

The Gaia Environmental Course / Scholarship programme

Gaia participants are environmental activists ... so the programme is designed to give you an understanding of environmental questions and problems, and get tools and skills so you can take your own stand and make your voice heard.

The Gaia Course gives the participants the possibility to raise their own scholarship towards the costs of the Development Instructor and Climate Activist programmes, by helping to improve the earnings of the college's clothes and shoes recycling project.

The Gaia Team runs a couple of continuous practical Gaia projects, which encourage putting what we learn into practice.

The first of these is the collection of second hand clothes. There are many different tasks in relation to this: packing the clothes in the store room, driving the collection van, finding more sites for our many clothing banks that we have put out in many towns in northern England and southern Scotland, and maintaining and painting the containers. Besides participating in our Clothes Collection activity a Gaia participant can be given the opportunity to contribute in the Promotion department - the office of the college focused on promoting CICD's programmes.

The clothes and shoes recycling project is an important source of income for the College, as we don't receive any funding from the state or have any other sponsors. The money for scholarships also comes from the proceeds of our clothes collection.

To increase our scholarship fund and the possibility of giving scholarships, we started the Gaia Course in 2004. During the Gaia Course, a limited group of people can raise their own scholarship towards the costs of the Development Instructor and Climate Activist programmes by helping to improve the earnings of the recycling project.

Most of the participants in the Gaia team continue as Development Instructors, Climate Activists or Poverty Activists at CICD. Participants, whose efforts have resulted in amounts equivalent to the Development Instructor course fees being placed in the scholarship fund, are guaranteed a place.

All these activities serve a dual purpose, or you could say brings double happiness

- 1) We reuse clothes that would otherwise be wasted. Some people in this part of the world get through a lot of clothes every year. According to an article by Louise Grey, Environmental Correspondent for the Telegraph newspaper: "textiles are the fastest growing sector in household waste. Every year consumers in the UK buy 2 million tonnes of clothes of which 1.2m tonnes end up in landfill. Just 300,000 are reused or recycled".

At the same time, many people in England, Europe and other parts of the world are in great need of clothes to wear. Most of the unwanted clothes still represent a value and can be reused rather than being wasted in landfill sites.

2) The surplus from selling the clothes is used to cover the running expenses of the college, The earnings from the Gaia team are placed in CICD's scholarship fund. Money from this fund can sponsor people who are not able to pay all of the course fees, but who still want to make a contribution to a better world.

Another continuous practical action for the Gaia team is to look after and develop the garden and park at Winestead Hall. We have a great asset for everyone to enjoy in our 30acre park, and it still has a lot of undeveloped potential! You can involve yourself in an almost endless list of possible tasks: cut the grass, establish a rose garden, make a permaculture demonstration area, do weeding, clean up the pond, expand the vegetable garden, develop the herb garden, build raised beds, make better composting systems, ...

In addition to these ongoing actions we are often involved in shorter actions in local towns and villages: maybe you will take part in a litter picking action, plant trees in the local park, make a recycling campaign, help out the local Transition Hull group, make street theatre about the consequences of climate change, or do something new that no Gaia Team participant has done before!