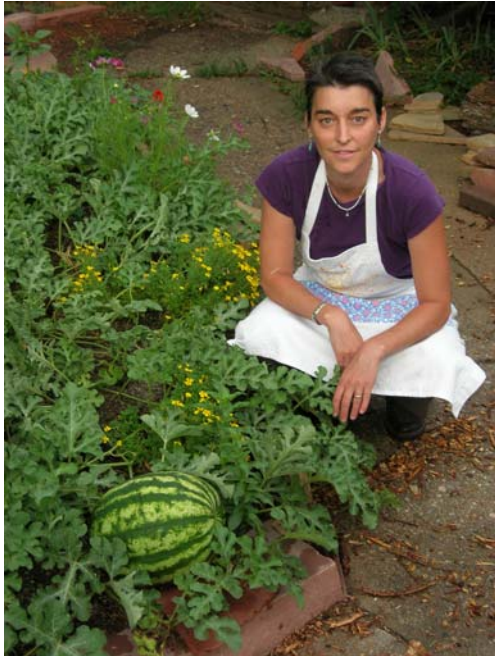


At Home>>Conservation Starts Here!



Kelly Simmons Lives a Sustainable Life and So Can You!

By Jessica Hall, Center for ReSource Conservation

“Somebody has to lead. Somebody has to show that stuff can be done...and that it’s possible...and what is possible.”

Kelly Simmons, Director of the Boulder Sustainability Education Center and the fourth recipient of the “Emerging Leader of Boulder” award, is that someone. As I sit in her dining room, gazing out at her expansive, lively backyard, I am instantly inspired by the numerous ways one person can lead a more ecologically and socially sustainable life. Kelly happens to employ a lot of them because it matters. Being a “doer” and a mother, she can’t help but feel responsible for her impact on the environment and wants to look her son in the eyes and say she did everything she could.

The Boulder Sustainability Education Center (BSEC) is a local non-profit with a mission to serve as a local hub for hands-on, practical education in sustainable living, tailored to Boulder’s unique bioregion. Simmons’ hope is that people will walk away from her classes and workshops with more insight on how to change their values and their

behaviors and why this matters. “We can all begin to lead in our own way,” she says. “I have great faith in human ingenuity.”

Simmons goes on to add that “we can talk a lot about what is wrong and feel hopeless...but one of the driving forces of behavior is (our) values.” Simmons believes most of us have been raised with the values of efficiency, price, and convenience, and these three culprits are primarily responsible for many of our current issues, both locally and globally. She emphatically quips that change happens once we make a conscious, collective decision to shift our values.

One of the most common questions Simmons hears is: “How do you do it? I don’t have time.” Simmons’ reply? “I don’t have time either.” But Simmons will tell you that you don’t have to initiate change all at once to make a difference. The important thing to remember is that we’re all making mistakes and we’re all in this together. One small change at a time is all it takes. She’s no better than the person next to her. She just decided that “somebody’s got to step out and...take the risk.”

So, how *does* Simmons do it? It has taken years of small changes and bigger changes one at a time. Her family now relies on public transit, bikes, and Boulder Car Share for their transportation. Her extensive garden and fruit trees provide for their meals year round. Chickens give eggs and fertilizer. Bees offer honey and pollinate her plants and trees. She got an energy audit when she bought her home (<http://www.conservationcenter.org>) and continuously looks for ways to make her home more energy efficient. And of course, she recycles, composts, buys her clothes on consignment, and shops at the Farmer’s Market.

Over time, Simmons’ actions evoked curiosity throughout the community, and people began to ask her how they could have their own backyard chickens and bees, among other things. Pretty soon, Simmons realized there was a need for education and hands-on workshops to help lead individuals to sustainable action. So, she combined her lifelong passion to be a farmer and her innate ability to teach and created the Boulder Sustainability Education Center.

After a busy spring of teaching almost every weekend, Simmons is looking forward to downtime with her family. However, August is right around the corner, and with it, comes another round of classes and workshops. Some topics will include: Backyard Chickens, Home Cheese Making, Fruit Tree Grafting, Seed Saving, and Four Season Gardening. In the meantime, you can visit her website at www.bouldersustainability.org to learn how to get more involved.

As the Development Manager of the Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC), I was honored to have the opportunity to interview Simmons and be reminded that even one small change makes a difference in preserving our planet. And while we’re responsible for our own actions, we have resources like the BSEC, the CRC, and many more in Boulder to help us make better choices and slowly redefine our values. “Let’s start choosing different values,” she encourages. “Every little change is really important, and you can feel so good about it.”

<<in text box>>

If you would like to learn more about how to take action on making your life more sustainable like Kelly Simmons did, visit www.conservationcenter.org or call 303.441.4367. The Center for ReSource Conservation has the answers to your conservation questions on conserving water, energy, or reduce unnecessary waste!