

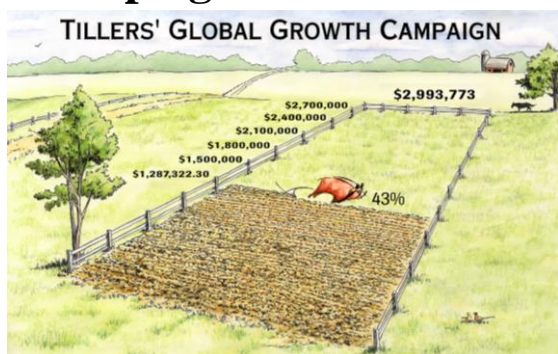
TILLERS' Nigh Ox

A Newsletter for Friends &
Volunteers



May 2004

\$2.9 Million Global Growth Campaign Goes Public



On Saturday, May 8, 2004 the Board of Directors of Tillers International announced their \$2.9 million Global Growth Campaign to raise money for programming, facilities, and an endowment. The successful completion of this campaign will allow Tillers to strengthen and expand its mission to preserve, study, and exchange low-capital technology in order to increase the sustainability and productivity of rural communities.

Since 1981, the volunteers and staff of Tillers International have brought together knowledgeable craftsmen devoted to teaching the skills necessary in animal-powered farming, blacksmithing, woodworking and other technologies adaptable to all areas of the world. Through classes, activities, and experimentation the work of Tillers provides essential tools to improve and enhance the lives of people in rural communities around the world.

“There is a great need for approaches like Tillers’ to address hunger and poverty around the world. And so the Board of Directors of Tillers chose to respond to this greater need by endorsing

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Tillers’ Nigh Ox

Nicaragua Revisited

By Jim Weaver, Rotarian and Tillers Board Member

Dick



Dick Wheeler works with young men blacksmithing

Wheeler, Carolyn Such, Virlee and I began a service project in Nicaragua in January of 2000.

After our first trip in January of 2000, we couldn't say with

confidence that we had made a real difference in anyone's life. We continued to return for two or three weeks in January of each year. In 2002, we began teaching basic woodworking classes to some teenage street kids using vintage hand tools that we collected in Indiana and took with us to Nicaragua. Over the years, we collected and took well over 1,000 pounds of hammers, saws, chisels, planes, drills, drill bits, files and sharpening stones to the site of our woodworking classes in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. This year, we managed to pack and carry an anvil and several blacksmith tools. Although the anvil exceeded the published weight limitation for checked baggage, American Airlines routinely checked all our bags and made no comment about our overweight bags. We just returned from our 5th trip and now we can begin to see some results from our woodworking and blacksmithing classes.

Here's an incident from our January, 2004 trip that affirmed the things we are doing there.

Dick Wheeler and I had parked our truck on a street in the town of Matagalpa, Nicaragua while Virlee, Carolyn and Jerry Zimmerman were in a store buying some souvenirs. As we were talking,

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Campaign, from page 1

an organizational strategy for growth. We are very excited about our vision for the future and how that will help serve rural communities around the world,” said Charles Andrews, Chair of the Board of Tillers International, “We believe that with this strong foundation Tillers International will continue to be an effective source of learning and hope for rural farmers all over the world.”

As of April 30, 2004, Tillers has raised over \$1.33 million in gifts and pledges. That is over 44% of our goal. Every member of the Board has given with combined gifts totaling of over \$120,000. Tillers has also received donations from many foundations and individual families including the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Arcus Gay & Lesbian Fund of the Arcus Foundation, the Weisblatt Foundation, Betty Hoffman of Charlevoix, Michigan, and the John L. Feirer Family of Kalamazoo, the Tatroe / Mawby Families of Walker and Richland, the Moor Family from Waterloo, Indiana, and many others.

Over 160 people were in attendance at Tillers’ annual plow day on Saturday, May 8, 2004 to hear this announcement. Fifteen teams of draft horses and oxen plowed the fields, and over 30 blacksmiths, woodworkers, tinsmiths, basket weavers, ropemakers, and timber farmers from all over Michigan provided demonstrations in traditional arts and skills. Also on that day, The Tumblers and the Thornapple Valley Dulcimer Society, both local music groups, provided music for everyone to enjoy and, in the middle of the day, the volunteers and leadership of Tillers, along with members of the Michigan Artist Blacksmith Association, dedicated a 3100 square foot timber frame blacksmith shop in honor of Herb Nehring.



Nicaragua, from page 1

a young man came up and began talking to us in Spanish. His name was Robinson and he had been one of our woodworking students in 2003. He told us that he was now an independent contractor

doing woodworking and home remodeling. He expressed his gratitude to us for teaching him woodworking, and as a result, he now has a job and is able to support himself. The next day, Robinson took off work and came to the farm where we were teaching and attended another day of class. He was a great example to some of the younger boys in the class and helped them realize that they, too could become self reliant and prosperous if they took advantage of the training we were providing.

Last year, one of our students from 2003 told us that he had made several Chinese checkerboards and sold them in the market. With the money he made, he was able to buy a dozen chickens and materials to build a chicken pen. As a result, his family now has a continual supply of fresh eggs and occasionally chicken meat.

Too often, we fail to see results from the things we do. I wanted to pass on some results that we now see and thank you for the prayers, words of encouragement and material assistance you have provided to make our Nicaragua trips possible. Peace, Jim & Virlee Weaver

Some errors in the class catalog:

June 6 **Gardening Basics** is on Sunday
Windsor Chairs with Jim Rantala is August 28
John Wilson is teaching the **Shaker Box** class
The **Forks and Rakes** class, in which you will make a wooden fork and rake to take home with you, is \$130.00, not \$65.00

Copper Smithing

Coppersmith instructor David Schmidt and students Garry and JoFran Bandix, James Cokewell, and Wade Hansue show their handiwork. Thanks, David, for another great class!



Shaving Horses

Brian Menze, Patti Redfield, Ted Archer, Arnie Hoye, Tom Lewis, Ted Lewis, Erik Silvassy worked under the guidance of Dave Kramer to make their own shaving horse, or schnitzlebank.



Timberframers get Abbey Farmstead on the Map

This spring, students from the Joinery for Timberframers class started building a 28' by 47' tool shed for the Abbey Farmstead. Jack and his son Jeff Romesberg, Richard Willett, Steve Burkhart, Joe Rafacz, Nathan Durham and intern Brian Stovall worked on layout and mortising of joints under the guidance of Steve Stier and Dick Roosenberg. The design plans called for heavy timbers and queen posts, and Dick Roosenberg gave an in depth lesson on steel square calculations to figure the angles of the tenons of the braces. After 4 days of hard work, the class got a taste of assembly by putting together the first bent.

For the next two weeks, staff and volunteers Rob Burdick, Kelsey Burton and Mitchell Hough worked on completing enough of the joints so the barn would be ready for the Assembly class.

Richard Willett, Steve Burkhart, Joe Rafacz, and Nathan Durham returned to test fit the remainder of the bents. With Steve Stier leading this small crew, three more bents were assembled, with careful attention paid to ensuring dimensions are within a 32nd of an inch.



The class sets queen posts

During Plow Day, the class finished girts and braces, and temporarily raised two of the bents in demonstration. Through the hard work of the class and crew, raising the building and getting the roof and siding on after the foundation is poured will go smoothly. If you would like to participate in finishing this building, give us a call or email us, we'd love to have your help.



Jack Romesberg work on a brace

New Element to the Small Foundry

Long time foundry teacher and enthusiast Paul McGuire was joined by pattern maker (and computer programmer) Russ Allen for an extended foundry class this spring. There were new students: Paul Carlson, who helps with blacksmithing classes, Al Levine, who traveled all the way from Long Island, NY, and intern Brian Stovall, who worked with lost wax castings in California, and students from last year Joe Rafacz and Mitchell Hough.

After an introduction in safety, Paul McGuire worked with the students building a low cost furnace. Joe, with the skills he had learned from the 2003 class, brought a charcoal furnace made from an old propane tank. Russ brought a propane burner and materials to make another that can be used with Paul McGuire's design. Soon the group was ramming up molds and pouring in molten metal.



Russ Allen removes an owl casting

As always, the class had a lot to offer new and returning students, and we appreciate the expertise Paul and Russ shared.

Basket Making

By Kris Svenson Chew

Ten sock baskets took shape under the tutelage of Jill Woods during the Saturday basket making class in late March. Tillers' woodshop was converted to a weaving room for the day as enthusiastic fledgling weavers got their start with a very attractive as well as highly functional basket design. The half-bushel baskets were made of reed and sported wood handles – able to take on heavy jobs. Though challenged by the task of forming a basket from scratch, at the close of the day each student had a functional work of art and a new skill to take home. Thanks, Jill, for another day of inspiration and fun.

Selective Logging with Draft Animals helps pay the Mortgage

Tillers offered a special two day Logging class this March to discuss forest management, timber contracts, and to let student spend more time in the woods. We received a good response with seven students. It began several days before the class when Tom Stadt, formerly a forester with

- About 90 trees selectively harvested
- 17,000 board feet of cherry, red oak & white oak
- Sawed oak sills for Abbey farm tool shed
- Replanted over 300 tree seedlings

the Kellogg Biological Center, marked out about 100 trees, including cherry, red and white oak. John Sarge, Dick Roosenberg, and Rob Burdick began felling the trees, and with the help of Scott Taylor removing tops, had enough trees down and ready to skid for Fred

Herr and Kris Chew to lead the class through safety and skidding practice in the open field. After a demonstration of felling a tree by Dick Reynolds, the class was in full swing and students began skidding logs from the woods to the log landing. Lynne Heasley, Rob Burg, David Leply, Sherry Dexteter, Amy Crow, Kurt Langenberg, Morgan Griffith, and interns Brian Stovall and Mark Lundy learned about forest health and management from Tom Stadt. He brought in a sample timber contract, and explained how the bidding process works.

The students were able to pull about 20 trees from the woods. After the class, Duane Westrate, Mark Lundy, Brian Stovall, John Sarge, Dick Roosenberg and Rob Burdick finished the harvest.

Howard Cain Wins State Volunteer Award

In May, Howard and Ruby Cain were invited to Schuler's of Marshall where Howard was honored with 15 others from around Michigan. Howard was presented with a plaque for **Outstanding Volunteer Service** for his work with Tillers. He has, indeed done a fine job inspiring us with his hard and devoted work. Thanks, Howard!

Intern Update

By Kris Svenson Chew

In mid-February Tillers welcomed Brian Stovall and Mark Lundy as interns for the 2004 season. Before coming to our frozen fields, Brian had been working at a couple different farm operations in Hawaii. Mark had recently returned from Mexico where he was doing fundraising for an NGO as well as teaching part-time.

Jessica Hanley has been on board as a part-time intern since January. She is a graduating senior at Western Michigan University. She developed an interest in Tillers when her Environmental Studies course took a field trip to Cooks Mill in the fall.

As spring progresses, we look forward to gaining several additions to our intern force. We are currently awaiting US visa approval for international interns from Uganda, Nepal, and Nigeria. We also expect to have a few college students with us for the summer. We will be anxious to introduce them to you as they arrive.

Join Tillers Volunteer Program

This year, Tillers is inviting people to attend orientations for volunteering in various tasks. So far, we have had a positive response. In March, Jim Kator, Frank Plume, Joe Rafacz, Norton Dent, Rob Burdick and Scott Taylor worked on clearing dead trees and brush from a fence row. In April, Abby and Judy Richmond, Colt, Kane, and Tracy Nevins, Eli, Cris, and Rachel Bean cleared stones and branches from the hay field, James Heaton helped stack firewood. In May, Foster and Caroline Woodward pulled and disposed of garlic mustard. To keep the blacksmith shop construction moving, Blair Bates, the men from Building Restorations, and Jessica Hanley poured the floor in the shed bent of the shop. Mitchell Hough has spent several long weekends working on timberframing, class lunches, and blue bird boxes.

Volunteer Orientation is scheduled on the **First Tuesday of Even Months** from 3:00pm –6:00pm and the **First Saturday of Odd Months** from 9:00am- 12:00. The exceptions are June 15 and July 6. Call ahead to let us know you're coming. Ask about housing.

Jim Kator drags trees with Tug & Suni



Blacksmith Shop Dedicated in Honor of Long Time Volunteer



On Saturday, May 8, 2004 the volunteers and staff of Tillers International in Scotts, Michigan, dedicated a 3,100 square foot timber frame blacksmith shop in honor of Herb Nehring, long time instructor of blacksmithing at Tillers. Over 20 members of the Michigan Artist Blacksmith's Association joined 150 friends, family, and visitors in honoring Herb.

Herb has volunteered with Tillers since its beginning in 1981. He helped build the first forge Tillers used in 1981. He also helped build the portable blacksmith shop with its four forges used at Tillers' previous site along Sprinkle Road. And Herb helped establish the blacksmith shop with its six student forges at Tillers' new home at Cooks Mill in Scotts, Michigan.

In over twenty years, Herb Nehring has shared his skills with hundreds of students. They have carried skills around the world. Gaudasius Opio, a Ugandan working on an agricultural engineering degree in the USA, quipped, "A day with Herb is worth a year at college," after quickly learning the secrets of heat treating high-carbon steel.

In 1995, Herb joined a team from Tillers in Uganda. According to Herb it was the most rewarding experience of his black-smithing career. He worked with agricultural extension agents bringing basic blacksmithing skills to different districts throughout Uganda.

"We didn't go there with the idea that we were going to start showing them all how wrong they were on everything they were doing," shared Herb Nehring. "I noticed a couple of the people the first days we were there. You could see that when we would have a meeting or something they'd have a look on their face like, 'Oh, here's another bunch going to show us how...'. But the whole idea of Tillers' is not so much to point out that we have a better way, just that this is the way we figured out how to do it and we'd like to demonstrate. That's what we did."

Tillers' Nigh Ox

The new blacksmith shop is a tall and airy timber frame building. It has six alcoves for student forges, a bay for the master forge, room for power hammers and rollers. It also has a porch from which visitors can see the master smith and the other activities and another shed for a supporting machine shop with grinders and drill presses for finishing work.

"We were so glad to be able to make this special day such a success," said Steve Alling, President of the Michigan Artist Blacksmith's Association said. "M.A.B.A. is looking forward to taking advantage of one of the premier teaching facilities in the state."

"What in our country is considered 'keeping old traditions alive', in many countries is the difference between making a living, having water, and feeding one's family, or not. Herb Nehring & Tillers are making an enduring contribution to the global economy, often one hammer's blow or one oxen step at a time," added Kathleen Carr and Tim Carr, the treasurer and Vice-President of M.A.B.A.

Special Ox Class

Long time member Jeff Heib keeps a single ox at Heritage Hill Living History Farms in Green Bay Wisconsin. After being called up for military duty, and because Heritage



Heritage Hill crew plows with 2 pairs and begins training a young team to walk in the furrow.

Hill is thinking of training a new team of oxen, Jeff suggested that several of the staff come to Tillers for some hands on ox driving.

Debbie and Tim Ashman, Nick Backhaus, Dan Liebke and Dick Roble came out for a three day emersion class starting with the basics in driving without a load, up to advanced calf training and plowing.

Tillers enjoys facilitating special group training. If you would like a customized group class, please call.

Mill Pond Lots for Sale

Are you interested in becoming Tillers' neighbor? Three 2-3 acre parcels across the pond from the guest house are offered for residential use. The Board sees selling this small area as a way to reduce debt. Call for a packet of info.

Donations and Volunteers

-Given Recently

Joe Shumaker- Bee keeping equipment
Fred Herr- Horse collar
Paul Robson-Rope, post hole digger, saws, pump, etc.
Dinah Perkins- Linens, pillows, blankets

-Thanks to other Volunteers

Sewell Mason, Dave Kramer, Nathan Durham- blacksmith shop
Brian Menze- Cleaning copier and folder
Bob and Dawn Rapp- Fall Mailing
Sharon Andrews- Fall Mailing
Sharon Dykstra- Fall Mailing
Mark Maier, Chuck Andrews- Work on Inwood Cottage
Howard Cain- Sawing trees, Lunch Preparation
David Florida- Computer assistance
Dave Witt- audio visual aid
Carleton Equipment- equipment use
Howard Cain, Julie Cain, Ken Hiser, Nathan Durham, Meg Dupuis- Tree planting
Sharon Andrews, Sharon Dykstra, Emily Fraser and Lynne Heasley- Plow Day planning
-Need: Railroad ties for fence posts
Bee suits

Mission

To preserve, study, and exchange low-capital technologies to increase the sustainability and productivity of rural communities

Vision

Sharing our Rural Heritage with the world in a Humble Way that:

- Offers Understanding of Local Conditions,
- Gives Promise for Generations to Come, and
- Encourages an Attitude of Experimentation

For a More Peaceful Earth

TILLERS' Memberships

Supporting Membership: Supporting members receive discounts on classes and publications. And this *Nigh Ox* is our primary means of keeping members informed. Supporting membership is \$35 per year.

If you are a member, please check the mailing label on your *Nigh Ox* to be sure that your membership is up to date. If the expiration date has passed, please send a check for \$35 to renew your support.

Life Membership: For a \$500 gift designated for membership, you will be a lifetime supporter. We will deposit the funds in a Board designated endowment fund from which the income will support current programs.

The Nigh Ox : Published and distributed to supporting members, volunteers, donors, and new friends.

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... Ruminations

Re-forging International Tactics in a World of Fear

This year, the international candidates for Tillers' internships are more highly qualified, but are having a much harder time gaining visa's from US Consulates. While state-side training is not for everyone, it is a great way to expose strong local leaders to a wide array of options beyond what exists in their countries. Indeed, Tillers' has stocked its Learning Centers with optional tools for trainees to experience. And, Tillers' staff eagerly explores options that may be even more responsive to the needs of international guests. Nonetheless, if candidates are being frustrated with refusals by our embassies, we must consider multiple strategies for disseminating information and improved practices to farm communities.

As America narrows its doors in fear, it risks feeding the impression that it and its people are coldly insensitive to the needs of those who are far less fortunate. Jealousy and frustration will breed greater anger and terrorism. We can say there is no justification for terror, yet opportunity and hope are clearly antidotes to violence and political unrest. If we cut ourselves off – if we terminate exchanges, we will suffer both disintegrating security and faltering economics.

Recognizing that some increases in security are necessary and that some excesses in fearful reactions will be with us for a while, Tillers is searching for ways to legitimately pierce the veil of fear. We see several strategies that have promise:

- Get more employers such as relief agencies and churches to sponsor their international staff to study at Tillers.
- Support our past interns in multiplying their international training opportunities and effectiveness.
- Work to recruit and train more young American interns for overseas service.
- Create more technical publications and videos to carry ideas around the world.
- Train more volunteers for international service.
- Send staff abroad more often.

We need your help identifying more of the international people who are in the USA through their churches or for educational purposes. They are also good candidates for training at Tillers – whether for a few days, weeks, or months. With a few days notice, we can plan great demonstrations of extremely practical tools and rural development strategies. Tillers can serve as a refreshing break in the culture shock of a first visit to America. We have done this very successfully with a number of visitors. Keep Tillers in mind when you meet or hear of an international guest to the States.

When we hand out billions in cash we confirm in others our arrogance, when we exchange ideas in face-to-face work, we convince others of our mutual humanity.



Dick Roosenberg

Elements of Tillers' Approach

1. *Our principal product is inspiring rural innovation.*
2. *Low-capital rural technology is the medium through which we build attitudes of experimentation.*
3. *Grassroots people-to-people exchange is at the core of Tillers' approach.*
4. *Listening before acting is critical.*
5. *The knowledge and skill base for our work has become scarce.*
6. *Partner organizations support our rural innovators overseas.*
7. *Quality tools and facilities inspire world-*

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May 2004

27-30 Cart wrighting
31-Ju5 Farming with Oxen & Horses

June 2004

2 Board Meeting
2-5 Farming Oxen & Horses **Wykoff**
4-5 Setting up Pasture, Hay & Fence
6 Gardening **Wykoff, MN**
7-10 Fundamentals of Blacksmithing
11-12 Artistic Smithing Clinic
11-12 Relocating Barns
15 Orientation for Volunteers
17-19 Road Building and Maintenance
21-25 Oxen Basics
25-27 Ox Drivers' Gathering
26-27 Solar Applications for Farmsteads
Wykoff, MN

28-03 Re-inventing Animal Power

July 2004

1-2 Horse Progress Days
Middlebury, IN
6 Orientation for Volunteers
5-9 Blacksmithing Camp
9-10 Relocating Barns
12-16 Farm Camp
16-17 Rope Making & Use
29-31 Art of Stone Masonry