The word itself summons up tantalizing visions of adventure, of unexplored frontiers, of human possibilities yet to be realized. There is the wonder of the place itself, 120 acres of fertile land carved out between mountain and ocean, blessed by a cascading canyon stream and hot mineral springs. There is the delicate and subtle Big Sur air of a late afternoon in May, the midnight mist of July, and the drenching February rain. There are October nights so clear the Milky Way can light your walk along the darkened garden path. And always there is the sound of the sea.

Then there are the people—the people who live there and love the land, and the 750,000 more who have come from all over the world to participate in Esalen’s 50-year-long Olympics of the mind, heart, body, spirit, and community, committing themselves not so much to “stronger, faster, higher” as to deeper, richer, more enduring in the fellowship of other seekers. They come for the intellectual freedom to consider systems of thought and feeling that lie beyond the constraints of societal norms. They come to re-discover ancient wisdoms in the rhythms and tides of the body, and poetry in the pulsing of life itself. They come to rediscover the miracle of self-aware consciousness. Often they come away inspired by a fierce desire to learn and keep on learning through all of life, and beyond.

Esalen is a place with a global reach. In the words of Thomas Wolfe about America, it is a place where miracles not only happen, but where they happen all the time.

For a longer and more complete version of the Esalen story, please read Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion by Jeffrey J. Kripal.
GORDON WHEELER
PRESIDENT

Gordon Wheeler, PhD, is an internationally-known psychologist for his teaching, training, and writing in Gestalt therapy, coaching, and education. He has served as President of Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California since 2003, where he also served for several years as CEO.

Gordon teaches regularly at Esalen and around the world and is syndicated nationally.

His written work, including a dozen books and over 100 articles in the field, has emphasized the evolution of Gestalt theory as the basis for relational and developmental self-theory, integrating the body of Gestalt psychology research with the Gestalt therapy tradition.

Gordon’s areas of exploration include relational development, self and shame, couples and intimacy, multi-cultural issues, gender and men’s issues, leadership and coaching, and lifelong integral education, as well as post-Holocaust issues and Gestalt Systems Constellations.

Gordon and his wife Nancy Lunney-Wheeler have a large and growing blended family in Santa Cruz, CA.

“Esalen is one of the most extraordinary places I’ve ever been and possibly the most extraordinary. It is infinitely precious because we can come here and tell the truth.”

–John Cleese
Michael Murphy is cofounder and Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the Esalen Institute, and serves as Director of Esalen’s Center for Theory & Research (CTR).

Born and raised in Salinas, California, Michael graduated from Stanford University in 1952. He lived for a year and a half at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India before starting the Esalen Institute in 1962 with his fellow Stanford graduate, Richard Price. In Big Sur, Dick and Michael co-created a magical and magnificent living laboratory on land owned by Michael’s family. But Michael insisted that Esalen focus not only on the wonders that happen for the thousands of people that come to be healed and made whole, but that it also work for social advance in various fields and fundamental research into the potentials of human nature.

In 1989, Esalen initiated Boris Yeltsin’s first visit to America — a trip that contributed to Yeltsin’s change of heart regarding the United States, capitalism, and the future of the Soviet Union. This success led to Esalen citizen diplomacy programs with China, an initiative to further understanding and healing among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and further work on Russian-Americana relations.

“His [Michael’s] zest, energy, humor, and insight have fired up generations of personal reformers and social reformers. To those who know him by reputation he is merely remarkable; to those who have had the pleasure and privilege of knowing him personally, he is transcendent.” — Robert Reich

With combined resources, shared interests, and mutual respect, Michael and Dick founded Esalen Institute in 1962. Agreeing on the need for freedom and innovations in the academic, medical, sociological and religious arenas, they created a space where diverse views could be explored both intellectually and experientially and where no approach would “capture the flag”.

When Michael moved back to San Francisco and established the city branch of Esalen, Dick stayed in Big Sur, continuing to provide core direction to the operational, programming, and community aspects of the Institute. His enthusiasm and support helped establish the work of Ida Rolf, Moshe Feldenkrais, Fritz Perls, and Stan Grof, among others. He was instrumental in bringing Julian Silverman from NIMH and, in collaboration with Dr. Jack Downing, supporting significant research regarding drugless intervention in first break schizophrenia. These diverse interests led to Dick’s formation of Gestalt Practice, a communal approach to developing awareness, which synthesized eastern meditative principles and gestalt structures with a somatic emphasis, which continues to develop and expand through his long-term students.

Dick died in 1985.
I am often asked about the historical influence of Esalen on American culture. I reply that this influence has been vast and deep, that it has not simply involved American culture (think Europe, Russia, Latin America, China, and the Middle East), and that much of this influence almost certainly still lies in the future.

I would only add one further observation here, namely, that Esalen’s signature idea of the human potential is so widespread and so popular now that it is virtually invisible. It is “in the water,” as we say. Or better, it is the water. I am reminded here of the story about the fish who one day met a turtle. The turtle said to the fish: “Isn’t the water fine today?” To which the fish replied, “What’s water?”

This is sort of where we are with the human potential. It is so common and so well known that we do not even recognize it any longer as something special, much less as something “Esalenesque.”

My favorite example here is American popular culture and its embrace of various “psychical” abilities or “paranormal” powers, capacities which are commonly seen, exactly as we have it in the human potential movement, as the evolutionary buds of our own latent human supernature. Think the X-Men and Prof. Xavier’s School for the Gifted. Think television programs like “Heroes.” Think countless Hollywood films, from John Travolta in “Phenomenon” to Matt Damon in “The Adjustment Bureau.” The latter film is based on a short story of the sci-fi master Philip K. Dick, who was himself utterly convinced of the evolutionary purpose of mystical illuminations, his own included.

My point? That the human potential movement, on its fiftieth birthday, has already instilled itself, alongside a host of other influences, in and as the very soul of American popular culture. This particular example (there are many others) may involve fiction, film, and fantasy, but that is precisely how a worldview often first shifts—through the cultural imagination. Nothing can be accomplished that is not at first imagined. And Esalen has inspired us to re-imagine ourselves in ways that are ecstatic, visionary, future-oriented, and, above all, big. Really, really big.
The Campus Renewal Project is the most significant campus renovation in Esalen’s half-century history. The multi-phase construction includes the expansion of Esalen’s iconic Lodge, the addition of guest accommodations on the northside of property, and staff housing enhancements.

**THE LODGE**
The Lodge renovation includes the addition of approximately 5,600 sq. ft., the upgrade and expansion of the kitchen, dining area, deck, café, bookstore and front office as well as a second floor addition with expanded meeting facilities. The energy- and resource-efficient renovation design was developed by the award-winning architectural firm Arkin Tilt Architects.

**Highlights include:**
- The Esalen kitchen is the source of our nourishing, farm-to-table experience that sustains approximately 350 people each day. Our re-designed kitchen and food service environment has been expanded to include approximately 2,300 sq. ft. of new/remodeled kitchen and storage space.
- The gathering place for life-changing conversations, the indoor dining area is expanded to seat 250 faculty, students, guests, and staff. Larger, more efficient windows offer increased ventilation and passive solar heating.
- Destined to become a favorite gathering spot, the new café and bar is located in the southeastern corner of the Lodge, on the site of the old Huxley meeting room.
- The expanded Lodge deck, located outside the southern end of the main dining room, features geo-thermally heated patios.

**NEW HUXLEY MEETING ROOM AND ADDITIONAL MEETING ROOM**
Built upon the foundation of Huxley with similar aesthetics and brought up to the second level of the renovated Lodge, this expansive sunlit space can now accommodate larger groups.

**Highlights include:**
- East-facing windows offer beautiful mountaintop views and south-facing windows offer views toward the baths and down the coastline.
- Design honors sacred universal patterns of the golden ratio, analemma and solstice with celestial windows and skylight orientations that capture the sunset light on the equinoxes and solstices.
- Cushioned bamboo dance floor with radiant heating, ideal for yoga, dance and movement classes.
- A new 1,000-square-foot meeting room adjacent to the new Huxley meeting room adds much-needed capacity for groundbreaking workshops.

**NORTH-SIDE GUEST ACCOMMODATIONS**
To better meet our current guest housing needs, a six-unit guest building is now located on the northside of Esalen’s property near the Art Barn. The goal of the structure is a net-zero impact on the environment.

**RESIDENTIAL STAFF HOUSING**
Located several miles north of Esalen on Highway 1, much of our South Coast Center residential staff housing was destroyed by fire in 2011. Phase 1 of the Campus Renewal includes rebuilding this much-needed staff housing, with the goals of enhancing staff comfort, safety, and privacy and achieving net-zero energy use.
Sustainability at Esalen is growing beyond traditional definitions focused primarily on environmental concerns (“being green”) to a more holistic and integrated approach. Whenever possible, we apply the ethics and principles of permaculture (a holistic, regenerative design system), and weigh social, cultural, economic, and environmental impact in fulfilling our mission and operating Esalen.

Embracing sustainable transformation as both a living-learning community and a conscious business, we strive to ensure a healthy quality of life and environment at Esalen for current and future generations.

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Esalen’s goal is to serve food that is healthy, fresh and delicious, and that is produced in a just and sustainable manner. Food should be produced in a way that is fair to farmers, that supports the (ideally local) communities from which it comes, that cares for the environment and that treats animals humanely. The food climate at Esalen should be one in which food is not simply food that energizes the community, but also one that creates an environment of awareness and fosters an understanding about where food comes from, who produces it, how this is achieved, and the implications of food choices we make every day.

Food systems are among the daily activities that can have a significant incremental impact on emissions not only because of reduced energy consumption but also indirectly through purchasing decisions and opportunities to educate the community and raise awareness about food choices.

**POLLUTION**

The use and disposal of hazardous materials is inevitable at Esalen—workshops and facilities require the use of chemicals, and disposal of batteries, electronics, and waste is unavoidable. However, it is extremely important that Esalen works to minimize use of these materials and to ensure their proper disposal. These materials can cause substantial air, water, and soil pollution and irreversible health effects when used (particularly if used in excess) or if not properly processed and disposed of or reused where possible.

**WASTE**

Esalen’s management of waste has consequences for climate change, local communities, local ecosystems, future generations, and our overall sustainability. As landfills fill up and related pollution and land use issues increase, it is more important than ever for Esalen to engage in alternative waste management strategies, including reuse, recycling, and composting. Education and awareness issues are also particularly implicated in waste management, because personal decision-making and everyday behaviors have a direct impact on waste generation and diversion.

**WATER**

While Esalen is blessed to have access to our own natural water source that produces millions of gallons of water annually, it is not unlimited and should be preserved. Esalen should set a positive example and decrease its environmental impacts by reducing consumption of potable water, increasing sustainable stormwater management techniques, implementing sustainable solutions to address overburdened on-site waste water and drinking water treatment systems, and increasing awareness of water issues on campus.

**LAND STEWARDSHIP**

Situated on the Central Coast of California with a climate, ecosystem, and biodiversity that are all unique and precious, Esalen’s physical and aesthetic environment is essential and must be respected, preserved, and restored for both current and future generations through responsible land and wildlife care, use, and restoration.
ABOUT ESALEN
Esalen Institute, a non-profit organization, is considered the birthplace of the human potential movement and serves as a sacred place for personal transformation. Through workshops, conferences, a working farm, and residential community, Esalen provides a unique opportunity for individuals and nonprofit organizations alike to forge a deeper understanding of self and society in order to pioneer new paths for social change.

THE PROGRAMS
Workshops, residential education apprenticeships, massage, conferences, massage, personal retreats, early child childhood program.

WORKSHOPS AND PERSONAL RETREATS
# of Workshops offered each year: approx. 550
# of Workshop Program Disciplines/Categories: 23
Most popular workshop types:
- Yoga
- Massage
- Wilderness
- Psychological
- Arts
- Somatic
Percentage of Returning Workshop Participants: 43%

RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION
One month to one year residential programs.
Total # of workscholars, extended students, and apprentices: 285/annually.

MASSAGE AND HEALING ARTS
40 massage and healing arts practitioners on staff, representing nearly 25 different modalities.

# of massages & healing sessions given by our staff each year: 13,500

THE IMPACT
Environmental, personal, socio-political, spiritual, transpersonal.

ARTS & MUSIC
Well-known musicians who have performed at Esalen: Crosby Stills Nash & Young, Simon and Garfunkel, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Raitt, George Harrison.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Ida Rolf creates Structural Integration/Rolfing at Esalen Institute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Connections between consciousness and quantum physics made at Esalen with Fritjof Capra and Nick Herbert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Soviet/American relations improved during cold war through spacebridge cosmonaut/astronaut program and Boris Yeltsin visit. Holotropic Breathwork and Spiritual Emergence Network created by Stanislav and Christina Grof. Somatics and shamanism conferences by Don Johnson and Michael Harner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Field of Ecopsychology created through a series of Esalen conferences by Theodore Roszak.</td>
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