

July 2009

Happy 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary EcoStewards Alliance!  
By Peter Kelsey

Congratulations ecostewards for supporting and evolving with the organization since 1994! You've been part of the solution.

As much as anything, anniversaries are for celebrating commitment, reflecting upon the past and thinking about the future.

During these 15 years dozens of committed individuals have lead the organization as directors and volunteers. Thousands have participated creating ripples of change in their lives and the environment spreading to the Chesapeake Bay. This anniversary is testimony to the commitment of these ecostewards and the organization's vision and mission. Both are to be applauded.

The organization's mission and an ecosteward's work are not easy; ecostewards are encouraged to look in a mirror and go within; to explore and very likely evolve in our understanding of themselves. Arriving at a deeper awareness of their interrelationship with the natural world, they become motivated to make choices that enrich the environment and themselves. In doing so, ecostewards understand they have been nurtured by Nature and have cared for her as well.

Reflections on these 15 years could fill far more space than available here. The ups and downs, joys and disappointments, accomplishments and setbacks have chiseled the character of the organization. More than anything else, the people and relationships have defined it.

When we go within after years of conditioning in the outer world we learn, perhaps with some surprise, that "the best things in life aren't things," but relationships, family, friendships and community. More enduring than the discovery circles, nurturing nature outings, certified backyard habitats, computers recycled – more than the tangible results are the warmth, fulfillment and joy that have emerged from the relationships with ecostewards who have come, stayed or moved on during these precious years.

This confirms the distinction that makes EcoStewards Alliance stand apart from so many traditional environmental organizations. EcoStewards is not about staff-driven accomplishments but about participants' choices and relationships with themselves, others and the natural world.

As for looking ahead on the occasion of this 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I have come to appreciate the meaning of what was initially a curious phrase to me, "What is, is." Through personal experiences with EcoStewards Alliance I have come to understand that hopes and fantasies are nothing but distractions and a waste of precious mental and emotional energy. We cannot predict or direct the future. On the other hand, EcoSteward's leaders and volunteers can influence it by what they do in the present moment.

With the benefit of extensive, wide ranging conversations over many months, the organization's leaders have drafted clear, uplifting, new vision and mission statements. The process has reaffirmed and sharpened the focus on the inner work that leads to the outer walk aligned with nature, while recognizing the enrichment and joy in doing so.

Those reading this are doing so in a newly designed and focused website built on user friendly architecture. It will enable more timely communications and creative material published by

EcoSteward's Managing Director, board members and volunteers.

*"ESA envisions a world in which people consciously live in harmony with nature, joyfully taking actions to achieve personal balance and a healthy environment."*

*"ESA's mission is to awaken our inner connection with Nature and to personal choices that enrich our lives and our environment."*

Several new, friend-building events are scheduled for the summer and fall. They will offer fun and relaxing opportunities to share with like-minded people the joys and frustrations of doing the inner work that inspires outer walk. The event details are available on this website.

Over the past 15 years we have witnessed tremendous strides in the evolution of human consciousness and personal choices as they relate to the natural world. EcoStewards Alliance has been there. Only time will tell us what role the organization will play in the next 15 years as our relationships with ourselves, others and the Earth continue to evolve. The organization itself continues to evolve and position itself to be part of the solution. Those who understand the enduring value of living from the inside out will participate as ecostewards and continue to be part of the solution also.