



## STARCROSS community

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Spring 2016

### HELPING TO REPAIR THE EARTH



Long ago, Starcross and the surrounding land was pristine redwood forest. In the 1960's, however, logging decimated this area. Once found worldwide, redwood trees now grow in only 3 places on earth, one being our foggy coastal belt of Northern California. Now, even more of these beautiful trees are being clear-cut in the frenzy of vineyard development. So, what to do? Plant more of course! Our first 50 redwood seedlings are off to a good start and a lot more will be planted next year.

Here at Starcross, we take seriously our responsibility to live out the Jewish idea of *tikkun olam*, or “repairing the world.” This means more than simply planting trees and growing organic food; the repair needed is twofold, both physical and spiritual. In the future, children will be able to walk through our redwood forest and find some of the spiritual solace and peace we all seek. But repair needs to happen now as well! Our internship program, spiritual retreats, and community activities offer some such opportunity for repair. “In The Garden” days at Starcross will begin soon. Elementary school children, many from impoverished families, will come and help plant, cultivate and harvest nutritious food.



These children and these tiny trees represent the hope we have for our community – that it will remain a welcoming space of contemplation and peace for those who need it for many years to come. We are applying for a conservation easement to preserve Starcross as a spiritual and natural sanctuary forever and make this hope a reality.

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Making ends meet is always a creative venture – you don't need me to tell you that. While this year's olive oil is amazing, sales are still not enough to solely support us. Book, Christmas wreath, dried fruit, and other sales continue to be an important part of our income.

We would not, however, be able to do the work we do without the financial support of you, our friends. We are grateful for your donations. You can mail the enclosed envelope, call 1-800-960-1500, or donate securely online at <http://www.starcross.org/donate/donations.htm>. Starcross Community is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization, and your contributions are tax deductible. Thank you!

*sister Julie*

## SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

Finding a job, going to the bank, renting a house – always stressful, but even more so when you aren't comfortable speaking English. Especially now, when competition for jobs is high and anti-immigrant feelings can be extreme.

This spring, we have expanded the services we offer our neighbors. In addition to the Starcross Food Pantry, which provides food, fresh produce, clothes, toys and books for our neighbors in need, we are now offering weekly English-as-a-Second-Language lessons free of charge. Each student is given a workbook, English-Spanish dictionary and notebook.



The classes are lively and the students very enthusiastic! We hope that we can help our friends overcome these challenges and understand that they are welcome, regardless of where they come from or what language they speak.

## SPICE UP YOUR DINNER AND MAKE THE WORLD A BIT BETTER!

It's ready! We are bottling this year's batch of Sister Julie's Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil and it's awesome. The fruit was abundant and perfectly ripened. The volunteers who came out to help harvest were invaluable. Now this beautiful, pungent oil is ready to dress up your Springtime salads, vegetables, grilled chicken, fish or whatever. One of our favorite things is sourdough toast with oil and herbs. Simply divine!



As you've probably read, organic olive oil is one of the healthiest foods you can eat. Ours is extremely high in antioxidant polyphenols. We're thrilled with this year's oil and know you will love it, too. Friends tell us it makes a perfect gift.

Sister Julie's Organic Olive Oil is available on our website [www.starcross.org](http://www.starcross.org) or by calling 1-800-960-1500. It will most certainly sell out, so don't wait to order!

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION AND GET INVOLVED!

Want to learn more? Brother Toby sends out a reflection every Friday to our e-list members, addressing issues we all face, such as overcoming spiritual dilemmas, dealing with change, and living conscientiously in today's world. Mondays, we share a haiku written by Sister Marti. Our Starcross Monastic Community Facebook is updated weekly. We also send out notices of events and announcements, including news on upcoming publications (such as a book of Sister Marti's haiku – stay tuned!) via our e-list and our Facebook page. If you would like to join in the Starcross conversation, please send your email address to [community@starcross.org](mailto:community@starcross.org) or visit us on Facebook!

## ✧ RIPPLES FROM A LOVING LIFE ✧

*“Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far reaching effects.”* The Dalai Lama (1935- )

Much has been written about our Sister Marti during the year she lived with pancreatic cancer, since her death on February 22, and after the remarkable gathering for her funeral. Several journalists who knew Marti used practically the same words to describe her: *“What a force for good she was.”* They accurately described the pebble that was and is Marti. Here, I share some of the ripples that are spreading out from where her pebble dropped into the pond of life...

*“Marti was so at peace. She kept doing what she could and simply refused to fret about what she couldn’t do. Truly a life’s lesson for me. Would that we could all deal with what life gives us as calmly and effectively as Marti did.”*

~ Barbara Johannes, who coordinates the Starcross Food Pantry and attends our services often.

*“Marti showed me what is possible when we have the courage to trust ourselves and God.”*

~ Susan Belfiore, now hiking the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Marti’s honor

*“If I had been simply looking for experience in organic farming, I would have come and gone. But helping to care for Sister Marti brought me into her world — the spiritual world of Starcross.”*

~ Katherine Quiñones, our 29-year-old Spiritual Resident, who spent many nights with Marti in Marti’s last year.



*“Marti was a deeply spiritual lady, but very practical at the same time. There was a simple joy about her person that she readily shared... sometimes when she dozed in my car while I was driving to or from Starcross, I felt the radiance of her presence.”*

~ Sandra Bodley, a Starcross Companion Member and nurse-educator, often drove Marti from Starcross to the cancer clinic, a two hour drive.

*“The influence of Marti on my life was to underscore the truth that good hearted and determined people can make wonderful important changes in the world.”*

~ Monica Schwalbenberg-Pena, a nurse and friend

*“Marti’s ‘do something, anything’ attitude, led me to volunteer as a personal shopper at Starcross. I didn’t know what I could do to help out, but shopping seemed like a need they had, and something I was capable of doing... Once, realizing a difficult situation in my life was nothing compared to the real pain experienced by people fighting health problems every day, I wrote to Marti and asked for a pep talk. The result was a vision of Sister Marti with a*

*‘No Whining’ pin on her sweater. I held onto that vision!”*

~ Sue Moeckel, a member of the Starcross Circle of Friends.

Marti’s ripples continue to spread everywhere – down the street, in Syria and in Africa, over sick beds near and far — and very much here in the chapel and land she loved. Once she said, “If I am still here then...” And someone shouted, “You will always be here!” Marti laughed and said, “Yes, I will be.”— And she is!

Brother Toby



## LEND A HELPING HAND, MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Basic inhalers cost as little as \$20. Your help doesn't need to be extravagant to make all the difference in a child's life -- just ask our friend Matthew!

Dr. Matthew Ssengendo was one of the first children welcomed into the Starcross House of Hope for AIDS orphans in 1998 in Uganda. Matthew was a small, sickly child struggling with asthma. After we provided him with an inhaler and an education, his life rapidly improved. Matthew recently graduated second in his class with a diploma in Clinical Medicine and Community Health. He is now a registered Medical Clinical Officer combating malaria in northern Uganda. His passion is helping sick children.

This young man and so many others thank you for your support and your faith in them!

# STARCROSS

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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

Inside this issue of *SHARINGS*:

*How to help repair the Earth*

*Join the Starcross conversation!*

*Sister Marti's gift to all of us*

*Your new doctor in Uganda*

*Our food pantry and ESL classes*

*The olive oil is ready to order!*

## STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY

is a small independent, autonomous community of lay-people living peaceful lives in the contemplative tradition and offering encouragement and affirmation to gentle folks on all spiritual paths.

Our home is in Sonoma County's coastal hills. We adopted and have been caregivers and advocates for children with unique gifts and needs, most of whom were born HIV positive. We also support individual children around the world and established HOUSES OF HOPE for children impacted by the AIDS pandemic in Romania and East Africa.