January 2007

CAROLINA SPIRIT QUEST, INC.

Carolina spirit quest
Winter 2007

Spring Quest 2007 Update

Christine Ahrens & Raven

It's about the Journey, not the Destination! Now that each of us have journeyed into 2007 we hope that you and your families will be planning on spending time in the spring with us April 20-22 at Umstead State Park near Raleigh. We have many learning circles from Astrology to Ecology, and Kabala to Wise women planned to help guide you in inspiring your spirit, growth in your community and just plain entertaining you. To keep the little ones in your household happy we have a full children's program. All of this, as well as rituals, drumming, dancing, great food, and many other activities are sure to guarantee a fulfilling weekend. The members of our Spring Quest staff are working hard to make sure that you get the most out of coming out and celebrating our togetherness as a pagan community. We hope to see you there! For more information about Spring Quest 2007 or our organization please visit our web page at http://www.carolinaspiritquest.org.

Blessings!

Winter Quest: Discovering the Divinity Within

Becky Starr

During a cold weekend in January, 29 "Questers" gathered at Fairystone State Park in Virginia to enjoy community and to "Discover the Divinity Within." It was a wonderful event filled with laughter, learning, cooperation and depth as we shared in ritual, food and fun. But it wasn't all just fun, as we participated in Learning Circles to help find the divinity within – shamanic trance work, reiki, meditations, runes and finding ways to include our spirituality in our every day life with a magical first aid kit or divination deck.

Probably the highlight of the event for most was our main ritual on Saturday night. We visited 5 elemental portals, or mirrors, to get messages from guides, Gods, animal friends or ourselves. Many attendees said it was an amazing experience and "intense work." Our ritual coordinator, Sharon, did a fabulous job of creating an environment where everyone could journey to find their own inner wisdom. (Sharon is teaching a Trancing workshop at Spring Quest this year!)

One attendee commented, "The energy was so gentle and loving, the theme was timely and the leaders really had it all together!" As director, I would agree and like to thank the staff, teachers and everyone attending for helping to make this a memorable event for all!

Blessed Be!

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Special points of interest:

- *Spring Quest 2006 a success with 87 participants!!*
- *Co-Directors for Spring Quest 2007 are Raven and Christine Ahrens*
- *PSLC 2007 website online with new tracks!*

President's Address 2006

Becky Starr

As the current and continuing president of the Board of Trustees for Carolina Spirit Quest (CSQ), it was my great honor to be able to address the members during the downpour that was Saturday afternoon at Spring Quest. Despite the crazy weather and threatening power outage, the mood was positive and joyful. Here are some of the highlights:

A bit about us…

- CSQ's mission is to encourage networking and community among Pagans and other earth-centered spiritualists.
- We serve the Carolinas, Virginia and DC.
- Our membership is varied in ages, geography and paths.
- Our first Spring Quest was in 1996 with 45 participants. 2006 had 87 participants with 20% children and teens under 16! Almost all attendees spent the entire weekend!

Programs and Services

- Spring Quest – our 11th consecutive annual event this year!
- Winter Quest – January 2006 was our 4th annual event. Quest on a smaller scale.
- Theme for Winter Quest 2007: "Discovering the Divinity Within"!
- Pagan Leadership Skills Conference (PLSC) – 3rd annual event coming this Aug 24-27 in Richmond, VA. Leadership training (see flyer elsewhere in this issue).
- Pagan College Scholarship Fund - $500 awarded annually to a full time college student. Now listed on Scholarships.com – check "Pagan"!!
- Quest Specials – one day Quest events with full day intensives by great CSQ learning circle leaders. Coming soon to a location near you!
- Pagan Pride Day – CSQ info table is coming to a PPD near you – help us staff the tables and tell everyone about CSQ!

Current Status

- CSQ is very healthy both as a part of the community for over a decade and financially.
- Board goal is to have $10,000 in the bank "just in case" – we are ¾ of the way to that goal!
- CSQ is the fiscal sponsor for PLSC and teaches the finance track.

Planning for the Future

- The Board would like to take CSQ from the wonderful grass-roots organization that it was, to a regional organization that connects hundreds of Pagans together! Big dreams come with big commitments!
- May 2005, the CSQ board set up a fund to buy land for dedicated space for events, drumming, summer camp and other things we have yet to imagine. There is currently over $2000 in the Land Fund!

All of the wonderful programs and dreams come at a cost – of volunteer time and money. If we are to move CSQ toward becoming more of a regional organization, we need YOUR help.

Please contact me at: info@carolinaspiritquest.org if you can donate of your time or money. We are all volunteers with a dream of community – and we need your help to move CSQ into the future!

As Above, So Below

Christine Ahrens

How many times have you said the statement "As above, so below", or heard a high priestess or high priest declare it in a ritual circle? Where did it originate from and what does it mean exactly? The Egyptian spiritual Master Hermes Trismagistus is attributed to the coining of the phrase. It was found in his writings in the Emerald Tablet and is part of the traditional Hermetic teachings. What is meant by this phrase is that all of creation echoes the Divine energy which is found in all things. The Divine is found throughout everything, in every part of our surroundings and us. Therefore, the next time you are in a circle and you hear the expression you will have knowledge of just how important this statement is to our beliefs and us.

Journey to the Dream

Stephanie Taylor

In the past few years there has been much talk about Carolina Spirit Quest's dream of buying land. This past year at Spring Quest our President announced that a land fund had been created and that donations could be made towards that fund. When I joined the board this past April I announced that one of my main goals was to help raise the funds for making the dream of land become a reality. Thus far the journey has been more interesting than I imagined.

In May the board set a goal of raising $300,000 for the purchase of land after reviewing the average costs of land with the acreage CSQ wanted and with a goal set we were able to start looking for grants. This is where things became interesting for me. In order to meet deadlines for grants I had a short amount of time to learn how to write a grant proposal (proposals for non-profit spiritual organizations are much different from biology grant proposals). Thanks to a Case for Support written within the last year by our President we were able to create a proposal that was reviewed and approved by an individual that works in this field. So now CSQ had a very good proposal but where were we to send it?

After a lot of research and some very long nights, 160+ grants in the state of North Carolina were found and the proposals mailed out. CSQ is now in a "wait and see" mode. Our proposals are out there being reviewed by all these different organizations and we just have to wait to see what type of responses we get. As responses come in we our keeping track of the positive responses so we can share our findings with other pagan groups that are looking for grants. For now though, we wait. We can use candle magic, send positive energies, or do whatever our individual paths teach to help bring forth the fruits of our labor. In the end we must still wait and hope. Of course, individuals can still make personal donations towards the land fund and play a more active role in making the dream become a reality. The more we raise now the closer we get to purchasing land and erecting buildings. In the meantime, I am lighting candles to bring prosperity to the work I have done on behalf of CSQ and looking at what the next steps will be on this journey. I am more dedicated than ever to see this dream come to fruition.

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PROMOTING A PAGAN-FRIENDLY WORLD

The purpose of CSQ shall be to devote its resources to religious and educational activities; and to sponsor a program for adults and children, to be held each year in the Spring; and further, the purpose of CSQ shall be to encourage networking and the building of community spirit among Pagans in the Carolinas and the surrounding area.

Board Members

Becky Starr, President, Durham, NC

Lance Brown, Vice President, Hillsborough, NC

Dick Merritt, Treasurer, Hillsborough, NC

Maddy Shenk (Chantress Maddy), Secretary, Chapel Hill, NC

Jag, Durham, NC

Kara Mueller, Ashburn, VA

Tim Woody, Hillsborough, NC

Stephanie Taylor, Durham, NC

Raven, Co-Director Spring Quest 2007, Raleigh, NC

Christine Ahrens, Co-Director Spring Quest 2007, Fayetteville, NC

Networking at the Pagan Leadership Skills Conference

Becky Starr

One of my favorite reasons to attend the Pagan Leadership Skills Conference (PLSC) in Richmond, VA is the wonderful people I meet and the networking that happens so naturally. This was my third trip to PLSC and I was prepared to meet many Pagan leaders from groups I had never known existed. But I was not prepared for the amazing free exchange of information, tips and offers of

On Thursday evening, Dick and I had dinner with Fred and xxx from Free Spirit Alliance (FSA) in Maryland. I was surprised to find out that FSA puts on a yearly festival with 750 attendees! How do they do it? What are their secrets for getting so many people to show up? As president of CSQ, this was something I wanted to know!! Fred and xxxx were so open and willing to compare notes and the conversation flowed easily from staffing to advertising suggestions. At the end of the meal, we exchanged business cards with a promise to stay in contact.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Jennifer and Xavier from Triad CUUPS in Greensboro during the weekend. We spent time discussing how our two groups can network together to assist with their events and ours. How can we share resources, advertising and lend support to some of our closest neighbors? What do they do well, and what do we do well, that can enrich both groups? We came up with a plan to get more involved in each other's events and to offer help in both groups.

As a leader in the Pagan community, PLSC is a wonderful training event. The 12 hour long classes are full of valuable information for organizations of all sizes! But the added bonus of meeting leaders of other Pagan groups, finding out how to improve our organization and assist theirs, is a beautiful side benefit that I never expected. Hopefully next year, I will meet some of the other amazing leaders that are out there, working off their butts for the groups they support!

The Spiral dance during the Spring Quest 2006 Closing Ritual

Dreaming our Dreams… Spring Quest 2006 Rituals

Becky Starr

Our theme for Spring Quest 2006, "Awakening Our Dreams, Igniting Our Reality," really sparked the imaginations of our ritual team. We created rituals that invited the participants into the land of dreams to imagine what they would like to create in their lives and in our community! We challenged them to dream their wildest dream for the future and bring it to life in the loving arms of our circle!

The chants for Spring Quest added a wonderful element to the experience of the rituals. Several people asked for the words to the beautiful chants that were used so I have included them below.

Opening Ritual –
Going Off to Bed
In our Opening Ritual, we created the sacred space that protects us as we drift off to "sleep" for a weekend of dreaming. It was the time to let go of mundane worries and enter the magical weekend together. We crafted dream pillows with chamomile, rose, lavender, catnip and mint and empowered them for vivid dreaming.

Chant:

Sleep Now in Peace
Tune of Go Now in Peace
Adapted by Tim Woody

Sleep now in peace.
Sleep now in peace.
May the spirit of love surround you.
Close your eyes,
Say "Good Night,"
Sleep now My Love.

Main Ritual –
Dreaming the Dream
In our Main Ritual, we were free to dream wonderful dreams for ourselves and our community. We explored those things that scare us and keep us from dreaming big and received a visit from the Boogie Man! After banishing him, we created a huge wreath of dreams, empowered those dreams and ignited them, literally, with flames. Afterwards, we dined on cookies and milk.

Chant:

Where I Sit is Holy
Traditional Native American

Where I sit is holy;
holy is this ground.
Forest, mountain, river; listen to the sound.
Great Spirit circle all – around me.

Closing Ritual –
Returning to Reality
In our Closing Ritual, we brought our dreams into the light and allowed them to be acknowledged. We empowered these dreams once again and spoke our intention to friends of our next steps toward realization. We closed the sacred space that had protected us and said good bye to friends old and new.

Chant:

One Spirit
Spiral Rhythm –
PJ Seale ©2000
www.spiralrhythm.com

One spirit in the dark,
Like a candle waivers.
Many spirits joined as one,
Burn with the power of the blazing sun.
There is strength in community,
A circle empowering
you and me.
The circle binds
yet sets us free,
In the Goddess' name,
So Mode It Be!

Awakening Our Dreams, Igniting Our Reality
Spring Quest 2006

Coming Home Again

Jenna Tigerheart

Some of you might know me. I was one of the founding members that helped to get Carolina Spirit Quest (CSQ) off the ground back in 1995. I remember sitting in the Fireside Room of the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ERUUF) in Durham with many of my closest friends discussing what we could do to bring the pagan community in the Triangle area together. We discussed monthly moon celebrations and annual festivals. Well, you can tell which one we chose. What we didn't realize then was that our intent of bringing together the pagans in our small area would extend out so far into such a large community.

As a member of the staff that first year I worked hard, though my job was probably one of the easiest. I organized the workshops that year, finding folks to present, arranging spaces, and setting schedules. Storm Weaver worked as our Programs Director, Dick Merritt as Communications Director and Mike Gunther was our Grand Poobah™. Our theme I remember: Dreaming the Web, Weaving the Dream. I remember that surreal feeling when the event finally happened. Forty-two people standing together on the lawn at Shelter Neck, holding hands and chanting as we started the opening ritual. I could hardly believe we had pulled it off. We had cast our Web and it was holding. When the weekend was over, I knew I was ready for the next.

Every year I attended CSQ after that continued to be a magical experience. The connections I made, the workshops I attended, the rituals and the fellowship have all touched me in a special way. After awhile though, my health prevented me from continuing. I hated to miss it, but some things can't be helped. After that I had a family and some challenges I wasn't ready for yet. Every year I missed being there and wished I could go, especially as I saw Winter Quest begin and flourish.

I remember after Quest 2005 one of my best friends came back and said, "You won't believe what I learned at Quest this year!" She proceeded to teach me how to make mead, based on the workshop she took at Quest. It was instant love. My cross-stitch took a back seat as she taught me all she knew and we experimented together with new ideas. I brewed and bottled my first mead last year, giving five bottles to another friend for her wedding. To date I've brewed seven 1-gallon batches and have three more on the way, thanks to this year's Quest.

When my fellow Chantress told me that the fabulous Ben Starr would be teaching mead-making at CSQ again this year, I was not to be denied. Besides that, I'd recently gotten this yearning to branch out again. I missed all those connections to my outside Web and wanted it back. (See, it wasn't *just* the mead talking.)

This year, 2006, was my first year back after several years away. The new location was definitely a wonderful change for me. As always, the staff was wonderfully accommodating in helping me find housing that worked for my medical concerns. When I arrived early on Friday everyone was helpful. Jag helped to carry my bags to my cabin, some of our younger members played a game of Steve Jackson's SPANC with me to pass the time. Everyone said hello and it was just so friendly. "Ah yes," I thought. "This is the right place for me. This is what I've been missing."

Little did I realize how right I was at the time. Old friends approached me to chat and new folks introduced themselves all day. Even members of my own order I barely knew were there and we enjoyed some great chats over meals. The community meals have always been one of my absolute favorite parts of Quest. It's a chance to meet new people, discuss anything or a whole lot of nothing, and generally enjoy wonderful fellowship. I feel like I left Quest with a ton of new friends. I even got to know some old friends much better. That fellowship extended into the rituals for me. I could feel such a strong connection between everyone at the Saturday night ritual. The energy resonating around our circle was incredible. There was a unity there that I had truly been missing all those years away.

The President's address Saturday really touched me too. She was NOT the only one weeping in there, folks. (And yes, I'm sure it wasn't *just* the hormones.) It was like reliving something I've been a part of for eleven years. Seeing the dream we have for the future just really made my day. I love where we're going and I can't wait to help us get there. I hope everyone else was as moved as I was.

It's hard to put into words what I feel about CSQ. It was a dream of one of my best friends. It's been a journey with new rewards every year. It's an achievement, a monument if you will, to what a united group can do and become. It's like coming home again every year to the warm, inviting arms of friends who know who you really are inside.

Kids Elemental Ritual at Spring Quest 2006

Kara Mueller

Let's face it, kids have so much energy it is just plain maddening. Well, a select few adults at Spring Quest 2006 got to experience that energy for about an hour while the Quest Kids experimented with 3 craft projects dealing with Water, Earth and Air and one quite unorthodox cakes and ale around the Fire where we roasted marshmallows. During each project, we had a small teaching about the element we were experimenting with. In sharing our ritual it is Quest's hope that more parents will experience getting down and dirty with their children, in a ritual setting.

Rules of Kids in Ritual:
1. Don't expect anything to go quite as planned
2. Don't expect to move smoothly from point "A" to point "B"
3. DO expect Distractions!!

Of course all that is real and also said in a very "tongue in cheek" way. The kids really seemed to have fun together and seemed thoroughly impressed with their projects particularly the sand art creations.

Special thanks to the parent helpers Cynthia and Don and young adult ritual helper Butterfly.

Children's Elemental Introduction Ritual
Written by Tracy Britto, Misty Chavez and Kara Mueller

Preparation:
For Smores: Sticks prepared and fire burning in fire pit near Dinner Bell

Ritual:
- Smudging by Blowing Bubbles

- Quarter Calls/Honoring of the Elements (adapted from *The Pagan Family* by Ceisiwr Serith):
  Here in the center of the world
  We stand,
  Earth is before Us,
  Air on our right hand,
  Fire is behind Us,
  On our left water lies,
  As We stand there between the Earth and Skies

- Stone Selection from Pouch (Actually colored melted marbles from the craft supply store.) Teaching: *I am going to have each of you pull a colored stone from this pouch. There is White for Air, Red for Fire, Blue for Water and Green for Earth. Whatever color you pull, that will be your special element to study, and learn more about after the ritual is over. You can ask friends and family or you can look up information in books about your special element.*

- Water: Sponge Animals Project (Little sponge sea animals in gel caps that melt after being in contact with water to reveal the animal.) Teaching: *Water is the Oceans, the Seas, the Rivers and the Rain. It is the life in your body and the tears in your eyes. When imagining the element of water, think of cool, green waters, and the waves of the ocean. Feel the waters washing over you and calmly carrying away all pain, hurt and misunderstandings. Water cleanses and renews you. Water is the giver of life, it heals and creates*

- Earth: Sand Art Project Teaching: *The Earth is responsible for all our growing things. Through the growing process we learn the cycle of life and how to take care of the Earth. Earth gives us strength like the mountains. Earth is stable, constant, solid, strong.*

- Air: Kazoo – Air Instrument Teaching: *Air is pure, clear and uncluttered. Air is light and ever expanding. Air carries sound. It teaches us to listen and interpret sound. Air is associated with communication; it represents the mind, thought and intelligence. According to old folk lore, howling winds are believed to carry the spirits of the night.*

Can you think of any other instruments you play with air?

- Fire: S'mores or Roasted Marshmallows Around a Campfire. Teaching: *Fire is the element of energy. Fire can be very destructive but also be very helpful. Fire is the element of the Sun which always shines upon us giving us warmth and giving the world its energy so all life can thrive.*

- Food Blessing (author unknown):
  Give thanks to the Mother Gaia,
  Give thanks to the Father Sun.
  Give thanks to the plants in the garden
  Where the Mother and Father are one.

- Element word game while eating s'mores. Children are to call out the first word they think of when we name an element.

- Dismiss Elements (adapted from *The Pagan Family*):
  Spirits of Earth, Air, Fire and Water,
  We thank you for your help.
  Go now in peace, but never be far away
  And answer quickly when we call for you.

The Candlelight of Imbolc

Christine Ahrens

The kindling of sacred fires chiefly marked Imbolc in ancient times. Many pagans today still celebrate the holiday in this fashion though many of us have brought those large fires indoors to a smaller scale. Candles and the light that they illuminate are key elements in almost all aspects of the Imbolc celebration. Some of these traditions that you may see spread throughout different pagan traditions are a candle wheel, crown of candles, candles lighting the bed of the Bride, and a candle lit in the window for the blessings of Bridget as she passes through. Each of these ritualistic observations is a symbol of the same thing, the remembrance of the warmth of the waxing sun that is growing stronger with each passing day. In the dark time of the winter while the ground around us is still and sleeping, frozen and blanketed by snow, it is important to remember that there is always the hope of life. The aspect of the Goddess that sparks the light back into the darkness is the Maiden. She is the one who lights the candles or wears the representative crown of candles in the rituals. It is she who is ripe and ready to bring the new into the next season transforming herself into the Mother. 'Imbolc' literally means “in the belly” (of the Mother). The womb of Mother Earth, hidden from our mundane sight, is stirring with the seeds of life. Through the warmth and strength of the sun, the promise will happen.

Imbolc Incense

3 parts Frankincense
2 parts Dragon’s Blood
½ part Red Sandlewood
1 part Cinnamon
a few drops of Red Wine

Burn this incense during your Imbolc ritual (February 2) to attune yourself with the symbolic rebirth of the Sun and coming of spring.

(Cunningham, Scott: *The Complete Book of Incense, Oils and Brews*)

Even in the bleak winter mother natures’ simple beauty can be found all around us.

CSQ Board of Trustees Update

Becky Starr

As is our tradition at CSQ, three of the six at-large board positions were up for election this year at Spring Quest. Members with terms ending were Christine Ahrens, Raven and Tim Woody. Christine Ahrens and Raven are automatically on the board by virtue of being Co-directors for Spring Quest 2007. Elected by unanimous approval for the open at-large positions were Tim Woody - Hillsborough, NC; Stephanie Taylor - Durham, NC; and Maddy Shenk - Chapel Hill, NC. Their terms started at the end of Spring Quest and run for two years – until Spring Quest 2008.

- Stephanie Taylor (above) joined the pagan community while at Elon College in 1999 after studying as many religions as she could find resources on trying to find the one that matched what she truly believed. She is currently living in Durham with her two dogs. She is devoted to the Goddess Aine and is interested in Celtic Wicca and the world of the fa'ae. Steph has lived in various places in NC for most her life.

As a board member she is interested in working hard towards making the dream of land become a reality. She brings with her new ideas and new resources to aid in this and is looking forward to watching the pagan community grow.

- Maddy Shenk (Chantress Maddy) attended CSQ's Spring 2002 event and fell in love. She's been a member and attendee of the Spring event ever since. She is a 2nd Degree Priestess in the Sacred Order of Living Paganism, and is an Elder Pro-tem of their Durham, NC Circle. She is currently studying for ministry and ordination. She is a member of ERUUF (Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship) in Durham, and sings in the choir from time to time. Music and mead-making are her most cherished hobbies. She enjoys the challenges and rewards of being a single mom, living with her 12 year old daughter, Auliya, in Chapel Hill.

Maddy's vision for CSQ includes a continually evolving program for Children and Youth/Young Adults at the Spring event. Also, continuing to build strong community and encouraging active networking are some of the areas she sees as ways to make CSQ stronger and provide more for it's members. Community outreach may be one of the ways to accomplish broadening CSQ's membership. And, as many of Quest's members, she would love to see a permanent retreat center for CSQ.

Flames of Samhain

Stephanie Taylor

Flame of remembrance
Flame of the New Year
Flame of endings
Flame of new life
Flame of restoration
Flame of renewal
Flame of the circle
Flame of wisdom
Flame of freedom
Flame of counsel
Flame of clarity
Flame of joy
Flame of life

CAROLINA SPIRIT QUEST, INC.

Post Office Box 61335
Durham, NC 27715-1335

www.CarolinaSpiritQuest.org
Email: info@carolinaspiritquest.org

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