



Reference & Resources on Rites of Passage: Regional and National Organizations

Boys to Men New England Montpelier, VT

<http://www.boystomennewengland.org/index.html>

Boys to Men is a mentoring network that works to raise awareness about the challenges facing boys, and to motivate caring adult males to provide boys with mentoring and modeling so that they learn integrity, accountability, compassion and respect and guide them toward healthy manhood. The Boys to Men (BTM) model is unique in that it is based on a proven and successful three-part program that starts with the mentor. Boys to Men, founded in San Diego, California in 1997 discovered, through their initial attempts at establishing mentor programs, that the men are not only the key but also the most hesitant players in the program. Consequently, the founders of BTM set out to develop a mentoring program that addressed this need. It has evolved into a unique and model that includes a **three-part program:**

Mentor Training – BTM recruits mentors (adult man) for each young man who goes through the rites of passage weekend. BTM uses 1:1 Mentoring, Group Mentoring or a combination of both. There is a 48-hour mentor training program that mentors complete prior to the weekend. Each mentor commits to attend community meetings with his mentee or the group of mentees for a full year. Each mentor must pass a background check. The mentor's purpose is to guide, support and help reinforce new, healthy male behaviors.

Boys Training – BTM provides boys with a "rite of passage" adventure weekend where positive qualities are modeled by more than 40 well-trained adult male staff and graduates from earlier trainings. Through a series of carefully facilitated processes, each boy discovers something of the of his own humanity. Boys are challenged and supported in new ways, and find that they can respond in new ways.

Building Community – Building on the rite of passage adventure weekend, young men and their mentors come together every two weeks to play, eat, and further develop the new insights and capacities gained from the weekend. Community groups provide the forum for ongoing education, empowerment, and support and allow the young men to continue to strengthen relationships with peers. Additionally, many of our boys who have completed the Rites of Passage Weekend volunteer to staff and assist the new boys entering the program.

Circles of Air, Circles of Stone Putney, VT

<http://www.questforvision.com/sparrow.html>

Founder Sparrow Hart Sparrow Hart has been leading workshops, vision quests and rites of passage across the US for the last 20 years, and has undertaken over 25 quests of his own. He is a creator of the Mythic Warrior training program (a 9-month training for men), a writer and counselor, and teaches courses and workshops on shamanism, the hero's journey, and finding the path with heart. He is dedicated to the task of bringing the ancient teachings into the modern world and currently offers Vision Quests, Workshops (Adventures of the Spirit), Men's Programs, and Apprenticeship Trainings.

EarthWalk Vermont

Plainfield, VT

<http://www.earthwalkvermont.org/>

EarthWalk Vermont is dedicated to inspiring and empowering children, families and communities to reconnect with and care for one another and the Earth through nature-based education and traditional teachings. All of EarthWalk's educational programs are designed for students to be engaged in a long-term learning community fully immersed in the natural world. Offerings include a variety age-specific day-long programs for homeschoolers, after school programs, pre-school programs, summer camp, and a partnership with 3rd and 4th graders at Twinfield Union School.

Institute of Natural Learning

Brattleboro, VT

<http://ifnaturallearning.com/>

The Institute for Natural Learning projects include: Reclaiming Elders, Rites of Passage for Boys, Men's Initiations, Vision Quests, Nature Leadership Trainings, and more. Founder, Mark Morey has committed his life to reclaiming the power of reconnecting with the land, rebuilding community and training young adults and children to reach full potential in the expression of who they are meant to be.

School of Natural Wonder, Marlboro College

Marlboro, VT

<http://www.questvision.org/vision.php>

The School of Natural Wonder (SNW) offers experiential, nature-based programs designed to help people connect deeply with the natural world, themselves, each other, and Spirit, however that may be experienced. SNW offers a sacred, supportive container in which participants can experience contemplative, participatory, and ceremonial ways of being in Nature. The basic model for all our programs is the Vision Quest, an ancient rite of passage, which we have adapted for modern use drawing on many wisdom traditions. The Vision Quest can serve different intentions. It is a powerful, ceremonial way to mark, honor and celebrate any life change, to discover one's own meanings and purpose, to seek renewal, to heal old wounds, to connect with Spirit. In addition, it is a particularly powerful vehicle for helping young people negotiate the momentous passage from childhood to adulthood. Programs are offered to entering students at Marlboro College. Programs occur in New Mexico during spring and summer, and in Vermont during fall.

Rite Of Passage Experience[®] (ROPE[®])

Glastonbury, CT

<http://www.rope.org/>

ROPE is a youth and community development initiative that uses rites of passage. It fosters collaboration among diverse members of a community to guide children in grades 6-12 through adolescence. Since its inception in 1981, ROPE been delivered to over 100,000 youth and their families across the United States and Canada and has been successfully replicated in small towns and large cities. Through a community development process ROPE provides developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant experiences to students contextualized to fit each community.

She Walks Toward Fullness

Montpelier, VT

She Walks Toward Fullness is a community of women and girls in Central Vermont who meet regularly to support girls as they walk towards the fullness of young womanhood. Initiatory ceremonies will be held as girls are ready to mark their passage from childhood to adolescence and adolescence to young womanhood. A mentor will be matched with each girl for the preparation and initiation. The circle of

women and girls is supported by a broader community that includes family members and interested community members. Activities include service to community and Earth, personal and group challenge, nature crafts and skills, personal awareness and self-esteem, and creation of ceremony and ritual. Girls and women may join the group at any time.

**Unitarian Universalist Society
Burlington, VT**

<http://www.uusociety.org/>

The Coming of Age program at the UU Society in Burlington is unique to the congregation; although most sufficiently sized congregations have a Coming of Age program, the intricacies of those programs differ. Coming of Age is offered to 9th-12th graders in alternate years, and usually begins in October and ends in April to coincide with the school year. The purpose of the program is to give the students a structured opportunity to explore their religious beliefs and develop their identity. Each participant is paired with an adult mentor of the participant's choosing, and the pairs meet approximately once a month to discuss topics guided by the mentor. The meetings allow the student and mentor to learn about each other, but also to explore big questions. At the end of the program, the participants share their personal credo/belief statement with the entire congregation during a service (each is 3-5 minutes). Mentors work from a book called *Words to Live By: Creating a Personal Credo* by Judith Burch. It is likely that coming of age programs will be more widely developed among UU societies in the coming years.

**Vermont Vision Quest
Montpelier, Vermont**

www.vermontvisionquest.org

Vermont Vision Quest offers quests in North Central Vermont each summer and early fall for adults ages 18 and up. Preparation is often conducted over 3-4 months in day long meetings. 3-4 day solo fasts are then enacted in wilderness areas of the Green Mountains followed by a community return ceremony that is created by people who have previously fasted. Renewal Fasts are offered each year to return, to remember and to deepen commitments made during the solo fast. Renewal programs are shorter in duration, from 3-5 days. Councils are held throughout the year for anyone who has enacted a solo fast. At these gatherings we support each other's unfolding spiritual journey. Mentoring and Coaching are offered for those who want individual support and guidance. The Raccoon Lodge, an apprentice group, meets quarterly.

**Vermont Wilderness School
Brattleboro, VT**

<http://www.vermontwildernessschool.org/school/>

Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) was founded on a commitment to building a powerful community of naturalists, teachers and leaders. They offer programs that go beyond traditional "environmental education" to help develop a deep understanding of self, community and nature, and in doing so, build healthy connections to the natural world and each other. VWS offers The Art of Mentoring Program every year in October and a variety of programs for children and adults.

National Organizations

Animas Valley Institute Durango, CO

<http://www.animas.org/about.htm>

AVI's central purpose is to assist people through the initiatory process that leads to visionary leadership and cultural artistry. Our primary work is with those ready to undergo the joys and challenges of the underworld descent to soul that flowers into a life of meaningful service and abundant fulfillment — or a deepening for those already on the journey. AVI also serves as a training institute for those who have heard the call to become soul-initiation guides for others. AVI has been offering contemporary, nature-based programs since 1981. We are a nonprofit organization of over 20 guides and four part-time staff with offices in Durango, Colorado, USA.

Our 40-plus programs include 12-day contemporary wilderness quests, 5-day retreat-center-based soulcraft intensives, and advanced intensives on soulcentric dreamwork, shadow work, the cultivation of ecological identity, deep imagery journeys, and other topics. Our Soulcraft Apprenticeship and Initiation Program (SAIP) is an advanced training curriculum designed for educators, psychotherapists, health professionals, and wilderness guides. Animas Valley Institute founder Bill Plotkin and the other Animas guides have created and shaped over 40 contemporary practices that assist people of Western cultures in their quests for more meaningful, fulfilling, and culturally engaged lives aligned with nature, soul, and the Great Turning.

Bridge Builders Portland, OR

<http://www.thebridgebuilders.org/>

The Bridge Builders is a community of volunteers who remove destructive barriers from a child's development and replaces them with constructive tools to build a strong community. Through African-centered rites of passage, The Bridge Builders organization has assisted hundreds of Portland (Oregon) area adolescents of African descent since 1996 to transform, internally, into Gentlemen and Oshun. Participants in The Bridge Builders rites of passage program are guided through a personal journey of transformation that takes them over troubled waters that have destroyed so many of our young people's dreams. Instead of drowning in hopelessness, under achievement, ignorance, apathy, and selfish ambition, the youth in this program cross a bridge that is anchored by four incredibly strong pillars: spirituality, scholarship, entrepreneurship and community building.

Global Passageways Boulder CO

<http://www.goldenbridge.org/global.html>

Global Passageways is a growing community of our world's leading rites of passage specialists, positive youth and elder development specialists, and social change movement leaders who are gathering together to revitalize the role rites of passage have in the healing and transformation of our lives, our societies, and the planet Earth. This collaborative international project is dedicated to the safe passage of humanity and our precious Earth as we navigate our way through the narrow passageway of change we face in the twenty-first century. Our shared mission will be accomplished through two global conferences, a dynamic multi-media website, numerous publications, and a feature-length film documenting the process and power of rites of passage in these times. Additional resources will include:

- A comprehensive listing of related resources: books, articles, videos, organizations, and programs
- A community dialogue and networking platform
- A multimedia interface featuring video and audio clips of people from around the world sharing their rites of passage and coming of age stories
- A global institute (Global Passageways) for the sustained study and promotion of rites of passage in the 21st century.
- An edited book about contemporary rites of passage for a popular audience and an edited book for practitioners and specialists in the field (scholarly/best practices).
- A feature length video-documentary on youth, elders, and the revitalization of rites of passage in the 21st century.

**Golden Bridge
Boulder, CO**

<http://www.goldenbridge.org/surfingCreative.html>

Golden Bridge is dedicated to improving and empowering the lives of young people from around the world through dance-based rites of passage programming. Our services are focused on youth and the adults who serve them, including families, educators, community leaders, and health professionals. In support of our ongoing programming, we offer one-on-one mentorship along with numerous youth rites of passage educational programs coupled to assist young people from numerous cultures find the inner and outer resources necessary to create safe and productive lives. These programs, offered during the summers and throughout the school year, provide young people with specific social, psychological, creative, and leadership skills that allow them to transform addictions, rebuild self-esteem, and discover life affirming creative pathways for expressing themselves in the world. Through our intensive movement-based programs, youth develop inner strength, resiliency, and self-esteem, along with fundamental outer competencies to become active members of community, at local, national, and international levels.

**Washington State 4-H Youth Rite of Passage Program
King County Extension (Washington State University)
Renton, WA**

<http://www.king.wsu.edu/4H/Rite/>

The 4-H Rite of Passage program was originally developed in conjunction with The School of Lost Borders in California. For over 30 years they have provided vision fasts for youth and adults as well as training for future vision fast guides. 4-H in Washington State offers a culturally appropriate rite of passage through a vision fast in the wilderness. They prepare initiates for as much as a 3-day fast alone, with minimum shelter, in the natural world. The vision fast process for participants involves 3 phases:

- 1) *Severance*: leaving the world that they know
- 2) *Threshold*: time alone
- 3) *Incorporation*: Reentry into a new life and life status as an adult.

**Labyrinth
South Lake Tahoe, CA**

<http://www.labyrinthcenter.org/home-page.html>

Labyrinth Center's mission is to assist in guiding youth and adults through the overall process of adolescence. It is also our intention to help "wake up" the adults in modern society to the myriad of culturally induced problems negatively affecting our children. Labyrinth Center will take a broad and

creative approach to the adolescent process. We will offer a full range of programs and services intended to work the Prevention-Intervention-Treatment spectrum, remembering that Prevention is always the best approach. Similarly, while Labyrinth Center will certainly help with Symptoms of adolescent problems, we will also focus strongly on working the Causes of adolescent issues.

**Leapnow
Calistoga, CA**

<http://www.leapnow.org/>

LEAPNOW is an organization dedicated to transforming education. LEAPNOW has a residential campus in northern California, and runs LEAPYEAR an alternative first year of college for ages 17 to 22. LEAPYEAR students travel abroad for 6 months, and learn skills for conscious living during two months on retreat. The program is a full year rite of passage - facilitating a conscious and powerful transition into adulthood through group travel, extended solo journeys, and formal rites of passage involving the students and their parents. . LEAPNOW also runs Ring of Fire, a 5-month journey designed to assist young men in growing into conscious manhood. All of the programs that LEAPNOW runs are designed to awaken and empower youth to "be the change."

**Men's Leadership Alliance
Boulder, CO**

<http://www.mensleadershipalliance.org/>

The Men's Leadership Alliance (MLA) is a 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. MLA's non-denominational programs are numerous, and are meant to address the needs of men and youth in their journey through life.

**The National Rites of Passage Institute
Cleveland, OH**

<http://www.ritesofpassage.org/>

The vision of NROPI is "to institutionalize a process that will result in the development, support, and regeneration of healthy and authentic community." The National Rites of Passage Institute has directly initiated five hundred youth. Adults trained by NROPI have initiated another ten thousand. NROPI has provided training for 924 adults who provide services in public schools, county departments of children and family services, institutions of higher education, religious institutions, neighborhood based organizations, and correctional facilities.

**The Ojai Foundation
Ojai, CA**

<http://www.ojaifoundation.org/index.php>

Offers young and old, individuals and groups, an opportunity to explore community, live close to nature, find renewal, build friendships, and mark significant rites of passage through ceremony and quiet reflection. Ojai offers customized programs to create enriching experiences with offerings such as; teachings in the way of council, rites of passage, ropes course, nature awareness, Medicine Wheel teachings, dream councils, ocean kayaking, sweatlodges, games, art making and solo time in nature. All are designed to foster healthy relationships, deepen appreciation of the natural world, inspire creativity, and promote self-reflection and growth.

PassageWorks

Boulder, CO

<http://www.passageworks.org/>

PassageWorks is dedicated to transforming the culture of classrooms, schools and districts so that the inner life of students and teachers is safe, nurtured and welcomed. By “inner life” we refer to that essential aspect of human nature that yearns for deep connection, grapples with difficult questions about meaning, and seeks a sense of purpose and genuine self-expression. For twenty years, our model for supporting these yearnings in young people has fostered the development of compassion and character, humility and excellence, and skills for collaboration and dialogue that are essential for a just democracy and a sustainable world.

Pathways Foundation

Australia

<http://www.pathwaysfoundation.com.au/>

The Pathways Foundation is a National harm prevention charity that assists young people make the fundamental emotional shift from being a child to becoming a young adult. The way Pathways does this is by providing contemporary, community based Rites of Passage for boys 13-15 years old.(Pathways to Manhood) and for girls 12-15 years old.(Pathways into Womanhood). Since 1995, Pathways to Manhood has been providing a community based, contemporary Rite of Passage for boys into manhood. The Pathways Foundation was incorporated in 2002 and now delivers the following programs nationally: Pathways to Manhood, Pathways into Womanhood, Leadership Development, Returning Young Man, and Raising Teenage Boys School talks. The Pathways Foundation is a registered harm prevention charity with gift deductibility status.

The Rite Journey

Australia

<http://www.theritejourney.com/Intro.html>

‘The Rite Journey’ allows each student to share in a year long partnership with his teacher as they explore together what it means to be a respectful and responsible adult in their society.

Given the current view that initiation and rites of passage should be renewed for young people, especially boys, in Western culture, a feature of the program is specially created ceremonies held throughout the year. These celebration points that are part of the rites of passage follow the “7 Steps of a Hero's Journey” and are specifically designed to be relevant to the context of young people. They are known to strengthen partnerships with parents and mentors.

School of Lost Borders

Big Pine, CA

<http://www.schooloflostborders.org/>

The School of Lost Borders is committed to creating opportunities for people from all walks of life to express their individual natures within old and modern ceremonial practices. Solitude and silence in wild nature, the commitment to community, honoring of personal intent, and the acknowledgment and responsibility to bring forth ones gifts, are the foundation of our ceremonies and teachings. Every course at the School is a rite of passage, a border crossing from the past to the future, from the old to the new, from the outward to the in ward, from the self to the Self. The emphasis is on the challenge of life transitions, the borders we all must cross.

We offer vision fasts and training in the various disciplines and related fields that support vision fast guides. We also offer programs for those wishing to incorporate their experiences into their lives.