



ASHEVILLE INSTITUTE

Sustainable Solutions in Action

Nonprofit organizations throughout Asheville and the surrounding area nourish the people within our communities, caring for those in need, protecting our historic heritage, educating young and old, and nurturing our cultural soul. Each month, The Laurel is bringing to our readers some of the stories behind these agencies. This month, the “spotlight” is on Asheville Institute.

BY JACQUELYN DOBRINSKA

Many people, when they experience feelings of stress, disconnect, or uncertainty, head to the mountains. There are qualities about the natural world—whether a river, cliff or wooded grove—that restore something vital to our minds, bodies, and souls.

But what if we didn't have to head for the hills to regain this sense of connection? What if the natural world was woven into our daily lives? Nature was in our backyards? Food came from the garden? Homes contributed to, instead of took from, living ecological systems?

Helping people realize this dream of a more

sustainable, regenerative life is Asheville Institute (AVI), a local nonprofit organization providing experiential education opportunities.

“We work to empower people and communities with the wisdom and ability to live in balance with the rest of the natural world,” says Janelle Kapoor, founder of AVI, as well as Kleiworks International. AVI's goal is to work with the abundance of nature, recognizing that humans are part of nature, and inspire, design and implement local, natural and integrated systems that engage both our inner and outer landscapes, while creating thriving, co-flourishing cultures in cities, neighborhoods, and backyards around the world.

The folks at AVI do this in several ways. Specifically, they offer several programs that not only build knowledge and skills, but also inspire participants to look at the bigger picture. Ollie Fleming, a recent graduate of one of these programs, said, “I came to the Urban Farm School so I could start my own farm project. I'm leaving with