

Dear Teens and Parents,

December 2008

Thank you for your interest in our Youth Quest. It is a rich opportunity to honor the transition you are encountering as a family. You teens are preparing to launch into the world and your parents are preparing to let you go. For centuries different cultures have recognized the importance of helping youth make the passage from childhood to adulthood. Around the world this transition has been marked by rites of passage ceremonies. These rites challenged the young person in such a way that they were forced to face themselves, thus discovering their own inner dilemmas and ways of handling them. In the process they would also uncover their unique gifts for their people. In the latter part of the rite the initiate would go through a pivotal witnessing wherein the elders and the larger community would acknowledge the new adult in their selfhood and in their new capacity and responsibility as an adult in the community. New privileges and responsibilities were bestowed at this time.

In numerous cultures these rites of passage into adulthood included a prolonged period of solitude and fasting in the wilderness. In addition to the somewhat well known vision quest traditions of various Native American peoples, solitude in the wilderness has been a part of the passage into adulthood for Australian Aborigines, the Basque in Spain and many others. This kind of questing in the wilderness is also found in prominent places in our biblical heritage. Thus, it is into these widespread and long practiced footsteps that we step as we head off for our Youth Quest. Our own practices are in many ways contemporary and modern, but they are rooted in archetypal human traditions and the need to have the next generation step forward to accept the blessing and the work of their family and community.

Trip Schedule

- Pre-trip meeting, San Rafael, CA **June 7**
(11am-2pm Teens only; 3-5pm Parents only)
- Send off ritual, teens and loved ones, San Rafael **August 8, 8 am**
- Youth Quest in the Inyo Mountains **August 8-16**
9-day quest experience for teens and guides with two days of solo time in nature for the teens, and time in base camp on either side of the solo time.
- Welcoming Back Ritual *in the Inyo Mountains* **August 16, 10 am**
Family / friends pick up their returning questers **IN THE MOUNTAINS**
- Follow-up Meeting (in San Rafael) **late August TBA**
Meeting with teens after their quest to support them in the challenge of bringing the benefits of their quest experience back into their daily lives.

What's Included

- All meetings as noted above.
- 9-day ceremony in the wilderness including: All guidance, meals, group gear and safety management; training in "leave no trace" camping, natural history of the high desert and creating personal ceremonies for transformation.
- Preparation guide and list of personal camping gear to bring.

What You Need to Provide

- Transportation to our meeting place in San Rafael, CA at the start of the trip And a ride home *from the quest site in the desert mountains* at the end of the trip. Directions to be sent to you upon registration. Carpools may be arranged as desired.
- Personal camping gear (equipment list provided).
- Ability to carry your own loaded backpack for approx. 30 minutes.

Fee

The fee for the quest is \$975. For those who cannot afford this, we offer a sliding scale down to \$750. In an effort to make the quest available to families of all income levels, we have established a scholarship fund and also offer some payment plans (contact us for more details). Full payment is due by May 1, 2009 (unless we've arranged a payment plan with you). If you are in need of financial aid, please contact us for further information. Please contact us as well if you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to our scholarship fund.

To Register

Please send: (1) Completed Youth and Parent Applications (attached); (2) a completed registration form (attached); and (3) a \$200 non-refundable deposit to Wilderness Reflections, P.O. Box 177, Woodacre, CA 94973. Balance of your fee is due by 5/1/09 and is non-refundable after 6/1/09.

We look forward to being a part of this sacred rite of passage in your lives,

Casey, Kate and Dave

To Register:

Please complete this form, and mail it along with your youth and parent applications, and non-refundable deposit to:

Wilderness Reflections
P.O. Box 177
Woodacre, CA 94973

Youth Name _____

Parent Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Parent Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

(cell) _____

Parent Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

(cell) _____

Youth Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

Email (youth) _____

(parent) _____

(parent) _____

Trip Date _____ Deposit: Youth Quest (\$200) _____

**** Please Note:** Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable. To allow us and yourselves to properly prepare for the quest and the pre-trip meetings, *the balance of your fee is due by 5/1/09 and is non-refundable and non-transferable after 6/1/09 unless we have made other explicit arrangements with you (e.g., payment plans).*

Balance of Your Trip Fee

The fee for the quest is \$975. For those who cannot afford this, we offer a sliding scale down to \$750. In an effort to make the quest available to families of all income levels, we have established a scholarship fund and also offer some payment plans (contact us for more details). Full payment is due by May 1, 2009 (unless we've arranged a payment plan with you). If you are in need of financial aid, please contact us for further information. Please contact us as well if you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to our scholarship fund.

* I have read and agree to the cancellation policy described above (please initial) _____

Youth Application, Youth Quest

(Use reverse side as necessary)

Why do you want to participate in this rite of passage? What changes in your life will you be marking?

What do you hope to receive from participating in this quest?

What do you feel you have to offer your peers in supporting them on their quest?

How do you imagine the quest will challenge you (physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, spiritually), and what resources do you have that help you in your life in general, and may help you when you're facing challenges during your quest?

Have you ever been treated, hospitalized for, or diagnosed with, mental health issues? If yes, please describe. (if it would be easier for you to call us about this, feel free to do so).

Do you have any habit of using mind-altering or addictive substances? If yes, please describe (or call us to discuss this confidentially). We request that you refrain from using for the 2 weeks before, during and the week after the quest (4 weeks total). Would this be difficult for you?

Parent Application, Youth Quest

(Use reverse side as necessary)

Why do you want your daughter/son to participate in this rite of passage? What do you hope they receive from this experience?

What changes in their life do you see them marking?

What do you hope you and the rest of your family will receive through this experience?

A teen's passage out of childhood and into adulthood is also a profound event in the life of a parent and family. What changes in *your* life will you be marking, for yourself, with your teen's rite of passage? What is ending for you and must be let go? What new beginnings are being born?

How do you imagine your teen's quest will challenge you? What will be the hardest part for you of their questing and marking the end of their childhood?

What do you imagine will be the hardest aspects of the quest for your daughter or son? What inner tools do they have to cope with these difficulties? Please list any specific concerns you have for your teen and what may be needed to address them.

Traditionally, a rite of passage into adulthood is affirmed by the conferral of new privileges **and** responsibilities. (These are often kept confidential until the initiation is completed.) What changes are you prepared to make in your teen's life, and in your home and family life to support their passage from one life stage to the next?

Has your child ever been treated, hospitalized for, or diagnosed with, mental health issues? If yes, please describe (or call us if you prefer).

Does your teen have any habit of using mind-altering or addictive substances? If yes, please describe (or call us to discuss this). We request that s/he refrain from using for the 2 weeks before, during and the week after the quest (4 weeks total).

Guides for Youth Quest

Casey McCarroll, M.A. has worked since 1996 with youth aged 5-18 in the wilderness as an outdoor adventure program coordinator, backpacking guide and wilderness therapist and in the classroom as a Head Start teacher. He has studied rites of passage facilitation with the School of Lost Borders and Wilderness Reflections and is currently working as a staff therapist and transition counselor at Holden High School in Orinda, CA. With his colleague Karl Smart, Casey is developing a rites-of-passage-based curriculum for youth dealing with cancer and life threatening illness. He is a leader of coming of age groups for middle school boys and a vision council member with Stepping Stones Project. He also works privately as a mentor for teens in the SF Bay Area.

Kate Cadoux

"I discovered strength and stability. I learned to be honest with myself...I came to accept and understand the natural ups and downs we are all bound to experience....I valued the bonds I made with the other people and the opening effect that had on me."

Jessica Y., age 19

"I came away from the trip with so much.... I became less afraid of life. Where I used to retreat into fantasies about who I was and what world I was living in, I now stay rooted in the present and in what's real and fight my battles from that standpoint. I'm comfortable with being me."

Robby S., age 16

"This initiation into adulthood was a blessing for my daughter. She has emerged more self-confident, courageous, and self-aware....I know that some of the dreams and visions she received will guide her for a long time. I am very grateful to you for providing this for young people to stretch their wings into their coming adulthood-- they will fly more true because of it."

Sally M., youth quest parent

Wilderness Reflections was founded by **Dave Talamo, MA, MFT** in 1996 to help people turn to nature to mark important life transitions, seek guidance with life's challenges and reconnect with what brings them joy and meaning. Programs for adults and a wide variety of groups are also available. Contact us for more details.