

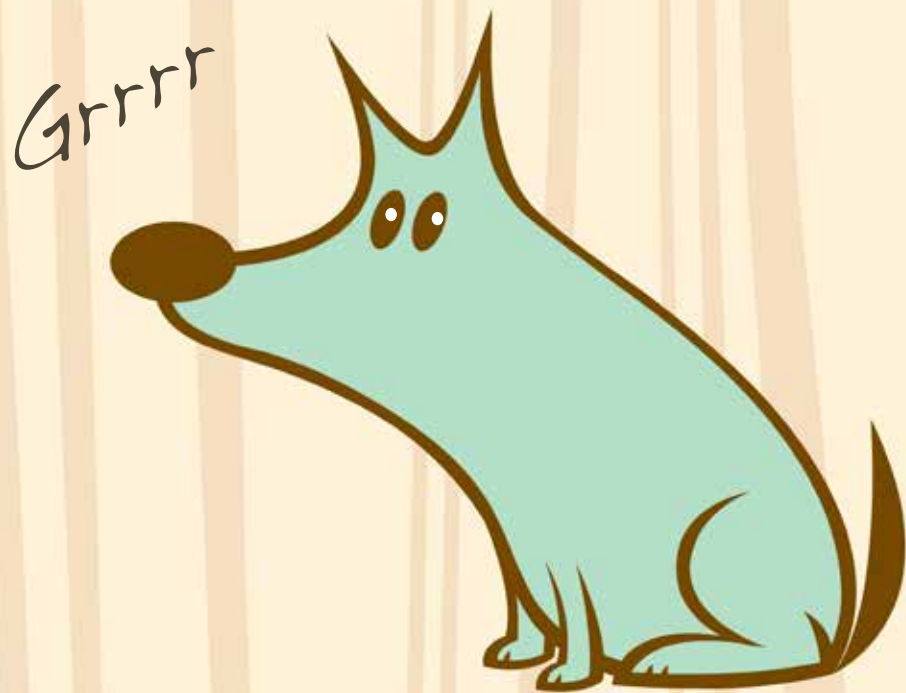


dare to **dream...**
make it happen!



*This book is dedicated to
my parents Eph and Cera Levin
My husband, Rudy Rousseau and
to the Project Kofi staff who
helped shape Project M Families:
Keith Allen, Patrick Cunningham,
Don Francis, Denise King,
Leroy Thomas, Yanegue Walker*





When I was a little girl
I was so afraid. I was
afraid to go outside
because I thought there might
be a loose dog roaming the
neighborhood that would
bite me.

I was afraid to answer the phone,
and I was afraid to ask other kids
if they wanted to play.

you feel
you're not
good enough.

In fourth grade I was so shy, I almost fainted when I had to give a speech in front of the class. I believed the other kids were way better than me, and deep down I always felt I wasn't good enough.



Yet, my mom and dad always believed
in me and told me,
**"JACKIE, YOU ARE WONDERFUL AND
YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE."**

But, I didn't really believe them because
of the voice inside my head that said

"YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH!"

you think you
can't do
anything right.

When I got my driver's license I was afraid to drive the car. And at my first day of college, I crashed my dad's brand new car into a pole at the University of Minnesota parking lot. The voice inside my head laughed at me and said,

**“YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING!
YOU CAN'T EVEN DRIVE A CAR!”**



And when I came home to tell my dad, although he was angry, he was quiet and gentle with me, because he understood that I had already punished myself enough.



My dad was kind,
creative and very smart.
He was a talented
artist and writer, but few people
ever knew that....because he
worked very hard every day for
long hours, to support my mom,
my brother and me.

I would often read my dad's stories
and cry, because I saw his
brilliance and knew he was not
able to live his dream.

you believe
you aren't
smart enough.

I went to college and studied to be a Speech and Language Pathologist. I got good grades in school, but had to work very hard to ignore the voice inside my head that said

“YOU'RE REALLY NOT SMART!”

When I graduated college I got my first job working with children with disabilities. I had never worked with these children before and I often was not sure what to do. The voice inside my head was strong and powerful. It often told me

“YOU AREN'T DOING A GOOD JOB!”



Many of my students could not speak and were having difficulty reaching their goals. In some ways, I felt a lot like them.

Many times I would leave work feeling very sad, because I saw the light in the eyes of my students and knew so much more was possible!

**WHAT
WOULD
YOU
DO...**

**IF YOU WEREN'T
AFRAID?**

YES!

Like other speech and language pathologists at that time, I worked with my students in a segregated classroom. This didn't make sense to me.

One night I had the idea,

**“WHY NOT DO MY SPEECH THERAPY RIGHT
IN THE CLASSROOM?”**

The next day I shared my idea with teacher **Tom Carlson**, who said *YES!* come work in my classroom! My students began to grow and develop in ways we did not think were possible, and many people noticed!

wonder
“what if?”

During my early years as a Speech and Language Pathologist, I went to a workshop with physical therapist **Lynn Scherfenberg**, where we learned how assistive technology was being used to help children with severe disabilities “speak.” These children were physically disabled but intellectually very smart. I wondered how assistive technology might be used to help the students I worked with who were much lower functioning.



That night I had a dream and woke up thinking

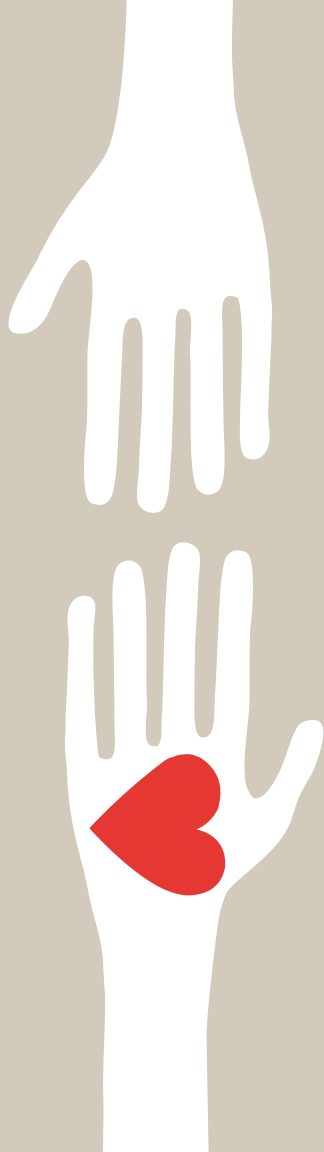
“WHY NOT BRING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TO MY STUDENTS; THOSE WITH SEVERE/ PROFOUND DISABILITIES?”

I went to work and asked my supervisor if Lynn and I could start an assistive technology program in our district. Luckily he said

YES!

be open to
new endeavors.

Several years later, still working in the school district with the assistive technology program, I had a meeting with a woman that would change my life. Her name was **Cheryl Volkman**, director of a preschool for children with severe disabilities, who knew an engineer from Honeywell named **Lee Hallgren**. At the time Lee was building simple electro-mechanical switches that allowed the children in the preschool to turn on toys all by themselves.



C heryl asked me if I would consult with her preschool and help the children learn other ways of using assistive technology. Thankfully, I did not listen to the voice inside my head

(**“YOU CAN’T DO THAT!”**)

... and said

YES!

I remembered the words of my parents

**“YOU ARE SMART AND YOU CAN BE
ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE!”**



**WHAT IS
YOUR
“IMPOSSIBLE”
DREAM?**

imagine
“why not?”

Lee and Cheryl and I worked hard and well together developing and using assistive technology with the children in the Cerebral Palsy Center Preschool. One night I had a dream and woke up thinking

“WHY NOT BUILD THE SWITCHES AND OTHER ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TOOLS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR MANY TEACHERS TO DO WHAT WE’RE DOING?”

That day Cheryl, Lee and I talked about the idea of creating a program that designed and manufactured assistive technology for people with disabilities.

YES!



We eventually took the idea to the CPC board of directors and they said *YES!* We named our program **AbleNet**, and continued to develop products that would change people's lives all over the world.

We helped people imagine what seemed impossible and make those dreams come true with simple technology solutions.

YES!

In 1990 AbleNet was spun off as a for-profit company and I left Intermediate School District 287 to join AbleNet full time. My title was Vice President of Marketing, which was interesting and challenging because I had never been a Vice President before and I knew little about marketing.

remember who
you are.

At my first day of work I was afraid as I asked Cheryl, “So what is marketing?” Her response was “It’s the four Ps: Product, Price, Place and Promotion.” I was relieved there were only four as I remembered my parent’s words:

**“YOU ARE SMART AND YOU CAN BE
ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE.”**

?

?

WHAT DO YOU NEED
TO REMEMBER?

?

?

?

challenge
your self doubt.



ver the years I learned and grew and helped develop many products and programs at AbleNet. AbleNet also grew and developed into an industry-leading company that helped thousands and thousands of people with disabilities participate, communicate and learn. But the voice inside my head did not go away....

“YOU’RE STILL NOT GOOD ENOUGH!”

is what I would hear.

have faith
in your
imagination.

Deep down I knew it was important to have faith in my imagination and that

“EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE!”

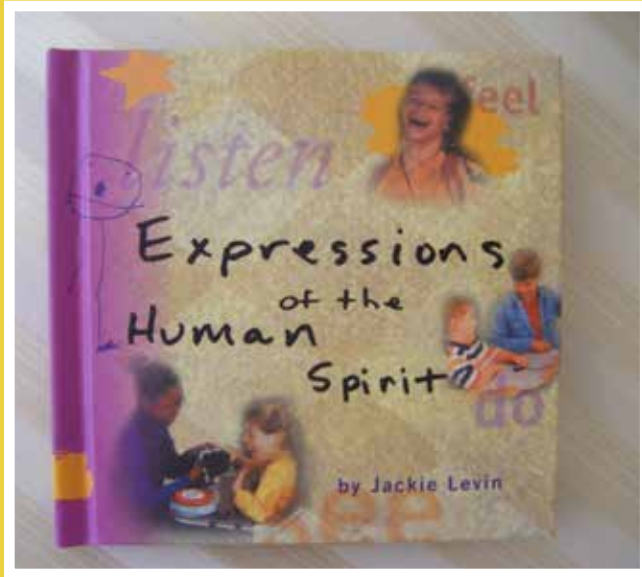
I tried to remember what I told my son over and over when he was a little boy

**“IF YOU WILL SEE IT YOU CAN BELIEVE IT,
AND IF YOU BELIEVE IT, IT CAN COME TRUE”...**

my own version of the positive message my parents gave to me. I continued dreaming and working at AbleNet.

express your
dream.

In May of 1998 my father died after two and a half years living in a nursing home following an accident. At the end of his life my dad was much like my students, severely disabled, both physically and cognitively. Three weeks after my father died, I had a dream that I should write a book that would be the “**VOICE**” of people with disabilities everywhere who have so much to tell us about their own capabilities and dreams.



I wrote my book on Memorial Day weekend and called it ***Expressions of the Human Spirit***. After the book was published I remember reading one of the pages:

**“IF GREATNESS IS MEASURED BY
WHO WE ARE, NOT WHAT WE DO...
FIND A WAY FOR ME TO STAND IN
MY OWN LIGHT.”**

I realized in that moment that although I dedicated the book to my father he inspired me to write it for myself...to start to change the voice inside my head!

remember your
own wisdom.

I cried as I remembered how much my dad loved me and believed in me.

I cried as I remembered how much I felt the same about him. Nineteen ninety nine was a difficult year, because the voice inside my head was so loud and powerful that I could not remember who I really was. I was stressed and tired all the time, feeling like I was treading water and barely staying afloat in a huge ocean. I tried to remember my own wisdom from ***Expressions of the Human Spirit***.

be proud.

*If Intelligence has many faces....
see my gifts and recognize how
smart I am.*

**“IF SUCCESS IS MEASURED BY OUR PERSONAL
BESTS...LET ME EXPERIENCE PRIDE IN MY
OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS”**

Sometimes it seemed impossible for me
to feel successful.



HOW WOULD YOUR
LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF
STARTING **TOMORROW**
YOU COULD DO WHAT
YOU REALLY LOVED
EVERY DAY?

imagine your
best life.

During that difficult time, I was talking to **Bill Mills**, a consultant and business coach working with AbleNet, who asked me a question that would change my life:

“SO, HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF STARTING TOMORROW YOU COULD DO WHAT YOU REALLY LOVED EVERY DAY?”

I was speechless, as I pondered the question. The voice inside my head was quiet.



A few weeks later I got stranded in New Orleans. It was New Years Eve of the new Millennium. That night I took out a legal pad and asked myself the question:

“WHAT MIGHT I DO IF I DIDN’T WORK AT ABLENET?”

An hour later I had filled twenty pages with over 800 ideas.

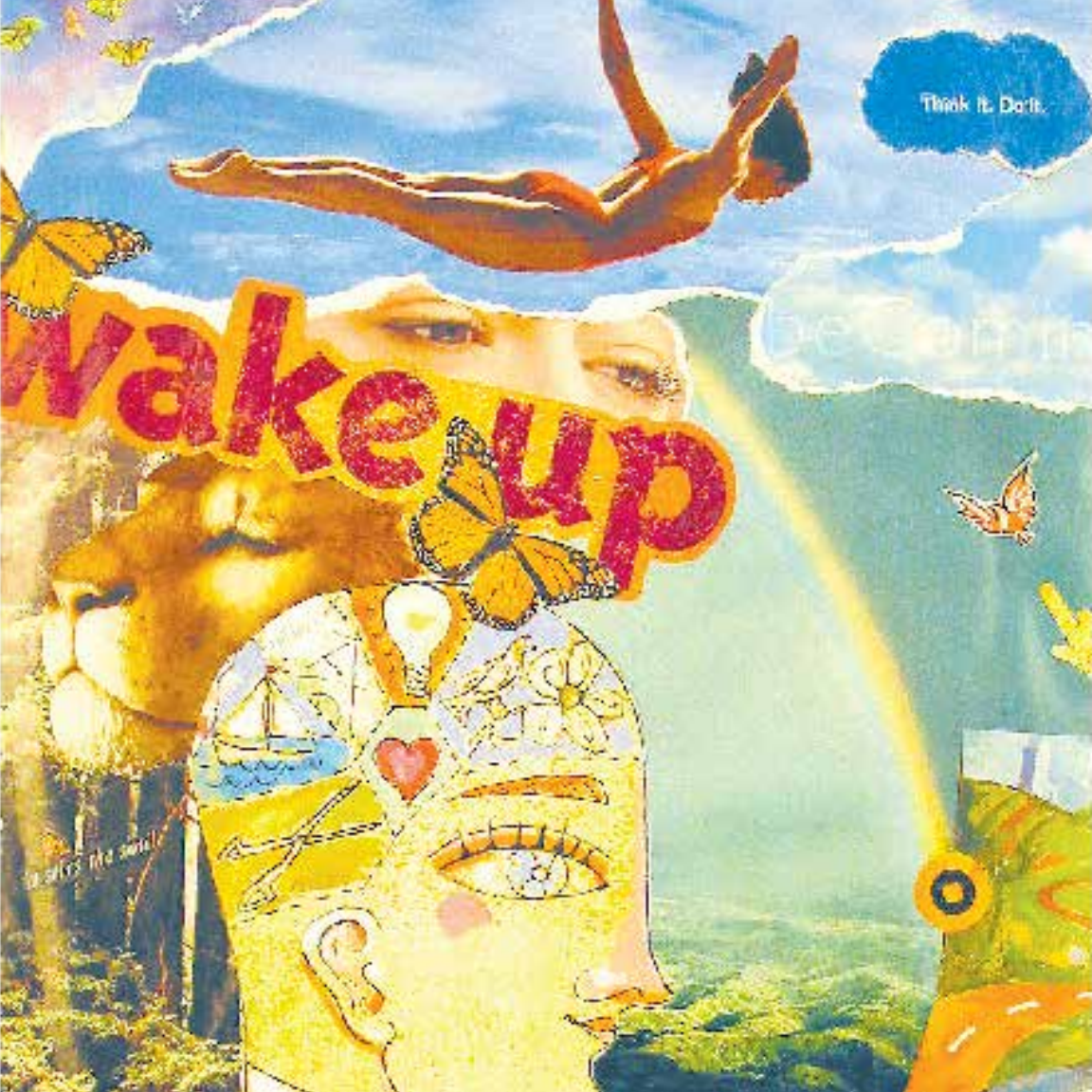
leave room
for hope.

I looked at my list and for the first time I realized that I was a visionary and a possibility thinker. I began to get excited about my future and felt a surge of creative energy coming from deep inside.

I FELT A DEEP SENSE OF HOPE.



**WHAT'S POSSIBLE
WHEN YOU OPEN
YOUR HEART?**



The next day I felt my heart open as I began my own “Journey to the Heart” to discover who I really was.

I continued to work at AbleNet, but also started exploring new possibilities including life coaching, collage art, and developing tools to help people find their own passion.

When people asked me what I did I said

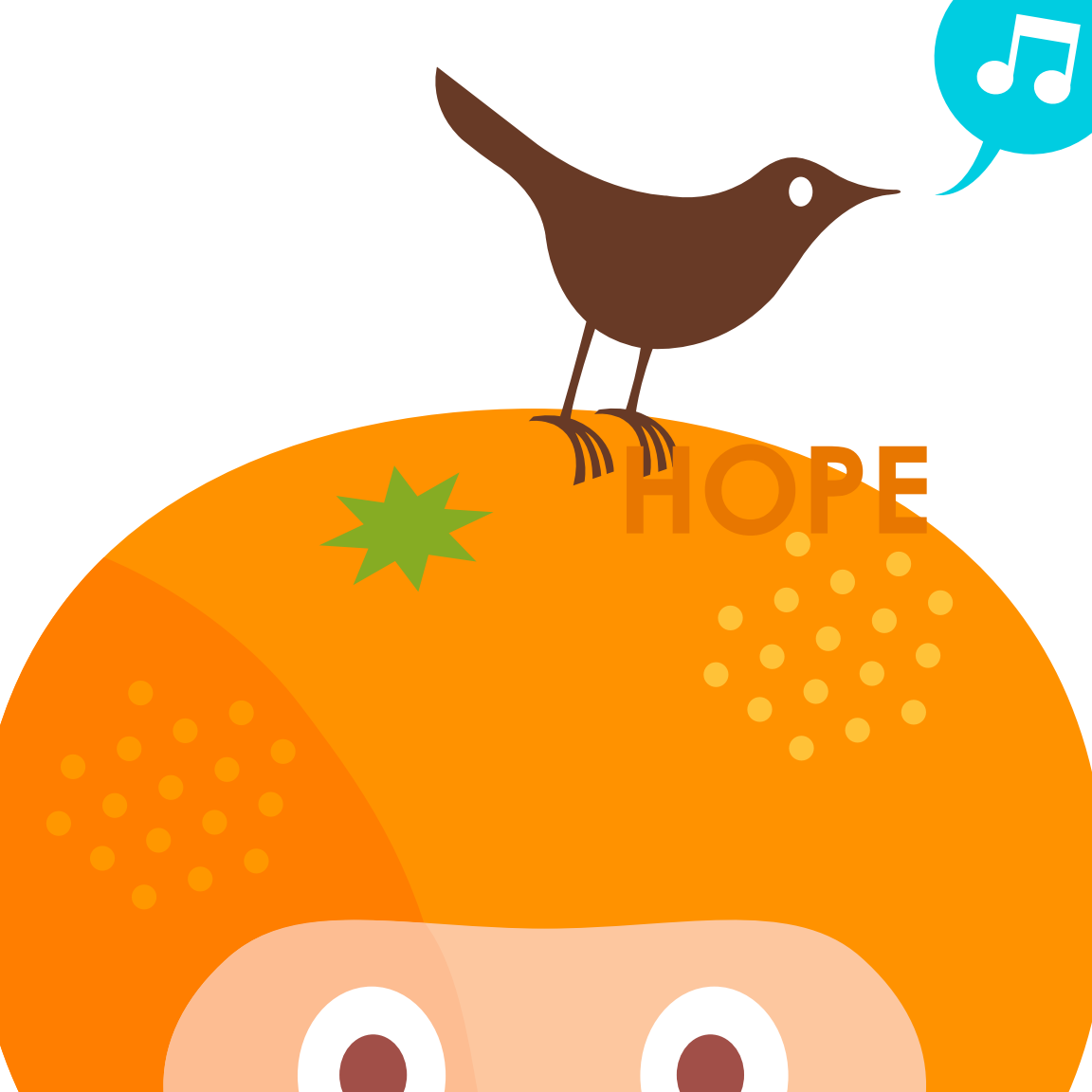
“I HAVE MY WORK LIFE AND I HAVE MY LIFE WORK.”



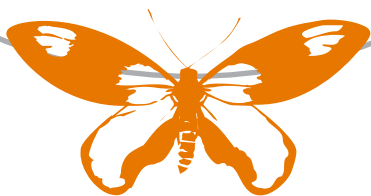
Every day I filled myself with positive images and messages to quiet the voice inside my head. I created a consulting practice and called it



My tag line was **"BRING YOUR PASSIONS TO LIFE."** Things seemed to be going well and I continued to grow, learn and get stronger every day.



Then in 2001 my mom (and best friend!) was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. On top of her multiple sclerosis and quintuple heart bypass surgery the year before, this was quite a blow. My mother was an incredible human being... positive, loving and a true believer in the power of possibility. Her favorite word was **HOPE** and she never gave it up despite all of the challenges she faced.



My mother loved butterflies and wore a beautiful butterfly necklace every day to affirm her belief in possibilities.

During the time I took care of my mom in hospice, she often told me *“After I die I’ll come back to you as a butterfly to let you know I’m always with you.”* My mother continued to be positive and brave as she told everyone who visited her

“I’M NOT AFRAID TO DIE.”

In the early morning of June 24th 2003 my mom, **Cera Levin**, passed away.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE WHEN...

**YOU CHOOSE
LIFE?**

believe
anything's
possible.

Two weeks later, I too was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I had to stop working and for the next six months I went through chemo therapy and my own process of deep transformation. There were times the voice inside my head made me wonder if I was really good enough to live, yet, I remembered my parents' words and did not give up. Choosing life, I continued to dream and believe that

“ANYTHING’S POSSIBLE.”



survived cancer with the love and support of my family and friends and my own commitment to live. Choosing life, I began to wonder again

“WHAT MIGHT LIE BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS?”

believe in
yourself.

In the Fall of 2004 I signed up for a 12-day residential retreat led by **Angeles Arrien** in the high desert of Arizona. We were to spend three days and three nights alone in the wilderness. I had never put up a tent by myself before this, so I practiced for two weeks in my backyard. I was very afraid and the voice inside my head was having a great time

“YOU'RE GOING WHERE?!”



YES!

Once in the desert, I was to find a place to pitch my tent for the three day vision quest. Hesitantly, I walked and looked, not being sure what I was looking for. The sun was hot, the ground was dry and I noticed there was little vegetation, only cactus and some juniper trees. I looked over to my right and saw an unbelievable sight. A strip of moss on the ground about an inch thick in the shape of a butterfly...about two feet across! I immediately thought of my mom.

“MOM... IS THIS WHERE I’M SUPPOSED TO PITCH MY TENT?” I whispered.

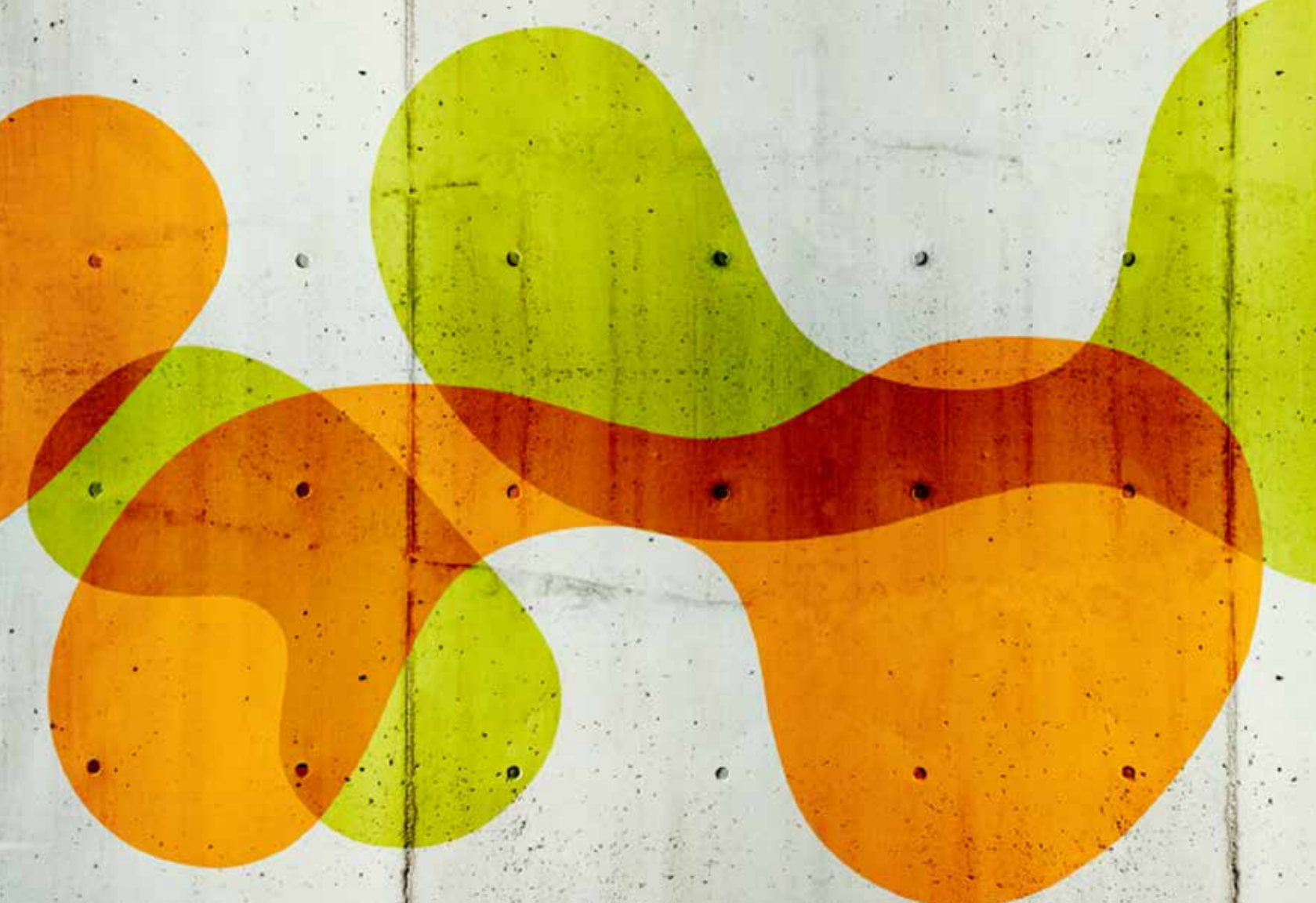
A second later I turned around and in the juniper tree behind me was a huge bright orange butterfly that flew right at me. The answer was a definite **YES!**

wonder
“what else?”

During my three days and three nights in the wilderness I learned a lot about **ME**. I learned more about who I really was, what I loved, and what really mattered in life. At the end of the three days I walked around my tent and said out loud:

**“NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS WOULD I
EVER HAVE THOUGHT I COULD DO THIS!”**

I wondered what else I might do that I could not imagine.



WHAT ELSE
MIGHT
YOU DO
THAT YOU
COULD
NOT
IMAGINE?



While in Arizona, I learned to walk a labyrinth and on my way home I had a dream, that I should build a labyrinth in my back yard to inspire my work with the power of possibility. I met with landscape architect and sacred earth artist, **William Grace Frost** and shared my stories with him. After hearing my stories William said

**“WHY NOT BUILD YOUR LABYRINTH
IN THE SHAPE OF A BUTTERFLY?”**

YES! Why Not!

That November we laid the first ever **Butterfly Peace Path** in my back yard.

continue
to listen.

William and I walked the Butterfly Peace Path together and I felt the healing energy of its sacred space.

As I continued to walk the Butterfly I was able to listen to my inner wisdom, the voice of my true self. Walking the Butterfly helped me remember that

“EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE”

and motivated me to continue living my dream.



practice and
embody peace.

Many people came to my house to walk the Butterfly, including **Connie Moret**, a teacher from Clear Springs Elementary School in Minnetonka, MN. After her walk, Connie had her own dream and said

“WHY NOT BRING THE BUTTERFLY PEACE PATH TO OUR SCHOOL?”

Connie brought this idea to **Curt Carpenter**, the principal at Clear Springs Elementary. Curt was also a visionary and said **YES!** because we are an International Peace Site school and this will help our students learn to practice and embody peace in the midst of a busy world.”



**WHAT ARE
LIFE'S MOST
IMPORTANT
QUESTIONS?**

find your own
answers.

Many more people walked our Butterfly
Peace Paths to find their own answers to
life's most important questions:

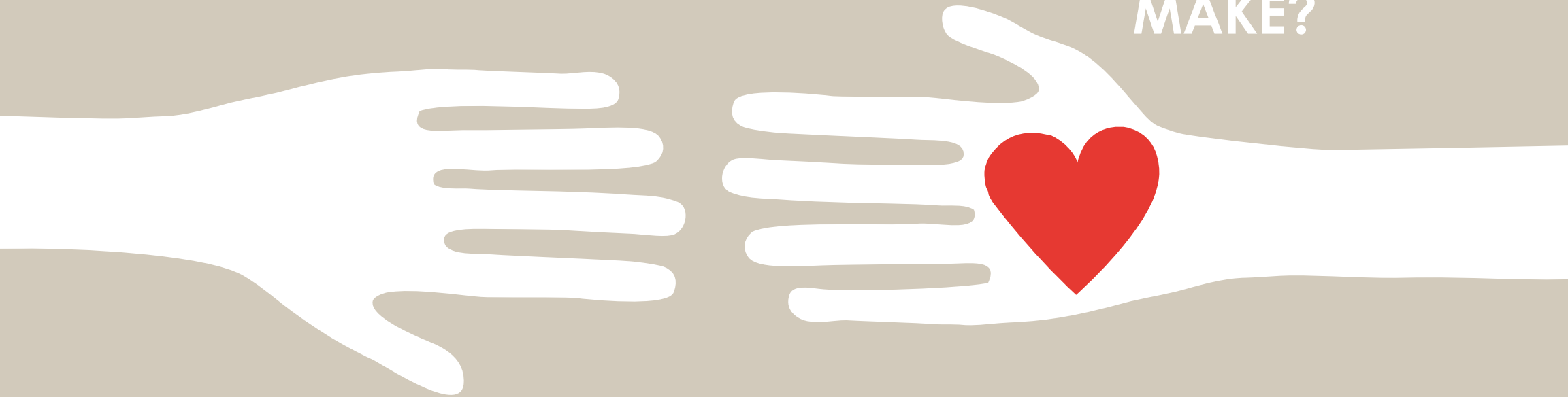
WHO AM I?

WHAT DO I LOVE?

WHY AM I HERE?

WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?

WHAT IS THE
DIFFERENCE
YOU'VE BEEN
LONGING TO
MAKE?



make new
connections.

My journey continued, and in 2006 I signed up for a ten month Co-active Leadership course where I would meet for four weeks (a week at a time) in California with twenty people from around the world. I smiled when I found out the pre-assigned name of our group was **The Butterflies**.

ask important
questions.

A requirement of the course was to do a community project. Our assignment was to look into the space of our community and our life and ask:

WHAT'S MISSING?

**WHAT IS IT THAT YOUR HEART
CRIES OUT TO CONTRIBUTE?**

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE THAT YOU
HAVE BEEN LONGING TO MAKE?**



At first I thought my project would involve the Butterfly Peace Path, but the answer that came was a deep calling, and a voice inside that said,

**“JACKIE, YOU ARE HERE TO HELP MENTOR
THE SPIRIT AND CAPABILITY OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN BOYS.”**

Despite my initial surprise and resistance, my sense of urgency was stronger than the voices of fear and self-doubt.



**WHAT IS
YOUR CALL?**

remember
your strengths.

What I had been learning in Leadership was that **“I AM GOOD ENOUGH!”** Thankfully I did not listen to the voice inside my head (**“WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE....!”**) and said *YES!* to this amazing call.



I decided to create a mentoring program for at risk and troubled African American males.

I named my program **PROJECT M**, knowing that M could stand for many things...

ME, music, movement, magic, and more than you can imagine! People would smile when I told them about my idea and say

“THAT’S WHAT OUR COMMUNITY REALLY NEEDS!”

6

Questions

Once I said “YES!” to the dream of **Project M** I saw the structure of the program. I saw that Project M was about helping youth and mentors answer the Six Questions:

1. **WHO AM I?**
2. **WHAT DO I LOVE?**
3. **WHAT AM I GOOD AT?**
4. **WHAT DOES MY COMMUNITY LOVE AND APPRECIATE ABOUT ME?**
5. **WHAT DOES MY COMMUNITY NEED?**
6. **HOW WILL I HELP.**

A vertical image showing a grey concrete wall with several small dark spots. At the bottom, there is a horizontal strip of bright green grass. The word "DREAM" is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the middle of the wall.

DREAM

Most important, I knew it would take many people who were willing to say *YES!* "WHY NOT?" ...people willing to dream and ready to make their dreams come to life.

YES!

Since the idea of Project M was just an idea, it needed a place to develop and thrive. I approached **Rudy Rousseau**, director of Project Kofi, a school based mental health program of the Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, MN, serving African American males with severe emotional behavioral disorders and asked him to consider the program. Luckily Rudy said *YES!* ...let's give it a try.

build
community.

Project M grew over the next year from a collection of activities Project Kofi counselors tried out with their students to a twelve-week family program and curriculum. We changed the focus and name of our program to **Project M Families**. The experience has been powerful and the response from our families extremely positive.



**HOW WILL
YOU HELP?**

be grateful.

Every day I take time to celebrate the success of **Project M Families**...and smile as I remember my mantra:

**“IF YOU WILL SEE IT, YOU CAN BELIEVE IT,
AND IF YOU WILL BELIEVE IT, IT CAN COME TRUE!”**

Although **Project M Families** has come a long way...we still have a long way to go! **Project M** is truly “MORE than we can ever imagine” and it will take time, talent, and resources to make the original vision of **Project M** a reality.



Someday every African American male
in our society will be able to say...

I KNOW WHO I AM

I HAVE A DREAM

I BELIEVE IN ME

AND THE POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

I WILL MAKE IN THE WORLD



Because thousands of adults in our communities were inspired to say...

I SEE WHO YOU ARE

I SHARE YOUR DREAM

I BELIEVE IN YOU

AND THE POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

YOU WILL MAKE IN THE WORLD

With deep gratitude to my development partners:

*Michelle Rousseau of In The Event, Inc. for her
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Studio 7 Design for her creative brilliance.*

For more information about the
Butterfly Peace Path visit:
www.ButterflyPeacePath.com





Please share this publication with someone you wish to inspire, challenge, mentor or grow. Remember, you're never too young or too old to dream. Now is the time to support each other to have faith in our imaginations and keep our dreams alive!

Jackie Levin