

## Echoes of Peace From the Heartland



*Dena Eakles is founder of [Echo Valley Farm](#), Ontario, Wisconsin, and of the nonprofit [Echo Valley Hope](#). In her blog, Dena tells us how she and a group of like-minded friends came together to live a full life of celebration and community service centered upon Prem Rawat's message of hope and peace.*

Echo Valley Farm began ten years ago. The land is ancient and dotted with rock outcroppings, nestled in a region of southwest Wisconsin noted for its deeply carved river valleys and adjacent to eight thousand acres of preserve and state forest.

Inspired by Prem Rawat's message, the farm serves as a place for people to gather and celebrate peace. It also functions as a community center, sustainable learning facility, and home to the people now living here. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf, I became part of the team of TPRF volunteers helping to bring clean water and food to flood victims. After witnessing the humanitarian efforts of TPRF in this hard hit region, a team of people came together to create our educational and charitable nonprofit, Echo Valley Hope. We recognized that in times of disaster we could work to augment the efforts of TPRF and its partner organizations.



With a mission to advance sustainable living and initiatives of peace, we held a benefit concert, *Widening the Circle*, in our first year. Now in its seventh year, this two-day outdoor concert features all types of music and has benefitted TPRF's humanitarian initiatives, local food pantries, and other nonprofits helping people in need. The charitable arm of our non-profit recently supported TPRF's efforts to bring fresh water to people in India on World Water Day, and has contributed to past TPRF projects in Haiti, Japan, Ethiopia, and more. We know that by supporting TPRF we will be helping those most in need.

In recent years, I have been inspired by Prem Rawat's public addresses to dignitaries and communities around the world regarding the need to grow the voice of peace. In taking this understanding to our team, we agreed to make an effort to do this. For the past four years we have celebrated the UN International Day of Peace, held annually on September 21st. We have gathered with those who strive for peace and have been fortunate to share Prem Rawat's message of peace with others. It is exciting to know we are helping here in our rural enclave.

In keeping with our mission to support all initiatives of peace, Echo Valley Hope collaborates with 165 peace and justice organizations in the state of Wisconsin. The organizations are diverse in their approaches and focus. Some work with prison reform, some with immigrant issues, while others work on environmental issues. All of these groups share a passion for peace. It is a pleasure to introduce the Peace Education Program and other TPRF humanitarian initiatives to these organizations. TPRF's simple message of dignity, peace, and prosperity is relevant to everyone.



At Echo Valley, the recognition of the need for peace in the heart of every individual inspires us. In such a beautiful setting, people have the opportunity to slow down and appreciate simplicity. Guests often notice how well we work together and care for each other. We often hear, "It is so peaceful here," and, "What inspired the vision of this place?" We answer by affirming our commitment to peace within first and acknowledge Prem Rawat's efforts that constantly remind us to practice peace. We have a dedicated learning center where guests can view Prem Rawat's message. Our websites and newsletters help to introduce people to the possibility of peace.

As for the sustainability aspect of our efforts, the community-sustained farm is flourishing, and our free classes are helping people to learn basic skills in baking bread, canning, organic gardening, green building, humane animal husbandry, and much more. People of all ages, religions, and walks-of-life come and enjoy our programs. Through an international farming exchange called Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, we have had guests, now counted as friends, from numerous countries throughout the world.

Our motto remains, "*Let Kindness Win.*"

I am grateful to Prem Rawat for his inspiration and unrelenting efforts to bring peace into the lives of individuals around the world. I find it an honor to work every day with people committed to this effort, including those living here and those who support our activities from afar. And, I am having a blast.

*Photos by Megan Novick, Noho, and Kazia Siemazko*

