Ecotone Groups Share Insights
By Gloria Rivera, IHM

At our community days last summer, the Sustainability Task Force invited us to consider being part of an “ecotone” group to explore some of the topics that had surfaced – 32 people said yes to this invitation and gathered to learn more about biomimicry and the process we would be using to pursue some of these topics. This was the genesis of three Ecotone Groups’ choosing: New Story, Poverty and Food as the focus of their exploration.

Twenty-three people plunged into this venture asking Nature to share her wisdom. Eventually each group came up with guiding questions: 1. As global citizens, how might IHMs embrace a “living economy for a living Earth” as part of the movement to eliminate poverty in all its forms? 2. How do we raise our consciousness about the impact of our food choices, leading to the transformation of the global food system, for the benefit of the whole Earth community? 3. How does nature’s deep design live in us?

This past May, we gathered again, and each Ecotone Group shared the results of their exploration. At the end of the meeting we asked the question: what was this experience like for you? Here are some responses we received:

I had several stimulating conversations as we explored the many responses we had in answering our question. Our unique life experiences were the answers. Trust God is present in everything and everywhere. BJ Schlachter

With deep gratitude and awe, I reflect on these days as true gift. Each and every person involved in this Biomimicry process these past nine months delved into the unknown and were willing to be changed. I am most grateful for their insights and sharing, for their challenges and questions. We can move forward as IHM community with hope and commitment to sustainability, justice, and peace. Alice Baker

Participating in the research, discussions, readings, reflections and shared activities of the poverty eco-tone group contributed to a series of ‘welcomed’ life-altering experiences for me. With new insight and deeper love of humanity and of our “Home!”, I accept and embrace the urgent need for radical transformation of human expectations and opportunities for all; wise stewardship of Earth and its resources; and loving regard as necessary for the well-being of this generation and those to follow. Mary Agnes Ryan, IHM

The new challenge of Poverty-Ecotone work was to walk the path with a new alert system....the Biomimicry outlook/“model”, and so "tuning-in" required a deeper dive and wider eye to the
world we inhabit together. Linking two frameworks – structural analysis and systems view – we took some small steps, and the characteristic "IHM gifts" came forward – passion, mind, vision, creativity, energy. I love it all, am deepened by it, but humanity must make a very Great Turning and I plan to stay “tuned in.” Kathleen Schultz, IHM

Openness to the future is one of the most beautiful qualities of our IHM community. This work was challenging and inspiring. Our call to grow into cooperative action with Earth today was seen not only as a way to sustainability but was rooted in Teresa of Avila’s perspective and our human path to soul. Annemarie Askwith, IHM

Taking time to be with Teresa of Avila and the members of my ecotone group was delightful. Teresa, with the certitude of experience models a process for us, a journey that enables us to negotiate our own journey through the self to explore the links between God and human history. Vita Pierce, IHM

I’m grateful to have experienced the freshness of new ideas, visions and perspectives. I hope our community will continue to explore the wonder, beauty and depth of our precious Web of Life. Joan Chicoine, IHM

Being part of the Ecotone Food Group was an experience of shared purpose and learning with deeply committed women striving for justice and peace in our widely diverse communities. Being part of a farming community for more than 50 years, my work in this group awaken the connections between our care for Earth and our responsibilities to feed ourselves. Margaret Clor, IHM Associate

In working with the Food Ecotone Group I experienced both in-depth learning and coming together with others who shared their own richness on this topic. We worked in a spirit of service, to make a difference to our IHM community and our earth community. Agnes Anderson, IHM

I loved the people in my group. We grew in consciousness and awareness. Joan Kusak, IHM

The readings and books for the Ecotone Group were very interesting and gave me lots to think about and to "chew on.” Mary Ann Penner, IHM

Group composition could not have been more perfect. It lent itself to feeling comfortable in conversation and sharing. I will greatly miss this group. The articles and resources brought to the table were excellent and broadened my perspective on biomimicry and related topics. I feel that there will continue to be many more conversations before we are transformed in this new era that we are living in. As to my reason for joining the group was to perceive what can be done to get to
the roots of poverty, beginning with our own city Monroe. We keep giving donations but POVERTY STANDS WHERE IT IS...what can we do about it? There was so much more related to our meetings. Since it was a process and continues to be one, I will continue to take it all in contemplating on our discussions and changing my own life in matters of this regard. Diann Cousino, IHM

We invite you to visit the Ecotone exhibit tables during Assembly-Chapter to learn more about the work of the three groups. Information and resources for the entire process will be available on the IHM website in the near future; look for details in an upcoming electronic communication.

- Sustainability Task Force