



The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Spring 2006

P.O. BOX 452 ♦ BEDFORD HILLS, NY 10507 ♦ 914-232-4822 ♦ stepsfoundation@aol.com ♦ www.stepsstones.org

Stepping Stones Foundation Announces Five-Year Strategic Plan

For the first time since Lois Wilson founded Stepping Stones in 1979, our Board of Directors has adopted a strategic plan. This plan is designed to guide the organization's growth and management over the next five years, to aid its success at receiving grant funding, and to help spread the word about the organization. The overarching goals of the strategic plan include:

To ensure the preservation and care of the Foundation's physical assets for future generations by undertaking thorough and intensive restoration, preservation and conservation efforts on the collections, buildings and site utilizing professionally accepted museum practices and historic preservation standards.

To create professional and meaningful educational programs that tell the story of hope that is embodied in the life stories of Bill and Lois Wilson, their home and collections, to be offered to all who are interested in the subject matter, including alcoholics, family members, historians, and researchers.

To implement a successful and evolving volunteer program that encourages the members of the community to play a key role in maintaining this historic treasure in perpetuity.

To create and encourage an administrative structure that provides sufficient support to carry out the Foundation's mission, to care for its physical and intellectual property, and to successfully complete this strategic plan.

The plan outlines a number of ways in which we will be able to assess if we have succeeded in implementing the Strategic Plan. Over the next five years, we will spread the story of Bill and Lois Wilson in an accurate, engaging, and hopeful way, as well as increase the visibility of Stepping Stones in the community through educational programs. We hope to increase a diverse range of visitors from the community, educational, cultural and religious institutions, and the media.

We also recognize that among our priorities is the protection of the Stepping Stones collection. To that end over the (Continued on page 2)

Needs Assessment Targets Preservation Priorities for Stepping Stones Collection

Our recent Historic Preservation Needs Assessment revealed a \$1 million price tag to bring the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson up to basic standards of care and protection. We spent much of 2005 utilizing experts in the field to determine exactly what needed to be done to efficiently restore and preserve the contents of Stepping Stones so that further deterioration is avoided and the contents of the home remain viable in perpetuity, as Lois intended. While the price tag is high, it is actually just a beginning.

Thanks to the Friends of Stepping Stones Fundraising Initiative, top priority items in the needs assessment have already been addressed. To date we have preserved an original Works Publishing Stock Certificate and original legislation signed by Governor Dewey, both of which hang in Bill's studio. These funds, raised through our recent letter campaign (see page 5 for more information) also enabled us to restore a piece of original Ben Foster artwork. Lois had this piece on display in the Gallery, although it had been removed due to its poor condition. It now hangs back where it belongs. In addition, the Friends Initiative will allow us to conduct a thorough survey of all facets of conservation, including textiles, works on paper, furniture and more. As the funds from the Initiative continue to come in, items will be restored immediately according to the priorities outlined in the assessment.

Other top priority items include, but are not limited to:

- Restoration and preservation of the table and chair set in the kitchen. The table where Bill and Ebby had their fateful discussion in 1934 is now located at Stepping Stones. We want every guest to have the opportunity to sit at the table, and in order to ensure that, we must preserve these important pieces.

- Restoration and preservation of the original Big Book so that it may be removed from storage and put on display for future visitors. The inside cover contains Bill's dedication to Lois and a note which says "This is the first copy of the Big Book ever off the presses. We used thick paper to make alcoholics think they were getting their money's worth."

- The restoration of Lois' family Bible in which Bill wrote several promises to stop drinking, all of which were at least five years before the actual date of his last drink.

While preservation is now a permanent part of our operating structure, and costs will continue to grow, raising enough money to preserve these items and put them back on display would make 2006 a VERY successful year!



Bill and Lois Wilson in their garden at Stepping Stones in 1954.

Dear Stepping Stones Friend,

As I write this, I have just celebrated my first year as the Executive Director at the Stepping Stones Foundation, and I want to share a little bit about what has made this year so special to me. In August we hired Sarah Capichioni to join the Foundation as Operations Manager. Sarah's dedication to the Foundation has enabled me to focus my time on several of the issues that were paramount as we move into a new phase for Stepping Stones: the creation of the Five-Year Strategic Plan; the development of the Historic Needs Assessment; the submission and receipt of grants such as from the New York Council for the Humanities; and our first ever fundraising initiative.

There were other sources of excitement this year, too. I don't think Sarah or I will ever forget the electrical storm in August of 2005, which not only caused a surge in all of our electrical equipment (which was up and running quickly, thanks to Rusell Gulvin and Rocco Sica), but also hit the great old tulip tree and knocked over a crabapple tree. We hosted documentary filmmakers, and the History Detectives from *Thirteen World*, which will help us to spread the word about our wonderful Foundation.

But more than anything, what stands out the most about the last year for me are the guests we are honored to have at Stepping Stones. While all of our visitors are special, this year we were lucky enough to host two people who were dear to Bill and Lois. Harriet Severino and her son Danny came in the middle of winter to share lunch and memories with us. Harriet, 93, was Lois's cook and companion for over 30 years.

Among other important stories that help us put missing pieces of history back together, Harriet told us that rhubarb was Lois's favorite food. Together the two would pick wild berries from around the property and rhubarb from the garden, and Harriet would make pies. Lois also believed that the leaves and skin of rhubarb could be made into a compress that would help cure rheumatism.

Danny wants everyone to understand the kind and gentle man that "Mr. Wilson" was. Once, when Danny was about to get into trouble from his mother for accidentally killing frogs with a bucket of fertilizer, Bill intervened and took Danny on a walk in the woods around the house as he explained all about life, death, and chemicals. All of their stories have been recorded and will become part of the archives at Stepping Stones.

There are so many ways that you can help us to preserve the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson, not the least of which is to visit, and tell others to visit. Thanks to the entire Stepping Stones family for a very special year.

Very truly yours,



Executive Director
Stepping Stones Foundation

NEWS

Foundation Garners Grant from New York Council for the Humanities

The Foundation is pleased to announce that we were awarded a grant of from the New York Council for the Humanities (NYCH) in March. The mission of the NYCH is to promote lifelong learning in the humanities by forging relationships between area communities and humanities institutions such as Stepping Stones. The funds will be used to develop a guided tour of the House, Wit's End, and the Gardens. Jill Vexler, Ph.D., a cultural anthropologist and museum curator will lead the project. Vexler's work can currently be seen in the exhibit "Sala" at the New York Public Library.

In June of 2005 Stepping Stones was awarded a Get Ready Grant from the Grants for Museum Advancement Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the Upstate History Alliance. This grant provided Stepping Stones with technical assistance leading us toward finalizing our strategic plan. Board members Maureen Sullivan and Joanna Cohan as well as volunteer Ken Berg and Executive Director Annah Perch participated in the session. Facilitator Liselle LaFrance, Director of Historic Cherry Hill, praised the Stepping Stones purpose statement and provided valuable direction.

Visit Us Online

Have you stopped by the Stepping Stones website lately? Along with updates to the online tour of The House, Wit's End, and the Gardens is an on-line gift shop, an expanded In The News section, and more. Visit <http://www.steppingstones.org> for directions, to purchase gift shop items, and to make on-line donations.

Farewell, Mountain Laurel

Spring of 2005 brought many important changes to Stepping Stones. After a longer-than-average life of over 85 years, the mountain laurel which always welcomed visitors through the back porch, died. Changes in property conditions, including an increase in sunlight, were most likely the cause of the beloved mountain laurel's demise.

Still, it lived a longer life than most mountain laurels. We called upon the expertise of our good friend Tom Serpe to find us a suitable replacement and did he ever. Now visitors are greeted by Halesia Monticola Rosea, with the loveliest blooms you can imagine. We think that Lois would have liked this replacement as much as we do. We thank Tom once again for his commitment and expertise and look forward to enjoying this bush with our guests for years to come.

A number of other trees are gone from the property, too. The old birch tree that is prominently featured in the backdrop of several famous photos was dying. As there was a risk it might fall onto the house, it was taken down, but the stumps will be made into seats to place around the property, keeping the tree with us in its new form.

Five-Year Strategic Plan *(Continued from page 1)*

next five years we will manage and protect the physical and intellectual assets according to the best standards of professional care. In order to do this, it is also important that we achieve a level of recognition and participation among our friends, community and similar foundations because of our exceptional management and reach our fundraising goals as needed.

More than anything, the Stepping Stones Foundation aims to do an outstanding job of sharing the story of hope for the recovery from alcoholism, as it is embodied in their lives and home.

The entire strategic plan may be accessed at www.steppingstones.org.

Special Thanks

This year brought a special need for volunteers as we experienced a transition in Directors and volunteers and found ourselves relying on the kindness of our volunteer friends more than ever. We offer our sincerest thanks to our volunteers and in-kind donors, which include:

- **Rocco** for his technical support for our computers.
- **Anthony**, our long time volunteer and friend who has lent us his gardening expertise for many years.
- **Jay** at Choices Bookstore for joining us at the annual picnic and bringing lovely gifts for our raffle and to sell.
- **Cadbury Schweppes and PepsiCo** for its generous donation of soft drinks.
- **Greg** in California for replicating the birdhouses around the yard as well as the wonderful replica of Stepping Stones.
- **Mt. Kisco Frame Shop** for its gift of framing services.
- **Bev, Marilyn, Sue, and Linda** for their envelope stuffing expertise. We couldn't have succeeded without you.
- **Noel and Frank** for their stellar parking guidance in the pitch black in the middle of December.
- **Betsey M.** for her work on developing a cross stitch pattern.
- **Bill Borchert** for hosting a book signing and donating the proceeds to Stepping Stones.
- **Jill** for her invaluable technical support in gearing up for our grant writing campaign.
- **Ken, David, Robert, Tom, and Sharon** for another stellar year of offering meaningful, heartfelt tours to our 1,800+ visitors.
- **Eileen** for her continued support.
- **All of our picnic volunteers** from 2005, without whom we could not make it through the day.

Fun Ways to Help

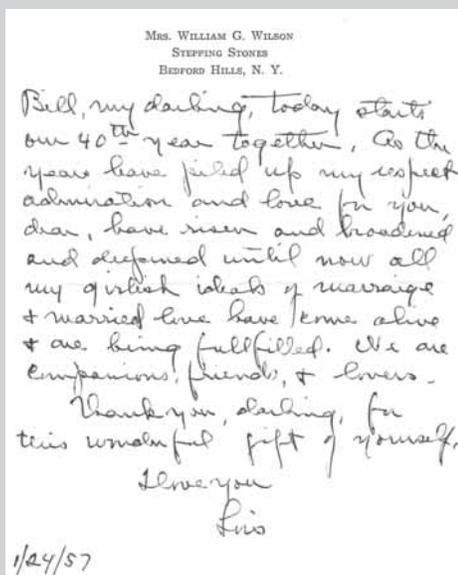
In our last newsletter we called upon our community to help build new birdhouses and to create a cross stitch pattern of a beloved poem that hangs as a cross stitch in Stepping Stones. The response was wonderful, and we are so pleased to have many of the birdhouses completed by Greg in California, including a replica of this very special one that once stood in Lois' garden. In the end, the cross stitch kit was developed by Historical Folk Toys, Inc. and is available to buy in this pages, in our gift shop and on-line at www.steppingstones.org.



Just one of the many birdhouses that Lois had in her garden. Photo 1979.

The Stepping Stones Foundation is starting the first ever Stepping Stones Garden Club. We are seeking volunteers who have experience and gardening skills and who wish to restore the gardens to the way Lois had them in or around 1960. Volunteers must be reliable, available at least one weekend day per month, preferably for at least two years, and for periodic club meetings. If you wish to be considered to help tend the Stepping Stones garden, please submit your name, contact information, and specifics about your gardening skills, with a reference to: Sarah Capichioni, Operations Manager, Stepping Stones Foundation, PO Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507, or at sarahcap@optonline.net. We will host our first Garden Club meeting in the early fall of 2006.

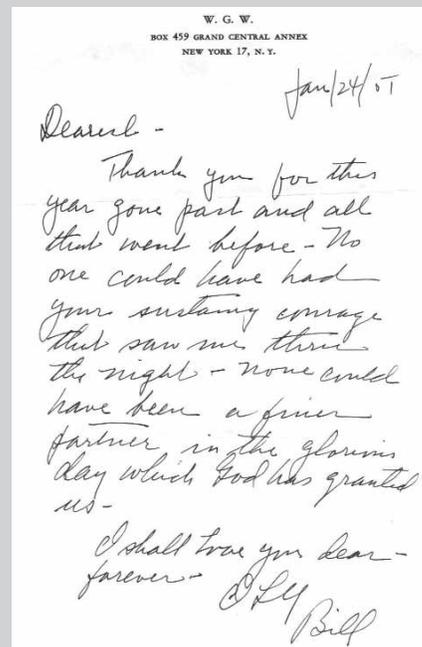
Stepping Stones seeks volunteer tour guides with weekday or weekend availability. Join the small team of dedicated guides for the chance to learn the history of Stepping Stones and share it with others. There are three openings for new guides, a resume, references and an interview is required. Please email Annah at stepsfoundation@aol.com if interested.



(Bill - my darling, today starts our 40th year together. As the years have piled up my respect, admiration and love for you, dear, have risen and broadened and defined until now all my girlish ideals of marriage and married love have come alive and are being fulfilled. We are companions, friends + lovers. Thank you, darling, for this wonderful gift of yourself. I love you, Lois 1/24/57)

From the Archives...

Perhaps the most resounding theme that is carried throughout Stepping Stones is the great love and respect that Bill and Lois Wilson had for one another. In sharing the story of hope for recovery we like to emphasize that along with practicing the 12 Steps for their respective fellowships, the Wilsons' practiced them with each other. From a romantic courtship when they were young, through the darkest of days, and then into the life beyond their wildest dreams during their years at Stepping Stones, Bill and Lois never took time away from expressing their love for each other, as evidenced in these letters.



(Lois - Thank you for this year gone past and all that went before- No one could have had your sustaining courage that saw me thru the night - none could have been a friend, partner in the glorious day which God has granted us - I shall love you dear - forever. ILY, Bill 1/24/57)

Friends of Stepping Stones

We wish a very special thank you to our 2005 and current donors. Between January 1 and April 1, 2006 we have raised approximately \$14,500, which are being applied directly toward our goals. We simply couldn't continue our growth without you.

Gifts that are not designated for preservation directly offset our annual operating costs, including repair and maintenance of the 8.5 acres of property and its buildings, salaries, and special initiatives.

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Archie Anderson

Donna Phillips & Francis

Barnet

Lisa Barnett

In honor of Joseph Matthew

Blanes

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Stan Bowman

James Boyd

Kenneth Carlson

Bedford Hills Women's Club

In memory of James Casey

Regina & Cesar Cardenas

Joann Carlson

Randi Carole

Edward Chanda

Linda Chanda

Victoria & Jon Clarke

James Cocoran

Joan Cody

In memory of David A.

Conley

It currently costs over \$600 a day to run Stepping Stones, and we count on the generosity of our community to help cover those costs.

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Nancy Cook

Diana & David Cowperthwaite

Jack Corderman

Diana Crudeli

David Culp

Peggy Cunningham

Edward Darby

John Daskos

Barbara Davidson

Alice & Jim Davis

Vincent Dibernardino

Tony Dombeck

Peter Donnelly

In honor of Nancy Dorgan

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Patricia & Raymond Gorton

Dante Grover

Donald Gregg

John Hagg

Kevin Hanlon

Geri Helwig

Evelyn & Robert

Hollingsworth

Jean Hurler

Gerard Johnson

Kenneth Johnson

Janine & James Johnson

Thomas Johnson

Mary & Tom Kearney

In memory of Jack Keegan

Judy Kehr

Karen & Frank Kell

Martha & Michael Kelly

Laurie Kleen

Mary Lou Knox

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Harold Peterson, Jr.

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Bill Wise

Geri Wise

Lily Wysinski

Wallace Wurl

Daniel Young

Leonard Zbyk

Michael Zin

+ 13 donors under \$10. We

appreciate your support!

From Our Visitors

"Thank you so much, Sarah. I've been telling the story of visiting Stepping Stones with you at or after every meeting I've been to since returning home. My visit to Stepping Stones was the highlight of my six days in New York. My visit would not have been possible without you, and I am grateful to you...I will always appreciate it but I will cherish my memories of the visit. Thanks, again." - *Frank*

"We are very grateful recovering alcoholics and we enjoy the history as well. Without Bill and Bob and Lois who knows where we'd all be at this point. Your helping to proliferate their memories and thus their teachings of recovery is a very good thing indeed, and we appreciate you very much."

- *Dan and Jane from Burbank*

We appreciate YOU very much Dan and Jane.

"What a nice treat to have this update and history. I was at Stepping Stones in 1970, as a panel 20 delegate from New Mexico. I will celebrate 40 years... and cry every time I think about the journey that was afforded me by this man. What a pleasure to meet him and be in a conference with him. You folks sure do a beautiful job." - "God Bless,"

- *Jimmy D.*

"To all at Stepping Stones - Lois would be so gratified to know that Stepping Stones is now listed on the state and national registry of historic places. My husband was an Al-anon trustee and I was an AA trustee. Lois asked Bo to help her with her book...and we stayed over night and also were there for many of her parties. She was an amazing person.

AA, Al-anon and other 12 step fellowships have now circled the world and are the greatest social movement of the last century." - *Ruth H.*

"I must write to let you know what a spiritual visit my wife and I had. Stepping Stones without a doubt was God sent. Please pass along to Ken [our tour guide] our thanks, and thank you all for being of Service. Please keep Stepping Stones as Lois wanted it for generations to come..."

- *Anonymous*

Fundraising Initiative off to a Great Start

It seems that anyone who hears about Stepping Stones realizes the influence that Bill and Lois have had on society. For some this influence is personal, for others it is the comfort of knowing that a loved one has been helped. Bill Wilson was named one of the most important people of the last century by *Time* and *Life* magazines, and Lois was just as influential. In fact, their contributions reach even beyond the nurturing of the 12 Step practice and are truly immeasurable, having touched hundreds of recovery programs and millions of lives across the world. As if more evidence were needed of the couple's importance, their beloved home, Stepping Stones, was recently added to the State and National Registries of Historic Places.

It was Lois's dream that Stepping Stones be available for people to experience in perpetuity. She was incredibly generous, yet could not have known just what it would take to properly maintain her home in the 21st century. That is why we are entering a new phase in Stepping Stones history – one in which we reach out to our community for help. This year we launched the Friends of Stepping Stones initiative. With gifts to Stepping Stone, we are better able to address our operating needs and launch a major Historic Preservation campaign. Just some of the current initiatives that Friends money is used for include:

To **restore and preserve** the interior contents of the home, so that it may last forever while looking and feeling *exactly* as it did when Lois and Bill lived here. There are windows, blinds, paintings, photos, frames, furniture, and textiles in need of immediate repair. There are historical records that illustrate Lois and Bill's legacy and require rigorous care. **It is our obligation to preserve the past so that it may influence the future.**

To **renovate** the garage, which will enable guests to view archives that are presently in storage, and to minimize the wear on the historic home. The plans for this renovation have been drawn, but the cost to build is substantial and will result in increased ongoing operating costs.

To **create and manage** an educational program that tells the dramatic story of Lois and Bill and the legacy of hope for recovery from alcoholism that is embodied in their lives and their home. This will be a piece that can travel and inspire not only AA's and Al-Anon's, but also those who might otherwise not know that there is hope for themselves and their family.

That is just a taste of what is happening at Stepping Stones. If YOU would like to play a role in protecting Stepping Stones so that it may be available for future generations, please take the time to make a gift today. Your tax-deductible gift, in any amount, will immediately be put to work. If you can't make a gift, please consider visiting, volunteering, or telling your friends about Stepping Stones.

Pledge of Support (individual or group)

Name: _____ Tel.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

As part of my commitment to preserving the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson through Stepping Stones, I am pleased to make a gift as follows:

One time gift, in the amount of _____
(check payable to The Stepping Stones Foundation)

I wish to pledge \$ _____ monthly/quarterly/semi-annually/annually

My gift will be matched by: _____

I wish to pay by: _____ credit card _____ MC _____ Visa

Name _____
(as it appears on card)

Card # _____ Exp date: _____

Signature: _____

_____ my check is enclosed _____ please bill me

The Stepping Stones Foundation, P.O. Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY
10507 914-232-4822, stepsfoundation@aol.com

From Far and Wide

We were lucky to receive many more visitors than usual this year, thanks to the influx of international travelers due to the 2005 AA International Convention in Toronto. According to our guest book visitors came from Austria, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Goa India, South Africa, Italy, Ireland, Canada, Australia and more. While Bill and Lois hosted many international travelers, even they would have been awed by the commitment that these visitors made to pay homage to Stepping Stones and the Wilsons.

Our visitors came in large groups and one by one. There was Francisco, an AA member with over 25 years from Goa, India, and his wife Sushma who had just about as many years in Al-Anon.

The pair came on a quiet day, and we walked together throughout the property. Francisco described their life in India and it was clear that he would have to take his experience at Stepping Stones back to share with so many others who may never make it. There was the group of 106 on July 13 who handled the conflict that buses aren't allowed on local roads with grace, and came and toured and ate and had a meeting, all in German. The group left us with a beautiful candle with the serenity prayer in German on it. It sits today in our office, along with the other special tokens we have accumulated, as a reminder of the generations and communities of people who have been here and a promise of those to come.

Bill and Lois Wilson knew that something very special happened at Stepping Stones and that people would continue to want to visit for years to come. She left the house for AA's and Al-Anons to visit in perpetuity. The Stepping Stones Foundation is so pleased that Lois' personal invitation to visit

her home has been received far and wide. Last year we received over 1,800 visitors. Stepping Stones is open 7 days a week, by appointment by calling 914-232-4822.



Among the many special trinkets left to Stepping Stones over the summer was the Marmalean, left. From Norway, it represents higher power. The plaster hands, right were brought from Goa, India. The back says "thank God that we could make it to visit Bill's home. 9/9/05"

You Are Invited To Attend!

The 54th Annual Family Groups Picnic

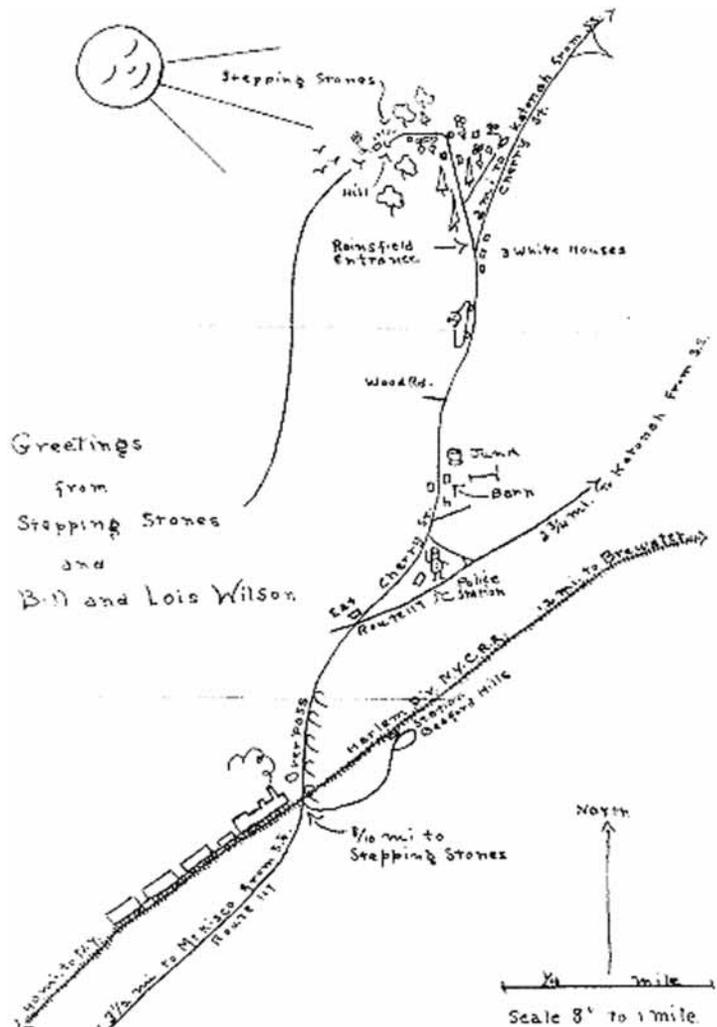
Saturday, June 3, 2006. 12pm-5pm.

Open meeting featuring Eric B. from Dallas, TX, Linda V., from Rhinebeck, NY, and an Al-Ateen member, starts at 2pm.

Bring your own food. Stepping Stones supplies the soft drinks.

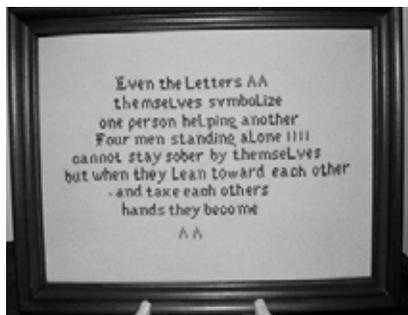
Directions: Rt. 684 to exit 6, go west onto Rt. 35. Turn left onto Rt. 35. At second light, turn left onto Cherry Street. Turn right onto Woodfield Road. Follow attendant's parking instructions.

Cars and Vans Only – Buses are not allowed on the local roads surrounding Stepping Stones. For more information, please call 914-232-4822 or email stepsfoundation@aol.com.



Drawing by Lois Wilson that she used as stationary in the late 1940s.
*This image should not be used for directions as the roads have changed.
For directions please visit the website at www.stepsstones.org.*

From the Stepping Stones Gift Shop



Recreate your own piece of Stepping Stones!

“Even the letters AA” cross stitch kit. The original cross stitch sampler is housed inside Stepping Stones and was a gift to Lois from a friend who she traveled to Europe with in 1977. The handwritten poem can be found in Lois’ travel diary from that trip. Kit includes pattern, fabric, needle, and thread. (We neither endorse nor oppose working on cross stitch during 12 step meetings.) **\$20****



Stepping Stones Note Card Set

5 card set with images from the home of Bill & Lois.

\$11.50**



Looking for other gift ideas? Visit us on the web @ www.stepsstones.org

(mail your completed order form, with payment to: SSF, PO Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507)

Item	Quantity	Total
AA Cross Stitch		
Note cards		
Donation		
Subtotal		
Tax*		
Total Amount		

Ship to:

(please print clearly)

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____

*For AL,CA,FL,GA,IL,MN,NJ,NY,PA,TX &WI, add local sales tax
 **Prices include shipping and handling

Calendar of Events

Starting June 29, 2006 3pm

Tea in the gardens at Stepping Stones

Join friends, old and new, for tea and snacks in the gardens at Stepping Stones. Rain or Shine. Advanced registration is required and is limited to 25 people. A voluntary admission of \$12 is suggested. Call for parking instructions. (914) 232-4822.

June 30 2006 - 3pm

July 28,2006 - 3pm

August 25 2006 - 3pm

September 29, 2006 - 3 pm

October 27, 2006 - 3pm

November 17 2006 - 3pm

December 29, 2006 - 3pm

Would you like to have a tea at Stepping Stones with your group and don't see a convenient time listed? Contact Sarah at (914) 232-4822 to make other arrangements. All events are subject to change, and all registrants will be notified. Please see the website under Calendar of Events at www.stepping-stones.org for updates.

January 6, 2007 2-5pm

Twelfth Night Open House

No advanced registration is required. Space indoors is limited to first come, first served. House is open for tours from 2-4pm. Hot chocolate and traditional Twelfth Night Cake will be served. Caroling outdoors from 4-5pm. A contribution is suggested.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Stepping Stones is open for tours 7 days a week, by appointment. The grounds and gardens are open from sun up to sunset. We welcome your visits and hope you will spread the word. To make your appointment to visit Stepping Stones today, call (914) 232-4822 or email us at stepsfoundation@aol.com.

Can't visit Stepping Stones with your group this year? We can come to you.

We offer a virtual tour and would be happy to consider coming to your event. Conventions, retreats, staff meetings and more are ways in which you might include a presentation about Stepping Stones. We can also send literature to your event. Call Annah Perch at 914-232-4822 to discuss.

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Address correction requested

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