



in-touch.online

Theosophical Order of Service International Newsletter

Issue 14 Feb 2011

to TOS website

Contents

- [Kern Foundation's offer to support the Golden Link College in the Philippines](#)
- [Announcing the Spanish version of *Helping the Dying*](#)
- [TOS news from around the world](#) -
 - Delhi, Kerala and Mahabharat in India
 - New Zealand
 - Award to Joy Mills
 - Australia & the Golden Link College
 - Krotona Institute of Theosophy
 - Tanzania
- [Making the most of our website – the members' section](#)
- [What's new on the International TOS website?](#)
- [The Possible and the Necessary](#), a short article by Joy Mills
- [UN themes for community activities](#)
- [An inspiring story of compassion and human-animal communication](#)



(L. to R.)

Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia, Geoffrey Harrod is the International TOS Webmaster and Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS.

Dear fellow-members of the TS and TOS around the world,

We hope that you are enjoying keeping in touch with what is happening in our international TOS community. Our electronic newsletter aims to bring you information to inspire your service work within and outside the TOS and to help you get to know TOS members outside your country. This issue, the first for 2011, brings a new look that we hope you'll find easy to use. Please let us know what you think of it. Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

We are sad to inform you of the passing to higher service on January 28 of Mrs Jean Gullo, President of Honour of the TOS in America. We send sympathy and love to her husband Joe and their family. In our next newsletter, we will bring an account of Jean's many decades of dynamic work for the TOS.

Please consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions, either through your National TOS Director/President/Coordinator/Correspondent or directly to the editors at: carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

1. To sign up, you only have to send a message telling us which country you live in to tos.intouch@theoservice.org with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.
2. If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@theoservice.org with 'Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

With best wishes,
Carolyn, Diana and Geoffrey

Our chief work ought to lie in helping, so far as we can, everything that makes for Brotherhood.

- Annie Besant



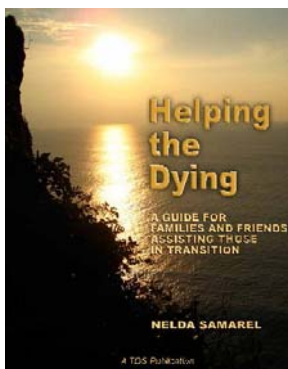
Take advantage of the Kern Foundation's offer and support the Golden Link College in the Philippines

Building on the success of the last three years' fundraising project, the Kern Foundation has offered up to US\$20,000 to match donations to the Golden Link College in the Philippines in 2011. The superb response from within the USA and from TOS members around the world enabled John Kern's and the Kern Foundation's generosity to be used to the full over the past three years.

The Golden Link College now offers education at primary (elementary), secondary and college levels. The college program offers two courses: Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education.

The College is committed to a philosophy and approach that integrates academic competence with theosophical insights on living.

[Read more....](#)



Announcing the Spanish version of *Helping the Dying* by Nelda Samarel

Thanks to the translation work of Maria Rosa Martinez, helped by Maria Ester Larraza and Idarmis Rodriguez, the TOS is happy to make available this 40-page booklet designed to enable us to help loved ones through the phases of the dying process. Printed copies may soon be ordered from the TOS.

Anuncio de la versión en español de *Ayuda a los Moribundos* de Nelda Samarel.

Gracias a la traducción de María Rosa Martínez con la ayuda de María Ester Larraza e Idarmis Rodríguez, la OTS se congratula de facilitar este pequeño libro de 40 páginas destinado a capacitarnos para ayudar a quienes amamos a lo largo de las fases del proceso de la muerte. Pronto se podrán solicitar ejemplares impresos a la OTS.

[Details...](#)



TOS news from around the world

Find out about the new vocational training centre organised by the TOS Delhi Region; a helping hand in Kerala; environmental awareness education in Mahabharat, India; how the New Zealand TOS is using Joy Mills's latest book to raise funds; the award of the Subba Row medal to Joy Mills; the Adelaide, Australia, TOS project to collect books for the Golden Link College in the Philippines; the experience of a volunteer to the Golden Link College; Krotona residents' adopt-a-family project; and young people becoming involved in TOS activities in Tanzania.

[Read more](#)



Making the most of our website – the members' section

Have you checked out the members' section that has recently been added to our International website? You'll find a start-up kit to guide people wanting to set up a new TOS group.

This collection of material could also be useful to established groups. The document, *About the TOS*, provides useful background information for new members; the three articles could provide springboards to group discussion about the nature of service within the TOS; the document, *What shall we do?*, contains a collection of bright ideas for service activities, and you could use the invocations at meetings.

Take a look at this material at <http://international.theoservice.org/members/startupkit.html>



What's new on the International TOS website?

In the **Latest News**, the Kern Foundation announces its continuing support of the Golden Link College in the Philippines by providing a matching grant of up to US\$20,000 in 2011. In Australia, the Sunshine Coast TOS group conducted a one-day event on the theme, *The Alchemy of music and dance* to promote the aims of the Theosophical Society and the TOS to the general public as well as to raise funds for TOS service projects. They share details in our new **Featured Project**. The new **Featured Article**, *True Theosophical Service*, proposes that theosophical service is made up of inner and outer action. In it, Dorothy Bell asks us to look deeply at our inner action and to consider the inner harmonising and adjustment that is needed to remove impediments that prevent the fullest expression of our true godlike nature in altruism. There are also additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>



The Possible and the Necessary

In her article Joy Mills challenges us to take positive action on the issues that confront society. She writes:

We must happen to the world in such a way that we, becoming inwardly transformed, transform the world.

It is possible to do lip-service to the ideal of brotherhood; it is possible to repeat the worn-out certainties of book learning; it is possible to continue the same routines, the same types of programmes, the same methods of study, the same kinds of presentations, year in and year out. It is possible to be satisfied that we are doing the best we can, to be satisfied that we are too small, too weak, too lacking in talent or capacity, to do more, to be satisfied that occasionally some really good things do happen to us. But the unrest around us, the desperation of human need, the urgency of human hunger (not simply for bread, but for the bread of wisdom), demand we move beyond the possible to the necessary.

It is necessary that we be willing to live out, in daily encounters, the very essence of brotherhood. It is necessary that we probe the old truths for new meanings that can only emerge in the revelation of our lives. It is necessary now that we speak clearly, so convincingly; so meaningfully, in terms that will alert the mind and awaken the heart to a new mode of being which is compassion incarnate.

[Read more](#)

UN themes for community activities

When you are planning your group activities for 2011, you might be inspired by the United Nations themes for the year.

2011 is the **International Year of Forests** and the **International Year of Youth** (12 August 2010 to 11 August 2011). Both these topics are related to focuses of service within the TOS.

The websites for these International Years have lots of suggestions for ways they can be celebrated in our communities. We could have featured speakers, tree planting, education projects about the importance of our forests and invite young TS members to a forum to discuss and plan ways of applying theosophical principles to current issues.

Plan to celebrate Earth Hour 2011

Earth Hour is all about the small changes that everyone is capable of making in their lives and building the Earth Hour ethos into each day's living. Turning the lights off, represents turning the lights on in your mind, and consciously reducing greenhouse emissions. Imagine the result if everyone around the globe switched off their lights for one hour?

Show the world you care with one simple action. Plan to join in individually, as a family or with friends on **Saturday 26 March 2011 at 8:30 pm**.

For information and ideas for activities, [Read more](#)



An inspiring story of compassion and human-animal communication

Enjoy this personal account by a diver of a remarkable encounter with a giant manta ray.

[Read the story](#)



News: Kern Foundation offers to match donations

FEB 2011

[> News-index](#)

Kern Foundation offers to match donations to the Golden Link College in 2011

Building on the success of the last three years' fundraising project, the Kern Foundation has offered up to US\$20,000 to match donations to the Golden Link College in the Philippines in 2011.

The superb response from within the USA and from TOS members around the world enabled John Kern's and the Kern Foundation's generosity to be used to the full over the past three years.

The Golden Link College now offers education at primary (elementary), secondary and college levels. The college program is committed to producing educators who see schooling as a preparation for life and not just as a means to earn a better living. It offers two courses: Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education.

Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, National Director of the TOS in the Philippines and Chairman of the Golden Link Board, reports that the school continues to go from strength to strength. Vic continues, "We are extremely grateful to the TOS USA, international TOS members and the Kern Foundation for the invaluable support that they have given. The Golden Link College is the largest project we have undertaken. We are committed to making a difference in the educational system in the Philippines and offering a philosophy and approach that integrates academic competence with theosophical insights on living. Thank you to our international TOS and TS friends for sharing our vision."

The [College newsletter](#) has more information.



Can you help raise US\$40,000 for the Golden Link College in 2011?

Whether you give one dollar or one thousand, every contribution made through the TOS in the USA will be doubled up to the \$20,000 limit of the Kern Foundation's grant. There are several ways to donate:

- 1) The old fashioned way – if your bank is outside the USA, send a bank cheque or draft to *Theosophical Order of Service, P.O. Box 660, Warrenville, IL 60555, USA* (be sure to write *Golden Link* in the memo line). USA residents can send regular cheques drawn on an American bank.
- 2) You can go to the TOS USA website, <http://theoservice.org/donate>; in the pull-down menu select the 'CEF Golden Link School (Manila, Philippines)' option, and using any major credit card donate using their secure PayPal account.
- 3) You can donate through your country's national TOS if they have an appeal for the Golden Link School/College.



News - 'Helping the dying' booklet

OCT 2010

[> News-index](#)

Helping the dying

The TOS is happy to announce the distribution of a 40-page booklet, *Helping the Dying*, by Nelda Samarel. Dying often requires assistance, not only for those in transition but also for their families and loved ones. This Guide is intended for those who are helping. It discusses how to meet the dying person's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs through all phases of the dying process, offering not only an understanding of the experiences of the dying, but also practical suggestions to assist them through their final transition. The booklet contains a list of useful resources for further reading, including ones with theosophical perspectives on death and after.

You may order a copy by writing to the TOS in the Philippines at 1 Iba St, Quezon City, 1114 Metro Manila, Philippines or to philtheos@gmail.com. A donation will be requested to assist with postage if multiple copies are wanted.

Download PDF version

The booklet can also be downloaded as an Acrobat PDF file. To view it on-screen click the link below. You can then save it by the Save-a-copy button of the Acrobat interface - don't use the browser's Save menu. Alternatively, right-click the link and pick 'Save target as' or some such expression, depending on your browser.

['Helping the Dying' as PDF file](#)

e-Book version

This is in DNL format and needs a special programme to view it. The link will download it for you if you don't already have it. To download the e-book and view it on your computer, click the link below -

['Helping the Dying e-book' Download & view](#)

[View e-book on-line.](#)

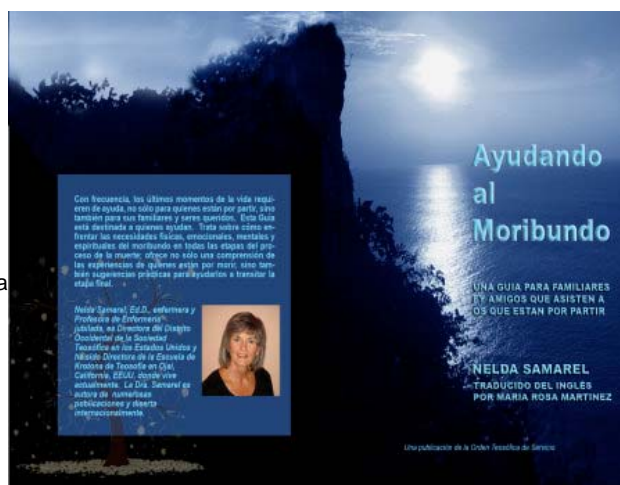
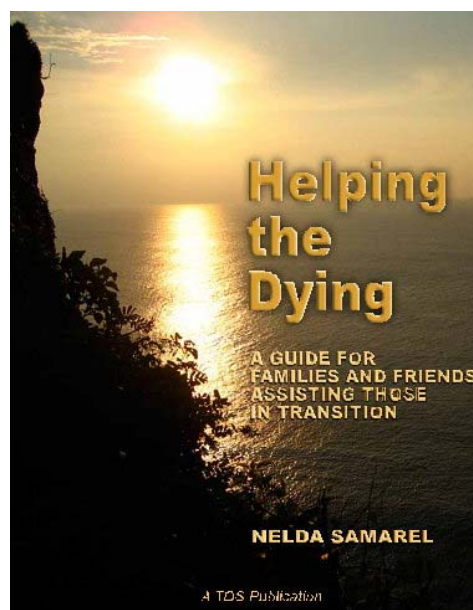
Version in Spanish

La versión en español - 'Ayudando al Moribundo'

(Maria Rosa Martinez of the TOS in Argentina has kindly translated the booklet into Spanish. Maria Ester Larraza and Idarmis Rodriguez checked the translation.)

La OTS se siente feliz al anunciar la distribución de un librito de 40 páginas titulado *Ayuda al moribundo*, de Nelda Samarel. El moribundo requiere a veces ayuda, no solamente para quienes están en ese trance sino también para su familia y seres queridos. Esta Guía va dirigida para los que ayudan. Comenta cómo hacer converger las necesidades físicas, emocionales, mentales y espirituales del proceso del fallecimiento y también ofrece ayuda no solamente para la comprensión de la experiencia del moribundo, además de sugerencias prácticas para ayudarles a través de su tránsito final. El librito contiene una lista de recursos útiles para posterior lectura que incluye referencias de perspectivas teosóficas acerca de la muerte y después de ella.

PDF - La versión electrónica se puede leer [aquí](#).





Nelda Samarel



Maria Rosa Martinez



Maria Ester Larraza



Idarmis Rodriguez

[Top](#) | [News-index](#) | [Homepage](#)

A new vocational training centre organised by the TOS Delhi Region

TOS Delhi NCR Region continued their support to Rural Women by establishing another Centre, "Brahmshakti Mahila Prashikshan Kender", at Kanawani Village, Ghaziabad.

This is the seventh vocational training centre for rural women established by the TOS Region. Other fully functioning Centres are at the villages of Barola, Mangroli, Palwali, Sikendrabad, Dhondhra and Raipur.

In the first phase a mix of ten hand/foot-operated sewing machines with ancillary equipment have been provided for starting low technology training such as dress designing, cutting and tailoring, etc. A qualified teacher has been employed for this purpose.

In subsequent phases, the TOS plans to add more vocations such as beauty culture, embroidery, knitting, etc. Adult education is also being planned.

The project was inaugurated on 2nd November 2010 by Prof C. A. Shinde, Librarian and National Lecturer, Theosophical Society, Adyar, in the presence of TOS members, local villagers and the beneficiaries. Sanatan Dharam Society, Noida, donated the sewing machines and other equipment.

There are also plans to establish a Theosophical Lodge at the Centre in the near future.



A helping hand in Kerala, India

K. Dinakaran, a member of the TS in India since 1983, is Secretary of the Kerala Theosophical Federation. He engages in service not just in this capacity but also in the context of his work at the Employees' State Insurance Corporation. Here we see him (right) with his Regional Director at Amala Cancer Hospital in Thrissur. They are helping out leukaemia patient, Agnel Augustine, with his medical expenses.



Environmental awareness education in Mahabharat, India

In July 2010, the members of the TOS in Mahabharat in association with a non-governmental organisation called the Green World Trust engaged the students of the Venkateswar English Medium School in environmental awareness activities, including a tree planting operation near the school, a rally and a signature drive. They also started a Besant Nature Club for the students to reinforce healthy habits of physical activity outdoors and help connect the children to the earth.





Students line up in preparation for their environmental awareness march.

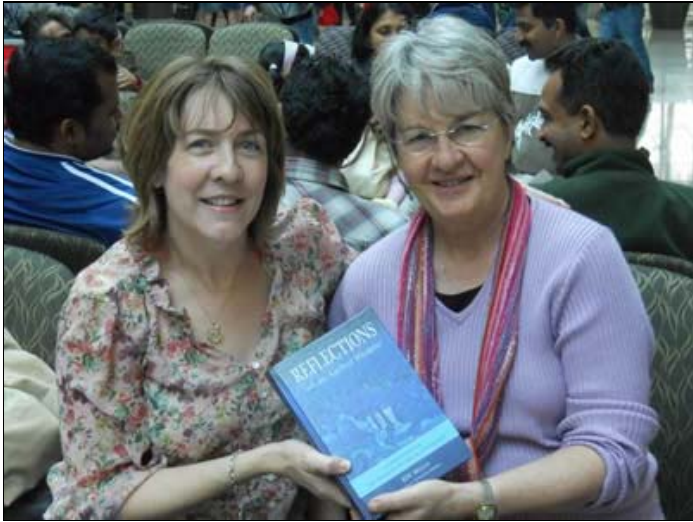
Dr Deepa Padhi presents a sapling to a former Minister of State for planting

A student plants a fruit bearing tree assisted by the representative of Green World Trust and Deepa Padhi, Secretary TOS, Mahabharat Group. Mrs Padhi asked participants, "what is more precious than giving life to something?" She suggested that instead of presenting gifts to our friends and relatives on their birthdays and other special occasions, we consider giving them a tree to plant!



New Zealand TOS's bright fundraising idea

As a fund-raiser, the TOS in New Zealand had the bright idea of obtaining an inscribed and autographed copy of Joy Mills's latest book to raffle at the National TS Convention. The raffle brought in approximately NZ \$590 for TOS projects.



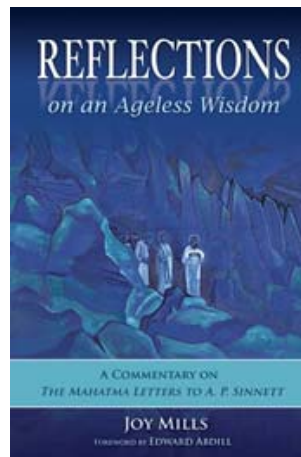
Dorothy Bell (right) not only donated the book but acted as courier on her way back home to Australia from Krotona and Olcott in the USA. Here we see her with NZ TOS National Coordinator, Renée Sell, who went out to Auckland international airport to meet her between flights.



Kerry James Goodhew of Dunedin (left) drawing the winning ticket for the Joy Mills book at the Annual Convention of the TS in New Zealand.



The winner of the dedicated copy, Chris Hensley of Napier Branch (left) with Renée Sell and Kerry James Goodhew.



Joy's book retails for US\$39.95 from Quest Books website: <http://www.questbooks.net/title.cfm?bookid=2286> (right) The author herself!

Joy Mills receives the Subba Row medal

Joy Mills has been awarded the Subba Row medal in recognition of her extensive contribution to Theosophical literature.

The International President of the Theosophical Society, Radha Burnier, asked Mr Jaya Hiranandani from Los Angeles to deliver the medal on his return from Adyar. The presentation ceremony took place at Krotona at the end of January.

We congratulate Joy warmly on this richly deserved award.



Adelaide, Australia, TOS members collect books for the Golden Link College in the Philippines

Over the last two years, TOS members in Adelaide, Australia, collected approximately 3,200 used books from primary school libraries for their Books for the Philippines project. In 2010 they sent 2,200 books weighing just over 380 kg to the Golden Link College.

Here we see some of the members packing books into cartons ready for despatch.



Volunteering at the Golden Link College

Gerard Brennan, a secondary school teacher from Sydney, Australia, returned again to the Philippines last September to teach at the Golden Link College for two weeks. This was his third visit as a volunteer since he attended the Indo-Pacific TS Conference in Manila in late 2007.

Gerard says he enjoys teaching at Golden Link and that he plans to go back next year for a longer time. He feels at home: "There is a special atmosphere in this school and it is a joy to teach there. I can say with certainty that the students give me far more than I could ever give them." Gerard is now regarded as part of the entire community and his next visit is anticipated with pleasure. During one of his stays, he delivered a lecture at the national headquarters entitled "Theosophy: A Bridge to Freedom".



Krotona residents in action

As we reported last year, the residents of the Krotona Theosophical Community in California engage in modest local community service projects. At Christmas, for example, they adopt a needy family, putting in together to provide enough groceries and gifts to help make the day special. This past December, they prepared groceries and gifts for an extended family of five, along with \$275 in coupons for additional treats and necessities.



Young people become involved in TOS activities in Tanzania

Deepa Kapur, Coordinator of the TOS in Tanzania, reports that a second generation is becoming involved in service work within their community. Deepa's daughter, Malaika, and fellow TOS member, Bro. Dubal's daughter, Khyati, have started a local branch of the TOS youth activity, World Care Way, which is based in Chennai, India.

The group, headed by Malaika and Khyati as President and Vice-President respectively, is dedicated to various social causes and environmental issues. One of the projects for which they are raising funds is the Tanzania Heart Babies project. They are also raising awareness of environmental issues and promoting the use of cloth bags.



Malaika (left) and Khyati present one of the teddies knitted by Italian TOS members, to a baby about to leave for heart surgery in India.

[Back to newsletter](#) | [To TOS webpage](#)

The possible and the necessary

by Joy Mills

“Some good things have happened to us this year. The trouble is we haven’t happened to anything.” So wrote a correspondent recently, commenting on activities within a lodge. There is, of course, a vast difference between letting things happen and making them happen. It is essentially the difference between following the path of hope and choosing to walk the road of risk. For hope is sustained by the possible, out of unquenchable faith that whatever may happen to us will find us prepared and able to meet the event. Risk, on the other hand, means the abandonment of worn-out certainties and, with a certain humility and a fresh provisionality, seeking ways for achieving the necessary.

Even to accomplish the possible takes some courage. Not everyone is willing to undertake the possible, for it can mean some slight discomfort to one’s personal patterns, some interruption of personal pleasure. To assess what is possible for engaging in theosophical service means to take the measure of ourselves, our resources, our capacities, our talents, our weaknesses, our strengths. Yet so many good things are happening to us just now – opportunities that have seldom if ever been available, challenges that test our commitment; it is for us to happen to all these good things! But beyond the possible, what is necessary? Early in the correspondence with A.P. Sinnett, one of HPB’s Mahatmic teachers wrote: “We are playing a risky game and the stakes are human souls.” (See *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter 9.) The crises of our times demand more than what is possible, for we are still involved in that ‘risky game’. We dare not shrivel our dreams to match our deeds; rather our ideals should always exceed the possibility of our acts. Only when we cease to take the measure of ourselves against what is possible and forget ourselves in a total commitment of all we are and all we have for what is necessary, will we truly measure up to humanity’s needs.



Whether we opt for the continuum of tension and anguish or for the continuum of peace and love is the choice before us. There are risks either way. It is possible to fail in our efforts and we can take the risks of failure. But it is necessary that we succeed and our risks should be those of ultimate triumph. For the Theosophist can never be content with letting things happen, however good or promising the events may be. We must happen to the world in such a way that we, becoming inwardly transformed, transform the world. This is not to say we must become activists in every good cause (though activist we may become on occasion and if we so choose), but that we are active (at least in thought for thought itself is an active power) at every moment in that single cause which is the enlightenment of all humanity. “To live to benefit mankind is the first step”, *The Voice of the Silence* reminds us.

It is possible to do lip-service to the ideal of brotherhood; it is possible to repeat the worn-out certainties of book learning; it is possible to continue the same routines, the same types of programmes, the same methods of study, the same kinds of presentations, year in and year out. It is possible to be satisfied that we are doing the best we can, to be satisfied that we are too small, too weak, too lacking in talent or capacity, to do more, to be satisfied that occasionally some really good things do happen to us. But the unrest around us, the desperation of human need, the urgency of human hunger (not simply for bread, but for the bread of wisdom), demand we move beyond the possible to the necessary.

It is necessary that we be willing to live out, in daily encounters, the very essence of brotherhood. It is necessary that we probe the old truths for new meanings that can only emerge in the revelation of our lives. It is necessary now that we speak clearly, so convincingly; so meaningfully, in terms that will alert the mind and awaken the heart to a new mode of being which is compassion incarnate. It is then not impossible to conceive that one day it will be said that humanity turned from the madness of war, poverty, pollution, greed, to the sanity of peace and understanding not only because the light of Theosophy shone upon the world, but because there walked in the world Theosophists whose lives gave forth the fragrance of love, the beauty of caring. Yes, because we happened to the world in its hour of need.

Extracts re-printed from *Theosophy in Australia*, September 1994

UN themes for community activities

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

When you are planning your group activities for 2011, you might be inspired by the United Nations themes for the year. 2011 is the **International Year of Forests** and the **International Year of Youth** (12 August 2010 to 11 August 2011). Both these topics are related to focuses of service within the TOS.

Earth Hour is celebrated each year at the end of March.



International Year of Forests

Did you know that:

- forests cover 31% of our planet's land area
- primary forests account for 36% of the forest area
- forests are home to 80% of our terrestrial biodiversity
- the livelihoods of over 1.6 billion people depend on forests
- forests are home to 300 million people around the world.

The **International Year of Forests** celebrates people's action to sustainably manage the world's forests. The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

For more information see the UN website: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/index.shtml>

International Year of Youth (12 August 2010 to 11 August 2011).

In an effort to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind, from enhancing peace to boosting economic development, the United Nations proclaimed an International Year of Youth starting on 12 August 2010.

The year has three main areas of activity:

- creating awareness (increasing commitment and investment in youth)
- mobilising and engaging (increasing youth participation and partnerships)
- connecting and building bridges (increasing intercultural understanding among youth).

For fact sheets, information on events and invitations to participate on-line, see the UN website <http://social.un.org/youthyear/index.html>



Plan to celebrate Earth Hour 2011

Earth Hour is all about the small changes that everyone is capable of making in their lives and building the Earth Hour ethos into each day's living. Turning the lights off, represents turning the lights on in your mind, and consciously reducing greenhouse emissions. Imagine the result if everyone around the globe switched off their lights for one hour?

Watch the videos of past Earth Hour celebrations and keep in touch with what is happening around the world at <http://www.earthhour.org/>

Show the world you care with one simple action. Plan to join in individually, as a family or with friends on **Saturday 26 March 2011 at 8:30 pm.**



Issue14 - Feb 2011 [Back to newsletter](#) | [to TOS website](#)

An inspiring story of compassion and human-animal communication

by Jennifer Anderson, Dive Master

It was like many Maui mornings, the sun rising over Haleakala as we greeted our divers for the day's charter. I noticed the wind line moving into Molokini, a small, crescent-shaped island that harbours a large reef.

The dive went pretty much as expected. The garden eels performed their underwater ballet, the parrot fish grazed on the coral, and the ever-elusive male flame wrasse flared their colours to defend their territory.

The last three of us in my dive group caught the current and drifted along the outside of the reef, slowly beginning our ascent until, far below, something caught my eye. After a few moments, I made out the white shoulder patches of a manta ray in about 120 feet of water.

Manta rays are one of my greatest loves, but very little is known about them. They feed on plankton, which makes them more delicate than an aquarium can handle. They travel the oceans and are therefore a mystery. Mantas can be identified by the distinctive pattern on their belly, with no two rays alike. In 1992, I had been identifying the manta rays that were seen at Molokini and found that some were known, but many more were sighted only once, and then gone.

So there I was... a beautiful, very large ray beneath me. So I started calling through my regulator, "Hey... come up and see me!" I had tried this before to attract the attention of whales and dolphins, who are very chatty under water and will come sometimes just to see what the noise is about.

I kept calling to the ray, and when she shifted in the water column, I took that as a sign that she was curious. So I started waving my arms, calling her [the manta] up. After a minute, she lifted away from where she had been riding the current and began to make a wide circular glide until she was closer to me. I kept watching as she slowly moved back and forth, rising higher, until she was directly beneath us.

Looking back to the ray, I realised she was much bigger than what we were used to around Molokini – a good 15 feet from wing tip to wing tip, and not a familiar-looking ray. I had not seen this animal before. There was something else odd about her. I just couldn't figure out what it was. Once my brain clicked in and I was able to concentrate, I saw deep V-shaped marks of her flesh missing from her backside. Other marks ran up and down her body. At first I thought a boat had hit her. As she came closer, now with only ten feet separating us, I realised what was wrong. She had fishing hooks embedded in her head by her eye, with very thick fishing line running to her tail. She had rolled with the line and was wrapped head to tail about five or six times. The line had torn into her body at the back. And those were the V-shaped chunks that were missing.

I felt sick and, for a moment, paralysed. I knew wild animals in pain would never tolerate a human to inflict more pain. But I had to do something. I forgot about my air, my diver group and where I was. I went to the injured manta. I moved very slowly and talked to her the whole time, like she was one of the horses I had grown up with. When I touched her, her whole body quivered, like my horse would. I put both of my hands on her, then my entire body, talking to her the whole time. I knew that she could knock me off at any time with one flick of her great wing.

When she had steadied, I took out the knife that I carry on my inflator hose and lifted one of the lines. It was tight and difficult to get my finger under, almost like a guitar string. She shook, which told me to be gentle. It was obvious that the slightest pressure was painful. As I cut through the first line, it pulled into her wounds. With one beat of her mighty wings, she dumped me and bolted away. I figured that she was gone and was amazed when she turned and came right back to me, gliding under my body. I went to work. She seemed to know it would hurt, and somehow, she also knew that I could help.



[Back to newsletter](#) | [to TOS website](#)