

1 SINGER'S VISION REVIVED IN THE HEART OF THE
2 ROCKY MOUNTAINS

3
4 When singer/songwriter John Denver's small
5 plane crashed into Monterey Bay in 1997, the
6 planet lost much more than a talented
7 musician. It lost an advocate, a visionary,
8 and most of all, a friend.

9 While most people know of Denver's love
10 for wildlife and the environment through
11 megahits such as "Rocky Mountain High" and
12 "Calypso," many don't know how committed
13 Denver was to putting his musical poetry
14 into action.

15 In 1976, Denver realized a boyhood
16 dream to bring people together to learn from
17 each other, and to connect with the earth.
18 Denver committed his personal resources and
19 partnered with teacher and Aikido master,
20 Tom Crum to establish the Windstar
21 Foundation on almost 1,000 acres of land in
22 Snowmass, Colorado. Windstar's chief mission
23 was to educate the public in making
24 responsible choices and taking action to
25 create a peaceful and environmentally
26 sustainable future.

27 Now, after a four-year respite
28 following Denver's untimely death, his
29 younger brother, Ron Deutschendorf, has
30 stepped up to the plate to once again turn
31 Windstar into a sanctuary for education,
32 growth, and inspiration based on Denver's
33 founding vision.

34 While Denver was alive, Windstar
35 thrived for many years as a center of
36 educational seminars and environmental
37 projects nestled in the heart of the Rocky
38 Mountains, aided by friends and many notable
39 celebrities who shared his commitment to the
40 environment. The popular *Choices for the*
41 *Future* symposiums drew thousands of
42 attendees over a ten year period and drew
43 nationwide publicity.

44 However, this time around,
45 Deutschendorf and the Board of Trustees are
46 reviving the Windstar Foundation by
47 enlisting the "grassroots" support of the
48 many Denver fans and friends of the
49 environment who have been active in keeping

50 John Denver's vision alive in the five years
51 since his death.

52 CEO Dan McCormick explains how Windstar
53 is shifting its emphasis in this second
54 phase of Windstar's existence, appropriately
55 called "And the Vision Goes Forward."

56 "Our goal is to transform Windstar from
57 an organization that has focused energy on
58 being a catalyst to one that conducts
59 activities demonstrating our commitment
60 toward the sustainability of this planet,"
61 McCormick says.

62 Windstar has always distinguished
63 itself from other environmental
64 organizations by adopting a holistic
65 approach to the projects and events it
66 supported, that is, the belief that
67 personal, social, and ecological concerns
68 are all necessary components to maintain
69 earth's sustainable future.

70 In keeping with this belief, Windstar
71 launched a global environmental children's
72 program, hosted ecology students from Moscow
73 University as part of a US/USSR exchange
74 program, and developed an environmental
75 program for disadvantaged urban youth.

76 Windstar instituted and supported
77 scientific ecology projects as well. Guided
78 by the late Buckminster Fuller, noted
79 architect, mathematician, and inventor of
80 the geodesic dome, Windstar designed and
81 developed a series of stable, self-
82 sustaining garden biodomes nationwide. Each
83 50-foot diameter biodome contained a passive
84 solar greenhouse with an integrated growing
85 system that could sustain a garden year
86 round and feed a family of four.

87 In 1980, the Foundation played a key
88 role in the passage of the Alaska National
89 Lands Conservation Act, which includes
90 protection of the controversial Arctic
91 National Wildlife Refuge.

92 Two decades after its inception, the
93 Windstar Foundation joined forces with the
94 Rocky Mountain Institute to buy a portion of
95 the land owned by the National Wildlife
96 Federation and officially establish the not-
97 for-profit Windstar Land Conservancy
98 foundation. The whale-shaped conservancy
99 land provides a safe refuge for wildlife

100 such as eagles, bears, fox and deer, and
101 serves as a main migration route for elk who
102 travel seasonally between habitats.

103 According to Executive Director Doug
104 MacDonald, "the unique combination of
105 symposium speakers, and today, the unique
106 content of the education program imparts a
107 sense of connectedness to the earth and to
108 each other that far surpasses pure
109 environmental education."

110 As a means toward achieving this end,
111 Windstar is expanding its network of
112 regional Connection Groups designed to carry
113 out action-oriented programs of an
114 educational nature that align with the
115 Windstar Foundation goal of raising
116 environmental awareness, developing
117 leadership potential, and creating more
118 involved, informed, and responsible
119 citizens.

120 Windstar is particularly focused on
121 reaching the minds and hearts of young
122 people, to "teach them more about their
123 responsibility in protecting our
124 environment, human relations, and culture
125 acceptance in a post-9/11 world," Dan
126 McCormick explains. The expansion of their
127 education programs primarily targets fourth,
128 fifth, and sixth graders.

129 The first phase of this expansion
130 program includes two week-long EARTHcamp
131 sessions held on the Conservancy grounds.
132 Each camp session offers children the chance
133 to experience and foster respect for
134 humanity and the environment and to learn
135 how they can make positive choices to effect
136 the world around them, all within the
137 context of a fun-filled week of science,
138 art, and drama.

139 Plans are for the EARTHcamp program to
140 expand to three other cities this year and
141 perhaps as many as twenty in the future.

142 Windstar also offers three
143 Environmental Studies Scholarships annually
144 for college students majoring in
145 environmental studies.

146 A spin-off educational program involves
147 the continued growth of a giant John Denver
148 Memorial Peace Cloth that travels to schools
149 and peace-related events worldwide.

150 Stretching approximately 1500 feet in
151 length, the Peace Cloth is a moving montage
152 of thousands of cloth pieces donated from
153 around the world, many beautifully stitched
154 or decorated in memory of Denver and his
155 dedication to peace.

156 The Peace Cloth is packaged and sent in
157 individual panels (each 50 feet in length)
158 to schools and events. An accompanying
159 detailed curriculum for grades 2 through 12
160 is available for download online. The
161 education curriculum is developed to instill
162 young people with an attitude of peace and
163 awareness of the environment in today's
164 complex world.

165 In addition to its education programs,
166 two mainstays of Windstar are its annual
167 volunteer weekend and open house.

168 The volunteer weekend is held each
169 spring to spruce up Windstar buildings and
170 grounds. An Open House and Silent Auction
171 are held in the fall in conjunction with a
172 week-long series of events in Aspen,
173 Colorado commemorating Denver's life and his
174 commitment to the environment.

175 Both events offer Windstar members and
176 supporters a tangible way to be personally
177 involved in preserving Windstar and continue
178 Denver's founding vision.

179 Deutschendorf, McCormick, and the
180 Windstar Board of Trustees also hope to re-
181 institute the *Choices* symposiums within a
182 few years.

183 When asked about his plans for
184 continuing his brother's boyhood vision, Ron
185 Deutschendorf responded, "as far as my
186 vision, I think it would be more honest to
187 say it is "Our Vision," referring to
188 Windstar's many grassroots supporters. "I am
189 just a spark that helped re-start the fire
190 we all share about our future."

191 "We have a wonderful board and now
192 soon, a group of advisors and connections,"
193 Deutschendorf continues, "all of which will
194 help shape our joint future to make our
195 home, this planet, a place of peace,
196 understanding and good will among all, where
197 there will be a future for all."

198 For more information about the Windstar
199 Foundation, please visit their web site at

200 www.windstar.org or contact Jeanie Tomlinson
201 at WindstarCO@wstar.org.

202 For information on the Peace Cloth
203 educational curriculum, go to:
204 <http://www.johndenverpeacecloth.com/education.html>
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209 [Illustrations: X prints, 1 pull-quote,

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211 [Print A: see attached]

212 Photo: Dreux DeMack

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214 [Print B: see attached]

215 Photo: Dreux DeMack

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217 [Pull-quote 1:]

218 "As far as my vision, I think it would be
219 more honest to say it is "Our Vision"! I am
220 just a spark that helped re-start the fire
221 we all share about our future."

222 -- Ron Deutschendorf

223

224

225 --Debbie King is a science writer in
226 Seattle, Washington.