

#143 Christmas Day 2009

On this day of giving and receiving gifts I want to mention some of the gifts I have appreciated the most.

The gift from the publisher of this newspaper to share ideas and plans on Greening Sullivan.

The gift of readers of this column who have offered to edit these columns, sent letters, e-mails and phone calls asking for more information, referrals to energy efficiency and renewable energy contractors, and informed me that they had just completed installing new insulation, windows, roofs, more efficient heating systems and renewable energy generation systems at their homes and businesses. It is my hope that this dialogue will gather more traffic and speed in 2010 and your commitment to purchase local energy savings products and locally installed renewable energy systems will grow by a factor of 5 or more in 2010.

For the beauty of this area we call home. Every season provides a daily reminder of the magnificence of our natural habitat. The winter blanket of snow and the strong, cold winter winds have opened vistas that allow us to see more of the angles and grades of the land, the architecture of trees and tree stands, fences of every kind, equipment, buildings of every shape, and views of animals enjoying the fine quality of brisk winter air. We had a marvelous, long, colorful autumn season that featured the special colors of autumn light, the deep enjoyment of harvesting crops and the connection with the soil as we prepared for winter's time of renewal. The unusually cold and above all, wet summer was difficult for farmers and many other businesses but there was still time to enjoy being outside to benefit from the innate need to connect with natural environments and it appears that farmers and other businesses through great effort and ingenuity did manage to bring in enough resources. The spring seems a long way off but I remember it as the time of new births on farms and in the forests and meadows, the excitement and sheer pleasure of planning the garden, starting seeds, moving transplants outside, feeling grateful that there was enough firewood to sustain the commitment not to use fossil fuels except for cooking and that the root cellar still held carrots and potatoes, apples, cabbage, turnips, beets and squash from the summer of 2008. The innumerable qualities of squash alone, so easy to grow, harvest and prepare in a variety of tastes and combination with other foods, is a personal best gift category.

For the gift of living in this time, in this place. History has never seen such privileged living as many of us enjoy. It may never be seen again unless we take up the challenge of altering our behavior. Current threats and opportunities are greater than in the past 1000 years. There is good and necessary work to do and momentum at the local level appears to be growing. This gift needs to be sustained and ramped up so that the great tug of warring interests in the seats and temples of power in our land are provided a majority vote for sustained, respectful relations with all people, nations, and the natural world.

It is a great truth that giving is receiving. With a little thought, each of us can make this promising truth a reality for others and ourselves.



