
MWSHS Student Newsletter

Spring 2018

MWSHS Profile: Suzanne Peterson, MH

"I have always been interested in natural healing and herbs," Suzanne Peterson noted, which passion eventually led to her to register as an M.H. student with the Midwest School of Herbal Studies. As she diligently applied herself in her studies, Suzanne found that "the program that MWSHS provides is an excellent way to learn. MWSHS is also associated with an active working clinic, so I expected the information to be practical and applicable."



Suzanne Peterson, MH,
with Her Lamb, Kal

Suzanne summarized features of MWSHS' program that she particularly appreciated as follows: "The structure of the program is very logical and builds well on previously acquired knowledge. It is challenging enough to be interesting with real world examples toward the end of the course. Being able to go at my own pace was very helpful, especially because I was interrupted for a while by family matters." She adds that "the workshops were also important for hands on learning and the practical workshop requirement is really important to actually learn how to apply the knowledge. I also appreciate all the information in the newsletters."

Saturday, May 5th Is "HerbDay!"

What Will *You* Be Doing on that Day to Educate the Public about the Healing Power of Herbs?

(See <http://herbday.org>)

Suzanne applied herself in such a determined and dedicated fashion that she graduated from the M.H. Diploma Program in *less* than 2 years—a quite amazing accomplishment! "At this point, I feel that I can confidently work with people about their health issues and offer real solutions," she informs us. "Watching a loved one's arthritis pain lessen significantly was a real joy to me as was my own experience of significantly less painful female hormone cycles. Herbs are quite amazing!"

What does the future hold for Suzanne? "I definitely have found my education to be of great value already and want to share it with others. I plan to open an herbal apothecary on my farm (Azariah Acres Farm & Apothecary) on May 1st, 2018. I am also planting and nurturing extensive herb gardens to provide herbs for my apothecary as well as to provide a teaching area for people interested in natural healing. This is the beginning of what will (hopefully) grow into (Continued in Column Two)

Mid-2017 to Early-2018 Graduates

We offer congratulations to the following graduate of the Master-Herbalist Diploma Program:

Suzanne Peterson, MH (MWSHS)

We also offer congratulations to the following graduate of the Western-Herbalism Certificate Program:

Robin Mahoney, CH (MWSHS)

We also offer congratulations to the following graduates of the Asian Module of the M.H. Program:

Timothy England, CH (MWSHS)

Kylene Seres, CH (MWSHS)

We look forward to hearing more from these graduates as they apply their accumulated herbal knowledge in real-life situations!

Comments on the "Holistic Assessment Skills" Workshop of March 18th

Attendees of MWSHS' March workshop were abuzz with appreciation for the event! Here are some of their many comments:

"Wonderful! I learned a lot and became more inspired."

"A great opportunity to meet and network with other students."

"Can't wait to attend more workshops!"

Have you, dear student, found opportunity to attend an MWSHS workshop yourself as yet? If not, why not take the opportunity to register for the next available workshop? (See page two of this newsletter for details.)

MWSHS Profile (Continued from Column One)

a place for people to come and learn about natural healing and how they can use the bounty of our native plants—my especial focus—to improve their own lives. I will also be available as a consultant to guide them in their health journey."

It was a real pleasure working with Suzanne and we wish her all the best in how she applies what she has learned about the healing powers of plants!

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WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop (Course-Eight) credits toward the 2-year Master-Herbalist program. Each hour of *verified* attendance (per instructor-completed workshop-credit slips as supplied by MWSHS counts toward an equivalent hour of Workshop Category #3 credits (up to the student limit of 20 hours), unless another category is specified or unless one attends a particular workshop at one of these events that is *strictly* in one of these other categories. ***MWSHS-sponsored workshops are boxed and shaded.***

Workshops, Conferences, Lectures, & Events in Herbal Studies Across North America

April 28th, 2018. *“Holistic Assessment Skills” Workshop.* New Brighton MN. \$45. For more information, visit the MWSHS website at www.midwestherbalstudies.com and click under “Events.” Attendance at this workshop qualifies as 4 hours toward Workshop Category #2 (Holistic Assessment Skills).

May 20th, 2018. *“Wildcrafting & Processing Herbs” Workshop.* New Brighton MN. \$45. For more information, visit the MWSHS website at www.midwestherbalstudies.com and click under “Events.” Attendance at this workshop qualifies as 4 hours toward Workshop Category #3 (Misc. Herbal Therapy).

June 1st-4th, 2018. *“Medicines from the Earth Symposium,”* Black Mountain, NC. See www.botanicalmedicine.org

We are Happy to Announce that the School Has Made Arrangements with **Cynthia Lane, Ph.D.** of **Savanna Moon**, a 120-acre Wildlife Sanctuary in Wisconsin, to Offer MWSHS Students Various Opportunities for Fulfilling Workshop Credits in Wild-Plant Walks and Misc. Herbal Therapy. We Will Regularly Be Mentioning Dr. Lane’s Workshops and Course in Our Newsletters. Some Upcoming Events Include....

May 19th, 2018. *“Spring Flora,”* 1-4 PM, \$35-45 (sliding scale) www.savannamoon.org. This Workshop Counts as 3 Hours toward Our Workshop Category #2: Wild-Plant Walks.

June 8-10, 2018. *“Applied Botany for Practitioners,”* Starts Fri. Evening and Continues through Saturday and Sunday. Includes Camping Space with Access to Composting Outhouse and Outdoor Shower and Use of Communal Kitchen. A Limited Number of Shared or Private Rooms in the Farm House Onsite are Available for an Additional Cost of \$30-\$45 per Night. Also, there are Several Nearby Airbnb Sites. \$295 if Registered before April 15th; \$350 after this Date. www.savannamoon.org. This Workshop Counts as 17.5 Hours Total toward Our Workshop Category #2: Wild-Plant Walks and Category #3: Misc. Herbal Therapy, with the Split between These Categories Dependent upon Actual Field Time vs. Actual Classroom Time.

Oct. 25-29, 2018. American Herbalists Guild 29th Annual Symposium, Unicoi State Park & Lodge near **Helen, GA**. For more info, see www.americanherbalistsguild.com

“Where Do I Find Qualifying Workshops in My Local Area?”

Aside from the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, which lists resources from around the country of which we become aware, you can check with local, independently-owned health food stores and food co-ops, which may have bulletin boards or knowledgeable staff who may be aware of local teachers of holistic-assessment skills, herbal-medicine-making, or who may lead wild-plant walks. (Local nature centers, plant nurseries, greenhouses, horticultural clubs, and native-plant-appreciation societies may know of local wild-plant-walk instructors as well.) Finally, check the phone book for local naturopaths, herbalists, acupuncturists, and other holistic-health professionals who may be willing to mentor you on some of these skills or let you sit in with them while they assess clients with these skills.

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A Decade-and-a-Half of World-class Herbal Education!

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An Interview with Matthew Alfs, R.H., MWSHS Director, in Celebration of the Fifteen-Year Anniversary of the Midwest School of Herbal Studies

Here, now, as of March of 2018, the Midwest School of Herbal Studies celebrates a *decade-and-a-half as a provider of world-class herbal education!* In recognition of this milestone, we reproduce below an interview conducted by one of the MWSHS coordinators with the School's founder and director, Matthew Alfs, M.H., R.H., in which he reminisces about the School's founding, its journey since that time, and its role in providing a quality herbal education....

Birth of a Very Unique Herb School

Q. What Prompted You to Start an Herb School and How Did It Come About?

A. In the late 1990s, there were very, very few herbal-education schools in the United States, although some older ones had been running in Canada (I had earned my own master-herbalist diploma from one of them.) The schools that were in existence in the USA at this time were primarily regional-oriented schools situated in small buildings on herb farms that were usually limited to offering classes on herb identification, herb gardening, and medicine making and not by any means providing a clinical-level education.

Seeing this sorry state of clinical herbal education, I resolved to change it: I envisioned a distance-education School, with periodic "hands-on" workshops, in which the serious herbal student could achieve a world-class education in *clinical* herbalism. With that in mind, I began to write a curriculum revolving around what I was envisioning: The first volume, published in 2001, consisted of a field guide and historical monographs on the medicinal uses of 100 wild plants (this went out of print in 2008 in anticipation of an extensive revision and expansion that was eventually published in 2013 as *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest*). The next volume was *300 Herbs: Their Indications & Contraindications*, which was published in 2003. This consisted of both a materia medica and a repertory of 300 different herbs from the Western, Chinese, and Ayurvedic traditions. It remains the textbook for MWSHS students to this day and is also an assigned text in four other herbal-educational schools throughout the U.S. Finally, and also in 2003, a Master-Herbalist Diploma program of over 1,200 pages was completed and published! This program focused on the clinical uses of herbs per body system, but also provided an education in the development of Western and Asian herbal systems, botany, nutrition, holistic-assessment skills, herb-drug

interactions, and the "ins" and "outs" of analyzing a case and developing healing strategies for such.

Once we found a site for our office and clarified our exempt status with the state of Minnesota, we began distributing our educational materials to eager students in 2003, preparing and guiding these students to become world-class herbalists—to our great satisfaction and delight!

Establishment of the MWSHS Clinic

Q: What Occurred in 2004 that Enabled the School's Educational Program to Find a Real-life Outplay?

A: That was the year in which we established the MWSHS clinic (the Midwest Herbs & Healing center), an integrative, natural-therapies center that we attached to the School offices. Since that time, this center grew to serve the public with, not only my own services as a clinical herbalist, but also the services of a naturopath, an acupuncturist, a homeopath, a massage therapist, a shiatsu therapist, an aromatherapist, and a holistic psychologist.

Since the founding of the Midwest Herbs & Healing center, those of us who work in the clinic have witnessed an amazing confirmation of the healing properties of herbs as outlined in the School program: Indeed, many *thousands* of sufferers of a variety of different maladies have embarked on a journey of genuine healing by means of the skillful application of herbs and other natural therapies by our seasoned clinicians!

Vital Role of the MWSHS Coordinators

Q. What Role Have the MWSHS Coordinators Played in the Success of the School and of its Students?

A: They have played a vital, irreplaceable role! MWSHS coordinators grade student lessons, prepare the students' grade documents, assemble programs for mailing to new or progressing students, contribute to the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, answer phone calls and emails from students and from inquirers of our programs, market our programs via phone calls to inquirers, coordinate our workshops, manage student files, and perform countless other functions!

Our original student coordinator, Deborah Loveland, worked with me from 2000-2002 as a clinic assistant in an integrative, natural-therapies clinic owned by a university in which I was practicing (this was in Woodbury, MN), during which time we became fast friends. In 2003, she was kind enough to accept a position as a part-time

coordinator with the School despite working full-time at another job. Deb and I still have fond memories of doing a skit at the School's very first workshop for the students demonstrating the proper *and improper* ways of developing a rapport with clients who seek one's services as an herbal counselor. Some of the lines in that skit were so humorous that we almost broke down laughing while we were doing it! (In fact, if memory serves me correctly, I think that we *did* break down laughing!)

Succeeding Deborah in that position (as she moved on to greater responsibilities in her full-time employment) was Sara Ruiz, who had also worked with me at the natural-therapies clinic in Woodbury. Sara came on as student coordinator in 2004 and served ably in that position until the last part of 2005, when she moved on to focus on finishing her schooling to become a dietitian, in which capacity she now serves in the community. We introduced the students to Sara in the Summer, 2004 issue of our *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, in which I wrote: "Those of you who attended the June herb walk got the opportunity to meet Sara: Clever, hardworking, good-humored, and soft-spoken, she has already demonstrated herself to be a tremendous asset to MWSHS, and we are very happy to have her on our team. Thanks, Sara, for the 'go-getter' spirit you bring to MWSHS!"

Succeeding Sara was Laurie Swadner, who has served most capably as Senior Student Coordinator since late 2005—ten full years now! Many of the current students know Laurie as their coordinator from her regular calls to check on their progress and to answer questions or concerns about student life (which is the aspect of Laurie's work here at MWSHS that she enjoys the most)! Laurie also served as office manager for our clinic until 2012 and was responsible for much of the clinic's growth and success. Our debt to Laurie is *tremendous*, indeed!

Kara Carper came on as Assistant Student Coordinator in January of 2007, as the School was growing in leaps and bounds and additional help was needed to effectively serve our students. Kara, a licensed nutritionist, did a lot for the School in our outreach to inquirers, as well as in grading student lessons, preparing many of the course-completion documents for the students, and maintaining student records. Smart, capable, and possessed of a very pleasant personality, Kara was a wonderful addition to the team here at MWSHS! Sadly for us, she had to leave the School to raise her newborn daughter (who is now a bright, beautiful young girl) in 2012. With her amazing talents, however, Kara has written and hosted a radio show here in the Twin Cities that is one of the most popular shows on the station on which it airs and also serves as licensed nutritionist at a nearby clinic.

Joining MWSHS as assistant student coordinators over the next couple of years were Deborah Garrido (in 2008) and, eventually, Annika Christensson (in 2011)—both of whom worked diligently as assistant coordinators for the

School, as well as serving as clinic assistants in our natural-therapies clinic. While Deborah had to leave the School to raise newborn twins and to finish her schooling as a nurse practitioner, Annika remains with us to this day and her pleasant personality and resourcefulness have been a blessing to both our staff here and to our many students.

With the student growth we have experienced over the last few years, however, we recently hired yet another assistant coordinator to grade lessons and to prepare grade documents.

In truth, the School would not be able to function without our dedicated, hard-working coordinators! *Thank you so very much, ladies!*

Western-Herbalism Certificate Program Added in 2007

Q. How Did the School's Educational Efforts Diversify in 2007?

A. By 2007, we had been deluged with requests on the part of health-care professionals for a shorter version of the program that emphasized simply the herbs commonly used in the USA and Canada and excluding lesser-known herbs from other countries. Realizing that this was a reasonable request, we spun off the Western-Herbalism module of the Master-Herbalist Diploma program into a separate "Western-Herbalism Certificate Program" later in that year, which we designed to be able to be completed in about a year. This was gratefully received by health-care professionals as well as by many other busy persons who wished to focus on the commonly-used American herbs. Since this shorter program's inception, a goodly number of medical doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and massage therapists have studied herbal therapy by means of it, finding that they have benefited greatly by what they have learned. I want to shout out here a special "thank you" to all such healthcare professionals for making this program a very large success!

Later in that same year, we re-arranged the Master-Herbalist Diploma program so that students would proceed to study the various streams of herbalism *separately* and *successively* instead of *all at one time* as was done in the older version of the program. This adjustment allowed for greater focus and fewer distractions and was warmly received by our student body.

Thriving in a Tight Economy

Q. What Do You Think Has Enabled the School to Grow and to Thrive in This Tight Economy While So Many Other Natural-Healing Schools Have Bit the Dust?

A. While the Great Recession and its aftermath have been responsible for the demise of a number of natural-healing schools (most notably, Clayton College of Natural Health and the Global College of Natural Medicine), the

Midwest School of Herbal Studies has registered a *greater amount of students each and every year that we have been in existence!*

I believe that *our integrity* and *our transparency* have been major factors in our success as a School: For example, we've stated on our website from Day One that the reward that we offer is a master-herbalist's diploma (similar to a master-gardener's or master-chef's diploma) and not a master's-level degree, clarifying the difference in detail. Contrast this to some other natural-healing schools who claim to offer accredited master's-level "degrees" when in reality their "accreditation" lacks government recognition and comes only from "accreditation" mills that have been set up simply to offer such an empty backing to schools such as these! While we could have gone the latter route, we made the firm decision not to do so right from the beginning, feeling that it would have been deceptive and disingenuous.

The schools to which I've just referred are typically not listed on the educational resources page of the American Herbalists Guild (www.americanherbalist.com)—the first and major association of practicing herbalists in the USA—and understandably so. However, we have been listed on the AHG's educational page since our inception and have been for quite some time *a member school* of this prestigious organization.

I think that the *quality of our course materials* has also played a major role in our success as a School. All of these materials are original to our School, as mentioned in the first part of this interview, rather than being a mishmash of herbal books from a variety of authors (many of whom are not even clinical herbalists) that lack any real cohesion, which latter curriculum is true of so many other natural-healing schools. Students of ours who have taken coursework from other schools have consistently informed us that our section on holistic-assessment skills is the most extensive and well-presented that they have ever seen! Unlike many other schools, too, we offer extensive material on nutrition, herbal formulation, the "ins" and "outs" of using herbs when pharmaceuticals are being utilized, and provide a good number of actual case histories from our clinic evincing the healing potential of herbs.

Recent Developments and Objectives for the Future

Q. What Have Been Some Recent Developments with the School that Have Sparked Your Enthusiasm? Also, What Objectives Do You Have in Mind for the School's Future?

A. I am excited about the establishment of our new landing page at www.mwhherbalstudies.com and the nice summary of our educational program that appears there and which will soon feature a video overview of our program. This new landing page will be used in our increased marketing from 2018 onward.

Another goal we have is to provide a *greater number of short* workshops in the place of the *less-frequent* and *longer* workshops that we have held in the past. Workshops need to be shorter, we have found, because people are more and more committed to work and to other responsibilities than ever before and cannot afford to spend a whole weekend—or even a whole day—at a workshop, as they used to be able to do before the Great Recession. Yet, we have also discovered, our workshops need to be *more frequent* in order to keep our fine students in regular touch with the School and *with their fellow students* and to enable them to practice more consistently the skills they are learning from the course materials. Finally, in our greater emphasis on more regular contact with our students, we have been sending more frequent “interim” newsletters their way and have been happy to learn of the positive reception therefrom.

In summing up, on a personal level I'm hoping that the next fifteen years will prove to be even more enjoyable for me than the previous fifteen years have been!

MWSHS Coordinator: Thank you, Director Alfs, for Your Insights on the Birth and Growth of the Midwest School of Herbal Studies. This Has Been Really Interesting!

MWSHS Director: It's been my great pleasure.



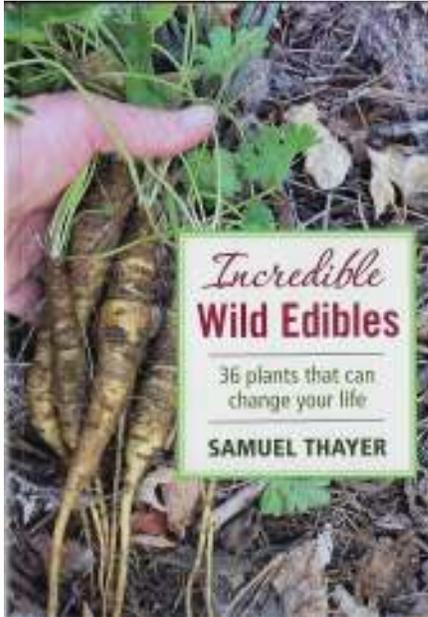
IMPORTANT UPCOMING ENVIRONMENTAL DATES

April 22nd, 2018 - EARTH DAY

April 27th, 2018 - ARBOR DAY
(Plant a Tree!)

BOOK REVIEWS

Thayer, Samuel. *Incredible Wild Edibles. 36 Plants that Can Change Your Life*. Bruce, WI, Forager's Harvest, 2017, softcover, 479 pp., heavily & beautifully illustrated.



This is the third installment in Samuel Thayer's informative and very readable series of highly illustrated books on wild-plant foraging.

After a very lucid introduction on the various aspects of foraging (ethics, legality, identification, etc.), Thayer proceeds to monograph 36 different edible plants in great detail and illustrates each entry with clear, well-angled color photographs.

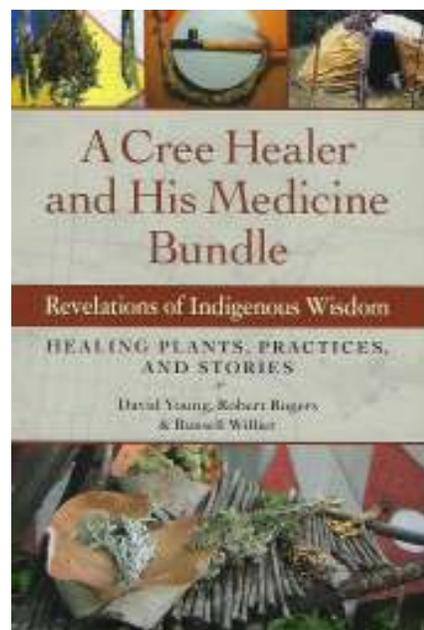
As a longtime wild-foods forager, I was delighted to find Thayer covering some of my favorite edible wild plants: mulberry, chickweed, dewberry, chufa (nut sedge), gooseberry, mint, rose, purslane, violet, wintercress, and one of my all-time cherished fruits, persimmon (which, unfortunately, does not grow wild in my own state of Minnesota). The book ends with a very thoughtful essay on ecoculture that echoes many of my own thoughts and feelings on the subject.

This newsletter has previously reviewed Samuel Thayer's other two books, *The Forager's Harvest* (in our Winter 2008-2009 issue) and *Nature's Garden* (in our Autumn 2010 issue). It can assuredly be said that all three of Thayer's books bring a fresh, hands-on perspective to foraging, with little or no overlap between them. They are well worth acquiring by any herbalist or herbal student and certainly hold treasured spaces in my own, 4,000-volume home library.-- Reviewed by Matthew Alfs

Young, David; Rogers, Robert; and Willier, Russell. *A Cree Healer and His Medicine Bundle: Revelations of Indigenous Wisdom (Healing Plants, Practices, and Stories)*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2015, softcover, 223 pp.

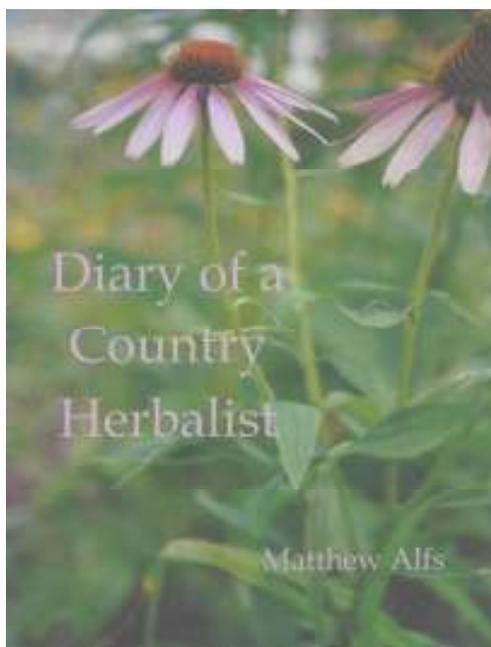
This remarkable book--the combined efforts of a Cree healer (Russell Willier), a retired clinical herbalist (Robert Rogers), and an anthropologist (David Young)--presents an intimate sharing of a Cree healer's medicine bundle, an unusual undertaking for a Native-American healer. This sharing, with accompanying short monographs on each plant by co-author Robert Rogers, takes up all of chapter five. Among the 60 different herbs covered in this chapter we find many that are little known to most modern Western herbalists, including *Aster puniceus*, (purple-stemmed aster) *Amelanchier alnifolia* (Saksaktoon berry), *Cornus stolonifera* (red-osier dogwood), and *Sorbus americana* (mountain ash). Two or more color photos typically accompany each of the monographs.

Chapter one details Willier's fascinating life as a healer, while chapter two takes the shape of an ecological plea against the white man's destruction of habitat by means of logging, burns, swamp drainage, and road development. Chapter three relates some of Willier's favorite healing stories, while chapter four describes a field trip for herb collecting by Willier and co-author David Young. A concluding chapter on the efficacy of Native-American medicine presents case-study reports on psoriasis patients accompanied by a progression of color photographs evincing the healing power of medicinal plants and sweat lodges. Truly, this is a most wonderful book! --Reviewed by Matthew Alfs



New Edition of Director Alfs' *Diary of a Country Herbalist* Available

Some readers of this newsletter may recall that Director Alfs issued a preliminary, limited-edition of his newest book, *Diary of a Country Herbalist*, in 2016, which was highlighted in an interview with him that was reproduced in the Spring, 2016 issue of this newsletter. The book was not made available to the general public at that time, but only to students and clinic patients. Since then, the book has been revised and otherwise improved with the addition of a *detailed index* to the plants and health conditions mentioned therein and is *now widely available, including even being carried by Amazon.com*.



We reproduce below portions of the interview with Director Alfs that appeared in the abovementioned newsletter, updated to include current details....

MWSHS Coordinator: I understand that this book is somewhat different from previous books you have written. How so?

Director Matthew Alfs: Well, first of all, let me mention that it *is* similar in that it deals heavily with edible and medicinal wild plants like my previous books and the herbal-studies program I wrote for MWSHS students. In fact, it details the gifts that *over 75 different wild plants* offer in the ways of food, medicine, and utility. The major difference is that this book is a novel—a work of historical fiction.

MWSHS Coordinator: A novel? Historical fiction?

Director Matthew Alfs: That's right. Years ago—as I explain in the foreword to the book—a friend encouraged me to share the things that are important to me in a story format that people of all ages and educational levels could read and enjoy. This book is the result. As it stands, it is designed to appeal to a much broader audience than I've typically found and especially to lovers of fiction. It is, however, an *educational* novel, as I mentioned earlier, which is quite a unique approach for a work of fiction.

MWSHS Coordinator: You mentioned a bit earlier that it is also in the realm of *historical* fiction. Could you tell us something about that?

Director Matthew Alfs: I'd be happy to do that. I think I'll use my summary from the back of the book, which I believe does a good job in outlining the story. So....

The setting for this heartwarming novel is the upper-Midwestern U.S.A., where, in the mid-1980s, herbalist “Sunflower” Sam Rogers and his schoolteacher wife, April, find themselves living an enviable life of devotion to simplicity, chronicled daily in a diary of their second year as homesteaders on a large tract of land known as “Weedhaven.”

While Sam busies himself educating folks in the area about the power of wild plants to nourish and to heal and April applies herself to shaping the young minds in her care, the couple still find time to traverse the length and breadth of Weedhaven on an almost daily basis—treasuring not only its fruits and beauty, but also their own growing love in the midst of this most precious Eden. Along the way, they adopt a pair of bear cubs, befriend a flock of crows, and help young and old alike to look at life anew.

Still, all is not bliss: With a down-home kind of spunk, Sam and April brave several personal tragedies, a deadly flu epidemic, and the prejudices of those unacquainted with the wisdom of simple living. All the while, they continue to expound the riches of country life to city friends and relatives, the power of herbal medicine to all who will hear, and the incomparable joy of wild-plant foods to those still young at heart.

MWSHS Coordinator: Thank you for your time, Director Alfs. I'm sure that all of the students will find this new book to be of value—not only to themselves, but also to friends and relatives who may be curious as to why they are so interested in seeking the healing properties of wild plants. I can see, in this regard, that it would make a wonderful gift.

In Coming Issues

* *Student & Alumni Profiles*

* *Book Reviews*

* *News & Views*

* *Informational Articles*

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To: