



Features in this Edition

- Welcome Note
- Sustainable Living Festival
- Critical Mass
- Guerrilla Gardening
- Free Hugs Campaign
- Coming Up
- What's New?

WELCOME NOTE

Welcome to the 14th edition of the Realise A Better World newsletter. This edition is dedicated to positive forms of activism, large or small contributions intended to improve the world.

The term 'pro-activism' has been used to describe "a vision of what you DO want (in the world)" (Abigail Lewis, 2003). Proactive activism offers a view that to focus on what we want is more effective for a successful outcome than focusing on what we don't want. A vision of what we want considers the current challenges as part of the journey towards a brighter future. In any situation where one's actions consciously are aimed at moving towards the type of world we want, one may be described as a 'pro-activist'.

A vision that inspires foresight and hope is able to affect behaviour positively, suggests Lewis. Positive behaviour contributes to this vision and may include non-radical and radical forms of pro-activism. Some examples of the non-radical forms of pro-activism might include water conservation, energy conservation or picking up litter. A variety of new, creative, perhaps more radical, forms of pro-activist behaviour available to individuals is offered in this newsletter. I hope they may inspire you.

References:
Abigail Lewis - From Re-activism To Pro-activism:
spiralmuse.org/activism_story_abigaillewis5steps.html

SUSTAINABLE LIVING FESTIVAL

The Sustainable Living Foundation (SLF) is a non-profit organisation, "committed to promoting, celebrating and practicing principles of sustainable living". This organisation passionately believes in positive, solution oriented options, supporting a number of projects including; a visioning forum called 'Future Cities Project' and Melbourne's 'Sustainable Living Festival' in February.

The Festival accommodates exhibitions, stalls, presentations, performances, workshops, art and films which celebrate and inspire sustainable communities. This variety "aims to increase awareness of sustainability and create new opportunities... for individuals and groups to accelerate the uptake of sustainable living" (SLF).

It has been attracting a growing attendance and in 2007 saw crowds swell to over 124,000. Contributing with one's attendance is one of the most accessible ways to participate in such an event. Individuals might also help organise, volunteer, contribute financially or provide publicity by mentioning it to others.

By accelerating the uptake of sustainable living and aiming at inspiring what people can do to participate, the Sustainable Living Festival presents itself as a good example of pro-activism.

References:
SLF - Sustainable Living Foundation: www.slf.org.au

CRITICAL MASS

Perhaps a tentative form of pro-activism is 'Critical Mass'. Critical Mass is a semi-organised bicycle ride, usually through city streets, en-mass, to make a statement. Riders take part for a variety of reasons, some which may be classified as pro-activist and others not. Some of the more proactive reasons for taking part in this monthly event include; meeting new people, enjoying a group ride, parading unusual bikes and costumes, offering the healthy transport options, reaffirming the street as a place for people and social interactions, and having fun. Fun is a critical element of a pro-activist event.

Since its beginnings in San Francisco in 1992, it has become a regular event in more than 60 cities worldwide.

It can be a positive, creative and fun way to demonstrate the options of a brighter future. To be involved there are Critical Mass events in most Australian capital cities which may be found via the internet or possibly through local cycling organisations. They generally leave from a set location at the same time each month. Please participate with the most positive of intentions.

References:
Critical Mass unofficial website: criticalmass.org.au
Sydney Critical Mass: www.bikesarefun.org/faq.html#what
ActNow - Critical Mass Bike Ride:
[www.actnow.com.au/Stories/Critical Mass bike ride.aspx](http://www.actnow.com.au/Stories/Critical%20Mass%20bike%20ride.aspx)

GUERRILLA GARDENING

The metaphor for planting plants is that we are planting ideas in peoples' minds (Primal Seeds). Guerrilla Gardening aims to pleasantly surprise people by 'committing a random act of

CONTACT DETAILS

website:
www.geocities.com/realiseabetterworld

email:
realiseabetterworld@yahoo.com.au

editor:
Steve York
c/ 16 Victoria St.
Windsor Q 4030

kindness' (Anne Herbert). The term 'Guerrilla Gardening' was first coined by Richard Reynolds who felt his gardening was like a form of guerrilla action when he first began in London.

Gardening pro-activists typically target vacant lots, railway land and under-utilized public space says the author of 'Guerrilla Gardening: A manual festo', David Tracey. They might sow seeds, plant groundcover, shrubs or trees with a view to either beautify an area, make a place productive or create a more useable space. Guerrilla Gardeners will often construct their garden under the cover of darkness to gain the maximum impact of pleasantly surprising those who use the space. While those who use the space appreciate the gesture, they may be inspired to pass on an act of kindness to others they meet. Gardeners combine the sense of empowerment with "the cheeky appeal of being a not-quite-legal call to action" (David Tracey). Charles Dobson in his 'Citizen's Handbook' suggests that, "Guerrilla Gardening is wholesome mischief".

For those with a green thumb and a desire for 'wholesome mischief', a search of the Guerrilla Gardening official website is the most ideal place to find like-minded people in your area. By planting inspiration in people's minds in a fun, cheeky, creative way, this call to action can be defined as an act of pro-activism.

References:

Guerrilla Gardening official website: www.guerrillagardening.org
David Tracey - 'Guerrilla Gardening': www.newsocietytv.com
Charles Dobson - 'Citizen's Handbook': www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook
Primal Seeds: www.primalseeds.org
Guerrilla Gardening: pics.yahoo.com/pics/potw/20070813.html

FREE HUGS CAMPAIGN

Sometimes one person can be the spark who creates the inspiration for others to spread their ideas. Juan Mann began offering hugs for free while holding a sign on a busy intersection in Sydney a few years ago. His aim was to brighten up the lives of others. Juan eventually committed a day a week to offering his hugs to strangers.



Free Hug: www.freehugscampaign.org

In September 2006, a short internet music-video featuring his deeds, found immense popularity with a worldwide audience. It inspired people to offer free hugs in many cities and became an example of a simple 'random act of kindness' going extremely right.

The success of the Free Hugs campaign is testimony that a creative, simple idea, fulfilling a demand for compassion in society is able to gain international recognition within a year through the use of current technology. Perhaps this is the purpose for what the internet was initially intended?

By passing on kindness, spreading a positive message, this simple act (requiring a touch of courage), seems to inspire an optimistic outlook in people. Pro-activism is able to inspire hope in the future of the world through this type of inspiration.

International Free Hugs Day falls on 10 September (Monday). If you aren't quite comfortable holding a 'Free Hugs' sign, perhaps you could show support with a hug of your own.

References:

Free Hugs Campaign: www.freehugscampaign.org

COMING UP

Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) in Windsor, Brisbane, is taking expressions of interest from people who have particular interests in sustainability and working towards a better world. It will be a forum held during its Sunday Organic Markets October to November in the community gardens teaching space. The purpose is to inspire discussion about positive solution-based ideas from the general public or experts. The forum's theme is 'back to basics'. Please email your interest to Anaheke Metua: anaheke@gmail.com or by post to: NSCF, 16 Victoria St, Windsor, Q 4030. The expressions of interest stage closes on the 10th September 2007.

WHAT'S NEW?

A new website forum page has been developed for the purpose of discussion related to the group or a better world in general. You may post a new topic or contribute to existing ones. Participating in these discussions may allow Realise A Better World to be more relevant to your needs. It would be ideal for providing feedback on this and future newsletters. Please connect through the website listed at the bottom left of this page.

REALISE A BETTER WORLD



To receive these free monthly newsletters send a blank email to: realiseabetterworld@yahoo.com.au

CONTACT DETAILS

website:
www.geocities.com/realiseabetterworld

email:
realiseabetterworld@yahoo.com.au

editor:
Steve York
c/ 16 Victoria St.
Windsor Q 4030