



The Men's Leadership Alliance
2115 Poplar Ave.
Boulder, CO 80304

2009 Program Schedule

Please check out our website for more detailed descriptions, and remember to register early to secure your spot in one or more of these enriching opportunities. Also, if you have a strong desire or idea for a program not currently scheduled, please contact the MLA office with your ideas

Crossroads in the Wilderness
August 7-9, 2009
near Boulder, Colorado

Wilderness Camping Trip for Boys
Young Men ages 13-18
July 30-August 2, 2009
Sapphire Canyon, near Estes Park, Colorado

The Art of Leadership Training Program
July 17-24, 2009
Sapphire Canyon, near Estes Park, Colorado

Tennessee Men's Gathering
Sometime in May - dates will be determined soon
near Nashville, Tennessee

Bridging the Lineage
A Father and Adult Son Weekend Retreat - ages 18+
February 27- March 1, 2009
CalWood Retreat Center, near Boulder, Colorado

Colorado Winter Spirit Camp
February 6-8, 2009
CalWood Retreat Center, near Boulder, Colorado

New Pathways for Fathers and Sons (Ages 9-12)
July 9-12, 2009
Sapphire Canyon, near Estes Park, Colorado

Vision Fast for Men
June 19-27, 2009
Sapphire Canyon, near Estes Park, Colorado



MLA Newsletter

Issue 5 • Fall 2008

Dear Supporters of the Men's Leadership Alliance:

I have been thinking a great deal about the concept of change lately. A few weeks ago I was deeply inspired by the words of Alice Walker in an interview on Democracy Now. During the interview she read a part of a letter she wrote to President-elect Obama. Here are a few of the words she shared: "This is how change happens, though. It is a relay race, and we're very conscious of that, that our job really is to do our part of the race, and then we pass it on, and then someone picks it up, and it keeps going. And that is how it is. And we can do this, as a planet, with the consciousness that we may not get it, you know, today, but there's always a tomorrow."

This past week at the Guide Council meeting, I also was inspired and awed once again. Some of these men have been with the MLA since the beginning, and others are newer to the room. Either way, I am inspired by the way they dare to open their hearts so they can embrace this work by stepping into the unknown and flux of change, listening to what is being called for, and continuing to step forward not knowing exactly what will come, but trusting in the hearts and intention and belief guiding this process that leads to designing and implementing what we are offering to the world.

And the energy and enthusiasm was flowing out the doors. This is an exciting time to be a part of the MLA. We are in a state of change, and while we continue to keep an ear to the ground for what is coming down the tracks, there is also a great deal of building momentum and forward movement. The Guide Council and Founders are working to paint a new tapestry, one where we are honoring and bridging from the places of our past, using those ways and moments to inform and guide what is currently being planned, all leading to long term visions of what will come next.

Now is the time to become more active in this Alliance. Please read through this newsletter to see all the exciting things that are happening. From programs planned for 2009, to stories from men after attending

a MLA program, to new ways to actively participate and give to the sustainability of our organization in this work, to the impending web-based Social Network that will aid in fostering a continuing sense of Brotherhood and community spanning across all our alumni, the hope for this newsletter is to help you feel the energy and momentum that we on the Guide Council are feeling.

This is how change happens. And we need your help to continue in this journey, to continue to connect all the men who are already a part of this Brotherhood, and to continue to be able to reach out to more men and women who feel that internal hunger to genuinely connect with themselves and the people in their worlds. There is much going on and many ways to support and encourage the sustainability and growth of this work. Under the example the Obama campaign set for us, we value and desire your ongoing input into our future, and we need your continuing support of the work through a monetary donation. Even giving \$5, \$10, \$25 a month, is invaluable. Already men and women all across the nation have been entering into active dialogue with us about the future of the MLA, showing that this work and the change that it brings to their lives remains actively on the forefront of their minds and hearts, and daring to co-create ways to continue to provide containers for others.

We are striving to answer the call of what is needed now in this time in this world. In order to bring all of this to fruition we need your trust, continued input, and your financial support. I ask that you join us now; this is the time to become a more active participant in our joint work in this world.

Many blessings to you and yours during this coming winter season.

With humility and love -

Jason Geoffrion
Managing Director



Mike Johnson Reflects on his Oregon Spirit Camp Experience

Why did you want to help bring an MLA Spirit Camp to Oregon?

It was Todd Smiedendorf who originally brought the idea to my attention. Todd used to live in Oregon, and during that time he brought so much to my life, as well as introducing me to the MLA. He saw enough in me to know that I would be open to coming to Sapphire Canyon, and that I needed it. I didn't really understand what I was getting into, but my time in the Canyon really opened me up and changed my life. Coming back to Oregon I realized that there were over a dozen guys that I see every day with whom I wanted to share that kind of experience. Besides bringing it to other men, having a Spirit Camp here was a way to continue my experiences in the Canyon and keep the connection flowing with MLA. I also wanted to encourage and support my friendship with Todd and keep that energy alive. He and I had a men's group in Oregon for a short time before he moved to Colorado and there was something that seemed unfinished. Todd saw the need to bring what the MLA has to offer to these men in Oregon, and he called and asked if I would help bring the Spirit Camp to Oregon, and of course I was in.



What was the most meaningful part of the weekend for you?

Really the most meaningful part was the feeling that comes at the end - once again I was surprised, and not surprised, that it all worked out. There was definitely an initial apprehension and fear when leading people you know down a road where you don't know exactly what it will turn out to look like. And of course, it turned out exactly as it needed to, and it was wonderful. One aspect that was really beneficial for me was realizing once again that every man really is an ally. No matter what, in some way shape or form, we are all connected. All men have the same dreams and fears. I was overwhelmed by the feeling of being blessed and thankful that this connection is real. With anything that is this big and powerful I sometimes wonder if it is real. These guys were real for me already in my everyday life, and the Oregon Spirit Camp brought in that real brotherhood connection and deepened my relationship with these men. And the really exciting part is that we are developing an on-going small men's group, as well as planning for another Spirit Weekend sometime in the Spring!

How was it to have your brother attending the weekend with you?

It was surprisingly easy, in a way. I didn't think it would be that easy. It was my desire to have him come to Sapphire in 2005 with me, my second time, to resolve some of our lifelong issues. However, at that time there wasn't enough of a trust between us yet. At the OSC it was really wonderful to discover once again how much of a real connection Warren and I have. In a way it is not anything we didn't already know. We have had recent experiences with isolation from each other, and this Camp capped off our efforts to come back together. This sealed the deal for us. Part of my frustration in my family is that sometimes I feel like I am not seen for who I am, but here my brother really saw who I am, and was able to see that I am okay, and tell me that I am okay. My brother is very important to me, and hearing his affirmations of me was exactly what I needed. What we think of each other is really important, and he was able to look at me and say, 'wow, this is what you are capable of', and he got to see me in a mature setting with other men. Together we got to discover that we are brothers and men, and no longer child brothers. It was a very profound experience.

MLA Alumni Running in Arizona Marathon



Gay Mayer and his grandchild

nearby it is a great reason to head out from New Jersey in January. It is the only time he even thinks about running this far!

The Rock 'N Roll Marathon (and half marathon) is January 18th, 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona. Two of our Brothers, Colby Lewis and Gay Mayer, are running in the race. Colby is running the full marathon at 26 plus miles. This is his first marathon! Gay will be running the half marathon. This is Gay's fourth time in the Phoenix event – with two grandchildren living

If you are in the area, or feel like flying in, stop by to cheer on Colby and Gay. Or, join the race yourself. There is still time to sign up - www.rnrraz.com. Both Colby and Gay are working to make this race a way to raise funds for the MLA. You too can join in the race, or support them in their race. Further details on how you can support them and the MLA will come shortly after the New Year.

The event is filled with fun for the whole family. The only problem is to assume that it is warm in Arizona in January – two years ago it was 31 degrees at the start of the race. As the day progressed and the sweating runners began dropping clothes along the way, more than 2 tons were picked up and given to charity!

There is entertainment all along the way with great bands and live music. So, come bring the family and cheer on our runners. There is something very encouraging about seeing a friend and hearing a familiar voice of support along the way. Let Gay (gamayer@aol.com) know if you will be in town and attending the event and he will plan an MLA get-together after the race!



About MLA

The Men's Leadership Alliance (MLA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring authentic manhood. We encourage and support soulful living in the service of a just, joyful, and sustainable world. We are devoted to supporting men and youth at all of their transition points, variously called thresholds, passages, or gateways. Our non-denominational programs are numerous, and are meant to address the needs of men and youth in their journey through life.

Contact Us

We look forward to hearing from you, and welcome your correspondence. We're available to answer any questions you may have about our programs or schedule.

Please feel free to contact our managing director regarding the Men's Leadership Alliance.
web: www.mensleadershipalliance.org
email: info@mensleadershipalliance.org

The Men's Leadership Alliance
2115 Poplar Ave.
Boulder, CO 80304
Phone: 303-444-9022
Fax: 303-444-8989



Prayers and feelings held within the circle

Reflections from Sapphire Canyon

I came to Sapphire Canyon with a lot of baggage. A tent... sleeping bag... traumatic family history... failed relationships... an overwhelming sense of being apart from rather than a part of everything in life. I have been involved in many different attempts to recover from this baggage. I lost a brother when I was 16. He was 14 and he committed suicide by hanging himself in the basement. This was the seminal event in my life. Nothing else could compare to this single event. I have lived with this shadow all of my life. It has taken form in many ways, ways that have been mostly self destructive.

I do have a wicked sense of humor; I see humor in even in the most precarious situations. And I have had a connection with death that has manifested itself in my own attempts at taking my own life. Once this notion has been broached in my mind it remains an option ad infinitum. 'When things get tough I can always off myself.' My thought process has always included this option. It has been with me in one form or another throughout my entire life. For me, this is a true shadow.

Somewhere along the way I realized that I was still connected to my deceased brother. I could not let him go. I did not know how to embrace him without taking myself down. Is it possible to have a healthy relationship with someone who is dead? I did not know how to embrace my shadow without harming myself. What to do? I realized that I can't do it alone, but I did not know where to find the help I needed. Fortunately I came across the Men's Leadership

Alliance. MLA provided me with a forum to become an active participant in life. And to become a part of other men—men who have survived and thrived with their own shadows.

I came to Sapphire Canyon as a participant in The Art of Leadership Training and I started to realize that I had options, that I could choose life rather than death. And I began to ask, what can happen if I live? How do I embrace my dark shadow without being obliterated? One of the most significant moments during that time was the Cutting the Ties ceremony. For me it was about shedding my old skins, and it became a beginning for what will be a lifelong process to embrace my shadow side and learn how to thrive from its positive energy.

Initially I could not let go of the remnants of the ties that bound me. Literally I could not let go of the ropes that had represented my death wish. I could not let go of what was familiar and comfortable even though it had been strangling me for most of my life. It will take continued resolve to learn how to live with new options and potential and I will have to continue with this process for the rest of my life.

My time at Sapphire Canyon was a beginning to this process. Coming together with my kin, my clan, my tribe, my fellow brothers is something that has sustained me beyond the walls of the canyon. I came to Sapphire Canyon with a brother and a mother, and I left with an additional thirty plus brothers.

With hope and love now -
Your Brother, Patrick Higgins

Do My Parents Dance?

I never saw them dance.

They made love,
but did they dance?

I saw their shadow,
but did they dance?

My parents danced anger,
their own shadow dance.

I hid from their dance:

Basketball, baseball, hockey,
skiing, treehouse, woods, the
book, the creek, Luke, boat.

They hid too: she in the
bottle, he in the chair, asleep.

We survived.

She died in peace,
she did her work.

He died in pain,
he retired from work.

I am doing mine
and some of theirs.

I dance.

I hear the drum.

I dance with shadows,
theirs and mine.

I dance with my parents.

They dance.

by John Griffin
written during AOLTP 2008



Gathered in the circle

MLA's Free Monthly Wisdom Circles

After the New Year we will resume our Monthly Wisdom Circles on January 13, 2009 in Boulder, Colorado. The second Tuesday night of each month, from 7-9pm, the Men's Leadership Alliance will present Wisdom Circles on a variety of contemporary topics. These programs alternate between Boulder and Denver each month.

These programs are FREE of charge and designed for both MEN & WOMEN of all ages. They serve the dual purpose of providing the opportunity to learn more about stimulating and thought provoking topics and to briefly introduce the MLA and its services to the public.

As the year progresses we anticipate that other groups will become co-sponsors and our presenters will come from a greater variety of disciplines. And we encourage men in other areas of the country to think about creating Wisdom Circles for men and women in their hometowns.

The schedule for the first half of 2009 is as follows:

Jan 13th – Boulder
Changing Images of Masculine Power

Feb 10th Denver Topic TBA
Mar 10th Boulder Topic TBA
April 14th Denver Topic TBA
May 12th Boulder Topic TBA
June 9th Denver Topic TBA

Changing Images of Masculine Power in the US: How the Shift toward Nurturing Father and Sovereign Statesman Impacts Us All

Presented by Tom Daly, PhD
7 - 9 PM, Tuesday, January 13, 2009
Location to be announced

In this first program of the Wisdom Circle series for 2009 we will be looking deeply into the importance of the shift in the image of masculine power as represented by the election of Barak Obama, and how this shift impacts us all at many levels.

No matter what our political affiliations and beliefs, we are witnessing a paradigm shift in how we all view male power. This has tremendous impact on all of us regardless of our age, gender, spiritual beliefs, or socioeconomic status.

Depending on what kind of father we have (or had) or what kind

Wisdom Circles (cont.)

of fathers and mothers we are, we all want healthy families, a sustainable environment, just communities, and enriching societies. We will look at how we might move in those directions and how this shift in our perception of masculine strength offers great possibilities. Through a variety of experiential exercises we will explore the re-emerging Earth Father and healthy sovereign archetype that resides in us all.

New Online Payment Method

Starting January 1, 2009 there will be a new online payment method through the MLA website. This method will be very similar to the old PayPal link - all you have to do is click on the Pay Now button on any of the pages. The link will then take you to a page where you will be able to make a selection from a drop-down menu. This feature will allow you to register directly for a specific program, as well as to make general donations, or other options like donating to the scholarship fund. This way it makes it easy to donate or pay for programs.

Another great feature of this new site is the option to pay with your checking or savings account. You will still be able to use a credit card, but the checking or savings account option allows it to come right out of your account, and costs us as an organization much less money to process. You can even set up recurring payments right through the site for monthly donations, and tax receipts are generated directly on the site to make it easy and convenient for you.

Social Network on the Horizon for MLA Website

One of the many suggestions that are often expressed from men is the desire to be more connected to other alumni. We have all gone through an MLA experience and come out the other end a changed man. Part of what is needed is a way to continue to foster that experience from our home-places and to stay connected with others who understand what it means to attempt to live the change that we are now.

Coming in January there will be a new way to begin to foster a true sense of Brotherhood among all MLA alumni. We are in process of developing an interactive part of the website that will allow members to engage with all alumni on a regular basis. This part of the website will be for alumni only as a way to keep men actively connected and form new connections between all the Brothers, while maintaining the confidentiality that is so important to all of us.

On the website there will be a link to a page where you will be able to logon with a username and password and enter into our Social Network. Once there you will be able to post personal information including a bio about yourself, pictures, and details about what you are up to right now. You will be able to view the profiles of all the men who are a part of the network and add them as friends or send them email messages.

This will be a great way to stay connected with the Brothers from the trips you attended, as well as connecting with Brothers from all the MLA containers over the years. There may be alumni who live really close to you, and you don't even know it! Now through Event Postings, Blogs, and Chat areas you will be able to discover and communicate with the entire MLA network. This is also a place

where you can post relevant topics, like something you recently read or an experience you recently underwent, and receive dialogue and feedback from other Brothers.

The desire is that this Social Network will create ongoing dialogue between us all, as well as create opportunities to foster new connections. Perhaps you want to go for a hike on the weekend – on this site you can invite other men to join you. Or maybe you are traveling to another city and need a place to stay. Who better to stay with than another MLA alum? On the network you can actively state your desires to connect and create ways for that to happen!

On the Social Network we also are looking at ways to bring pieces of what is provided in an MLA container to men on a more regular basis. Ideas are forming around the many ways that we can connect and remain active. One idea we are thinking about is offering monthly conference call times to tune in with Tom, Jeffrey, Keith and other men to discuss a topic or work through a ritual process. Another idea is to provide times where there will be guided discussions through the online forum. The opportunities and possibilities are endless for what we can create through this Social Network.

Sometime in January you will receive information on how to join our Social Network and become an active member of the MLA Brotherhood. In the mean time, please feel free to call or email with your ideas and thoughts about what else we might be able to offer through this exciting opportunity for developing and fostering an active sense of Brotherhood.

Twelve Times Yes

I am realizing that in some ways there is nothing more powerful than men creating together. There is something about it that chews at the raw essence of beauty. The drum beats, the heart beat, the pulse of life, the core essence uniting us all. As men, how often do we come together and create? We create destruction, illusions of power, dominance, fortifying ourselves enclosed against the world – strange that even that is done in unity under the guise of pretending to need to stand alone.

Yet here we are, twelve men, twelve, consciously choosing to step into the collective conscious, taking time to breathe, to peer within, to use our hands as instruments to map the heart, breaking open the soul together.

I am reassured that something is going right in this world when men choose to be together while each doing our own work each man beautiful in this moment, full, enough. In this moment we begin the collective healing, the collective acceptance of what is, and thus we can begin to say

I am okay, and we are okay, and the children will be okay.

Twelve men gathering together. Twelve men saying yes to life. Yes to really living.

Yes to the beauty. Yes to being awake. Yes to purposeful steps.

Yes to the warm embrace of brotherhood. Yes to authenticity.

Yes to being only and exactly who we are. Yes to being enough in this moment.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Twelve times Yes.

May what is in this moment carry through into the next. Yes.

Jason Geoffrion

(Written during the Oregon Spirit Camp while watching the men create visual representations of their inner selves on their Body Drawings)



Support MLA with the Click of a Mouse Button

Here are two ways you can support MLA with just the click of a mouse:

GoodSearch – www.goodsearch.com - is a search engine which will donate over \$.01 to the MLA every time you use them to search the internet. You use GoodSearch exactly as you would any other search engine. And, it is powered by Yahoo!, so you get the same fast and effective results as any other search engine. The money GoodSearch donates comes from its advertisers – so **it doesn't cost us anything!**

All you have to do is go to the website above, designate Men's Leadership Alliance as your organization, and search away! **If 100 people searched 2 times a day it would bring in over \$725 in a year!** There is no cap on how much money we can raise through this site - the stratosphere is the limit here! The more people we encourage to use this search engine the better, so let's spread the word and get as many people involved as possible.

Check out their website to answer any other questions you might have about this great giving opportunity. And you can even

add the site to existing toolbars or make it your homepage.

MissionFish - www.missionfish.org - is a division of eBay that makes it possible for the MLA to benefit from the billions of dollars in trade that takes place each year in the world's largest e-commerce platform.

Here's how it works: Every time you sell something on eBay you can donate a certain percentage, or the entire amount, of the proceeds to the MLA. By participating the sellers are rewarded for their generosity with special eBay Giving Works features that help them get more bids and higher sale prices. And the MLA then receives recognition in the listing and benefits from the seller's success. The best part is, MissionFish does the heavy lifting – they collect and distribute the donation, issue tax receipts, and keep everyone informed along the way.

So now you can get rid of unwanted clutter in the house, help out the MLA, and get tax donation benefits all at the same time! Check out their website for details for how to begin to donate through this great opportunity.