

## Earth Ethics Institute Earth Literacy Field Experience at Narrow Ridge

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What is Narrow Ridge?

Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center (NRELC) is a facility located on 500 acres of land in northeastern Tennessee. The center was established in 1991 to provide a place to study, teach and demonstrate Earth Literacy and simple, sustainable living. The mission of Narrow Ridge is to provide experiential learning of Earth Literacy based on the cornerstones of spirituality, sustainability and community. The vision of Narrow Ridge is one of justice for human beings, animals, and Earth and sustainability in the way we live our lives and the way we create institutions and technologies. This vision is one of education and leadership by example in creating alternatives to the present society and culture.



#### What do students *do* at Narrow Ridge?

Students participate in a variety of activities that deepen their connection to Earth, humanity and other beings. Activities include organic gardening, tours of simple and sustainably-designed structures (participants will stay in a strawbale lodge or wood cabin), film screenings on environmental issues and hikes. Facilitators engage students in in-depth discussions and sharing, role-playing, reflection and journaling. Students are able to engage in self-discovery and often form strong friendships and bonds with their peers in the program. Students leave with a strong sense of interconnectedness and strong desire to share what they have learned with their community in Miami.

#### Who are the facilitators at Narrow Ridge?

The program at Narrow Ridge is run primarily by two individuals, Mitzi Wood-Von Mizener, Ph.D. and Bill Nickle, M.A. Dr. Wood-Von Mizener is the director of the Narrow Ridge Center and Mr. Nickle is the previous director and founder of the center. Both have, or currently serve, on the Earth Ethics Institute Advisory Board. They have extensive training and experience with Earth Literacy, Natural History, Green Building and Environmental Sustainability. Visit <http://www.narrowridge.org/> for more information.

#### What do students *learn* at Narrow Ridge?

Students learn about how an individual can live sustainably and simply through basic green design and mindfulness. Specifically, students learn about the benefits and installation of: photovoltaic panels and windmills, composting toilets, strawbale housing structures (or other structures made from renewable, inexpensive resources), rain barrels and organic farming techniques. Students learn about the environmental and health benefits of eating a vegetarian diet and are introduced to various recipes for cooking vegetarian meals. Various environmental and humanitarian issues are addressed and presented by local experts and films on topics including access to and shortage of fresh water, climate change, fossil fuel usage and food access, nuclear weapon proliferation, and mountaintop removal. Students also learn about the evolution of the universe and reflect upon and discuss our role as humans.



## How do students participate in the program?

Students submit an application consisting of: 1) a 300-500 word essay stating reasons for interest in attending the program, 2) one letter of recommendation from an MDC faculty member, 3) a copy of their photo identification, and 4) a printed copy of his or her MDC degree audit. Student applications are screened by a committee composed of Earth Ethics Institute staff, and responses are sent out two weeks after the deadline.

## What preparations are made prior to traveling to Tennessee?

Students meet with each other and the Faculty Advisor (as well as an EEI staff member) two weeks prior to the trip. The Faculty Advisor or EEI staff member goes over the travel logistics, what to bring and what to expect. Students are able to voice any concerns and ask questions.

## What is the cost of sending a student?

Applicants who are accepted do not pay any costs related to airfare, travel to and from the site, meals, and room/lodging. The trip is fully sponsored by Earth Ethics Institute and Student Life. This makes the application screening process quite competitive, so make sure your application is very strong! (Students might want to bring some cash for snacks or food at the airport both to and from NREL.)

## Students' Reflections on Experiences



*My time in Narrow Ridge is completely inexplicable with words. It is by far the most meaningful experience I've had in my whole life. It has been even greater than any trip to Europe or South America that I have done. At Narrow Ridge you learn far more than "taking care of Earth" or living sustainably, you learn about people around, and most important - yourself. By knowing yourself you are able to communicate more, enjoy more, and be open to far more things than you have ever imagined. In my experience I truly came in touch with myself and who I am. I learned that I am a tiny snow flake compared*

*to the universe, but I can be of great importance and big changes. I learned how to live in community and have the true sense of belonging somewhere. And I learned that humans have damaged our planet way too much, therefore, we must heal it. People often speak of recycling, raising awareness, etc. Although all of that is great, you can't really bring forth change if you don't start in your own home, in your own soul. The Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center experience brings you all this and much more. Be sure to embrace it with wide arms, as well as the beautiful relationships you will acquire with people in this short time. With no doubt, they will last a lifetime.*

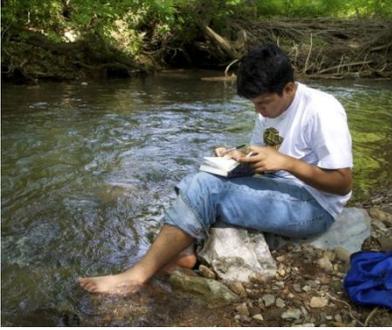
- Carla Cordoves, Wolfson Campus, Former Narrow Ridge Participant

*The trip allowed us to grow in a way that is not possible here in busy Miami. We were able to take a step out of our routines and see that we can make all sorts of small changes to impact the world around us and in our own lives. As much as we learned, it would be useless if we did not bring it back with us.*

*The true takeaway from this trip was our project that we have been encouraged to carry out. We have decided to see to it that Miami Dade College North Campus gets solar panels.*

- Daniel Cardona, North Campus, Former Narrow Ridge Participant





*Not even in my wildest dreams did I expect that one week in a remote area of Tennessee could change my life forever. Never did I think that waking up to a rising sun amongst the mist and the mountains, and falling asleep beneath a starry sky could be so empowering and uplifting for my dormant spirit. I never thought that I would gain so much knowledge and make so strong bonds in a hidden jewel they call Narrow Ridge.*

*Now, Narrow Ridge does not exist in the physical world. It is a place of being, where sustainability, community, and spirituality shape the way of life. Narrow Ridge is in my heart, it is in the inspired manner I look at insects, in my deep care for Earth, in the sun, in the light turned off, and in the closed faucet. Narrow Ridge is the smile I give to a stranger and the door I hold for my neighbor. It is the growing sense of community and my personal commitment to benefit those around me through the power of education that I am sure will follow me until my old days. Narrow Ridge is everything, much bigger than the state of Tennessee and even the United States. It is the stardust that we come from, just like all other beings. It is the sky and the stars. Narrow Ridge is what I am, what I will be, and what I hope humanity to become.*

*To try to fully portray my experience would not be fair to everything that I encountered. All I can do is to educate and encourage those around me to live the Narrow Ridge Field Experience. Mitzi and Bill's unconditional love, the hospitality of all of Hogskin Valley's inhabitants, the abundantly delicious vegan food, the hikes through the wilderness, the witnessing of humans' self-destruction, the discussion on alternative sources of energy, the alone times often spent in naps with nature, the drum circles, the laughs and the tears, the shooting stars on a cold night, the unexpected rain, the heart to hearts, the peace cranes, the swimming in the lake, the bumpy rides in the back of the truck, and the hugs—all of these encompassed the essence of what made this experience so valuable. They changed my consciousness and taught me to aim to live a more responsible, sustainable life, while enjoying the little things. After all, we are only here for a short while, so we must leave a positive imprint and ensure those around us do the same.*

-Esteban Roncancio, Kendall Campus, Former Narrow Ridge Participant

*The Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Program is an exceptional program that provides retreat activities that are at its livelihood. Students and chaperones from Miami Dade College had the opportunity to learn about the significance of sustainable living, earth literacy, and eco-spirituality. We did many activities such as gardening, hiking, and the sacred circle cosmic walk. The amazing activities we participated in Narrow Ridge allowed me to see our world from a different perspective and appreciate all the living organisms that exist on our beautiful planet.*

*Learning about the dangers we pose on Earth has caused me to change my old living habits. I no longer leave the lights on or the water running unnecessarily. I have also tried to change my eating habits and have moved to consuming more organic foods than before.*

*I am very blessed and thankful for going to Narrow Ridge. I am grateful to my chaperones for always helping me and teaching me about different plants and animals that exist and to the entire MDC EEI faculty for offering me the opportunity to learn the value of simplicity and deepen my sense of responsibility.*



-Ali Bawany, Kendall Campus, Former Narrow Ridge Participant

**More questions? Reach out to Stephanie Victoria, [svictori@mdc.edu](mailto:svictori@mdc.edu), 305-237-2602.**