



institute for sustainable living, art & natural design

May 9, 2007

Dear

If you're like me, you've watched the documentaries and you've seen the image of the polar bear on the cover of Time magazine. You've heard the worrying reports of energy scarcity and economic downturns. Like me, you're feeling the urgency of these impacts and wondering if there's something you can do, here and now, to make a difference.

Here's one idea. Support the work of the Institute for Sustainable Living, Art & Natural Design (ISLAND) – an organization dedicated to finding local solutions for sustainable culture, based here in Northwest Lower Michigan.

ISLAND has had an incredible year. It was just last spring that we held our first event: an Edible Forest Gardening workshop and lecture with noted permaculturist and author Dave Jacke. The response to that event energized us into action to keep the work going:

- ☞ last fall, a community conversation about how to “relocalize” our area communities by skill sharing and visioning;
- ☞ less than a month ago, a talk and tasting in support of one of our favorite local food producers, Leelanau Cultured Veggies. We organized a talk from Sandor Katz, a food activist, scholar and author of *Wild Fermentation* and *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved*;
- ☞ and progressively building our library to nearly 2,000 titles on art, organic gardening, permaculture, ecological design, renewable energy, alternative building and more!

Before ISLAND was conceived, when I was working as a community organizer campaigning for the environment, I began to sense that a shift in our culture was slowly and invisibly happening. In the last few years I've watched that shift build



with remarkable speed and intensity. Global warming has taken center stage and peak energy issues are coming into the mainstream. Green cars, green clothes, green energy, organic food – these topics are more prevalent than ever.

At the same time, a disturbingly familiar process is underway – small, local solutions are being ignored in favor of large scale plans that ignore local character, local resources and local input. While I'm very happy with the success of these movements, I worry that being "green" will soon become just another product to buy.

In contrast, ISLAND is working here, locally, to build a model of self-sufficient living. We envision a culture of neighborhood and city scaled solutions based on community skill building. We include the arts as a key component to that process. This isn't about re-inventing the wheel – it's about re-training the wheelwright (and the cheesemaker, gardener, brick oven baker, construction worker, etc.)!

While doing this, I've been consistently surprised. I thought that our work was about growing sustainable food, planning for bikable, green-growing neighborhoods, building cool cob ovens and learning to do business with a neighbor instead of a big-box mega store.

But I was wrong.

Instead, I've been brought to tears in conversations with some of our past supporters when they explain to me the importance of the *connections* they've made at ISLAND events. Connection to each other, to their community, to the soil, to the cycles and rhythms of life in our corner of the world. Over and over, what you all keep telling me is that that connection has been at the center of everything ISLAND has done.

**I'm seeing clearly that these events, this vision, and this organization is important to our community. Is our work important enough to you to contribute to our success? ISLAND has plenty of room to grow and your contribution is a key component to that work.**

We are excited at the potential of moving into Phase II of our development plan – obtaining a long-term lease on 10 acres of beautiful rolling hills in Antrim

County to serve as a home base, arts residency, library, permaculture test site and workshop center. I'm also excited to add a paid employee to our office, enabling us to have more workshops and events each year.

Please let us know that this work is important to you, and to our community! Give generously. Every dollar ISLAND receives during this important growth period will count for decades to come.

Thank you,

Brad Kik  
Co-Director

P.S. You can donate by writing a check to ISLAND and mailing it in the enclosed remittance envelope. You can also visit our website at [www.ARTmeetsEARTH.org](http://www.ARTmeetsEARTH.org) and click the "Donate Now" button to give with a credit card or through PayPal. Please be generous – every dollar counts!

