

Memories of Lyn Barton

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On September 26, 2014, our beloved colleague Carolyn Barton crossed the threshold after being diagnosed with a rapidly spreading cancer in February. Two weeks after Lyn's passing, her daughter, Melissa, delivered each of us a gift from Lyn. Carefully wrapped inside brown burlap were bulbs for us to plant in the earth. Knowing Lyn, as we all did, we were not surprised that she was leaving us with something to do. However, since she specifically chose daffodils, we also recognized that there was more to this special gift than digging in the earth. Being the gardener and lover of flower lore that she was, Lyn knew that daffodils symbolize rebirth and new beginnings, and that the daffodil is virtually synonymous with spring.

During the final weeks of Lyn's life on earth she grew deeply connected to the story of Star Money, and she often said that she felt much like the little girl in the fairy tale, who, after giving everything away, was showered with heavenly golden pennies. It is still winter here in Chestnut Ridge, but the early childhood teachers of Green Meadow know that those brown bulbs planted during Michaelmas are beginning to awaken and stir beneath the earth. They will soon line pathways and gardens

around Green Meadow, and as they nod their starry-petaled heads in our direction as we pass by, we will all remember our dear friend and colleague, and the starry gold that rained down upon her with the promise of future prosperity and rebirth.

What follows are our memories of Lyn. They pop up here and there, like golden daffodils in springtime, warming our hearts with love and joy. As you read them, we hope that you will experience some of the wisdom, love and dedication that Lyn Barton showered upon all of us.

From Leslie: As a new colleague. . .

I met Lyn for the first time in 2005 when we learned that we needed to search for an experienced Waldorf teacher for a one-year sabbatical position for our satellite program at the Fellowship Community. The program was in its infancy, and experience as well as an ability to navigate the workings of the Fellowship Community, were essential qualifications. Personally, I thought we had a better chance of sending one of our cows to the moon. However, we posted a listing, and before long, one of the applicants turned out to be Lyn Barton. Her resume indicated that she had lived and worked at the Fellowship for many years prior

Lyn with her daughter, Melissa. Photo by Dyana van Campen, courtesy of Green Meadow Waldorf School.



to becoming a Waldorf early childhood teacher. That was too good to be true!

The following Sunday afternoon, while I was busily making curtains with two members of the Fellowship, I mentioned that we had received an application from Lyn Barton. Their enthusiasm and great respect for her was overwhelming, and when they told me that she was the first female fraternal day planner at the Fellowship, I knew she had to come for an interview. She would need to bring her daughter, Melissa too, because a Waldorf high school was in her future. Not only one, but two glass slippers now needed to fit!

When Lyn visited, I didn't get to see her demonstrate her circle or story. However, my colleagues were absolutely convinced that she was the one for us. I was only able to spend a few hours with her over dinner, and in those few hours I felt a deep connection to her, and knew that we had work to do together. When I offered her the position, she replied with a voice sweet and smooth as butter on warm bread: "Thank you, I am honored. I do need a few days to consider this." She agreed to come for the year, and it turned into ten.

Over those years she tilled the soil, made wonderful connections with the Fellowship, and brought great impulses and changes to our section and our school. Last year her dream to move her classroom up to the Duryea Farm came true. Then I inherited the space she en-souled for nine years, as well as a wonderful child's garden, which I hope will continue to bring great joy and delight to all. Each time I turn a piece of soil in that garden, I hear her gentle, wise words and feel her loving presence in a place on earth that she deeply loved.

From Rebecca: As a neighbor. . .

My house and Lyn's house faced each other across the lawn that was part of the Threefold Community called Noisy Village, because of all the children who lived there. Looking out my kitchen window I could often see Lyn walking her little dog, Biscuit. He was a shaggy old dog who wasn't very friendly and didn't like noisy children very much, but Lyn lovingly looked after him till the day he peacefully died in her arms.

I remember spring afternoons and early summer mornings when I would see Lyn outside working in her small vegetable garden. She often had children helping her. There was so much joy and care and purpose in tending to the plants,



Photo by Dyana van Campen, courtesy of Green Meadow Waldorf School.

and all the children were drawn to her quiet way of working with the earth. There were also many times when Lyn could be seen chatting with somebody across the garden fence. She always had time to listen, especially to the dads of Noisy Village, who loved to share ideas and plans with her. The mothers of Noisy Village knew that in Lyn they had a friend they could tell their stories to, and who would listen and understand them.

Lyn could sometimes be seen sitting by her window or on her little porch working or reading. She often remarked how much joy it gave her to watch the children play and she delighted in their new inventions and creativity. Whether they were building gnome houses, going on treasure hunts, or finding ever new ways to sled down the hill Lyn never grew tired of having children around.

She also loved it when one of the dads of Noisy Village fired up the grill, and the children would go from door to door letting everybody know that they should bring their dinner to the big wooden picnic table. No matter what she brought to share it always included a bottle of her delicious Kombucha. I am so grateful to have experienced these delightful moments of Lyn's love for community, friendship, and good food, and I will always cherish the friendship that grew between us because of being neighbors.

From Lisa: As a leader. . .

Lyn was a valued and respected leader during her years at Green Meadow. She was also a humble and reluctant leader. Each time she was asked to chair a committee she politely declined, stating that she was better suited to digging in the earth or tending to the animals. However, her standards for excellence, her deeply rooted convictions, and her unwavering will, helped launch and guide both the Media Resource and the GoGreen Committees of Green Meadow Waldorf School. As a student of anthroposophy Lyn drew strength and inspiration from the work of Rudolf Steiner, especially when she undertook her final leadership role as Chair of the Collegium.

She also co-chaired the Early Childhood section, and as a section chair she brought a wealth of wisdom, uncanny directness, and deep compassion to her role. She used her organizational skills to institute protocols and systems to support the section's rapid expansion as it grew from seven to twenty-one colleagues. In addition, she lent her creativity and eye for detail to the development of new early childhood outreach materials, and simultaneously helped raise the standard for showcasing the school's early childhood programs.

As co-chairs of the early childhood section, we worked together very closely and were often described as being "attached at the hip." After our mornings with the children, our colleagues would often find us behind closed doors with charts and drawings, readings, and scribbled inspirations sprawled out all over the floor as we worked together on yet another project. One colleague said that because the air crackled and popped like an approaching electric storm when we worked together, she had to run for cover because she couldn't bear the intensity. Others hoped to unbundle us as partners because together we sparked so many new ideas, they feared we would never stop. If there was a will, there was always a way with Lyn, and her friendship and partnership continue to inspire me with bold enthusiasm and the energy to make things happen.

From Andrea: As a steward of the earth. . .

Lyn was a woman with focus and passions. When I arrived at Green Meadow, she was my talking partner as I navigated entry into the culture of the school. I had been out of the kindergarten classroom for some years and I had questions of

how to go about making real ideas I wanted to apply with the children's outdoor activity. Lyn said few words, but each one had punch and clarity. When I asked her if she used plastic cups and paper napkins in the woods, she simply said, "Never!" In one word I got the picture of what a truly "Go Green!" attitude meant. In single, simple responses, Lyn inspired me to look as far as I could to what it means to be with children and model being a lover and care-taker of the Good Earth Mother, to re-use, recycle and honor every natural item that invites my interaction. I am forever grateful for her example of being a steward to the land.

From Carol: As an inspiration. . .

The words which come to mind when I think about Lyn are service and joyful dedication. Her dedication was absolute. It was to the children, to the animals, and to the land. Her dedication to service was a mandate by which she lived.

As her illness progressed, we grew closer, and our relationship deepened and became more personal. Anticipating that I would step into her classroom at the Duryea Farm, Lyn shared with me the essence of her beliefs. It was heart breaking but also tremendously meaningful. Now as I arrive at the farm each morning, I am constantly reminded of Lyn. Her presence is everywhere. I feel it when I am churning the compostable toilet, bringing hay from the hay loft, harvesting turnips, and feeding the chickens and the sheep. I am aware of her when I am walking with the children over the farm lands, when they are listening to a story in the woods, or watching a puppet show in the greenhouse. I also feel her presence when I sort through the trash at the end of the Fall Fair to make sure all compostable items are in the compost and not in the landfill.

There are not many people who can selflessly serve by putting the needs of the children, the animals, and the land before their own needs. Lyn was able to do this. May her devotion and her ideals continue to inspire us all in our work as Waldorf early childhood educators. ♦

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