

A MANUAL FOR OUTREACH

EARTH INSTITUTE DISCUSSION COURSES

2008

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1 – BACKGROUND

The Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) develops discussion courses and offers them with its volunteers in Oregon and Washington. To share these courses and other programs with autonomous groups outside the Northwest, in 1997 NWEI created the National Earth Institute Network (the Network).

This manual was prepared for use by NWEI Chapters and by autonomous groups and community organizers offering discussion courses outside the Northwest. If you have suggestions for improving these materials, please contact NWEI at 503-227-2807 or contact@nwei.org.

2 – OUTREACH BASICS

Of all the activities associated with the earth institute programs, none is more critical than those employed to get new discussion courses started. Collectively, we call those activities *course outreach*.

We're looking for the people who are looking for us. Discussion courses are designed to facilitate profound and enduring change in people's values, attitudes, habits, and actions. Through outreach, we seek to identify and engage those who would like the opportunity to participate in a discussion course and explore the possibility of change. We never seek to cajole or entice those who are not interested. Rather, we try to find people who are receptive. The rapid growth of the Network makes it clear that many people are looking for such an opportunity. Since 1993, over 85,000 known participants have enrolled in classes in 50 states and Canada.

We make it easy. The discussion courses are designed to engage busy people where they spend their time – in the workplace, faith center, community center, home, school, or neighborhood. Courses can be held wherever a group can gather for at least an hour, once a week. With a well-defined group process, and the help of trained volunteers, it is very easy for anyone with an interest to organize a discussion course.

Personal contact. This manual discusses several strategies for arranging introductory meetings or garnering interest in the discussion course process. Although there are a number of different approaches, all of them are made more effective by personal contact with prospective “sponsors” for an introductory meeting or course start. Announcements made through bulletin boards, e-mail, newsletters, radio, etc. can be helpful in getting the word out. Experience has shown, however, that these broadcast media are less effective than telephone calls or person to person outreach.

3 – APPROACHES TO OUTREACH

This section discusses six ways to organize an introductory meeting:

1. **Networking**—Identify a “sponsor” to organize an introductory meeting by arranging a time and place and inviting people to attend;
2. **Informational Meeting For Sponsors**—Invite prospective sponsors to a meeting to prepare them to host an introductory meeting
3. **Public Meeting**—Invite the public to an introductory presentation for the primary purpose of inviting those who attend to participate in a discussion course;
4. **Scheduling a Class**—Set a time and place for a class to start and announce it to the public;
5. **Special Event**—Invite the public to hear a guest speaker on a relevant topic, with an opportunity to sign up for a discussion course; and
6. **Matchmaking**—Identify individual participants who are interested in a course and then form a group or groups to take the course.

Networking is discussed further in sections 4-5. Case studies are presented in section 7.

Most discussion courses get started during one of two informal “seasons”: September-early November (after summer vacations, and before the holidays) and January-April (after the holidays and before summer vacations). The best times for networking to get introductory meetings scheduled are July-September and November-March.

NETWORKING TO IDENTIFY A SPONSOR

In most communities, the best way to start a course is to identify someone who will “sponsor” (or host) an introductory meeting. The sponsor invites a group to the meeting at which a volunteer makes a presentation. At that meeting, interested people sign up for the course and the date for the first session is set. This approach has been the source of most of the discussion courses held to date. Other approaches that have been used are also discussed here, and other creative ideas are waiting to be tested. The “networking” approach, however, with its record of success, is the primary focus of this manual.

Networking begins with a “lead” – a personal friend or acquaintance, or a person referred by someone else. The marketer contacts the lead to seek that person’s advice in finding a sponsor for an introductory meeting. The person contacted may become a sponsor, or may know someone else who would be more likely to sponsor a meeting. Some contacts lead directly to an introductory meeting. Some lead to other interested people. Some plant seeds that will bear fruit at a later time. And some may do nothing more than increase awareness about the discussion course outreach. Experience has shown that, with systematic follow-up, many leads result in a discussion course during the current course “season.”

Networking is not a difficult or mysterious process. Anyone can do it, although people who are naturally outgoing may enjoy it more. Specific information about how to gather leads, make contact, and follow-up, are presented in later sections of this manual.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR SPONSORS

A variation of the networking approach is to schedule an informational meeting, and invite three to 15 prospective sponsors to attend. These are individuals who might each become a sponsor and organize an introductory meeting. The informational meeting provides an excellent opportunity to answer questions about the discussion course process and to strategize about inviting people to an introductory meeting. While these things can be discussed in telephone conversations with leads (see Section 5), some people feel they need more information before scheduling an introductory meeting. In those cases, an informational meeting that includes other prospective sponsors can be helpful.

An informational meeting typically lasts from 60 to 90 minutes. The agenda might include:

- Opening
- Background on the Earth Institute Network and the local group
- Description of the discussion course process
- Brief descriptions of the discussion courses
- Discussion about inviting people to an introductory meeting
- A time to set specific dates for future introductory meetings
- Closing

When inviting prospective sponsors to a meeting, you might suggest that they bring a friend. That way, the two can support each other in the process of inviting people to an introductory meeting.

PUBLIC MEETING TO INTRODUCE DISCUSSION COURSES

A public meeting may be used to introduce a discussion course. This approach can be particularly effective in a community where the discussion courses are being offered for the first time, and where the meeting is well-publicized. Meetings can be held at any public venue. Meetings are publicized with posters and public service announcements on radio and in newspapers. A news story about the event and the discussion courses can be extremely helpful in building a crowd. In Salem, Oregon, a meeting at the public library drew 80 people for an introductory presentation, and resulted in eight *Voluntary Simplicity* classes.

SCHEDULING A “CLASS” THAT PEOPLE CAN JOIN

An approach that has experienced mixed success is to schedule a date and place for a class to start, and announce it to the public. When the date arrives, there may or may not be enough people to hold a class. In Cincinnati, Ohio, this method has been tried both in churches and

in homes. Classes are advertised through church bulletins and the earth institute newsletter. In churches, where the members of the congregation participate as part of the regular adult religious education program, the class succeeds about 75% of the time. In homes, the success rate is closer to 30%. In some communities, discussion courses have been offered as noncredit classes at community colleges or community schools. (As with all classes, there can be no charge to participants other than the cost of the course books.) Here too, results vary, with anywhere from 25% to 75% of the classes succeeding.

The success of this approach depends on how well the classes are publicized, and whether an effort is made to invite people individually. It is generally less successful than classes set up through an introductory meeting where a sponsor takes responsibility for building a crowd.

SPECIAL EVENT

Another approach is to sponsor an event or to make an announcement at an event sponsored by others. In either case, the goal is to provide an opportunity for everyone to sign up to take a discussion course. The event might be a talk, a panel discussion, or some other presentation on an earth-centered topic. It can be an opportunity to gather leads, or to actually form a group for a class. The NWEI chapter in Olympia, Washington has sponsored a "Community Forum Series." Special events are sometimes helpful in starting classes, especially if the event is focused on one of the course themes. In general they are less effective than public meetings focused on the discussion courses.

MATCHMAKING

Some communities have succeeded in "matchmaking" – gathering the names of interested persons and forming them into groups for discussion courses. In Victoria, British Columbia, one community where this method has been effective, lists of names and telephone numbers are collected by "tabling" at various events (see section 4), and from people who call to express interest. Then, twice a year, a group of volunteers forms a phone bank to call everyone on the list, and organizes them into groups based on location and availability.

This approach is easy for prospective participants, in that no sponsor has to take responsibility for gathering a group. It requires a large commitment from the volunteers. It may require several calls to each person to make contact, check availability, and confirm participation.

4 – NETWORKING: HOW TO GATHER LEADS

NOTE: *As indicated above, networking to identify a sponsor for an introductory meeting has been the most effective approach to marketing discussion courses. It also requires the most explanation. The next two sections of this manual discuss techniques that support this approach.*

The earth institute culture is very personal and based on relationships. Networking to identify a course sponsor is an important aspect of the culture. To start the networking process, you will need to develop a list of “leads.” A lead is any friend or acquaintance, or someone recommended by another person. This way, due to a personal connection, you will always be talking with someone who is inclined to listen to what you have to say.

A lead does not have to be interested in the discussion courses, or even sympathetic to an earth-centered perspective. After Dick Roy gave a public talk in Portland, one man from a public agency approached him and castigated him for his views. He then handed Dick his card and stalked off. Later, Dick was looking for a lead into the agency’s office in Walla Walla. He called the gentleman, who gladly recommended a good contact in the Walla Walla office.

Who do you know? It is a good idea to begin with people you already know. Make a list of your friends and acquaintances. Don’t limit yourself to those you think would be willing to sponsor an introductory meeting. Who you want is someone willing to take a few minutes to give you some advice. When you call, you will ask that person to refer you to a friend or acquaintance who might be interested in hearing about the courses. When you call that person, you will ask for the same advice, following a chain of referrals until someone says, “That sounds like me.” (A sample script for this telephone conversation can be found in Section 5 of this manual.)

Course participants. Most participants have a great time in the courses and many are happy to recommend friends. Mentors should be seeking referrals when they return for the celebration after the course has ended. It can also be useful to call past participants to seek their advice. They are usually glad to hear from an earth institute representative, and may recommend leads, or even be interested in helping to organize another class. Some participants may suggest that they will talk to some friends and see whether they are interested. It is better for the person doing the marketing to get these names and make the contacts. This allows you to follow the chain of referrals. It also ensures that leads get good information and consistent follow-up.

“Tabling” at events. Many events offer an opportunity to set up an informational display and talk with people about the discussion courses. These events include talks, workshops, farmers’ markets, Earth Day fairs, and the like. Experience has shown that relatively few of the contacts made at these events prove fruitful. One way to improve these odds is to engage with the people who stop at the display. People who just take a brochure or sign up

for a mailing list are not often helpful in starting new classes. People who have had a discussion about the programs are more likely to sponsor one when contacted later.

“Outreach consciousness.” Every day that a person is out in the community offers many opportunities to make contact with potential leads. People can be engaged on the bus, on the street, in stores and restaurants, on elevators, at work, and waiting in line anywhere. Any encounter can be seen as a chance to let someone know about earth institute programs. A person who is able to exploit these every-day opportunities consciously develops a marketing or outreach consciousness.

Everyone serves a number of roles in life—parent, child, brother/sister, employee, friend, etc. A person who wants to be part of an effective earth institute outreach can choose to adopt the role of “lead generator,” and to remain conscious of that role throughout the day. That consciousness turns an ordinary encounter into an opportunity.

Anyone associated with the discussion course outreach can adopt a marketing consciousness. Volunteers and steering committee members can all be encouraged to look for leads as they move through their days. Leads can then be handed off to the person or people who are responsible for contacts and follow-up. The more people who accept responsibility for generating leads, the more successful will be the outreach.

5 – NETWORKING: MAKING CONTACT

Seeking advice. As noted above, networking begins with a “lead” – a personal friend or acquaintance, or a person referred by someone else. A lead does not need to be someone who has expressed an interest in a discussion course; just a person who might take a few minutes to give some advice. The marketer describes the discussion courses briefly, and explains that he or she is looking for someone who would like to sponsor an introductory meeting. This person might be someone who is concerned about the environment or who simply likes to organize interesting gatherings. Can the lead recommend someone in his or her workplace (or center of faith, organization, neighborhood, circle of friends, etc.) who might be interested? This lead may recommend one or more people. This recommendation becomes the new lead. The process of seeking advice is repeated until someone says, “I’d be interested in that.”

Although networking may come more naturally for some, anyone can be effective if he or she enjoys the process. As you make calls, your feeling about the process will be important. If you call recognizing that you are creating opportunities that will enrich lives and protect the earth, you can be relaxed and enjoy where the conversation takes you. If you call with a sense that you are imposing on someone, or trying to manipulate the other person, the calls will be hard to make. In Portland, where this process has been used for eight years, we find that people are very interested in being helpful and the networking itself can be very rewarding.

Setting an introductory meeting. Once you have identified someone who is interested in a course, you will want to help that person set a time and place for an introductory meeting.

- Some people will be ready to schedule a meeting. Great!
- Some people may want more information. This can be mailed to them. (A sample information packet is included in the appendix to this manual. Be sure to follow up.) These people can also be invited to an informational meeting. (See Section 3)
- Some people may want to check with others to see what might be a good time. This is rarely beneficial, and can delay or thwart the process. You can be helpful by being a little directive here: “Are there certain days of the week that wouldn’t work? Are Tuesdays good? How about two weeks from next Tuesday?”
- Make sure the sponsor understands not to try to get people to commit to an eight-week course. The presenter will take care of that. Just invite people to the introductory meeting.

The marketer should know about the availability of introductory presenters, and be able to set a firm date for the meeting.

Tracking. A marketer should have a reliable system for tracking leads and making timely follow-up calls. It might be a calendar, a notebook, a card file, a computer database, or some combination of these. A sample database entry can be found in the appendix. A “tickler file” for follow-up reminders can be as simple as 31 folders or card file dividers, labeled “1” to “31,” for the days of the month.

Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up. The most critical piece of the networking approach is follow-up.

WITH ACTIVE LEADS. If you have mailed information about the courses to someone, you will want to follow up within a week. People usually appreciate your getting back to them. If they have not had a chance to look at the materials you sent them, the call might be a good time to review materials with you on the phone. Are there any questions you can answer? If not, you can move ahead to schedule an introductory meeting.

WITH PRIOR CONTACTS. People who have expressed an interest in the courses but have not yet been in one can be recontacted periodically to see if they are ready. Likewise, former class participants might be ready for another course, or might know someone else who is.

AFTER A MEETING IS SCHEDULED. To ensure a successful introductory meeting, check in with the sponsor a week or so before the meeting. Some sponsors may need your help to understand that personal invitations are essential to a good turn-out, even if they have posted notices, and sent a broadcast e-mail. You might ask leading questions, such as “How many people have said they are coming?” and “Are there others you plan to invite?”

Illustrative Sample Script for a Telephone Contact

“Hello, my name is Adam Humus, a volunteer with the Valley Mountain Earth Institute. I was talking with Sharon Hill yesterday, and she suggested that I give you a call. She thought you might be able to give me some advice about the best person to talk to in your organization.

“We have a series of seven discussion courses that are taken informally by employees, in groups of 8-12, often during their lunch hour. These courses have been offered in hundreds of workplaces around the country, and at _____, _____, and _____ locally, among others.

“Our goal for the courses is to encourage dialogue on how people’s habits and lifestyles affect the environment. We’re probably best known for our courses on *Voluntary Simplicity* and *Sustainable Living*. There is no cost for the courses beyond a nominal charge for the course book. It’s a simple process that is enlightening, useful, and a lot of fun. That’s basically it. Do you have any questions?

“Is there someone in your organization whom you could recommend that I talk to? Perhaps someone who enjoys getting people together and who might have an interest in the environment or in living simply?”

Additional Talking Points

“The courses are informal, and we are not in the role of teacher. Actually, we’re not even at the group discussions most of the time. Our volunteers meet with the group for the introductory, first, and last meetings. The other meetings are self-facilitated. The learning comes from the course book and the discussion with others in the group.”

“We have nothing to preach. There is no, ‘You should do this,’ or ‘You shouldn’t do that.’ It’s up to each person to decide what, if any, changes to make.”

“The goal of the discussions is dialogue; consensus is not the goal. In fact, it’s often more fun if people have different ideas.”

“The courses last eight or nine weeks, and employees usually meet once a week over a brown bag lunch.”

Setting a Date

“In just three easy steps you can set up an introductory meeting:

1. Pick out the course that you are most interested in.
2. Set a time, date, and place for the introductory meeting.

3. Invite people to attend. You can circulate a memo or an e-mail, but a personal invitation from you will be most effective. Remember, you don't need to ask people to commit to the course. Just invite them to the meeting, and our presenter will take it from there."

Leaving a Voicemail Message

"Hi, my name is Adam Humus, with the Valley Mountain Earth Institute. I was talking with Sharon Hill yesterday. She suggested that I talk to you briefly to get your advice about the best person to contact in your organization. Please give me a call at 234-5678. Thanks."

6 – OUTREACH TARGETS

Workplace. The earth institute discussion courses were developed with the idea that they would be offered in workplaces at noon. By design, the discussions work well in a one-hour time slot. In larger communities, workplaces may be the easiest marketing targets. Courses can be held as a lunchtime "brown bag" discussion. People are already present, and don't have to travel to get there. For most busy people, it is easier to commit to a lunch once a week than to give up an evening.

A workplace with 30 or more employees is likely to have enough interested people to form a group for a class, although smaller organizations can work, too. An office environment seems to work well. Law, architecture, consulting firms, government offices, and others have been receptive. Employees working in a retail setting and outside sales or field staff have a harder time committing to a consistent lunch period.

An effective approach is to network to find an employee who wants to sponsor a "brown bag" introductory meeting. In most workplaces, employees have the freedom to reserve a space for a lunchtime event, and do not need the employer's approval. It is rarely a good idea to work through a company's official channels, such as the human resources department or the training office, because the courses normally will not fit within the company's existing training structure. A company with a strong focus on sustainability might be an exception, and in some cases *Voluntary Simplicity* courses have been sponsored by an organization's "wellness" coordinator.

In many organizations, the employees who take an initial discussion course want to continue with additional courses. It is a good idea to check back regularly to see if the group is ready for another offering. After the first course is completed, you should establish who in the organization will be the workplace coordinator. This will be the person to contact in the future.

Home. An ideal setting for a discussion course is the home in the evening. In many communities, an outreach to workplaces is not feasible. But the home is always a possible

site for a discussion group. It allows the group to include partners, friends, etc. Any of the marketing approaches discussed in Section 3 can be used for starting home groups.

Center of faith. Churches and other faith centers have been quite receptive to discussion courses, *Voluntary Simplicity* in particular. Many churches have a regular adult religious education (ARE) program, with an hour set aside on Sundays, or some other day. When marketing courses to churches, you will probably be referred to the ARE coordinator, either a staff person or a volunteer, depending on the size of the church. ARE courses are often scheduled months in advance, and promoted in a church bulletin. You will want to plan plenty of lead time when networking to start these courses.

A good source of information about faith centers in your community is your local interfaith coalition. Such groups are likely to know which clergy and faith centers would be most interested in earth institute programs, and can give you good leads.

Neighborhood. Neighborhood-based discussion groups can be a particularly rewarding way to share earth-centered concerns while building community. Marketing to neighborhood groups can require some persistent networking. The marketer is looking for a neighborhood activist—someone who knows most of the people on the block and can call them all, or visit door-to-door to invite them to an introductory meeting. Articles in neighborhood newsletters, where they exist, can be helpful in finding activists. An excellent tool for marketing to neighborhood groups is an informational meeting for sponsors. (See Section 3.) Many prospective sponsors find door-to-door invitations daunting. A meeting with other prospective neighborhood sponsors can provide the support needed for the task.

Adult education/community school. Discussion courses have been successfully offered through local community colleges, junior colleges, or community schools. Community school classes are a way to include people who want to participate, but don't feel they can organize a class themselves. **These classes must be offered for no academic credit, and at no cost except for the course books.** Most community adult education programs include non-credit classes, but some may not be able to offer them without a fee.

Some classes set up in this way may not attract enough enrollees to proceed. With fewer than six participants, it is difficult to sustain the discussions. The introductory presenter who attends the first class meeting may have to judge if there is sufficient energy to continue.

Non-profit organizations. You might think that environmental organizations and other nonprofits would be very receptive to sponsoring courses. In fact, they are largely similar to other workplaces, and the same networking approach can be effective. Small organizations may not have enough staff members to support a discussion course. In that case, the staffs of two or more small organizations may combine for a class. Some organizations open a class to their members or supporters, who can join the staff for the discussions. Discussion

courses are also a great way for an organization's board of directors to build cohesiveness, among themselves or with the staff.

7 – CASE STUDIES

Networking – Boise, Idaho. Anne Hausrath, the Boise outreach coordinator, uses the “networking” approach to marketing. During her first six months on the job, Anne focused on starting classes in workplaces and churches, and enjoyed some success. Because she originally found the networking process “a little scary,” Anne began by calling people she knew. She also “went back to the well,” calling past course participants to see if they wanted to sponsor another course. Lately, she has also been calling leads referred by the Boise Chapter's steering committee. Finding that people are friendly and receptive to her calls, Anne now says, “It's not as scary as I thought it would be.”

In her calls, Anne explains the courses and asks people if they know someone willing to schedule an introductory meeting in their workplace. If they need more information, she mails it to them and follows up in about two weeks. Anne does not want to be seen as “bugging people,” so if they are not ready to schedule a meeting now, she asks their permission to follow up later. Anne has learned to “never be afraid to ask, and always accept the answer.”

Anne recently took a break from marketing to work on another project. As soon as she stopped making calls, people stopped calling her. She now feels that persistence is the key to successful marketing. She says she needs to be making calls and following up constantly, in order to keep the outreach moving forward.

Public Meeting – McMinnville, OR. The successful discussion course outreach in the small community of McMinnville relies mostly on the energies of one volunteer, Paul Studebaker. After Paul had been invited by friends to join a *Deep Ecology* class, he wanted to share the experience with others. He drafted a letter about his experience and sent it to his some of his friends. With a telephone call follow-up, 90% joined the next class. This core group has provided many referrals for subsequent classes, including several organized in workplaces by previous participants.

Twice a year, usually in August and January, Paul organizes a “public meeting” to introduce the courses. After some experimentation, all meetings are now held on Friday evenings, at a community center in a park. Fridays seem to be a good time for people in his community to get out, and Paul feels that having a beautiful, natural setting is an important draw. These meetings have each resulted in two to four classes being formed. Paul publicizes the meetings by telephoning past participants and others who have expressed an interest, putting up a few posters, and by getting articles published in the local newspaper.

The articles have created the biggest turn-outs, and Paul has been quite successful in persuading the *McMinville News-Register* to publish them. He now knows two reporters who seem to have an interest in topics like simple living. Through them, he has also developed a relationship with an editor, whom he sometimes calls with stories. The paper is more interested in people than in ideas, so Paul looks for good human interest stories: someone who has downshifted dramatically or made other significant life changes. To make his public meetings more newsworthy, Paul looks for a “hot” speaker (preferably from out of town) or a “hot” topic. Shortly after the WTO protests in Seattle, Paul organized a talk on globalization that the paper covered. When he calls to “pitch” a story, Paul is prepared with names and telephone numbers of interesting people who might be interviewed.

Public Meeting – Port Townsend, Washington. After being inspired at a sustainability conference, Helen Kolff and Judy Alexander formed an intention to make Port Townsend, a town of 8,000, “a model of sustainability.” They learned that Dick Roy would be speaking about the NWEI discussion courses at a “public meeting,” and decided that, as a first step, they would help build the crowd. They called everyone they knew, and urged them to attend. From that meeting, five classes were started. “I don’t think we had much to do with that,” said Helen. “We just got people there.”

Helen and Judy next decided to hold a discussion course with community leaders. They identified a list of people who were seen as leaders, were good communicators, were open to learning new things, and represented a diversity of attitudes. They called these people, explained why they had been selected, and invited them to participate in a *Choices for Sustainable Living* class. About half of those invited agreed to join the group, and the class was formed. This group included the Chief of Police, now a member of the chapter’s steering committee, and a former mayor, who has since formed a *Discovering a Sense of Place* class in his neighborhood. Helen and Judy have gone on to organize a second community leaders’ class. Participants from both classes have become advocates for the discussion courses, urging others to get involved.

There have also been two additional public meetings, one with Dick Roy, and one featuring testimonials from class participants and a local sense-of-place slide show. The meetings have drawn about 50 people each. After an introduction of the discussion courses, people are asked to move to one of the four corners of the room, where displays are set up for each of the six courses. People can sign up for the course they are most interested in. The first two meetings resulted in four to six classes each. The last meeting yielded three small classes. Helen now thinks that issuing personal invitations is a more effective approach than large public meetings. But it’s hard to argue with the success of a group that organized fifteen classes in their first seven months.

Special Events – Olympia, Washington. The Olympia Chapter of NWEI has used several marketing approaches, including a regular schedule of “special events.” In their Community Forum series, the Olympia group aims to schedule a speaker about once a month, from September to May. These events create an opportunity for the earth institute

volunteers and course participants to gather on a regular basis. Publicized through public service announcements, flyers, the Chapter's newsletter, and occasional news articles, some events also attract the larger community.

Unless the speakers are fairly well-known, and focus on one of the themes of the discussion courses, the events have not generated a lot of class starts. Exceptions were talks by noted advocates of voluntary simplicity, Janet Luhrs and Cecile Andrews. These events drew large crowds and led to a number of new classes. Several talks by NWEI founder, Dick Roy, that aimed specifically to introduce the earth institute programs and create an opportunities for people to sign up for classes were also very successful.

The Community Forum series takes considerable time and energy to organize, considering the number of classes generated. Those involved like the community-building aspects of the series, however, and want to offer these educational opportunities to the community.

The Olympia Chapter also offers voluntary simplicity workshops as a way to introduce the discussion course. An Olympia volunteer developed a two-hour workshop that is offered five or six times a year through the local Parks and Recreation Department. The workshop gives people a taste of the topic, followed by an opportunity to sign up for a discussion course. Most workshops result in one or more *Voluntary Simplicity* classes.

Matchmaking – Victoria, B.C. The NWEI chapter in Victoria created a very successful model of the “matchmaking” approach to marketing, and has used it to start more than 50 classes. The volunteers there gather names of interested people through the spring and summer for fall class starts. Beginning with Earth Day events, volunteers set up a display at fairs, festivals, and farmers’ markets, talk with people about the earth institute programs, and take names and telephone numbers of people who appear interested in a discussion course.

Then, in the fall, a group of volunteers gathers in an office with multiple telephone lines to set up classes. They divide up the lists and start telephoning. They find that about half of the people on their lists are still interested in joining a class. From the initial contacts, class dates and times are tentatively established, and shared among the volunteer callers. They then try to fill those classes with others. Messages are left for the many people who are not home. They are given the home number of one volunteer, who will complete the remaining matchmaking. It usually takes a minimum of three calls per participant to get people placed in a class.