

### **Why are we here?**

A talk by Sacramento Valley School staff member Mary Lou Wright at the Sudbury Schools Conference at Sudbury Valley School in Framingham MA, Summer 2005.

(breath) Wow! What a big question! I had all kinds of thoughts and feelings when I was asked before the last Sudbury Staff Workshop by Mimsy & Danny to make a small presentation and facilitate a meeting about this subject. Now it is still a question I ask myself.

One of my feelings is that I do not think of myself as a presenter. I typically have left that task to Kaye Lynn and Brenda...but now, here I am doing this tribute to our own school and letting you all know something that I feel. Here I go....

I got this same feeling of going ahead anyway when I was about to go down the rope for a 180 foot rappel into Moaning Cavern on a school excursion. I was only supporting the excursion. Was I going down? How did I get here? Brenda & I talked about how could we not go when students were going? Here I go. Don't let go of the rope! But just like then and now, I am doing it anyway and it doesn't matter why.

When I began to think about sharing my gratitude, I starting thinking about how big this question is for me, why are we here? Searching for my own answers has brought to me to the following ideas, so far: to wake up to who we are for self knowing, to find our purpose, to find connection to others and to make a contribution to this existence. I think this relates well to all of us on the smaller question of why are we here at Sacramento Valley School for ourselves and our children.

Each person in this room has their own reasons to be here which are as valuable as any reasons I can think of. So, at least 50 reasons of why we are here...hmmmm. I like lists, and I will give my list of reasons why we are here. I think we are here because we are searching for the answers to our own questions, looking for encouragement and empathy, to share stories, to commiserate, to laugh, to recognize, to understand more about what we are doing, to make decisions, to participate, to respect, to be compassionate, to live for this short time together, to converse, to make choices, to cooperate, to eat together, to talk about our own feelings, to hang out, to play, to connect to others of like mind, to listen, to wonder, to respond, to contribute, to share with families this Sudbury experience, to see what pure Sudbury is, to learn that there is not a pure Sudbury way, to be in a place – this beautiful campus – where the people have been practicing freedom for over 15 years and started it all back in 1992. This place exudes freedom and innovation.

Those who are new to the school may be searching for answers to the bazillion questions they have for oldsters with All the Answers. Those who are wondering when one overcomes scarcity while supporting Sudbury kids are searching for answers as well.

There are those of us on staff who continue to hope that working so hard for the school will pay you well enough to stay.....where you can do the most good for the students, the school and the Sudbury movement. We maybe looking for affirmation that it can work out. It can. I think it takes time, patience and commitment from all of those around us to see the school support itself. The work of each and every one of you is what keeps this place going. Everyone doing what they can. Every little bit helps and each one of us stays for our own reasons.

Why am I still here? I am a 15year old teenager in Sudbury schooling....I only think I have answers! I do have less questions though. Now that both of my daughters have gone through this school with it many different experiences of people and situations, I wish to stay, and watch for what happens next whatever that might be. I know that both Mady & Moni have built their lives with this beautiful philosophy - I am that I am, deal with it. I'm proud and happy to have made a school for them (and me) to be who we are with all of you here now, all of those who came before and all of those who are coming. I am grateful to all of you, my kids, my husband Charley and my colleagues (Kaye Lynn, David, Brenda, Gypsy, Ayesha and Melanie) here at school for coming together with me to create this wonderful place.

My grandmother had a sign that hung in her cabin "Let's be Ourselves". I have loved and lived those words and share them with you.

Thank you.