

Subject: MAGIC SEEDS

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Richard, we are faxing some other info for those requesting it to Linda Comer.NG

MAGIC SEEDS
(Transformation of a Small Town)

No one could have guessed in 1992 when it all started, no one could have guessed what the results would be in 10 years. From a sleepy, closing down village that once was an agricultural center to a thriving cultural highlight in Georgia, drawing the third largest number of visitors of all the cities and towns in the state, this is the story of Colquitt, Georgia. It's not likely on your map, but if you draw equal lines from Tallahassee, Florida, Dothan, Alabama and Albany, Georgia, they will meet right here.

What's happened in ten years? A lot of country folk, some with minimal education, have discovered they have a story to tell, a song to sing, and the talent to wow an audience. It started when Richard Geer came to town and taught us how to collect stories about the past and the present and have them made into vignettes. They were old family tales or just stories in peoples' minds that needed to be shared: brutality in marriage, kindness in spite of poverty, making "fun" farming, fears and dreams, success and failure, all the essentials of life as it is known anywhere. When these stories were made into a play and put on stage, they released some floods of gratitude, remembering, pride and delight. Actors as young as six months and over eighty revealed a community united.

Since then the magic has spread to story-telling events, elementary school coaching sessions, arts incubators, craft centers and book publishing. And the cast of eighty or more has travelled to perform in Washington D.C. at the Kennedy Center, to Denver to write and produce the story of the Institute of Cultural Affairs, to any number of small towns and cities to replicate the method of remembering and celebrating the life we have.

We are producing a generation of youngsters who can belt out a song or tell a story without any need of microphones. We are hearing from the old folk the stories that they remember. We are turning abandoned buildings into theatres, art studios, craft centers. We are rearranging the ties of loyalty from simple kin to visions of service and shared delight. We are eliminating all sense of being a backwater, forsaken village as we reveal the depth of human greatness in us all. We are breaking down class and race barriers by sharing the common joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, yes, even the drudgery that makes our lives.

And what will come of all this? Great people who have something to share with the world, a mindset of wonder at the glory of the past and the possibility of the future; a method for bringing unity and companionship to those who walk isolated and alone; a way to retell history that brings understanding and goodwill.