartfelt spinings of loving wishes and thanks for memories of warm, and loving times, and the Meditation offered to us all as friends of Galen, early one beautiful sunny morning, back in our beautiful, quiet corner where the Dreaming Lodge used to rest us all.....and where it held us all together, gently, again.....

~ the quiet, intimate, one-to-one private connections, with a child watching a bee dusting his socks with pollen while he sips sweet nectar from a blossom....

..... May we all discover our own individually creative and diverse ways to give to ourselves and each other such beautiful, peaceful spaces, and the time to give thanks and to exchange the gifts of love and nourishment and rest that we all need to thrive. As Robert said so eloquently, may we tread gently, and with grace.....

**Jane Hillary**

## The Oven

This year I wanted to make a new bread oven with the kids, especially one with a chimney to draw the smoke away from our eyes. Early in the summer I took a week long intensive Permaculture course about sustainable living, working with nature following it's ways and doing so with a gentle touch.

After absorbing all these inspirational ideas and practices I decided it would be more appropriate to fix the old oven, cracked through as it was, rather than build a new one. It was an act of nurturance rather than one of simply replacing the old with the new, improved model. It fits our philosophy here nicely and was a good chance to demonstrate it.

Before the summer I parged the cracked sections together with concrete. When the kids arrived we began to make a stovepipe-like chimney by stripping coffee cans of their labels and taping them together. We built up a mound of sand as a form to mould the concrete on top of. In this way we extended the oven to accommodate the chimney and cemented it on. Next we layered it with a mixture of clay from various lakes and straw to insulate it. It was very elemental, raw, simple, real using readily accessible free materials.

One participant made a new door and another few worked on a new broom of cattail leaves to sweep away the ashes. We have a hand-cranked grain grinder, which was out every day, and the kids loved it. It was a very simple, straight forward activity, some might say a task but so many times I saw kids working together in small groups, taking turns and grinding a lot of grain into flour. Some choose it as their main activity. It was very exciting to see something work out so well, which the kids took ownership of.



## **Bounty**

So what was all this grain for? Why fix the oven? To make yummy baked goods to make, eat and share together of course! Every celebration needs food to share.

Pizza has been an idea that kids and adults have tossed around for many summers and now was the time. There was a bounty of extra tomato sauce and cheese from a recent gathering. Like a message or sign, it was time to make pizza.

We decided on making one mini pizza per person and figured for our last day celebration we would need about 200 pies! This was an organizational feat in itself, to fire up our relatively little wood-fired oven, keep it stoked, and make all the pies in 3 hours!

After a quick how-to I stepped away from the nerve centre of the operation to work the oven. The kids self-organized in amazing fashion. Some flattened dough, others dressed it, some ran them over to the oven and a few problem-solved around getting more trays, more trays! And cloth towels and decorations, flowers what have you. It was lovely and satisfying to step back and see them work out a plan on their own, with minimal guidance and good humour on their part. It seems that's what it's all about.

**Shannon Crossman**

## **The Story Spiral Garden's 21st Year**

### **Door #8 Leads to Infinity**

Early on in the summer Camper Matt told us that "Door #8 leads to Infinity" and he was right. The story began with a door and then went on forever. A huge inverted tree branch 7 feet tall at the top of the archway had been in the garden long before this summer, but up until then nobody knew why until a Naka clown came to explain it. One day he brought it out and told us that it was a doorway and we needed to build a door for it...and build it we did. Then we put wheels on it and rolled it around the Garden to try it out in various locations. It wound up creating more questions than answers but, luckily, our old pal Splat Diddley (a resident snake) revealed to us that he had divining skills. All we had to do was ask him a question, toss him into the air and interpret the patterns his body created upon landing on the earth. It was a peaceful time, a calm before the storm. Jane, our gardener, tried to warn us, but it was too late. The Garden was being taken over by... Strangling Dog Vines!!! These insidious weeds set down roots and spread like fire, choking the life out of the Garden's plants. How could we stop them? We needed help! And then one day, as if sent by a higher power, help arrived. One fine morning, like a beacon of light dressed in a three-piece suit, the Irreverend strode into music circle. A humble man he was not, but he did have a message of hope and a catchy tune. He taught us that Strangling Dog Vines had one weakness: they were scared of the colour fuchsia. Quickly, we rounded up all the hot pink fabric we could find and braced ourselves for the final invasion. When the Dog Vines arrived we saw that they had taken over (both physically and mentally) the Fountain of Youth. They came in like a mob of drooling zombies from a Michael Jackson video. Led by the Irreverend, we drove them away with our strips of fabric and the mighty chant of "FUSICA! FUSICA! FUSCIA!". The Dog Vines receded into the ravine. Once again, all was calm.

At around this time a ceremony took place. To allow for the construction of the addition to Bloorview the Garden's entranceway had been moved to a new spot. So, with great pageantry and foo-fer-ah, the sacred rock that had marked the original entrance was moved as well. But the rock left something behind...a hole. And two things were in that hole. A giant doughnut snake (who, by

the way, we never saw or heard from again) and a beautiful piece of wood with strange markings on it. It was quickly determined that the markings had been made by worms. Were the markings a message? Were they a map?! Were the worms trying to TELL US SOMETHING!!? To spare you any further suspense I'll just tell you: It was a map and yes, the worms were trying to tell us something. The same construction that had necessitated the moving of the rock was also uprooting the homes of a lot of worms. They had to move and the place they were going to was Compost Capital. Yes siree ma'am, it was diggin' time! The map showed us where Compost Capital was located and we wanted to help them get there.

Soon another celebration was prepared to honour the 10th birthday of Mama Crow. Mama Crow (the mother of our beloved crow) was taken down from her post to be "revamped". The Fountain of Youth gave her a new coat of paint and new decorations and even a layer of glossy glaze. By the time she was resurrected for the birthday party she truly was one fine lookin' mama. Now as we all know, crows eat worms. Not that there's anything wrong with that, it's just the way it goes, mother nature is not kind, as Elizabeth Taylor can attest to. But we were also friends of the worms. So to help them reach their new home with out being eaten along the way we planned to distract Mama crow with a chocolate, "Gummi" worm birthday cake. The plan worked and the worms made it safely to Compost Capital. But something very unexpected happened at that birthday party which created a whole new problem.

One of the guests of honour at the party was the venerable Miss E. Miss E., a grand old dame -- and I do mean old--had come to the garden just a couple of weeks before. She was a performer, she was a great romantic, and she was at least 600 years old. At that ripe old age she was looking to move on to the next life so that she might rejoin her old friends. And at Mama Crow's party, we think she may have done it. After Mama Crow was presented with a gift of a beautiful orange flag, Miss E stepped behind Mama Crow and simply.... disappeared! What's even more amazing is that in her place Crow appeared!! What's still more amazing (or perhaps just plain shocking) is that the first thing Crow did was snatch the orange flag away from his mother and run off without saying a word. Now, Crow....that's just low. Stealing your own mother's birthday gift?! The next day a detective agency, lead by the infamous puppet Jimmy "The" Snake, was formed to try to reclaim the stolen flag.

The detective agency found many, many clues and made many a discovery about what was going on in the Garden, but alas, the orange flag was still at large and so was the crow that stole it. Then, one Tuesday morning the strangest thing happened. Now I know a lot of strange things had already happened but this thing was still way up there on the strange meter. As the morning progressed, one person, then another, then another found the flag. But they still couldn't retrieve it. Wanna know why? 'Cause it was 300 feet up in the air flying from a crane in the construction site!!!

We could only assume that Crow put it there but no one knew why. Then the last bit of weirdness walked in. The Yeah-Baby family. An all-female family made up of women and girls from New England, Old England, Jamaica and I think Spain. The head of the family, Auntie Kathy made the outrageous claim that she was in fact married to Crow. Crow, whose first name is apparently 'Thompson' (we'll never let him live that one down), had managed to convince her that he was actually human. In retrospect the Yeah-Baby women realized that there were 'signs' that he wasn't all human. The way he pecked at the dinner table, the way he ran screaming out of the room whenever his daughters were watching The Wizard of Oz and the Scarecrow came on. Anyway, the Yeah Baby twins had recently become Siamese twins due to a cycling accident (as is so often the case with cycling accidents) and Crow ran away. Auntie Kathy was understandably upset and demanded an explanation. A few days later, at morning music circle the Yeah Baby family came to explain their situation to everyone once more and requested help in summoning Crow. All previous attempts to find him had failed, but we thought we'd try it one more time. Everyone got together and cawed. They cawed to the North, they cawed to the East, and they cawed to the South...nothing. Then they cawed to the West. At first there was nothing....then, a faint caw came in reply...then a little stronger. It was coming from the direction of the sand pit but we couldn't see anything. Then suddenly...a crow hand popped out from under the sand!! Then a foot, then another hand, then another foot!! Then a head!!! Crow had been underground and was now CLAWING HIS WAY TO THE SURFACE!!....again very much like a Michael Jackson video. Jaws dropped, eyes were rubbed, and

I'm willing to bet that more than one staff member wet their pants. Crow stepped up from the sandy soil and dizzily made his way toward the music circle. Once there he managed to explain that the reason he ran away was not because the twins had become Siamese, it was because the bike accident had rendered him unable to disguise his Crowness (as is so often the case with bike accidents). Convinced that Auntie Kathy could never love a crow, he ran. A few weeks later he stole the orange flag and hung it up on the crane to help ward off any more Strangling Dog Vines. "But why?" we asked "that flag was orange and Dog Vines are afraid of fuscia..." Crow reminded us that he was colour blind and had obviously made a mistake. A mistake he realized soon after he hung the flag on the crane, because no sooner had he flown back to Earth then he was attacked by a gang of Strangling Dog Vines and dragged underground. He had been there ever since and was trying to tell us by getting worms and centipedes to send us messages, which we had received but were never able to decode. But now surely everything would be all right. Well, not quite. It turns out that Crows ridiculous fears that Auntie Kathy could never love a crow weren't so ridiculous after all. She forgave him but said that he just wasn't who she thought he was. She did however throw a huge baby shower and gave him custody of the crow baby she had just given birth to. Shortly afterwards, several other people, puppets and characters came by and gave Crow other crow babies of whom which he was apparently the father. Yikes! We gave him a baby carriage and wished him good luck. Soon after, it all came to a close. Everything was restored to normal and the Garden once again began to move gently to its usual lackadaisical beat.

p.s. Robert came up with the phrase 'lackadaisical beat'. Isn't it great!

**Mark Brown**

## **Fountain of Youth**

Recently I received an email link to 119 photos taken by one of the Fountain of Youth this past summer. There were a lot of images of happy teenagers. Looking over the photos I had to smile... so many fun things happened this past summer at the Garden.

The Fountain of Youth is a program where adolescents volunteer half time and spend the rest of their time in the garden working on their own art process. This was my third summer working with the Fountain of Youth. The program has grown and evolved over time.

During most sessions, the FOY worked together to create something for the Garden. The FOY initiated their projects, so each session was different and exciting in its own way. In the first session, the FOY worked on both creatively replenishing the instrument collection and textile printmaking using a large roller and tractor inner tube (visualize that). In the second session, Mama Crow was refurbished. In the third session, inspired by the visiting artist Teilhard Frost, a water drum was made. In the final session a worktable was created for future FOY projects. Along with the group projects, many of the FOY worked on individual artistic pursuits in the garden. As well as participating in ambitious artistic projects, all the FOY contributed to the garden by being responsible for daily tasks on site, assisting the younger children and helping the artists at various stations.

I need to end by saying that the supportive and incredibly talented staff at the Garden make so much possible.

Deanna Bowlby

## **Facilitators:**

Each year at the Gardens we are fortunate to have a number of facilitators for some of the children who come to both Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder. At each site a team is formed to support the children with special needs. The team at Spiral Garden lead and nurtured by Elyse Chiu



consisted of Ahlia Vallevand , Hester Koopman, Kim Ceurstemont, Sonia Satov, Amy Lewis, Julia Riley, and Marjorie Richards. Emma Manchester, Tatsiana Peker and Claire Pentelow made up the core of the team at Cosmic Bird Feeder under the able direction of Waleed Noor.

The facilitation teams at both sites give the rest of the staff valuable insights into the individual children they are working with. They are an invaluable asset to the children's participation in the program and the smooth running of the sites.

## **Volunteers**

Each summer we have a number of Volunteers who assist with facilitation, with activities and with general site setup and cleanup. Their commitment makes the program run that much better. We really were fortunate to have the an exceptional group this year:

### **Volunteers at Cosmic:**

Catherine (Kate) Davis  
Stephanie Kellowan  
Rebecca Lee  
Jennifer Lee  
Jessica Leffert  
Kaye Palomera  
Jackie Sarigiannis  
Rachel Wagner



## Volunteers at Spiral:

Jessie Colgan  
Catherine (Kate) Davis  
Krystle Duncanson  
Lisa Goldberg  
Christine Ho  
Allan Joshan  
Laura Killey  
Danbee (Serene) Kim  
Mathanakumar (Math) Kumararatnam,  
James Lawton,  
Alicia Lee Fong,  
Jennifer MacDonnell,  
Saburah Murdoch,  
Amelia Sheffe,  
Caroline Taylor,  
Emily Ursell,  
Karina Vilner,  
Priscila Zanatta,  
Michael Zauder,

## Staff

The staff at both Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder are a collection of various artists, musician, educators and childcare professionals, many of whom return from year to year. This year I have asked each staff member to write something about their role at the Garden this past summer and something about what they are engaged in during the rest of the year. It is my hope that reading about the staff will provide people with a taste of the range of talent and experience that is available to the children in the village that appears each summer in the backyard of Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre.

## Cosmic Bird Feeder

### Jen Calder

This summer as the musician, Jen led daily music circles and tried her hand at building instruments, such as shakers, rainsticks and mbiras with the children. Installing a instrumental wheel in the long neglected music area was also a great engineering feat accomplished by a small dedicated group with saws and a powerdrill. Songs also emerged this summer, including a tree-talking chant, an ode to earwigs and the always dramatic Clam-sody in B flat minor. Broken telephone drumming and some jamming with the gongs were also highlights.

Jen is looking forward to an exciting fall. Currently, she is looking for full time work as a nurse, having finished school this year. In addition, she has expanded her creative projects by agreeing to do an original score for a friends film and continues to perform with her own band. She is making ambitious travel plans for next year, including going across Canada and eventually to Australia to seek her fortune overseas.

### Michaela Chandler

I've been working at the Cosmic Bird Feeder in a variety of different forms, apprentice, facilitator,

and office related work, but this summer I worked under the star canopy making puppets, masks, jewelry, pouches and worry trees. I also played a lot, dressed up and made up puppet shows. During the winter I've been doing various other things most recently I came back from a trip to India and Sri Lanka. I've also worked with another artist assisting her in her own art classes. This year I've moved to Montreal to attend Concordia University studying Women's Studies and Art History.

### **Heather Davis**

I am the gardener at the Cosmic Birdfeeder. I dig in the dirt and try to make the plants grow, with varying degrees of success. I water, pull, plant, harvest, smell and taste. I try to encourage the kids to interact with the garden in every and any way. I learn and teach about the importance of caring for living things and figure out ways of doing that better. The garden is the foundation for all the other activities, even if simply in location, just as the earth is the place we each start every aspect of being and living. I try to incorporate the garden into many different activities and arts as well as fostering an appreciation for the magic of emerging life from tiny seeds.

Outside of the garden I am currently a master's student working on my thesis in cultural theory. I love to read, write and teach. I knit, sew, silk-screen and take photographs. I try to find ways of increasing ethical, caring, socially progressive ways of being in the world in every way I can.

### **Micah Donovan**

This was my third year as Co-ordinator at Cosmic and fifth in the Gardens. I had thought of my role as creating and supporting a process which would mostly benefit others-- I didn't realize until this year just how much we each benefit from the opportunities to grow and heal, actively, in the Gardens. I experienced first-hand how equilibrated our program is in providing the philosophical framework, emotional tools, the space, and opportunities to connect meaningfully with one another, to grow, to heal. I am thankful for the meaningfulness of my work, and the extraordinary dedication of the staff at Cosmic to create an ideal and considered program for both the children and ourselves.

I am working on a sculpture for the new site, which commemorates the program at Cosmic, with its eventual closure. Daniela Pulido is joining me in this project. In addition I am doing web and print design, and continue my practice in metal work. I am also developing a stunt-cooking show, for which we recently shot the demo, and is being shopped around to networks by our producer.

### **Alex Glenfield**

Alex brings his wondrous skills to the gardens; his Tuvan throat singing, Gillespie-esque style clean-up trumpeting and encores of 'Future Man' thrill garden-goers. Working away on his academic pursuits (what makes some music cheezier than others? Connections between sound, language, song, frequencies and everything) and touring with Inuit vocalists performing drum dances and varieties of overtone singing, Alex has been keeping busy. Clown names will never be the same again. We look forward to his visits.

### **Doug Moore**

This was my first year as a full time staff member at Cosmic, where I led woodworking. Last year I subbed for the woodworker at Spiral, so I got a feel for the rich world that these two gardens comprise. This summer there was a constant inflow of inspiring artists in woodworking, and many exciting creations-furniture, supernatural devices, family members for a lonely tree named Woodruff Loneoak... WW was the site of a number of celebrity visitations including LaLaLousha and Madame Ears Mr. THouGhtLess, ace wwer Emily from Spiral, some Nacas, Moses.

Now that the summer is over I will be resuming work as an installation technician at The Power Plant contemporary art gallery, and substitute teacher at the Alan Howard Waldorf School. I will be eagerly spreading the word about the program at Spiral/Cosmic to friends with kids.

### **Waleed Noor**

It is the primary duty of the special needs (SN) coordinator and site monitor to ensure participants for the program arrive there and remain there safely.

While being aware of all participants enrolled for each session in the summer, the SN-coordinator must learn of any special needs or accommodations pertinent to any camper. This may involve the pairing of a 1:1 facilitator with some campers and making all staff and volunteers aware of any relevant details.

The SN-coordinator is in contact with parents, administrators, volunteer coordinators, recreational staff, facilitators and all program staff for the sole purpose of ensuring the needs of the participants are met. It is the responsibility of the SN-coordinator that a healthy relationship between the participant and the program exists at all times.

This was my first year at Cosmic Birdfeeder and as a special needs coordinator. I came to Cosmic after being a facilitator at Spiral Garden for three years. Having that background gave me a comfortable place to start at Cosmic. However, both sites are different and uniquely special. The staff at Cosmic made it a joy to be there. It was a great experience being special needs coordinator. I learned a tremendous amount. I hope to hold those experiences close to me as I embark on my journey in Occupational Therapy. I may be in the program at U of T this year or, if not, then next year. Until then I will continue to enjoy life and try to be as stress-free as possible!

### **Tatsiana Peker**

I've worked with special needs children for more than 20 years and every day I learn how wonderful it is to help children to feel comfortable and happy. I'm very glad I had the opportunity to work in the camp this summer, it made happy as well. I've never seen so fantastic relationships among people; everyone was ready to help each other.

This fall I am going to be a college student studying for Communicative Disorders Assistant. I feel that especially this camp made me mentally ready for going back to school after so many years; it made me feel comfortable and confident in myself. Thanks!

### **Daniela Pulido**

Working at the garden is the best job I have ever had! I miss it throughout-out the rest of the year, but take with me the experience of working in such a great environment with really inspiring people, and from time to time the memories give me great joy and keep my standards high when working in other places.

As a staff member in charge of the ceramics area I make available clay to be a medium for different purposes, from functional objects to decorative tiles to take home and give someone, or to enhance awareness to the touch with it's texture, temperature and mass. I try respond to the need of some children to end up with an object fast to take home but also try to encourage and introduce the experience of working on a project for a longer period where it's result becomes tangible over time and patience and perseverance are cultivated. This year was the clay book. Each week a page was made including a new character or event that happened in the garden, and by the end of the summer we ended up with a record of the story of 2004.

After this Summer I will continue my individual art practice in sculpture\ installation with various materials such as, fibers, cardboard, thread, plaster and whatever is available in large amounts. For the past years my work evolves around the concept of home and the questions around what makes us feel at home when you live in a foreign land.

I am looking forward to take my artwork, for the first time, to Santiago, Chile, for a show in January and I also look forward to collaborate with Micah on a sculpture project here in Toronto.

### **Liz Rucker**

Elizabeth is an actor, director and writer and a founding member of Number Eleven Theatre. Elizabeth received a BFA in Theatre Studies from York University (1996) after which she co-founded Theatre Fugue, with whom she wrote and directed two pieces: VISIT, through Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell program, and Two Part Linen, and directed two company creations: The Customs House (1996) and Wake (1998). In 1997, Elizabeth participated in Primus Theatre's three-month intensive, Fictive Realities. She was a collaborating performer in NaCl Theatre's The Secret Storey (1997) and Theatre Labyrinth's Never Speak to Strangers (Cleveland, 1998).

### **Jayne Walker**

I am a gardener, teacher, basketmaker by trade and passion. I have been the gardener at Cosmic since it's inception and for seven (?) years, reluctantly relinquishing this most exquisite of all positions recently in order to pursue my dream of living in the country where I have a great veggie garden, the best dog in the world, deer in the yard and chickens in the barn...

### **Amber Yared**

This past summer I was the painter at the Cosmic Birdfeeder. It was my first time working at Cosmic, though I am not new to the gardens. I spent two summers running the Spectral Palette at Spiral Garden. Cosmic and Spiral are guided by the same principles, and some of the same people have worked at both sites. Yet, the two are so very different from each other. I feel lucky for being able to experience both the grand scale and vibrancy of Spiral and the intimate tranquility of Cosmic.

At the painting table we entered the summer with a pretty ambitious project. We painted different sized and shaped squares of canvas with the idea in mind of making a large painted mosaic representing the tree that grows in the Sea of Milk off the coast of Italy. Putting the pieces together was like trying to build a bookshelf for the first time with wood cut to the wrong lengths. Eventually a cubist-like tree became apparent as the subject of our colourful, patchwork painting. We hung the tree mosaic in the Adobe for the summer's last day celebrations. In addition to the mosaic we made two-dimensional painted puppets; origami modular cubes; painted flags representing puppet thoughts and messages from pinecones; portraits of things in the garden such as pinecones, flowers, and holes in the ground; leather string stamps; a squireletta to commemorate a dead squirrel we found in the playground.

Now that Cosmic is over (until next summer), I am back in my home in Montreal. I hope to return to Toronto next fall for teacher's college, for which I am diligently working on an application. In the meantime, I am teaching English as a Second Language at a Non-Profit Immigrant's Active Listening Centre and teaching art at an alternative high school, as well as scrounging for further employment. As for my art practice, I am engaged in a long-term multicity postcard project and this fall, I plan to make a complicated interactive origami mobile installation in my apartment and some very simply bound books.



## Guest Artists

Each year we look for opportunities to bring new artists (sometimes ones from long ago at the Gardens) onto the site, into our village. This year we were caught short (at the last moment) without our ceramist. Although we miss Jeff we took this opportunity to bring Rani Glick on for part of the summer.

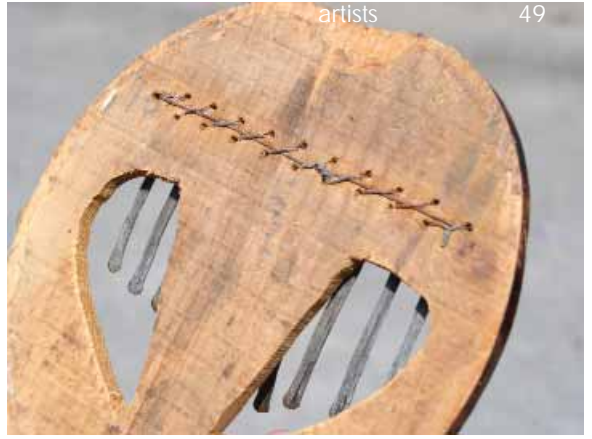
Rani Glick is an accomplished ceramist, sculptor and mixed media artist. She has also worked as the Executive Director for Community Arts Ontario. She relished the opportunity to get her hands covered in clay, playing with the children and staff in the Garden. She brought her excitement for creating shapes in clay and also a tool (an extruder) that the children had not tried yet - they loved it! Rani also created a sculptured as a collective project with the kids from left over clay pieces and a wide range of found objects. We hope to be able to have Rani return another year.

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This summer we also had the good fortune to have a guest artist who worked on both site. He has worked with us in the past as a musician and we were delighted to have him return.

Teilhard Frost is a musician par excellence, a jack of all trades and master of many. This summer he shared with us his skill at creating instruments (and masks) from gourds. Thumb pianos, long





armed creatures, elephants and koras (a kora is a stringed instrument from Africa). He also created his own elephant character and costume and played fiddle, drums and didgeridoo. It is sometimes hard to fathom how one person could be master of so much - we hope to have him back next summer.

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Rebecca Wood, our guest apprentice at Spiral Garden for the month of August offered her love of beading to the kids. She also filled in the gaps where necessary, being at moments a one on one facilitator, then a candle-maker, a character in costume, a face painter, a salad maker, a friend to sit on the grass with at lunchtime. Rebecca has grown into her role from being a participant, a volunteer and now a valued staff member.

## **Spiral Garden**

### **Emily Antze**

This summer at Spiral Emily took on a lead role at woodworking. She and Jason were kept busy with a constant stream of kids vying for time to build their projects. A marvelous parade of characters emerged from the woodworking area, elephants to guard the gate, dragons that flew home with children, portraits of individuals, books, and a myriad of fanciful objects. Emily also had opportunities to play in other areas, adding her delightful spirit, helpfulness and talents to Spectral Palette and the dramatization of the story.

Emily is spending the winter in Ghana as part of her Anthropology course at McGill.

Here is a small excerpt from her e-mails:

" I've been living in Accra, attending classes at the University of Ghana (at Legon) on the outskirts of the city...I take my classes with 23 other Canadians and 4 Ghanaians. They cover various facets of African and Ghanaian history, culture, politics and economics, as well as some aspects of development practice in 'the field'...there will be a Ghanaian national election in about a week's time...in even the smallest town and villages of Ghana, posters of local candidates are plastered everywhere, pickup trucks with large speakers drive through communities blasting music specially commissioned to sing the praises of 'one party or the other'...there doesn't seem to be a lot of voter apathy - almost every Ghanaian I've spoken to has a strong opinion...Accra is a big, dusty, polluted, crowded, crazy city... this is (also) a really beautiful and ecologically diverse country and the south is dominated by beautiful beaches, warm ocean and lush rainforest..."

### **Deanna Bowlby**

In her third year of coordinating the Fountain of Youth program Deanna has brought the program to a new level. Her way of working with the teens is so engaging that the program grows each year. This year there were more teens with special needs than ever before and she incorporated everyone seamlessly into both the art processes and the area of assistance. She has created simple and meaningful projects that allow them to see themselves as having moved to a new level of responsibility in this community. Deanna is also extremely skilled at leaving space for and bringing out the best in each of the youth and the youth as a group. In the Fountain of Youth report we see the wide range of activities that this group took on. Deanna's artistic sensibilities are inspiring to the youth, the younger participants and the rest of the staff. Deanna is an artist and secondary school teacher.

### **Mark Brown**

I spent the summer following kids as they discovered the story. I used a couple of puppets and

created a couple of new characters to help the story grow a little. I also played my usual role singing alongside Lynn in the morning and afternoon music circles. This was a very musically productive summer. No less than 7 new songs were created and I was personally involved in the co-creation of 5 of them collaborating with both staff and kids. It was awesome! Finally I assumed the new role of "Pied Piper" (although I played a drum) leading the kids to and from the lunchtime playground. It was a thankless, disciplinarian-type job, but somebody had to do it. I would also like to say that I am secretly in love with Lynn. And I have a crush on Bohdan.

Now that the summer is over I have returned to University after a 3 year absence. Formally a U of Windsor student, I am now attending York and getting my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music as well as my Bachelor of Education. I'll be 30 years old before it's all over and that just scares the heck out of me. I will also continue with acting, singing and burlesque projects on the side.

### **Elyse Chiu, Community Special Needs Co-ordinator**

After a very full and intense year of academics and training, I am excited to return to a welcoming and safe environment of a different pace, the Garden. Each summer brings on its own multitude of experiences. This summer the coordination of the facilitators and their work with the children ran quite smoothly. One critical element this summer was ensuring each child's needs were met, and the facilitator was suitably matched with the individual. There were occasions throughout the summer, where it was necessary to change the facilitator for particular campers to better meet their individual needs. With some reassignment, we were able to meet the needs of each child to ensure their experience at the garden was magical. The challenges of reorganizing the facilitator match up was better achieved as I had a better idea of each facilitator's skills and abilities in order to appropriately support the ranges of needs of all the children. My awareness of individual skills was a direct result of my participation in the facilitator selection process. After my 16th successful summer (camper, volunteer, facilitator, special needs coordinator) I am eager to return to my studies.

Having completed an exciting and challenging first two semesters of the Paramedic Program at Centennial College, I am excited to return for my final two semesters. One of the many highlights of this past year was my clinical placement at St. Michael's Hospital. On one rotation, I had the opportunity to observe and assist in the delivery of a baby girl. This year I am looking forward to my experience on the road, in an ambulance during my field placement.

### **Sue Cohen**

This year at spiral wasn't to be missed for all the world especially after the party it was last year I simply couldn't say no when I was asked to return, and can I say wow wow what beautiful people, times and place. Thinking back my heart is full... This year we began with looking at an old sculpture from last year a rather large canvas shaped like a tear, upon reflection we saw we needed something more... and the painting area needed a sun tarp- more protection from the sun on those hot afternoons. So0 we began doing light washes on thin fabrics, and the paints were flying. And then a piece of lace came our way and we began flinging brushes and sponges filled with paint and the elephant ear sculpture was born, a most beautiful thing to behold. There were many paintings created and chalk boards were created and placed in and around the garden. Some bookbinding was happening in and amongst it all... Thanks for this summer twas wonderfilled for me.-sue

This winter I will be assisting Shannon with the Weekend Winter Respite Program with Arts activities, I am hoping to experiment with a paint that is magnetic and create magnetic paintings, sculptures and story elements. I am also Artist in Residence at Art City an after school arts drop-in for local youth in St. James Town. Also I will be in Open Studio programming at Sketch working arts studio for street involved and homeless youth in the fall and continuing with outreach activities in to the winter. Somehow in all this I will continue to paint, inspired by my summer at Spiral I have

begun some naka clown paintings on skateboards...sue

### **Shannon Crossman**

Early this summer I had the chance to take a one-week intensive Permaculture course, which is the design of sustainable and ecological human habitat and environment. It was an opportunity to meet and study with like-minded individuals and bring back ideas, techniques and philosophies to share with the Garden such as living roofs and walls and working according to nature's low impact principles.

This fall I have begun taking academic courses towards my Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Ontario College of Art and Design. As well I am studying ceramics, specifically wheel throwing, to expand my repertoire in the understanding and enjoyment of clay.

Happily the mosaic, which the kids from Art City in St. James Town and myself have been working on for the last year and a half, is now installed at the Simcoe Place, concourse level, at Front and Simcoe streets. It is a bright and bold eight by sixteen-foot square self-portrait of the kids in the windows of an apartment building, similar to one where many of them live.

Every day we start the day, as staff, with a stretch, a song and a rock passing ritual. When we sing we hold hands. We stand in a circle, which is sometimes small, and sometimes large depending on who is there that day. But always there is one person on either side of you and always you hold hands with each of them. Usually one person's hand is a little warmer, or cooler, larger or smaller, or rougher or smoother than the other person's. Some hold tight and others more loosely. You become a sort of invisible, silent channel, sensing these differences.

Its funny but I wouldn't know this or even think about it but as soon as we gather and hold hands I observe these dimensions of each person. And person by person, all around the circle you are connected to everyone else and they are connected to you.

### **Karin Farkashidy**

This past summer was busier than usual for me. Because of gaining more responsibility in other areas of the Centre, unfortunately I could not do the gate keeping at Spiral Garden this year. Instead, I went back to working "behind the scenes" in the Spiral office and up at the Bloorview site as well. This always involves lots of paperwork, handling the money and payroll, talking to parents, ordering supplies and other assorted and diverting tasks which I hope contribute to the smooth functioning of the program. The summer did have its moments though - I was there one morning to witness Crow emerging from the Spiral sandpit - an awesome sight - and marveled daily at the Spiral Garden flag flapping in the wind on top of the huge construction crane next door.

Meeting all the old faces again as well as the new children and their parents was a pleasure, not to mention working with such a wonderful and talented staff - these are the things that made the summer memorable for me.

### **David Field**

Artist, educator and clown - now you see him, now you don't!! David comes to the Garden when he can (can't keep him away). This summer Rusty (as the kids know him) came and gave the woodworkers a break. Then in the last week he came with his new invention - wearable grass!!!! - brilliantly bright green slabs of wheat grass that he cut into shapes - there was a grass tunic, hats and a yomuka for Michael. Thanks for the popsicles, David!

## Jane Hillary

This spring, I was thrilled to be able to attend fortifying workshops at the Royal Botanical Gardens on herbs ("...diggin' thyme!") and horticultural therapy. This fall, I am lucky to be going to the American Community Gardeners' Association Conference: "Gardens of Diversity, Growing Across Cultures." A few of us will be offering a tour of Spiral Garden to interested conference attendees. Members of the very appreciative Toronto Herb Society also came out for a tour this week (some wanted to stay and volunteer with us!)

Kahlil Gibran said, "work is love made visible." I am indebted to the universe for providing such joyful work, with folks in Spiral Garden, and in Etobicoke for the last seven years. Every evening after I close the Garden Gate and breathe my own deep sigh of appreciation up from the tip of the spiral, I brave (sometimes just survive!) the traffic heading west to be a Special Services At Home Worker with five developmentally delayed adults, one of whom I had the honour this year in supporting as her bridesmaid! Many thanks to you all, along with my incredibly important family and friends, for your gifts of unconditional love that nurtures my roots so I can lift with my branches!

## Jason Kenemy

Along with Emily Antze, Jason directed the woodworking area this summer, drawing on his work experience as a carpenter's apprentice. This entailed helping kids with the tools and guiding them through the construction process. In the wood shop he also helped develop the some musical instrument making projects.

On the musical side of things he led a drum group of kids and facilitators who played music for garden functions and for the sheer fun of it. Some of their activities, based on Brazilian call-and-response techniques and native Canadian drumming functions, were used as communication across long distances and as signaling for events in the garden.

Jason is a pianist and composer working on in the Canadian music scene. As a co-leader of the jazz-pop group Directions he has toured to and performed at all of the major Canadian jazz festivals in Canada including Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. Direction's recording "Have You Felt This Way Before" has been released nationally and internationally to critical acclaim and has been played on CBC Radio1 - and played extensively on BBC Radio1 and has made the charts on that network. Jason has composed and performed music for the Blue Collar Dance Company. He leads the Jason Kenemy trio, featuring Blake Howard (drums) and Chris Banks (bass) and regularly plays Toronto's finest jazz clubs. In November 2004 Jason will be residing in India for a 6-month period to continue and broaden his studies in music. Jason is also really into good food!

## Jen Leis

I guess for a lot of us this will always be the summer that Galen died. It was the most horrible, sickening, unconceivable news delivered in May. The 12th, the day before his birthday. He was on his bike. After the memorial, an exhausted Jan hugged us all as we got off the last ferry and hailed cabs or unlocked bicycles. When it was my turn she said, "I have an idea for this year's quilt", (At Spectral Palette, I have facilitated a collaborative quilt project every summer.) My reply was, "Yeah?" even though in my head I was thinking - what are you thinking about THAT for right now? "A hole-in-the-heart quilt," she said quietly and hugged the next...

Immediately an image came into my mind. A big graphic heart (you know, valentine style), with a hole - or a chunk cut out of it. In the past, we have used oil pastels or wax crayons to draw on fabric quilt patches - "crayon batik". I thought that if we printed these hearts on the patches, the kids could use pastels to draw in the space - to fill the hole. The most difficult decision was how big to make the hole...

I thought a lot about the oncoming season at the Garden, and it struck me how much of Jan is there. For so many years she has given generously so much of herself and I hope that she has also received as much from the Garden and all of us. It seemed to me the Garden had a place in Jan's heart. And so I added the spiral to the top. We went on to silkscreen colourful hearts on patches for the quilt, t-shirts and prayer flags. Then we used the "real" batik wax resist technique and dyed the fabric. Pastels and crayons added even more colour. Then came the sewing. Two delightful campers sewed most of the square patches together in tandem, taking turns "driving" the sewing machine together - Sadie on the needle and Emily on the pedal, then switch... Jan cut notches out of a pine plank so the pedal would fix to the foot of Emily's wheelchair with copper wire.

I pressed and sewed on the black-and-white check fabric that edges all three quilts now. I did the corners wrong, but Jan says she can fix it. Maybe we'll start quilting tomorrow. But it is the last day and it will be awfully busy. Anyway, it might be a nice project to carry into next summer...

### **Jan MacKie**

I have long appreciated the community that is Spiral Garden / Cosmic Bird Feeder and Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre - this summer that appreciation grew as everyone rallied to take on tasks that I was unable to fulfill as I grappled with the loss of my son.

I took on the role of gatekeeper - this gives one the opportunity to greet the children as they arrive and to speak with parents. One learns a great deal from the parents. I was very pleased to see and hear the delight that the parents (many of them new) found in our approach, with our emphasis on process and with the ability of the staff to be playful and inventive while being responsible and thoughtful.

It is a gift to be a part of a caring community that does not hide from the trials of life, one that is willing and able to hold difficulty and sadness alongside beauty.

I am grateful to have been able to laugh and sing with the children and staff.

This winter I will be working on future directions and building some of the foundation for the Open Studio and the new Centre for the Arts. I also hope to be working on a Special Installations project for the new facility. I will also be doing a small amount of work on a project in the schools and on the proposed project for a Garden in the West Bank. In the early part of 2005 I plan to travel to South America to visit family and see some places that I've not yet been with a view to finding a restful, warm place for retreat and rejuvenation.

**Jan MacKie received the Circle of Honour Award, this year, for service and leadership at Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre, and in the greater community. We thank Jan for her hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Congratulations!**

### **Carol McIntyre**

Our beloved 'Bug Lady' spent the days answering questions, devising new methods for gently catching bugs for identification and sharing the wonder and awe of the children as they made discoveries of tiny creatures in the grass, amongst the plants and on the bark of the trees.

Carol is our elder at the Garden. She spends her winters tutoring children with learning disabilities and remains a vital part of her community within Toronto.

### **Lynn Simmons**

Lynn, our dancer, our herder of cats, our singer with the voice of an angel who keeps us all together,

and brings us back on track in the music circle. Lynn has been with the Garden many, many summers and leads the music circles and creates songs with Mark, leads the dancing, works alongside Deanna with the Fountain of Youth and is an essential part of the animation team. In between summers at the Garden, in her other professional life, Lynn adds her incredible voice to a number of choirs as well as teaching voice to a number of students.

### **Bohdan Petryk**

Back at the Garden this year, Bohdan worked in the spring with Robert setting the site for the summer. Bohdan has been at the Gardens for fourteen years, sharing his imagination and playfulness. This summer he moved about the site, divining with Splat Diddle and the kids, creating kolloms and a new board for experimenting with continuous line drawings. He introduced the vanishing painting technique and played a key role in the animation team. As irreverent as he can be when the Naka clowns appear, he can also bring a deep thoughtfulness to activities. This summer he introduced the children to a process of creating prayer flags and eventually a prayer scroll dedicated to Galen. It was then ceremoniously installed on the last day in the prayer wheel he had built next to the gate, which he had refurbished in the spring and that children had added to throughout the summer.

Bohdan is one of the artists involved in creating work for the Special Installations for the new facility. In the fall he worked further on this series of paintings and is now traveling with his partner through Europe and Asia for the winter.

### **Susiawan**

This summer Susiawan arrived with a beautiful little gamalon- type instrument from Bali. He would begin each session by donning his traditional headgear and sarong from Java. He would then invite the children to find a plant or flower in the garden, ask them bring it to the instrument and then find two or three notes and a simple rhythm to express the sense of the object. When a child found their simple tune, Susiawan would play along with them on the other end of the instrument. The children delighted in this process and the entire site benefited from the exquisite sounds of the xylophone-like instrument as they floated on the air.

Susiawan also performed his magic with mask and puppet making and ended the summer by engaging many in creating a 20 foot dragon that paraded through the garden on the last day with the help of many hands.

Again this fall Susiawan will take his talents into the schools and go back to Bali where he and his wife (also an excellent puppeteer) are working towards creating a school. He also plans to meet with Bohdan in Bali. What surprises might they bring back to the Gardens?

### **Robert Vine**

Robert Vine has wandered and wondered in the spiral "forever", some people have said. This season he was site co-ordinator and site monitor. He also brought his friends O-Paulee and Sir Duncan to visit. At lunch he could be found in the tepee leading True Stewies. Quite by accident some songs escaped into the garden with his help.

## Feedback

By Feb/Mar 2005 we will have collected and compiled the feedback from our new feedback form - these results will be available as separate report.

Below are a few pieces written about the programs from teachers parents, and staff.

This is a letter from the kindergarten teacher at Northlea Elementary School. In the Open Studio programming we had brought this class together with some children from the MacMillan site school to do activities and songs together for a winter solstice celebration.

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Tuesday, January 20, 2004

To whom it may concern,

My class was excited and delighted to have the opportunity to work with students from Bloorview-MacMillan, celebrating the Winter Solstice. There were many aspects of the program which they enjoyed.

All the staff from Spiral Gardens and Bloorview-MacMillan were caring, energetic, creative and fun. The students felt very comfortable and important in their presence. My students loved all the unique activities that the staff planned- singing songs, working with clay, print making, beading, grinding wheat, creating the candelabra, walking back and forth from the school carrying the flags they had made, and taking part in the Winter Solstice ceremony. Finally, they thoroughly enjoyed participating with the students from Bloorview-MacMillan. On one level it was interesting to see them totally oblivious to the fact that many of the students had special needs. It was just one large group of children doing fun activities together. They thought their different chairs and vehicles for getting around were cool. On another level they gained a heightened awareness for the difficulties some encountered on a daily basis. Activities such as beading, which was so easy for them, took a great deal of effort by some of the Bloorview-MacMillan students. Students who sometimes were a little aggressive in my class, were gentle and kind when working with the students from Bloorview-MacMillan. I had only positive comments from the students and parents in my class and would love the opportunity to work with Bloorview-MacMillan once again.

Sincerely,

**Julie Roberts**

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The following piece was written by the mother of two children who attended Cosmic Bird Feeder this summer.

### **Cosmic Birdfeeder: Reconnecting My Child with Childhood**

Almost two years ago, my five-year-old daughter suffered a catastrophic brain injury. There followed a long series of surgeries, tests and seemingly endless months in hospital. Nine months of that stay in hospital took place at the Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre where she received care for her physical well being and also attended school. She responded, however, to all stimuli with a uniform lack of interest or even acknowledgement most of the time. Many told me that the vacant expression and lack of response was a product of her injuries and was unlikely to change.

We struggled along hoping for progress, sustaining ourselves with brief glimmers of the vibrant person she once was. The first summer after her injury, whilst a patient at Bloorview, I became aware

of the Cosmic Birdfeeder camp that took place on the grounds. Her opportunities for activity out of doors had previously been almost non-existent, so I decided this would be a great chance to get her out of the hospital. I don't recall what I expected of the camp, but it certainly wasn't what I found. Amazingly, here was a place where my daughter could interact with other children on a level that had nothing to do with her disability. There were children of varying ages and ability levels all contributing in some measure to the beauty of the whole experience. Myth and fancy enticed them all into a world of wonder and exploration through music and art in the magical setting of a garden. Their ideas and experience are central to the creation of a story that winds its way through week after week of play and learning. It offered my daughter stimulation and peace in equal measure, when she needed it and gave her the opportunity to open up to being a child again.

Childhood is a time of such creativity and wonder, two things that sadly suffer the most when a child falls ill. Cosmic gave that back in huge measure to my daughter. It also gave her sister the chance to learn how to relate to her again on a new level. The creativity and passion with which the artists and all the staff approach the children has everything to do with what makes this such an extraordinary program for able bodied and disabled kids alike. My daughter just finished her second summer at the Birdfeeder. The vacant expressions have been replaced with smiles, the silence with voice during music circles. In short she has been able to reconnect not only with other children, but also with the joy of being a child herself.

### **Skye Gross**

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**The following is a transcript of a speech written for a school presentation in 2004 by a twelve-year old girl who has attended Spiral Garden for three years.**

Imagine you can't speak, can't walk, can't eat or go to the bathroom without someone helping you. Imagine you have the same intelligence and dreams as any teenager does. Imagine you can't go to a movie or a dance or on the Internet. But there is one place you can go it is Spiral Garden.

The Spiral Garden is a magical place at the edge of a ravine, a garden with huge, colourful, cloth dragonflies hanging from the trees. Six-foot puppets tower over the open space. There is a big sandpit with waterworks made of bamboo. Children bake their own bread in an outside oven. There is a beautiful cage where butterflies and other insects are caught, observed and released each day. Herbs and edible flowers are gathered and made into sun tea.

Who are the lucky children who get to spend their summer days there? Many are disabled children who need 24-hour supervision. Many never leave a wheelchair and some are without special needs. This camp accepts every aspect of a child whether it is their emotional, physical or spiritual being. I have had many amazing experiences at this camp. One of them was last year when I was friends with a little girl who was in a wheelchair and could not speak. At first I could not tell how I would communicate with her but when I looked into her eyes I felt as if she and I were talking to each other. I understood that you do not always need language to understand.

At the Spiral Garden children who do not know how to behave are accepted and loved. An example is a boy who had an electric wheelchair that he drove around the garden on the highest speed. He didn't want to be part of activities and his driving was dangerous. Finally the counselors came up with a great idea. They got him to carry full buckets of water to every corner of the garden for watering the plants. Of course he had to slow down or he would spill the water. Even more important he felt as if he were helping the camp.

We get certain elements from the garden such as the ability to smell, taste, hear, see and feel. The garden also teaches us to be patient, careful, slow and quiet.

The garden is important because it helps many children who are disabled be in an atmosphere where there are other children. It is also where they can be outside and play and do crafts as much as they want.

At the end of the last session we have a last day ceremony with all the kids from the camp. There are themes that the ceremonies are based on. Last year it was launching monkeys into space. All session we told stories of blue monkeys that came to give us messages every day after lunch. The

notes usually said things like use these glasses to read the missing words from the newspaper. These ceremonies give the kids who like to speak in front of people a chance to do it. They give kids who can't speak a chance to use their imagination. Most of the kids really enjoy these ceremonies that include singing and drumming and dress up because it gives them a chance to be creative. I want to be a counselor when I am old enough because I like being around children. This year because I am too old to be a camper I am going to be a helper to a disabled child. There are magical places on earth and Spiral Garden happens to be one of them. It doesn't need much, just a simple garden, lots of imagination and love for every one whether they can speak or move, no matter how different they are.

### **Olivia Upshur**

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North York, Ontario August 30,2004.

Dear Ms MacKie:

Let me compliment you and your team for the Cosmic Birdfeeder camp program held this summer. As a nurse I was fortunate to accompany a child to the camp for the last two weeks in August. Both of us enjoyed the experience very much.

Having the activities in the garden behind Bloorview provided a perfect setting for the children to



actively take pleasure in nature. I cannot give enough praise to the wonderful staff who made the best use of the beautiful surroundings. The coordinators and the support staff brought a wealth of kindness, imagination and creativity to their jobs every day. Their activities were nicely balanced and flexible to allow the children to move freely within structured events.

I hope you will congratulate everyone who contributed to the success of the camp. If such programs will be offered again, I know the child in my care would love to return. So would I.

Yours truly,  
**Kaaren Stuss R.N.**

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### **To the Friends of Spiral Garden**

My name is Paul Alcamo. I am a teacher in the Bloorview MacMillan Centre School. I teach in the Integrated Kindergarten Program. It is a class that teaches both children who receive therapy in the IET and children from the community. Our class is situated next to the Spiral Garden. Previously, we used the adapted playground, which has since been removed due to the construction of the new building.

Although the Spiral Garden does not offer accessible climbers for the students, I have found the setting to be one that has encouraged a sense of discovery and a deeper appreciation of nature for all of the students in the class. The large sandpits invite all of the students to enter and literally immerse themselves in sand play and the musical area is in regular use. The property, with its trees has allowed us to carry on many games that encouraged the students to play together. Many games of hide and seek and adapted tag have occurred.

The set up of the Garden has allowed for many areas for children to cluster and choose activities of their liking. The shell of the teepee offers a wonderful setting for playing house. The narrow passages and paths make for adventurous journeys as the students' imagination takes over in this inspiring setting.

One of the most remarkable occurrences was in noting that because the property was smaller than our previous space of the playground and the large, north field, the students of all abilities were more likely to intersect paths. As such, it has led to many more play interactions, thus aiding in our goal of integration and friendships between children of all abilities.

I would like to thank the people of the Spiral Garden for all of their efforts to try and make their area an inspiring and educational place.

Sincerely,

**Paul Alcamo**  
Teacher  
Bloorview MacMillan Centre School

## Press

During the summer two articles appeared in the Toronto Star about the Gardens. In one instance they used a photo of a child intensely engaged in painting for the cover of the paper.

The Gardens also appeared twice on television - once on Global and once on CBC.

A photo from the Garden is due to appear on the cover of the Journal of the American Medical Association's 'Archive of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine' in February 2005.

## Cosmic Evaluations

The Staff at Cosmic were encouraged to map out what worked, what did not, as well as their impressions of what we do. Our working model is that of a shared leadership; in order for this to be achievable, everyone's concerns must be addressed. It is equally important, and a pleasure, to see the depth of commitment and appreciation expressed in the evaluations. This process is an attempt to make a working continuity from summer to summer, a challenge we face as a seasonal program. The following are excerpts from the evaluations as written by the staff.

### Compiled Evaluations

#### What is the core essence of what we do?

- We create a vision of good life on earth...a model of passing learning from one generation to another.
- We act as facilitators of the creative process, meaning that we create an environment that is safe and free from judgment in which we can all play together and create together freely.
- We are recognizing our own diversity and using it as a means to ask questions, gain knowledge and dispel myths.
- "Play" is the word I agree with in describing what we do. It is a celebration of humanity. The fact that staff (as adults) play gives permission for the children of the program to indulge in that celebration and aim to never lose it.
- I'd say we work/play to nourish one another (ourselves, and all those we work with). We work/play to create a social environment where people of all range of abilities can share in such nourishment.
- We work as a group supporting each other and listening to our needs and points of views with a focus in the collective success over a personal achievement. Many times, though, the collective satisfaction becomes personal as well.
- We are engaged in play, art, healing, learning and being imaginative together, none of which takes place separately. All of it happens, I think, with an acknowledgement to the interconnectedness of everything;
- We are allowing for meaning to enter into our play and we do this by contextualizing art, music, and play within a greater story that has its roots in the garden. What we do is significant on both a smaller, personal scale and a larger, cosmic scale that goes beyond the self.
- We try to foster an appreciation for the care, compassion and joy of taking care of each other and the earth. We also open up a space of pure creativity and play
- It's a place where many things happen but in the end no one really knows what's going on, maybe it's the closest thing to the truth we have.

#### What works really well? Why does it work?

- The structure of the day

- Morning Ceremony: The opportunity to ground yourself and focus yourself for the day ahead ----
- The morning stretch circle potluck. The potluck stretch continuously posed and answered the question: How can/should we work/play together? The morning circle gathered and shaped that joy energy during the smudge, then, with the see-day-um chant sent it down-down to stir the dark waters in the well of the soul, bringing many colours up and out of the well to share in the rock/clap/sound passing jam- X 5
- Spontaneous/Daily Ceremony: gives us the opportunity to stop and acknowledge what is happening in the moment, creates an intimate moment that can be just as therapeutic as the creative process
- PSW assistance for washrooms: allows the special needs coordinator to remain onsite to monitor and greet visitors from inside, assistance for facilitators with larger kids, allows for faster washroom runs that get the kids back outside sooner so they don't miss too much!
- "Everything under the sun" is available to the participants..... The program breaks free from constrictions found elsewhere.
- Continuity of staff, story, vision, children really helps..
- Visits to WW (woodworking) from costumed story-spinners and gleeful gentle tricksters helped me to feel that WW was connected to the larger movement of activity and play in the garden
- times we, the staff, spent together preparing for the last day of each session was a big part of what made so smooth and great the last days
- I realize that when I am engaged and focused on a project I attract kids to do the same
- Staff [shared] lunches (the lunch cult) works really well.
- Playing with the kids works really well because it emphasizes process - we integrate play into all of our activities and we don't set aside separate time for play. Thus, playing is meaningful and playing is learning and discovering in the garden - the kind of play we encourage is considerate and kind (not destructive and thoughtless)
- accessibility is not just in terms of activities or projects, but also in terms of friendships and fostering independence.

### **What doesn't work so well? Why doesn't it? What are the steps to help it work better?**

- Lunch switch-over X 8 - switchovers are difficult - time too short -- Lunchtime for Children - I felt that it was very fast, the ones that eat faster, become restless and start running around and disturbing others while eating. I think that we could provide free time, for them to eat and talk, balanced with story telling. "The story" could be read by one of us, or other stories
- Everyone gathering at circle on time: I know that there is lots of set-up to be done in the mornings, but it is of great support and help to the musician for everyone to arrive promptly to circles and engage with the children. -- If the interest, or at least attention, of each participant is maintained during circle time, it would lead to a better experience of the program for the all participants
- Integration of the Recreation children from inside into the activities does not work really well. The Rec. kids often came out after morning or afternoon music circles, so they did not know what was happening at the different areas - a few suggestions
- When Rec. enters the site somebody, such as the special needs coordinator or the site coordinator or site monitor, could give them an overview of the activities that were announced at morning/afternoon music circle. --During the orientation week before the children arrive, the Rec. staff come outside more -- We could also write up this information in a handout and include some philosophy and history about Cosmic Birdfeeder as well as encouragement to get involved and experiment when they show up on-site.
- One thing that could still be improved upon is collective projects or projects with multiple artists involved.
- It (the program) is not as accessible when it comes to race or economic status.
- The interactions between nurses and r.a's from the centre and the artists at the garden could be better.

### **Outline working/meeting/scheduling/playing improvements-**

- Discussion of roles and responsibilities within those roles: should be done with ALL staff including facilitators and volunteers
- Allowing time for the staff to play together at the beginning of the summer
- A chance for volunteers and facilitators to do some activities prior to their period,
- A chance for staff to visit one another's work areas, make some things individually or collectively.
- I would suggest fitting in our job an extra hour every other Tuesday to plan the last day of each session. And in that hour designate 30 minutes to make manually together what we need for the next day. I find that an activity like that puts us on the same page and mode for our last day of the session
- I am insisting on the subject of making time to collaborate in projects for the site or the story together. That can be working on the garden together too. I can't emphasize enough the benefits of this
- I always wished we had more time -- It would be great if we could add an extra prep day into the summer. X 5
- Decide upon work days early.
- We need even more pointless art, talk, absurd reasoning, fruitful miscommunication.

### **Prep before next summer:**

- more kiln furniture, posts to be more specific
- Creating a volunteer task list prior to our orientation week
- I would suggest maintaining sand box
- What would be helpful would be if I could come in right after the frosts are gone to begin planting the garden earlier.
- Supplies for washroom kits and first-aid kits are essential.

## **Attendance at Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder**

Children come to the gardens through different entry points. The children from the community (with and without special needs) register for one or two sessions with coordination between staff and families regarding facilitators where necessary. At the Cosmic Bird Feeder children attend the summer portion of the program with their recreation groups or with other Centre camp programs. Siblings, visiting with inpatients, also attend the program for one or several days at a time. At Spiral Garden siblings and visiting relatives may attend the program for short periods of time. We strive to keep a good balance of children with and without special needs.

The number of spaces provided in the summer (July, August) program:

Spiral Garden	219	
Cosmic Bird Feeder	128	
Fountain of Youth	54	
Total:	401	49% with Special Needs

Attendance Days (July & August): 2,366

Total: 2,852 (school programming included)\* - 53% with special needs

While Spiral Garden and Cosmic Bird Feeder are seen as summer programs, it is integral to our philosophy to incorporate the cycles of the year in the ways in which we engage the children and the

community. At both sites there is a planting day in the spring when the children who are registered for the summer program come with their families to start the growing season. They plant seeds and seedlings, sift compost and add nutrients to the soil as well as making a little music together. This is an excellent opportunity for children who will be attending for the first time to become familiar with the site and meet some of the staff.

At Cosmic Bird Feeder all of the children attending the school had an opportunity in the spring to plant as well as a time for harvesting and art activities in the fall.

At Spiral Garden, the Open Studio program and the Garden program came together to provide each of the classes at the MacMillan site school with a number of art and gardening activities. The spring activities lead to planting outside in the Garden. The fall activities lead to the Harvest Festival. (see Open Studio report for more details)

\*Attendant Days for the children from the two schools for the spring and fall would amount to approximately 495.

### **Spiral Garden Songs**

#### Splat Diddley Song

by Ben Wood, Matt, Daniel M., Bohdan and Mark

#### Verse I

There's a snake in the garden  
He will tell you your fortune  
Wrapped in mystery  
They call him Splat Diddley - Ah- Haah

#### Chorus:

What should I ask him? - Snakes never give straight answers  
What should you ask him? - Snakes never give straight answers  
What should we ask him? - Snakes never give straight answers

II: Watch him do his divining dance  
He has a zipper but doesn't wear pants  
Coiled and slippery  
They call him Splat Diddley - Ah- Haah

#### Chorus

III: He fell in love in the garden  
Too bad everyone but him knows  
That his long skinny girlfriend  
Is actually a garden hose

#### Chorus

Strangling Dog Vine  
(similar tune to "Boy Named Sue")

#### Verse 1

Well I've spent my whole life wanderin' round  
From the biggest of cities to the smallest of towns  
And I'm gonna tell ya 'bout the scariest thing I seen

It wasn't too ugly or weird to see  
 In fact if you saw it you'd prob'ly agree  
 That it's small and soft and the prettiest shade of green

Chorus :  
 Strangliiiiiiiiiin' dog viiiiiine  
 Strangliiiiiiiiiin' dog vine

2: If you chopped it down it just grew higher  
 It set down roots and spread like fire  
 It was evil incarnate disguised as a friendly weed

It had shiny chlorophyll coloured claws  
 But it also had one fatal flaw  
 It was scared of the colour Fuchsia, yes indeed

Chorus

3: Well I warned you once an' I won't do it twice  
 That if you care about your garden's life  
 You'll take my advice an' do everything you can

So band together friend and foe  
 'Cuz if you've listened to me you'll know  
 That it can't be eaten by just one woman, child or man

It'll take the lot of you workin' at once  
 You might even have to work through lunch  
 But if you do, you'll win in the end and I know you can

Chorus x 2

You Gotta Move - sung for the worms  
 Words by Robert Vine and the Rolling Stones  
 Music by Tampa Red

I-IV-V Blues progression in 'D' (slide guitar)

You gotta move (echo)  
 You gotta move (echo)  
 If the Crow sees you (echo)  
 You will be food (echo)  
 So when the drum (echo), starts to beatin' (echo)  
 You gotta move (echo)  
 Hey, You gotta move!

You may be high (echo), You may be low (echo)  
 You may not know (echo)  
 Which way to go (echo)  
 But when the drum (echo)  
 Stars to beatin' (echo)  
 You gotta move (echo)  
 Hey, You gotta move!

Na, Na, Naaaaaaaa

Na, Na, Na, Naaaaaaa etc.

Repeat 1st verse

Diggin' Time

By Lynn, Mark and the kids

Verse 1:

In the dirt mines of the garden  
I was born 'n I was raised  
Turnin' compost into cities  
Into a subterranean maze

2: In the fall, winter and springtime  
We settle into our groove  
But when summer rolls around now  
Grab your shovels, it's time to move

Chorus:

Diggin' time, diggin' time  
It's diggin' tiiiiiiiiime

3: Now on the move there's many dangers  
Floods and rivers, forks in the road  
Rocks and cicadas, human construction  
And many more we've yet to know

Chorus

Diggin' Work Song

Chorus:

Hey worms keep them hammers swingin'  
Hey worms keep them hammers swingin'  
Hey worms keep them shovels diggin'  
Hey worms keep them shovels diggin'

Gather 'round what'd I say  
I work all week for a dollar's pay  
I work from midnight right 'til day  
I hope some good gonna come my way