

Update on the Alumni Web Site Project

Thanks to a generous grant from the Waldorf Schools Fund, we're getting ready to launch the alumni section of the [Why Waldorf Works](#) web site.

In January we were fortunate in having a freshman from Bennington College join our office staff for five weeks as part of his required work internship to help in the preliminary research of how to proceed. Henry Lyons is a Waldorf graduate from the Summerfield Waldorf School. He enthusiastically identified many online services that might be employed in building a specific page or place on the Why Waldorf Works web site specifically for Waldorf Alumni. He also spoke to many Waldorf Alums as he stayed in a house in Hillsdale rented by five Waldorf Alumni from different parts of the continent. He carried on an informal focus group dialogue with them. Henry produced a report identifying alternatives with researched price tags affixed and an articulated design concept for the home page of the proposed Alumni page.

Later in the year we found a young Waldorf graduate from the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School and the Honolulu Waldorf School, Samantha Stier. Samantha took the research project up with enthusiasm and dedication. She interviewed twenty-six graduates at length, sometimes more than once. The graduates ranged in age from 18 to 72. Her research included existing online systems already in use by Waldorf Alumni to find other alums and to keep in touch.

There was enthusiasm for the web site and much interest expressed in using an AWSNA site for a gathering place with help in reconnecting with the school of origin. Samantha had good ideas for gathering names and information from graduates and also for making it easy for schools to harvest those graduates for their own records from the web site. She took copious notes and recorded many good suggestions directly from graduates. She analyzed the information by age groups identifying different needs from different times of graduation.

Important reactions from the direct interviews (which took the place of and were more effective than focus groups) included those that a specifically Waldorf-based site would be welcomed and used. Existing venues for networking like "FaceBook" and "MySpace," though used by many Waldorf Alumni, are unsatisfactory in ways that an exclusive site would solve. There was also enthusiasm expressed for assisting in re-connecting with the schools of origin in cases of long lack of contact.

In addition to invaluable information and directions for a final design of such an Alumni Place on the web site, we now have a list of alumni who were flattered to be included, who are willing to help in a soft launch and in refinement, and also who would be willing to help in spreading the word and building the data base of Waldorf Alumni. We're now in the process of consolidating the abundant information gathered, pursuing a final design using the preliminary work done, and hope to have an Alumni page on the web site by January of 2009.

We'll keep you posted! Please send us your ideas to [Why Waldorf Works](#).