

71 Ways To Build Trust and Connection

# COMMUNITIES

JOURNAL of COOPERATIVE LIVING

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(\$8 Canada)

Fall 2005 (Issue #128)

## *Resolving Conflict*

*Our 'Year of Living Dangerously'*

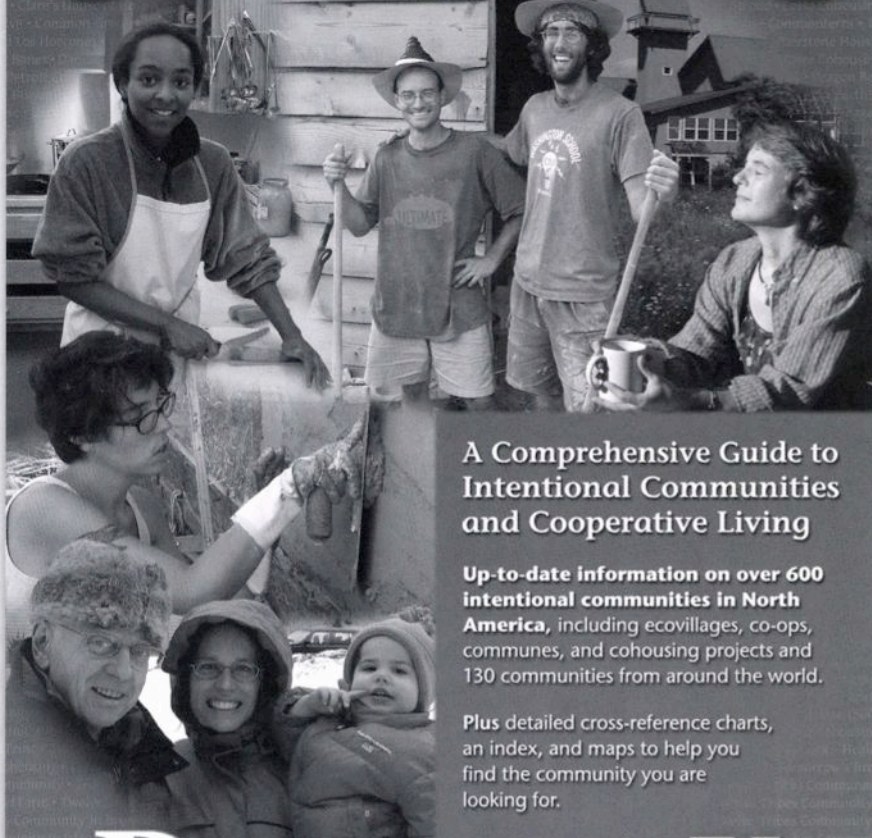
*Our Toughest Membership Decision Ever*

*Ask the Experts: "What Do You Do When ...?"*



NEW EDITION – UPDATED FOR 2005

# COMMUNITIES



**A Comprehensive Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living**

**Up-to-date information on over 600 intentional communities in North America**, including ecovillages, co-ops, communes, and cohousing projects and 130 communities from around the world.

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All data is based on the Online Communities Directory at [directory.ic.org](http://directory.ic.org) (see below).



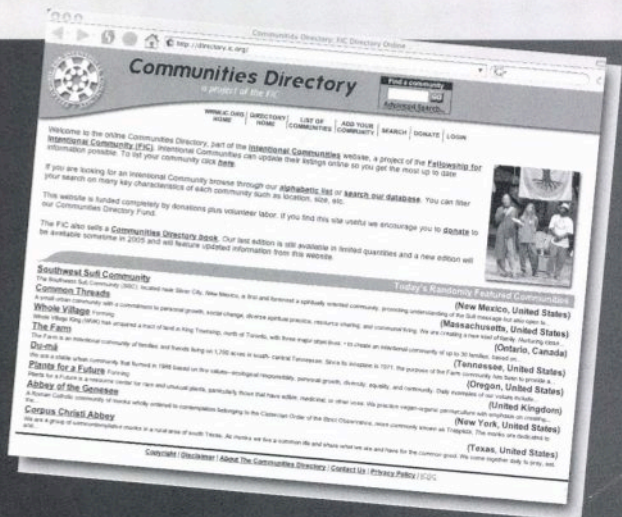
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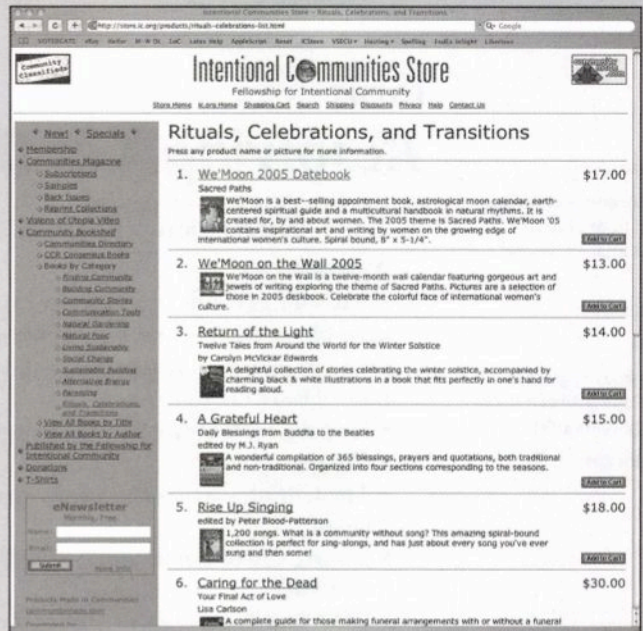


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# COMMUNITIES

JOURNAL of COOPERATIVE LIVING

## FRONT COVER

Catherine Johnson and Wayne Gustafson in front one of EcoVillage at Ithaca's off-grid homes.

Credit: Jim Bosjolie

## BACK COVER

Members of EcoVillage at Ithaca finish the bridge between their first two neighborhoods.

Credit: Jim Bosjolie.

## FOCUS

# Resolving Conflict

## 18 Trust, Connection, and Clear Agreements

What reduces conflict in community: Trust, a sense of connection, and plenty of hugs? A clear record of decisions, agreements, and policies? Both? *Diana Leafé Christian.*

- Helping Each Other Stay Accountable to the Group
- The Gifting Circle—A Process that Feels Good
- Sowing Circle Community's Conflict Resolution Policy
- Wild Sage Cohousing's Conflict Resolution Process

## 24 Communication Rules!

We must first care enough about our community mates to think about the consequences of our actions "downstream"—preferably *before* acting—advises a longtime communitarian.

## 25 24 Common Sources of Community Conflict

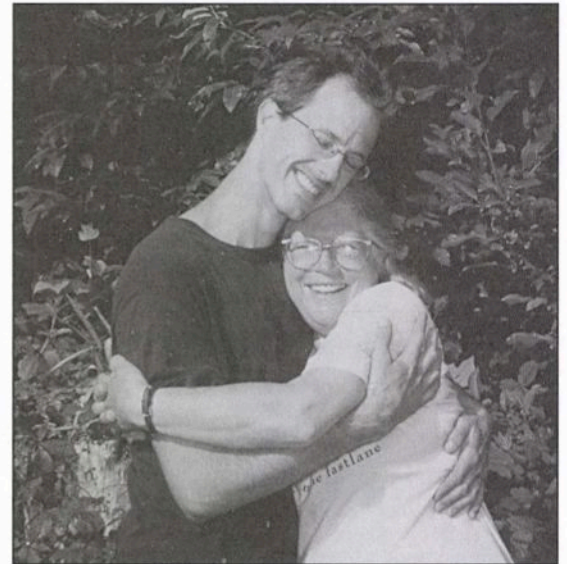
This list, gleaned from the author's experience and research, tends to make community veterans smile—and neophytes gulp. And ...

## 37 71 Ways To Build Trust & Connection or Reduce & Resolve Conflict.

Gleaned from methods that have worked well in communities across North America, this list tends to make community veterans thoughtful—and newcomers relieved. *Diana Leafé Christian.*

## 26 But Not Without Tears ... Our Toughest Membership Decision Ever

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## 32 Our 'Year of Living Dangerously' (And How We Survived It)

EcoVillage at Ithaca cofounder, *Liz Walker*, recalls the impact of impressive new members who brought mainstream power dynamics to the group's consensus process. Would community members learn to stand up to brusque put-downs and the "what do I want?" use of blocking? What can a group do when this happens?

- Consensus Decision Making at EcoVillage at Ithaca

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Through trial and error Stone Soup Cooperative in Chicago induced themselves to fulfill their required community labor hours—and learned good problem-solving skills in the process. *Lou Villaire.*

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How two brothers revitalized their run-down Tucson neighborhood and created a sense of community for themselves and their neighbors. *Dan Chiras and Dave Wann.*

#### 14 Our Community Revolving Loan Fund: How Walnut Street Co-op Financed Its Property.

It's not an impossible task to raise money to buy community property, says *Tree Bressen* of this Eugene urban housing co-op. Here's how they did it.

- Other Possible Financing Sources



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*Geoph Kozeny*

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# COMMUNITIES

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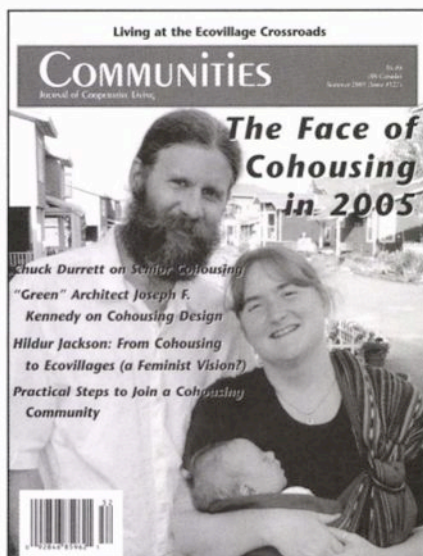
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# LETTERS



Send letters to *Communities* magazine, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711, or [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org). Your letter may be edited or shortened. Thank you!



## The Face of Cohousing

Your cover photo is of the Grovers in front of their home in Great Oak Cohousing, not Sunward Cohousing, in Ann Arbor.

Jillian Downey  
Great Oak Cohousing

We apologize! Jillian Downey is the cover photographer for our summer '05 Cohousing issue. —Editor

Dear Editor,

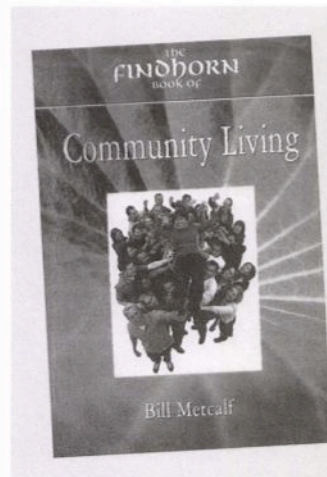
It seems that *Communities* might want to try to build a bit more self-awareness and marketing prowess. The cover of your Summer 2005 issue is entitled "The Face of Cohousing in 2005." Eight pages later the "Publisher's Note" laments stagnant sales in 2004 despite new distribution efforts to the large chain book and food stores.

Looking at the cover photo of this issue in conjunction with the Publisher's Note, one can surmise why more copies are not being sold to more "mainstream" markets. First, the photo could just as well have appeared in 1965 as in 2005. Second, the implication of the title is that there is only one face of cohousing—the one that you are depicting on this Edition.

A more suitable cover would have read "The Faces & Places of Cohousing" and depicted several (smaller) varying photos. If you want to sell more copies, you'll have to make a better first impression. My suggestion is simply to invest the time and money into marketing before trying to expand your distribution. Graphics overhaul, expanded exposure, and ad rate increases are a start, but there are many additional levers to consider as well. Why not ask your readers for some of their feedback and ideas?

P.S. To help your financial deficit, why not increase the subscription price by \$1? I personally would be happy to pay it to see your publication stay in black numbers.

Mark Langford  
Stallikon, Switzerland



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Thanks for your critique. We just received a grant to pay for cover photography, starting with this issue. —Editor

Hi folks,

I just picked up your re-vamped issue #127, with the Publisher's Note "Prime Time," about seeking grant funds to redesign the magazine. Here's another suggestion: change the font of the title. The current font looks kinda quirky, 70s ("space age") style. I like the font and style used on the cover of the *Communities Directory* (inside front cover), with the last letter capitalized like that. You might also try making the title slightly larger than the page so it gets cropped around the edges—for another look. Or maybe your subtitle should be "Cooperative Living Journal" instead of "Journal of Cooperative Living"—less wordy. The title is what grabs people, and your current banner isn't that grabby. I think it's mostly the font. Play around with a few different ones. Just my two cents. I grabbed your magazine off the newsstand more for the content (as listed on the cover) than for the "look and feel" of the magazine, because I am thinking of moving, and instead of just getting another house, I might try to find a community!

Great magazine. Thanks a lot.

John

### Fifty Cohousing Stories in Dave Wann's *Reinventing Community*

Dear *Communities*,

I got the new Cohousing issue of *Communities*, and while I haven't yet poured through it, it's a very handsome and seemingly comprehensive issue. Thanks for your good work.

As I glanced through it, I was confused, though, about the reference in your Resource section to my book *Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing*, where you say it lists 14 stories about cohousing. Really, it's 50 stories written by people who live in cohousing. More than 40 individuals contributed stories and photos.

I put a lot of work into the book, and I believe it can be a very lively contribution to peoples' understanding of daily life in community. Just wondering what's up.

Dave Wann  
Harmony Village Cohousing  
Golden, Colorado

Please accept our sincere apologies for the error. —Editor



Caroline Estes

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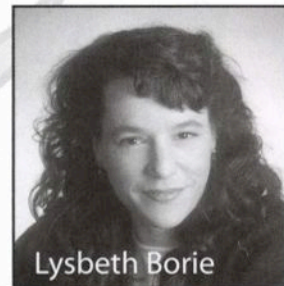
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### Communities Editorial Policy

*Communities* is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues.

We do not intend to promote one kind of community over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related to the theme of community living, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

### Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request the Writer's Guidelines: *Communities*, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711, 828-669-9702; [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org).

### Advertising Policy

We accept paid advertising in *Communities* because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We hand pick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback.

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### What is an "Intentional Community"?

An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based, and others are both. For all their variety though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE



# Facilitating in an Altered State: Trusting the Magic

BY LAIRD SCHAUB

Several years ago I was visiting another community when a member there inquired about my spiritual life. I was about to slough off the question with agnostic cynicism, when I realized, to my surprise, that I had a positive response.

After three decades of community living and almost two decades of work as a process consultant, I've observed, participated in, and facilitated a lot of meetings. Gradually, as I've learned the intricacies and nuances of skilled facilitation, I have come to appreciate that when I was really "on" in that role, I entered an altered state of awareness. I understand facilitation now as a spiritual practice and my work as having a shamanic quality.

When in that state I can hold more information than usual, and see things before others do—including ghosts (beyond seeing what's present; I see what's missing) and impending train wrecks (seeing around the curve). I cultivate the capacity to operate simultaneously in two worlds: that of content and that of energy, and the ability to double track (where I follow the immediate conversation while also pulling out themes in anticipation of the summary that will be needed ahead). I've taught myself to see connections where others see differences (I'm not talking about links no one else believes to exist; I'm talking about connections that no one sees until I name them).

More, when I'm in the "shamanic" zone, there is minimal energetic cost to the effort. That is, I can work for hours and not feel tired. The energy flows through me and around me, yet does not consume me. It is tiring only when I'm off, or straining—when the Force is forced.

### COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

#### "Urban Community" Winter 2005

What unique gifts do urban communities offer? What are the unique challenges of urban communities? How can we create more community connection and "community spirit" in our town and city neighborhoods?

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#### "Sustainability in Community" Spring 2006

Natural building, permaculture design principles, and appropriate technology applications in intentional communities, urban and rural, and in neighborhoods where we live now.

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Interestingly, this is not about control. It's about faith. It only truly works when I admit that I don't know what will happen; when I surrender to the process.

When I first put my toe in the water as a process consultant I was always nervous going into a job, unsure that I'd be able to deliver the goods and make the time worthwhile for the client. (Of course, it helped that the baseline quality of meetings in North America is abysmal, and almost anything would be better than what most groups are inured to.) In those early years I figured that when I really got good, I'd no longer be nervous. By degrees though, it dawned on me that I was wrong. It would, in fact, be a bad sign if I *wasn't* nervous, as it would likely be a symptom of overconfidence or laziness. It turns out that a certain amount of terror is part of the ritual by which I enter the shamanic state.

I've had enough failures (or at least indifferent results) that I retain humility about how any particular session will go. And I know that for the magic to happen, I have to let go of the idea that I know what will happen or what, exactly, my role in it will be. I have to trust that I'll know what to do in the moment, without knowing ahead what the moment will be. It amounts to leaning forward and committing your body to a step

***When surprise happens in a meeting, you want to be delighted by it, not threatened.***

without knowing where the ground is—with the added spiciness that you've enticed others to believe you know what you're doing and that they should follow you.

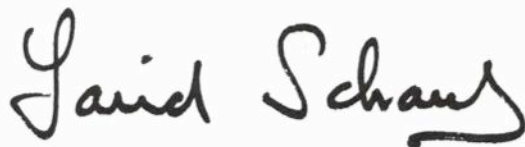
Please don't misread this. I am not counseling against preparation when facilitating (which is a very bad idea); I am advocating letting go of a sense that you have everything firmly in hand. When surprise happens in a meeting, you want to be delighted by it, not threatened.

Facilitating tough meetings is a lot like cultivating roses. It's possible to obtain considerable beauty yet it's essential that you be disciplined and that you hold the flowers gently and with respect. If there's no pruning, you get chaos and few blossoms; if you hold too tightly, there'll be blood all over the place. There are times when a facilitator needs to be directive, as when the group drifts off topic, indulges in repetition, or deteriorates into squabbling. Yet facilitators can make the mistake of reaching for toughness when unsure what to do, when afraid to trust the group, or when faith in the process is weak. You want to work among the thorns, not upon them.

My advice to facilitators: trust the magic.

Even when the facilitator is centered and has the internal demons under control, there can be pressure from the group to be firm. This can happen when the group wants a tight rein on the participation of "problem people," is impatient for "product," or nervous about the wildness that can accompany fulminating conflict. However, just as the facilitator needs to trust the group, the group needs to trust the facilitator. They need breathing room to manifest the bouquet.

My advice to groups: please don't squeeze the shaman.



*Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publisher of this magazine), and a cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.*

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Caroline Estes

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Geoph Kozeny

### Manifesting Our Dreams: Visioning, Strategic Planning, & Fundraising

Jeff Grossberg

### Raising & Educating Children in Community

Diana Christian, Elke Lerman,  
Martin Klaiif, Judy Morris

### Conflict: Fight, Flight, or Opportunity?

Laird Sandhill

### Consensus: Decisions That Bring People Together

Caroline Estes

### Six "Ingredients" for Forming Communities (That Help Reduce Conflict Down the Road)

Diana Christian

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Carol Carlson, Lois Arkin, Harvey  
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# COMMUNITY GRAPEVINE



Communitarians from the Americas participate in the 9th Continental Bioregional Congress (CBC9). Two hundred fifty people attended CBC9 held July 9-17 at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina. Speakers included *Lois Arkin*, cofounder of Los Angeles EcoVillage and one of two western US representatives to Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA); *Albert Bates*, longtime Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) activist director of Ecovillage Training Center at the Farm, and member of The Farm community in Tennessee; *Laird Schaub*, Fellowship for Intentional Community executive secretary and member of Sandhill Farm in Missouri; *Liora Adler*, council member from the Caribbean to Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA), cofounding member of Huehucoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico, and cofounder of Gaia University; *Bea Briggs*, author of *Introduction to Consensus* and member of Huehucoyotl; *Peter Bane*, editor/publisher of *Permaculture Activist* magazine and Earthaven cofounder; *Chuck Marsh*, permaculture designer and Earthaven cofounder; *Ashley Ironwood*, member of Moonshadow Community in Tennessee and co-director of its nonprofit; and *Jeff Clearwater*, one of two western US representatives to Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA) and former member of Sirius Community in Massachusetts.

Other community activists attending included *Laura Kuri*, one of two Ecovillage Network of the Americas representatives from Mexico; *Arnold Rincalde*, who will soon take over that role from Laura; *Carlos "Pato" Gomez* from Columbia, one of two ENA representatives from northern South America; *Andre Stefaniak*, from Whole

Ecovillage in Ontario, Canada; *Tony Sirna*, cofounder of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri and editor of the Fellowship for Intentional Community's 2005 edition of the *Communities Directory*; and *Diana Leafé Christian*, Earthaven member, author of *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities*, and editor of this magazine. Ten percent of those attending the Bioregional Congress were from Spanish-speaking countries, mostly Mexico, but also with one participant each from Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Colombia.

A small group of Earthaven members, *Kimchi Rylander*, *Peter Bane*, *Patricia Allison*, and *Mary Armstrong*, along with other North American bioregional activists in the US, Mexico, and Canada, spent a year organizing this international gathering. "Earthaven provided a magnificent container for the magic of CBC9," notes Kimchi Rylander. "Hosting it at an ecovillage will surely change the future of bioregional congresses ... an intentional community offers a rich and vibrant location for such events."



[scotland.indymedia.org/newswire/display/1719](http://scotland.indymedia.org/newswire/display/1719)

Summary: A broad network of activist groups today announced that they are to set up an Eco-Village to coincide with the G8 summit at Gleneagles. 5000 people will gather outside Stirling to build the camp as an example of sustainable ways of living and nonhierarchical methods of organizing in direct response to the G8s poverty making, undemocratic and ecologically devastating policies. [snip ...]




**Community Network Starts Up in Southeast Wisconsin.** Six forming communities in southeast Wisconsin are forming **Community Living of Southeast Wisconsin** or CLOSEW. The website is [www.closew.org](http://www.closew.org), and email is [info@closew.org](mailto:info@closew.org). The group is looking for more members: people who live in southeast Wisconsin and have an interest in (or are already living in) cohousing, housing cooperatives, intentional communities, and so on. The group

intends to provide a clearinghouse of information on community living in southeast Wisconsin, provide support for communities in southeast Wisconsin, and provide support for community living in general. The group anticipates finishing their statement of purpose once they feel they represent communities in their area. For more information: [info@closew.org](mailto:info@closew.org) or [rob@v2b.org](mailto:rob@v2b.org) for more information.

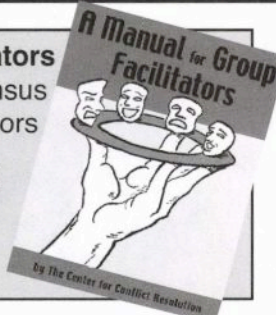


United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) Launched in March. Findhorn Foundation member and Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) activist *May East* attended the launching of the UNDESD at the United Nations headquarters in New York in March. Panelists who took part in a discussion of key issues in the implementation of this program included *Gunter Pauli* of ZERI, who helped design aspects of *Gaviotas* in Columbia and *Kobunaki Ecovillage* in Japan; Ambassador Adamantios Vassilakis, Permanent UN Delegate from Greece; *Dr Pamela Punttenney* of the CSD Education Caucus; and *Mary Joy Pigozzi*, Director of the Division for the Promotion of Quality Education at UNESCO. May East reports that the recurrent theme was the need to go beyond the three usually recognized pillars of sustainability—social, environmental and economic—to search for a set of values and principles that will inform the program's actions over the decade. "The Decade of Sustainable Development needs to be values-driven in order to be relevant and transformative—a potential renaissance period for education," observes May. Some of DESD's planned programs include *Ecovillage Designer Education (EDE)*, a global educational initiative officially inaugurated in the spring of 2004 in an ecovillage education conference at Findhorn by a group of 23 international ecovillage educators. This curriculum is intended to serve the purpose of educating for the transition to a globally sustainable culture. One of the first pilot programs of DESD will take place in Cuba, potentially later in 2005, in a partnership between *Ecovillage Designer Education* and MAB/UNESCO.



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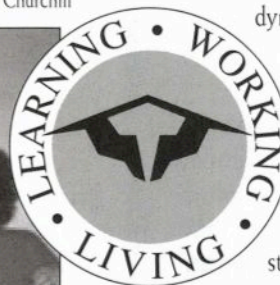
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*"We make a living by what we get,  
we make a life by what we give."*

Winston Churchill



Camphill Soltane is a lively Anthroposophically-based community for and with young adults with developmental disabilities. Through a dynamic combination of community life, education and training, work with the arts and on the land, a job placement program, and active strategic alliances with organizations in the surrounding area, Camphill Soltane accompanies these young adults through their age-appropriate quest for meaning and purpose in their lives.

Camphill Soltane offers numerous benefits to coworkers, including AmeriCorps education awards! We are interested in talking with families and individuals (including college interns) over the age of 19 about opportunities for becoming involved with us.

For more information or to arrange a personal visit:

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# Holding Our Resources in Common

*The first of seven principles guiding the Federation of Egalitarian Communities reads, "Each of the Federation communities holds its land, labor, income and other resources in common." (See [thefec.org/about/](http://thefec.org/about/) to read all the principles.) Here is how this first principle is realized in one FEC community.*

Nine years ago seven people with a dream found an old and condemned (but huge and spectacular) house for sale at a bargain price in the heart of one of Seattle's most diverse neighborhoods. They pooled their money and bought the place outright. Everyone contributed what they had: some threw in a few hundred bucks, others tens of thousands. They put the house in the name of one of their number, but made a courageous commitment: regardless of how much or little each person put in, they would be paid back during the same time period (20+ years); ownership of the house would be transferred to a land trust; and the tax benefit of this contribution would be given to the community. Thus was born the Emma Goldman Finishing School.

In the early days, before the house was habitable, members would spend their evenings and weekends ripping the guts out of the walls, replacing the electrical

system, adding plumbing, and putting in new sheetrock and fixtures while living elsewhere and maintaining income-earning jobs during the day. Gradually, everyone moved in. The renovation work was intense and virtually nonstop. This labor was surely a labor of love, but it was also strictly accounted for. Labor belonged to the community and was shared equally. Over the first five years or so, Emmas (then called Beacon Hill House) was a strict income-sharing community—all labor belonged to everybody.

Money earned at jobs in the city was given in full to the community, and each got an equal (and modest) stipend.

About four years ago Emmas began an experiment in a modified income-sharing arrangement which we call labor-sharing. As before, we each have a monthly labor quota (which is usually around 100 hours) which we divide between income-generating

work in the city and in-house labor. Since we have no community business, in-house labor tends to consist of meetings, renovation, cooking, cleaning, bookkeeping, and so on. Everyone chooses what share of their labor quota they want to earn in income-generating or in-house labor. And it's all kept in balance by "the gizmo," a computer program that makes sure we get enough



*Parke Burgess lives at the Emma Goldman Finishing School in Seattle ([www.egfs.org](http://www.egfs.org)) and is Secretary of the FEC ([www.thefec.org](http://www.thefec.org)).*

dollars and in-house labor each month to meet our carefully planned budget. We all owe the same number of hours each month, and we value each of those hours equally, regardless of whether it's earned at a job or in-house, and whether the job pays high wages or low.

**We all owe the same number of hours each month, and we value each of those hours equally.**

In recent months, we have been experimenting with our labor-sharing system to make it more egalitarian, and more fluid. Under labor-sharing, we can work more than 100 hours in a month if we want and bank the surplus for personal use. That means extra hours or extra money from our jobs which we can use to cover vacations later. This year we have been trying out a policy of "spending caps," which limits the amount of additional personal money we're allowed to spend or save. Any dollars we earn above the spending cap we loan to a fund to help start new egalitarian communities. We're also discussing a new policy that would allow us to trade our quota hours informally within the community.

Our project at Emmas is explicitly anti-capitalist. We aim to create an economic system that can interact with the dominant system (because that can't be avoided), but which neutralizes capitalistic values as much as possible for community members. We intend to build a much larger infrastructure of communities and alternative economic systems so that more people can participate in anticapitalist lifeways. By creating viable alternatives to a system bent upon the consolidation of wealth and power, the use of violence, and the destruction of the environment, we hope to show by example that another way of life is possible; and we hope to develop the skills to live joyfully and work meaningfully in a different kind of world.

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STACEY MALASKI

# From Eco-Home to Sustainable Neighborhood

BY DAN CHIRAS AND DAVE WANN

When he was 27, Brad Lancaster and his brother Rod purchased a dilapidated home in a run-down neighborhood in Tucson, Arizona. Most people would have razed the house and started over, but not these

two. Over the years the brothers have devoted their energy to fixing up the house and breathing life back into the weed-infested, arid lot, turning the grounds into an oasis, and the house into a stellar example of urban self-sufficiency.

## Two brothers revitalized their run-down city neighborhood. You can too.

To reduce heat gain in the hot Arizona summers, they painted the house white so it reflects sunlight and reduces heat absorption and discomfort. They also increased the length of the overhang (eaves), providing additional shade. They constructed trellises from recycled rebar and steel mesh, then planted vegetables that grow on vines. During the summer, squash adorn the trellises, providing food as well as shade. In the winter, snow peas grow there. Because they only grow to a height of three to four feet, they don't block the low-angled winter sun, which heats the house.

Over the years these two remarkable men have planted trees to shade their home, and a vegetable garden that's fed by rainwater collected from their small roof. To protect against overheating in the summer, they often cook food outdoors in a solar oven. Because the desert air cools down substantially at night, they open a few windows each evening to permit the chilly desert air to purge heat that accumulated inside the house during the day.

In the winter, they heat their house from solar energy entering through south-facing windows. A small woodstove provides back-up heat, using wood from the trees that grow in their yard as fuel. All year round, hot water comes from a solar water heater.

Slowly but surely, these advocates of environmentally friendly lifestyles have become more and more self-sufficient. They've also organized the creation of an organic community garden and orchard. Thirty-five members participate in the community garden, growing an assortment of vegetables, including tomatoes, chilies, herbs, eggplants, snow peas, lettuce, broccoli, and watermelon. The community orchard, located in the middle of the neighborhood near the playground, produces peaches, plums, almonds, dates, citrus fruits, and apricots. This has brought more neighbors together, stresses a more sustainable system of local food production, created a gathering place (there are weekly potlucks and regular work parties), and become a news and gossip hub with a community bulletin board.

The Lancasters have even created a small nature park in the inner city. "We grow native species once common around Tucson, but now lost to blading (bulldozers) and develop-

ment," says Brad. "It brings a piece of the desert back to the inner city."

These energetic visionaries have also established a monthly neighborhood newsletter, mailed out to everyone in the neighborhood. "The City pays for printing and mailing," says Lancaster, "which is a great service, because the newsletter keeps everyone current and connected. Anyone can submit articles, art, or stories." The newsletter brought other benefits as well. For example, it "greatly reduced ridiculous rumors, speculation, and backstabbing, as folks know what is going on. It has also enabled us to mobilize volunteers for projects and push city and county officials to recognize our issues and positions."

But there's still more. In recent years, the neighbors have established an artists' cooperative in a nearby abandoned warehouse. "These low-cost live/work spaces and the creativity of those within them has created an unofficial and vibrant community center with ongoing classes, concerts, workshops, services, art shows, theater, bike repair/rental/sales, and more. Nothing had to be built, it only had to be opened and made affordable."

When asked about the motivation for his efforts, Brad is eloquent. "I want to live in a vibrant community," he says. "I want to live where people know each other, wave to one another, talk to and help each other, work to make things better, and play together. I want to live in a community that encourages and celebrates diversity and creativity. I want to live in a community with a sense of place connected to the local cultures, history, and bioregion. I want to live in a community that leaves the car behind to welcome leisurely strolls and bike rides. I want to live in a community where we grow much of our food and share it through potluck dinners.

I want to live in a community that creates rather than extracts resources. As I want such a community, I work to create and support it."

It's hard to argue with success.

Given time, we can transform our neighborhoods dramatically, creating vibrant communities we're proud to belong to. All we need is the vision, the tools, and the willpower ... and a little cooperation from city hall.



***I want to live where people know each other, wave to one another, talk to and help each other, work to make things better, and play together.***



SCOTTY BUCKLEY

*The Walnut St. Co-op is located near the university in Eugene, Oregon.*

# Our Community Revolving Loan Fund:

## How Walnut Street Co-op Financed Its Property

BY TREE BRESSEN

Community revolving loan funds are an amazing tool. When we converted our house to cooperative ownership, no bank was willing to offer us a mortgage. Out of necessity, we searched for alternatives, and succeeded in purchasing our 9-bedroom home in Eugene, Oregon thanks to approximately 20 friends who gave us private loans. This is a fantastic model for alternative financing, a do-it-yourself empowerment that shifts power away from conventional institutions toward creating a better world. This description is written to enable other groups to benefit from the knowledge our co-op gained from creating this fund.

We have a contract with each lender that specifies how much money is being loaned, for how long, at what interest rate, and any other terms. Our usual parameters are a \$5,000 minimum loan, 5-year minimum time, and no more than six percent interest. We aim to be flexible, however, and every contract is a bit different. For example, one loan requires us to maintain an advisory team. Our lenders have been very generous with us:

some lent at zero percent interest, others at two to three percent, and a few are using simple interest rather than compound interest; also some were able to commit for 10 to 15 years. We offer a way for people to invest in alignment with their values and our lenders appreciate that.

Our loans are in the range of \$5,000 to 20,000, except for one \$120,000 loan from a person who met us when we had already raised over half the money we needed and offered to cover the rest.

Most of our loans are amortized at 30 years, which makes the payments affordable. If you are unfamiliar with this term, amortization means that the payments are stretched out over a really long time. That's how people of limited means are able to buy something big like a house. Thirty years is a typical amortization for a standard home mortgage from a bank. However, unlike a bank, most individuals cannot predict the course of their lives 30 years ahead and therefore are not prepared to commit their assets for that long. So instead the way our loans work is that we



make small payments during the five years, acting as if it were a 30-year loan. But then at the end of the five years, we have to pay the entire remaining balance due—this is called a balloon payment.

That means that every five years our community will go through a refinancing cycle. We'll be asking each lender whether they'd like to turn the balance due on their loan back into the fund to lend to us again, or whether they want the money back. We'll need to replace all the loans that people want repaid, either with money from new lenders or with increased loans from existing lenders. This is somewhat risky, because if we were unable to find adequate new financing we'd have to sell our property to repay the loans. However, that risk seems very worth it to us, and after our experience so far we are reasonably confident in our ability to do the refinancing—after all, we were able to do it the first time around, and over time we are only going to become a more attractive investment because the community will have more equity in the property and a proven track record of repayment.

Our payments are quarterly rather than monthly, to reduce paperwork. With the exception of our one large loan, the loans to our co-op are unsecured. That means they are not officially attached to our property in county records, in the event that the co-op dissolves and the house is sold. This is partly because we wanted all of our lenders beyond the one large loan to share an "equal second" position: meaning that if the house was sold and the money wasn't enough to pay back all the loans, everyone would get a proportion equal to the portion of their investment, to be fair. But when loans are secured with the property, they get priority in the sequence in which they were recorded with the county, so that all of A's loan is paid off before B gets anything.



*Members of the Walnut Street Co-op include founder/owners and tenant/residents*

In order to give everyone an equal position we would have had to form a whole separate legal entity, and even then the lawyer we talked to wasn't sure it was doable. Also, having 20 separate

loans attached to a property is very complicated, especially when the lenders change over the years. So instead, our loans are unsecured, and the contract with each lender explains that they are in an equal second position with other lenders.

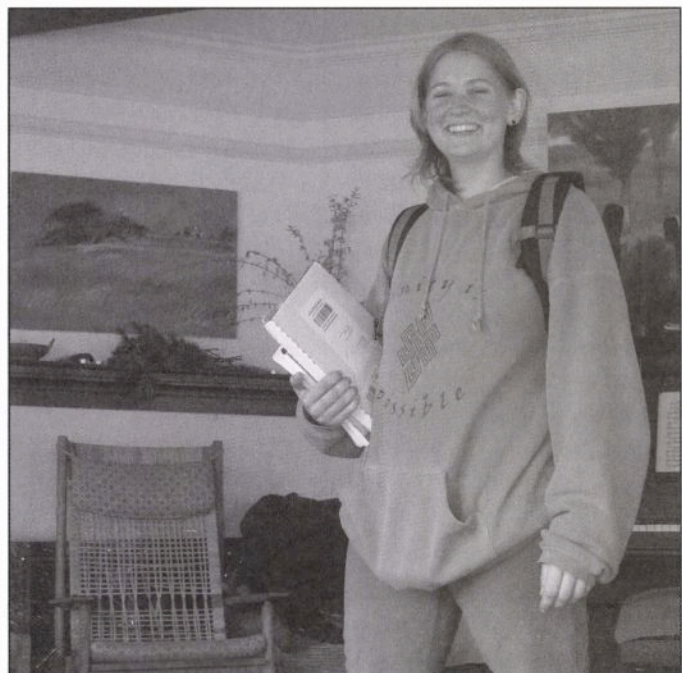
Some of the loans have co-op members signed as personal guarantors. That means that if the co-op fails to make payments, each of those guarantors can be held

responsible for the entire remaining balance of the loan. But even with that, what it really comes down to is that this whole community revolving loan fund deal is based on trust. Our lenders understand that we are committed having integrity in our relationship with them, and that while we don't expect our co-op to fall apart, if it does we will do our utmost to fulfill our financial obligations. If the co-op dissolves, outside investors get paid in full before any co-op residents get paid anything. Because our house appraised at nearly \$50,000 more than we paid for it and real estate values in our town are rising, it is extremely unlikely that we'd be unable to repay all the loans even if we did have to sell the property.

Our lenders come from a variety of sources. Some are active folks in the communities movement who believe in creating more intentional communities. Some are personal friends who felt moved to support a particular individual here. Some are supporters of a wonderful nonprofit based here in our house, Tom Atlee's Co-Intelligence Institute. We also received support from several organizations in the communities movement.

We attend to our relationships with our lenders; they are our friends and not just a source of financing. We strive to be honest with them, offering genuine appreciation and

***We attend to our relationships with our lenders; they are our friends and not just a source of financing.***



SCOTTY BUCKLEY



Author, Tree Bressen

SCOTTY BUCKLEY

practical information without distortion or descent into puffery. We try to visit them when we are in their locale, send them a quarterly newsletter, explain to newer housemates who they are as people, and so on. Our lenders are a valuable part of our wider community and we are very grateful for their continued support.

When we started this fund, we created a beautiful, well-written packet that explained our project to prospective lenders. Our packet included the following components:

1. Our vision of what our community is doing and why it matters;
2. History of our project and community;
3. Business plan;
4. Biographies of the core group;
5. International co-op principles (also known as the Rochdale principles), explanation of what a co-op is and of our type of community (limited-equity co-op);
6. Testimonial letter from a respected leader in the intentional communities movement;
7. Photos of the house (interior and exterior, with core group members in some of the pictures);
8. Form for enrolling support (loans, donations, and more);
9. Self-addressed stamped envelope.

**You are  
offering lenders  
a service and  
an opportunity.  
You are helping  
them to live  
out their values  
in the world.**

If you are setting out to create a Community Revolving Loan Fund for your intentional community or other project, here is what i advise:

1. Believe in what you are doing and share your passion.
2. Have everyone in your project make a list of everyone they know that has \$5,000 or more (or whatever your minimum investment is) that they might be able to lend. Hopefully you will be surprised by how many names are on the list. You won't end up asking everyone on that list, but it gets you started seeing the possibilities.
3. Remember that you are offering lenders a service and an opportunity. You are helping them to live out their values in the world. At 3 percent interest you would be providing a higher profit than a savings account and a more reliable profit than many other investments.
4. Keep the trust. Some people loaned to us based on one conversation without ever seeing the packet, simply because they believed in the person asking. At first i was shocked by this, but i came to understand that trust is the central element in a lender's decision. Be honest, transparent, and above all, always act with integrity.

Walnut St.'s Community Revolving Loan Fund was inspired and assisted by a similar entity at Los Angeles Eco-Village.

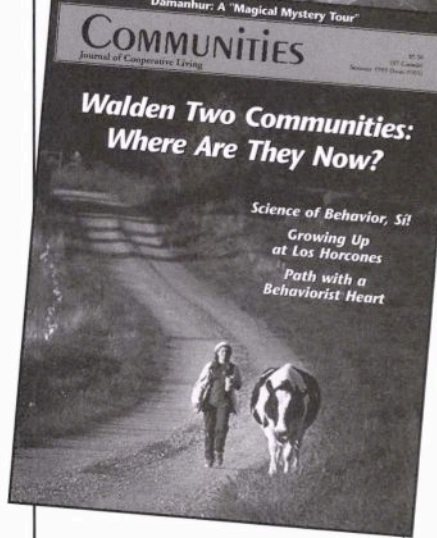
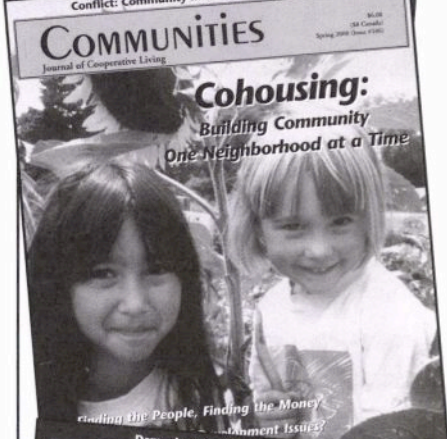
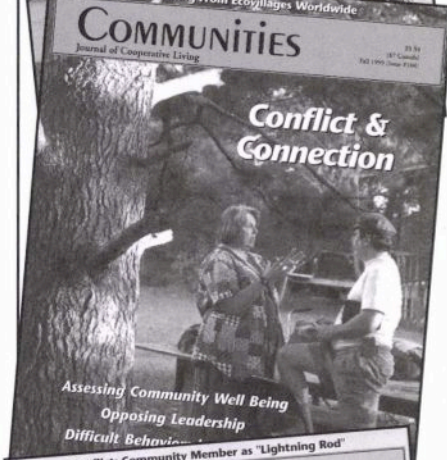
Walnut St.'s Community Revolving Loan Fund was inspired and assisted by a similar entity at Los Angeles Eco-Village.

*Note: Tree Bressen treats the first-person pronoun "I" as no more or less important than any other word by keeping it lower-case when it appears midsentence.*

*In addition to being a founding member of Walnut St. Co-op, Tree consults on group process with intentional communities and other nonprofits on how to have lively, productive, and connecting meetings. Her website, [www.treegroup.info](http://www.treegroup.info), offers free tools and resources. Walnut St. Co-op's website is: [www.icetree.com/walnut](http://www.icetree.com/walnut).*

## Other Possible Financing Sources

1. **Institute for Community Economics (ICE):** Their bureaucratic wheels turn slowly and they require huge amounts of documentation, but they can lend over \$100,000 if your project is structured as a land trust or limited equity cooperative.
2. **PEACH (Protected Equity Accessible for Community Health):** The member communities of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) operate their own health risk fund, a portion of which is available for investment in intentional communities. This is a great cooperative resource. Contact the PEACH administrator, Laird Schaub, for more information at [laird@ic.org](mailto:laird@ic.org) or 660-883-5545.
3. **Sunrise Credit Union** is the only credit union in the U.S. based in an intentional community (Sunrise Ranch in Loveland, Colorado). Credit unions, especially young ones, are closely monitored by federal agencies so they are somewhat limited in their flexibility, however they offered us a substantial loan if we proffered a qualified cosigner.
4. **Permaculture Credit Union:** This is an even newer credit union, and they are not set up to lend in very many states yet, but you can contact them to find out if they are a resource in your area.
5. **NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation)** lends money to cooperatives that fit current lending parameters, through their CCDC development company.
6. You can try asking other intentional communities and intentional community organizations, particularly ones in your region.
7. In theory the National Cooperative Bank (NCB) should be a source of financing for projects like this, but we were told we were too small for them to even consider. However, if you are converting an apartment building in New York to a co-op, they'd probably be interested. —T.B.



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# Trust, Connection, and Clear Agreements

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

“**T**o reduce conflict, we need clear community agreements,” say the more left-brained folks who like to draft documents. “No, we need to do more to build trust and connection,” say their more right-brained counterparts, who like juicy group process.

“Agreements.”

“Trust.”

“Documents!”

“Hugs!”

They’re both right, of course.

When people feel close, bonded, and trusting of each other—in other words, have “sustainable relationships”—conflict that might ordinarily be a 9 on a scale of 1 to 10 might feel like only a 2 or a 3. That is, misunderstandings with an emotional charge don’t loom as large when they arise among people who’ve already established deep connections and good will. So activities that foster bonding, connection, and “community spirit” tend to not only feel good but be conflict-reducers as well.

One of the best, emotionally rich, community bonding processes I’ve experienced is the Gifting Circle. (*See pg. 20.*) I learned this process from organizational consultant Paul DeLapa, who introduced it at the Fellowship for Intentional Community meeting in 1997. I introduced it to Earthaven Ecovillage in 2001 and later to other groups and communities. In June, Earthaven member Peter Bane facilitated the process at the 7th International Permaculture Gathering in Croatia. And just today I shared it in a

course at the Ecovillage Training Center in Tennessee, with participants from all over the US, as well as Mexico and Palestine. In each of these cases, whether with communitarians or permaculturists, neighbors or people from across the globe, the Gifting Circle process tends to generate and create warmth, connection, hugs, tears, and a deep sense of bonding.

Where do community agreements come in? One source of conflict is when people have different ideas about what’s been decided in a community, especially in terms of agreements about people’s rights and privileges, or labor, or fees owed. This common source of conflict is easy to prevent—the group just needs to write down its agreements and make them accessible to anyone, anytime.

Another common sources of conflict in community occurs when people don’t do what they say they will. This often causes repercussions “downstream,” since some people count on others to finish certain preliminary steps before



## Helping Each Other Stay Accountable to the Group

By putting a few simple processes in place, community members can help each other stay accountable to one another in relatively painless, guilt-free ways. Some examples:

- Make agreements about tasks in meetings, and keep track of these tasks from meeting to meeting. This involves assigning tasks to specific people and defining what they’re being asked to accomplish and by what time. It also involves having a task review at the beginning of every meeting—the people or committees who agreed to take on these tasks report whether they have been done, and if not, when they will be.
- Create a wall chart of assigned tasks with expected completion dates and the person or committee responsible for each. Assign someone the task of keeping the chart current and taping it on the wall at meetings.
- Create a buddy system, where everyone is assigned another group member to call and courteously inquire, “Did you call the county yet?” or “Have you found out about the health permit?” This is not about guilt-tripping; it’s about helpful inquiry and mutual encouragement.
- When anyone accomplishes a task, thank and acknowledge the person at the community meeting. When someone doesn’t accomplish a task, the group as a whole asks the person to try again. After a while, the simple desire not to let others down usually becomes an internalized motivator for more responsible behavior.

These methods rely on the principle that it’s more difficult to forget or ignore responsibilities if they’re publicly visible. Social pressure can often accomplish what good intentions cannot.

If someone still frequently fails to do what they say they’ll do, consider using a graduated series of consequences like Wild Sage Cohousing does. (*See pg 23*)

Why is not doing what you say you’ll do such a common source of community conflict? I think it’s about developing the habit early in life of procrastinating or agreeing to take on more than is possible, and not having enough motivation to change. When we live alone or live with our families, it’s relatively easy to change our minds about whether or not, or when, we’ll do something we said we’d do, or just plain let it go. But in a forming community group or community, this can have widespread negative impacts on other people, and we’ll certainly hear about it. It can take time, energy, and commitment to shift from “live-alone” or “single-family” mode to consistently considering how our actions will affect others.

When people repeatedly don’t do what they promise and others continue to hold them accountable, it usually results in the person either changing their habits or eventually leaving the group.

—D.L.C

*Excerpted with permission from Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities by Diana Leafé Christian (New Society Publishers, 2005). [www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com).*



munity to buy its members' goods or services. He values building a healthy village-scale economy. Barb wants mail-order businesses only, with no more cars on the road than necessary, and certainly doesn't want to encourage driving to the community. She values clean air quality and using renewable resources, not gasoline, as fuels. Dan wants his community to borrow money from friends and family to fund construction of the community meeting hall—he values creating the physical infrastructure of community. Dawn wants to

they can take the next steps. One way to address this is to adopt practices that help people stay accountable to the group. (See pg. 19.)

Consider what happens when people have different values—or different ways of interpreting apparently shared values. Often people don't *know* they hold different values until crucial issues come up. Bob wants on-site businesses in which people from the region will come to the com-

build the meeting hall slowly and only as the group can afford it themselves—she values home-grown financial self-reliance over methods like loans, interest, and collateral.

Values differences trigger even more conflict when it comes to different communication styles. Jack likes to speak right up and ask for what he wants—he values clarity and directness. To beat around the bush strikes him as disrespectful of other people's time. Jill takes the time to



## The Gifting Circle—A Feedback Process that Feels Good

The Gifting Circle process is based on the idea that kindly delivered feedback is a gift, and it's all good. It is an opportunity for people to not only give thanks and appreciation, but also to share concerns they've been withholding, or address situations that they want to clear up. Doing so ritually, with everyone doing it at the same time, seems to make giving and receiving feedback easier. And obviously, the more skilled the actual language used—telling real feelings, using "I" messages, choosing neutral language to describe other people's behavior—the better the process generates connection. Here's how it works:

Everyone sits in a large circle in a big room, but with some space between the chairs for sound privacy. Soft music plays in the background to help set the mood of respect and sacredness, and to give more sound privacy. Candles and any of the group's ritual objects are placed in the center, with the intention of creating an honored, safe, and friendly atmosphere. The following four statements are written large and posted where everyone can see them.

1. "Something I appreciate about you is \_\_\_\_\_."
2. (Optional) "Something that is (or has been) challenging for me with you is \_\_\_\_\_."
3. "Something I know about myself is \_\_\_\_\_."
4. "Thank you for listening."

The facilitator explains the guidelines and how much time there'll be for the process. (For a group of at least 20 or so, I recommend no less than 90 minutes.) At the end, the facilitator asks if people would like more time. It takes some people time to give enough minor feedback messages to get up the courage to give more significant or emotionally charged messages.

Each person chooses a small object to place in front of them on the floor. It can be a special stone, or just their wallet or keys. It serves as the signal, "I'm available to listen." The Gifting Circle involves Givers (speakers), Receivers (listeners), and Gifts (the feedback). When it begins, each person willing to hear feedback at that point places their object in front of them on the floor. Anyone who wants to give feedback crosses to someone who has their object on the floor, and sits, kneels, or crouches before them. This is a

establish rapport first, and brings up her requests indirectly—she values delicacy and courtesy. To do otherwise strikes her as rude, even boorish.

Then let's add in the emotional baggage each of us brings to community from early years—issues we haven't completely healed yet (or even looked at yet!). Sam feels anxious when other people get angry; Sue gets angry when other people act scared. Joan feels frustrated when people remain silent and don't offer an opinion; John feels frustrated by people who "take over," spouting opinions on everything.

So here we are—a group of visionaries determined to live more lightly on the Earth with a common vision and shared resources—but with wildly different interpretations of our values, opposing communication styles, and all kinds of hidden triggers that make us (perhaps temporarily) restive, reactive, outraged, and outrageous. Is it any wonder we run into conflict in community?



We can address these issues with communication agreements (how we treat each other in our meetings) and conflict resolution policies (what we do when conflict arises). Sowing Circle Community/Occidental Arts & Ecology Center in northern California includes both in one document. (See pg. 22.) And some communities, such as Wild Sage Cohousing in Boulder, Colorado,

simultaneous process, so many people will be going to and from other people in the circle.

The Giver picks up the seated Receiver's object and hands it to them as a symbol of the Gift they're about to give. Some facilitators suggest that the object be handed to the Receiver with both hands, and the Receiver takes the object with both cupped hands, as a physical reminder that the feedback is a gift. The Giver whispers or in a low voice makes the four statements to the Receiver. The statement about what may be challenging for the Giver about the Receiver is optional. The Giver may not want to talk about such challenges at that moment, or there may be no challenging situations—the Giver may simply want to give the Receiver appreciation and acknowledgement. (Note: This process is as much for sharing appreciation as it is giving critical feedback.) The "something I know about myself" statement invites the kind of intimacy that arises when people freely reveal something about themselves to another. The four statements are meant to be heard only by the Receiver, and not audible to anyone else.

The Receiver just listens. When the Giver is finished, the Receiver doesn't respond but simply says, "Thank you." The Giver returns to his or her seat. The Giver can put their object on the floor and become a potential Receiver, or go to a different person with another feedback Gift.

The Receiver may put their object on the floor again, meaning "I'm open to receiving more feedback." Or they may continue holding the object and just sit there for awhile, feeling what they feel and considering the feedback. This gives the Receiver control over how much, and how often they receive feedback, which seems to increase willingness and tolerance for hearing it. Or the Receiver can put the object on their chair and become a Giver, giving feedback to someone else in the circle. Anyone who wants to respond to what the Giver said can do so later, if they wish.

It's suggested that people pause a bit for silence and contemplation between the actions of giving or receiving. People will be constantly changing roles, crossing back and forth across the circle as they decide to give feedback, or to remain where they are and receive it (or not). The facilitator is available to explain the process again, or clarify any misunderstandings. The facilitator rings a chime five minutes before the end of the session, and again at the end. (Once the group knows the process well, the facilitator's role can be eliminated and someone can serve as timekeeper.)

The group can, if it wishes, evaluate the process at the end, but only the process, not anyone's content. The Gifting Circle seems to generate as many loving expressions of appreciation as it does expression of concern and requests for change. There is usually a hushed atmosphere during the process, and often, smiles, tears, and long hugs.  
—D.L.C.



go even farther: creating a graduated series of consequences to respond to community members who repeatedly break agreements or violate accepted standards of behavior. (See pg. 23.) Agreements, too, can help us deal with community conflict.

In the rest of this issue we look at real conflicts communities have experienced—in membership issues, differing values, responsibility levels, and communication styles—and



## Sowing Circle Community's Conflict Resolution Policy

### I. Problem-Solving Ground Rules:

All members agree to attempt to solve problems by first dealing directly with the person or persons with whom he/she is experiencing problems. Implicit in this agreement is a commitment to honest, direct problem solving. All members will agree to the following ground rules when involved in conflict-resolution efforts:

1. A commitment to mutual respect.
2. A commitment to solve the problem.
3. No put-downs.
4. No intimidation, implied or direct.
5. No physical contact.
6. No interrupting.
7. Agreement to use the conflict-resolution protocol, below.

### II. Conflict-Resolution Protocols:

Community members in conflict will:

- Make a good faith effort to resolve the problem between/among themselves. If this does not work, the members in conflict will:
- Ask a mutually agreed-upon member to help mediate and solve the problem with those having the conflict. If this does not work, the members in conflict will:
- Formally request assistance from the community in solving the problem.
- If the community is unable to assist in resolving the conflict, and all avenues of conflict resolution have been exhausted, then the community may choose to engage in outside mediation to solve the problem.

### III. Third-Party Confidentiality

We recognize the importance of the conflict-resolution protocol outlined above, and agree to abide by it in principle and

practice. As noninvolved parties, we will encourage conflicting parties to deal directly with one another. However, we also recognize the need, at times, to discuss, seek advice, or seek comfort from others while in the midst of conflict. Such a situation requires confidentiality. As third parties who are approached for solace, advice, etc., we agree to provide these things in the spirit of helping to improve the situation.

We do not wish to contribute to rumors, gossip, “bad-mouthing,” or the perpetuation of problems. If a person who is experiencing a conflict with one or more people on the property approaches a neutral third party, it is understood that the person is responsible for keeping the health and well being of the community in mind. That is, while maintaining confidentiality, the third party should remind the conflicted person of the conflict-resolution protocol, if necessary. In addition, by virtue of being privy to the conflict at hand, the third party is also responsible for monitoring the situation. If the feelings, issues, etc., are leading to greater conflict or to a weakening of the community, then the third party should take steps toward facilitating resolution, even if this means exposing the fact (not the details) of the problem at hand to others in the community.

### IV. Confidentiality with Regard to Internal Community Conflict

In the spirit of protecting the privacy and rights of members of the community, we are committed to maintaining confidentiality regarding individual and community issues of a sensitive nature when speaking with people outside the community.

*Excerpted from Sowing Circle/OAEC's "Conflict Resolution Policy," which appears in Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities by Diana Leafé Christian (New Society Publishers, 2005). Excerpted with permission of the publisher. [www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com).*



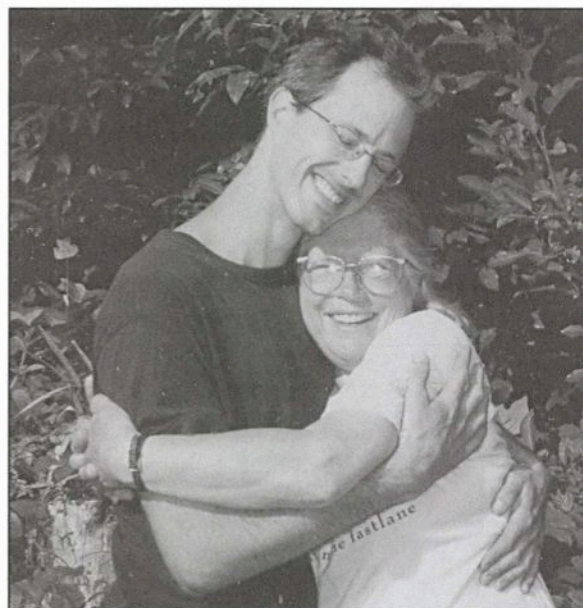
more importantly, at what these communities learned from their conflicts.

We also offer quick reminder lists: “23 Common Sources of Community Conflict,” and, as antidotes, “71 Ways to Build Trust & Connection or Reduce & Resolve Conflict.”

And we’ve called on some of the most savvy process and communication experts we know—Caroline Estes, Bea Briggs, Laird Schaub, and Tree Bressen—to answer readers’ questions about conflicts in their home communities.

Community conflict is a rich and evocative topic. We hope you enjoy delving into it more deeply in this issue.

*Diana Leaf Christian is editor of Communities magazine.*



## Wild Sage Cohousing’s Conflict Resolution Process

BY SHARI LEACH

*Members of Wild Sage Cohousing community and process consultant Shari Leach created this agreement when the group was still meeting in each other’s homes, so it does not address the legal issues of home ownership. This kind of process, however, would work well for an ecovillage or community in which everyone owned all the property and no one had an individual deed to their homesite. —Editor.*

**Situation:** A member is violating community ground rules, either inside or outside community meetings.

**Intentions:** To create a healthy resolution of conflicts, done directly and with compassion, for the good of the whole community.

**Step 1.** A one-to-one conversation takes place between the meeting Facilitator or a Process Team member and the person violating the ground rules. The Process Team member who initiates contact should keep notes on the conversation and any follow-up steps that occur.

If the community member who has been approached does not feel the rules violation really occurred, or was significant, they are encouraged to check in with other Process Team members, the team involved, or the entire community for additional feedback. The intention is not to create sides in a conflict, but to provide the opportunity for community members to clarify how others perceive their actions, behavior, and words.

If the behavior stops, no further action is needed. If the behavior continues, go to step 2.

**Step 2.** A second one-to-one conversation will occur, probably involving a different Process Team member. This conversation

will be to ensure that the member understands the rule being violated, and the potential consequences if this continues. Notes of this conversation should be added to those already started.

If the behavior stops, no further action is needed. If the behavior continues, go to Step 3.

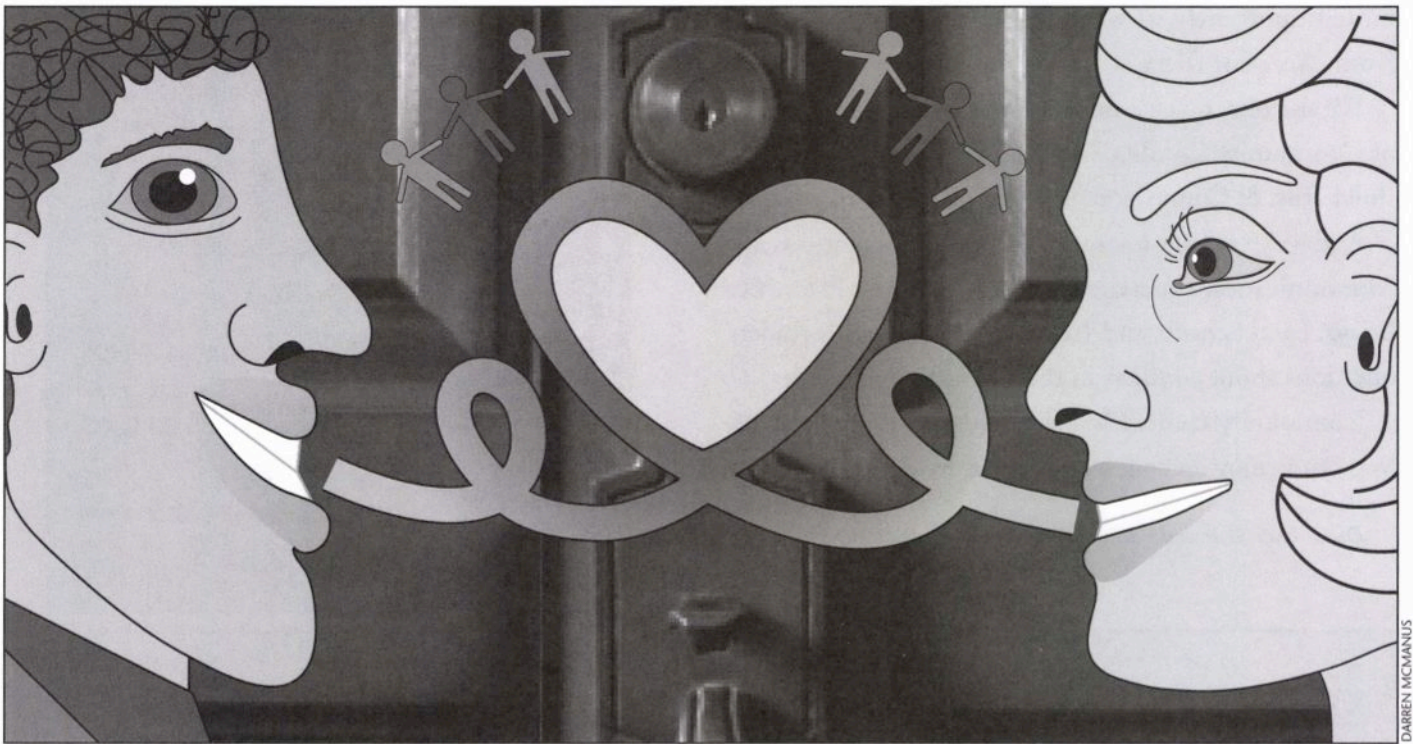
**Step 3.** The member(s) in violation will be asked to attend a Process Team meeting to develop, with the help and support of the Process Team, a plan for how they will co-exist in harmony with the community’s ground rules in the future. Notes of this meeting and the plan developed should be added to those already started.

**Step 4.** A follow-up process will take place within 3 months of the plan’s creation. This process will involve either positive feedback, if the behavior is changed and/or violations have stopped, or feedback to inform the member that the issue is now being sent to the Steering Team for a recommendation. The notes regarding this matter should be provided to the Steering Team at this time.

**Step 5.** The Steering Team will make a recommendation to the community on how to address this situation. Recommendations can vary from doing nothing (or even dropping the issue) to asking the member to leave the group for a period of time, or permanently.

*Excerpted with permission from Head, Heart, and Hands: Lessons in Community Building, by Shari Leach. (Wonderland Hill Development Company, 2005; michelle@whdc.com)*

*Shari Leach, a process consultant for cohousing communities and other groups, is based in Boulder, Colorado.*



# Communication *Rules!*

One thing I've observed through my 23 years of community living is that when a community is doing well, "communication rules!" The opposite is also true: "Lack of communication *sucks!*"

For the past 15 years I've lived in a small urban intentional community. Although four of us who bought the house together have remained throughout the time, various and sundry other community dwellers have graced our doors, with stays ranging from six weeks to six years. These more temporary members have included an Americorps Vista worker, a gay ministerial student who was just coming out and relocating to our area, a single woman who went through drug and alcohol rehab during her three-year sojourn, a 30-something environmental architect and her law-student fiancé, a recovering stockbroker looking for something more meaningful to do with his life, and several others who joined us—sometimes out of curiosity, sometimes out of commitment, and, occasionally, out of desperation.

Before that, I lived in a semi-rural intentional community for eight years. My partner and I bought a house, a pond, a barn, and five acres with another family. After three years, that family moved out and another family bought in. We homesteaded with them for five years in a household of four adults and five children (four of them teenagers!).

Back to communication. Communication means more than leaving notes in the laundry room saying "Please don't put anybody else's laundry in the dryer!" or notes in the refrigerator saying "Please don't eat my leftover lasagna," although such notes are both welcome and necessary.

I've come to realize that there's an ethos to community communication: one has to care about one's community partners enough to think about the consequences of one's actions—preferably before acting. And one has to know one's community partners well enough to fairly accurately project what his or her reactions might be to a certain action. Finally, if in doubt, it never hurts to ask.

I must clarify here that all of my community partners have been what the world would call above-average caring and compassionate people. They've also all been of above-average intelligence, and perfectly capable of thinking about consequences.

Yet, some of these people seemed to have trouble getting the hang of this community ethos. They made decisions about community space without consulting others; they came and went at will, ignoring expectations that they would be around for certain times or events; they invited guests to dinner in the shared dining room without letting their housemates know.

When such behavior occurred, I felt like I was living in a co-op or dormitory instead

ment. I assumed that "replace" meant "more of the same." I was shocked to come home and find a completely different (and in my view, rather ugly) type of weatherstripping in place.

"What happened?" I moaned. Chuck patiently explained to me that this type would work better because of thus-and-so, and the other type wasn't available anymore anyway.

Did I feel better? A little, but I would have welcomed the chance to have a more thorough discussion of the whole weatherstripping thing—before it happened. Then I wouldn't have to face the loss of something I thought was good-looking without some mental and emotional preparation. And if we had all

***One has to care about one's community partners enough to think about the consequences of one's actions—preferably before acting.***

of an intentional community. And I felt ignored, discounted, or slightly taken advantage of. But mostly ignored. As if I were invisible.

If you're thinking of living in an intentional community, regardless of size or setting, please know that you can no longer think from the perspective of one person, or one-half of a couple. There's a knack to thinking about the whole group—without sacrificing individual tastes and desires—but it can be done, and it works better when you do it that way.

But no matter what you do think, or how you do your thinking, it helps to think out loud.

Think out loud along with your housemates, process decisions, let them know how things are affecting you, and welcome their input: not their advice on how to fix your hair or your love life, but their thoughts, their hearts, their souls.

Recently, one of my housemates decided it was time to replace the front door weatherstripping. He announced it at our weekly house meeting, so we all agreed to the expenditure. But nothing further was said about the how or what kind of replace-

discussed it together, we might have found more solutions than the one that was obvious to Chuck.

I know, I know—how many community members does it take to change that light bulb? Sometimes for the sake of efficiency, communication has to be curtailed. Responsibilities have to be delegated. But I've never been someone who worships efficiency over other values, like letting everyone have their say, and listening behind the words for the feelings.

The moral of the story—at least in this community household—is: say more than you think you ought to. The results may surprise you. Share yourself, and be open to others sharing themselves. Be ready to see the beauty that diverse beings living in a single household can create if they weave themselves together into a household mosaic of more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts, which could be at least a beginning definition of "community."

*We have not identified the author, as she asks that we preserve her privacy and that of her community.*



## 24 Common Sources of Community Conflict

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

### "Structural Conflict" Set-Ups:

1. **Vision and values differences.** Arguments over how money should be spent, or allocating our time and labor based on differing values or visions about the community.
2. **"Structural" power imbalances.** Resentment and blame arising from real or perceived power differences in terms of how decisions are made and who makes them, or who has more influence than others in the group, either because of persuasive influence, expertise, or seniority in the community.



3. **Exhausting, divisive, or unproductive meetings.** Resentment and anger from too-frequent, overlong, or dragging meetings that accomplish little and go nowhere, or meetings characterized by resentment or hostility.
4. **Lack of crucial information.** Arguments about whose fault it is that we're suddenly stopped in our tracks, or must

# But Not Without Tears ...

## Our Toughest Membership Decision Ever

BY CHRIS ROTH



GILLES MINGASSON

Note: The author has changed the names of the people involved in this story and some identifying details.

**O**f all the issues I've seen groups deal with in my years in community, none has been as difficult or fraught with practical and emotional repercussions as certain membership decisions. Who gets to stay in our community? Who needs to be told "No, you can't join us"? Who needs to be asked to leave?

Six years ago, Lost Valley Educational Center in Oregon faced the most challenging membership decision I've witnessed here. We needed to choose between taking on a new member who seemed likely to require more energy from us than many of us were willing or able to give, or asking that person to move elsewhere,

a decision which would separate her from the father of her unborn child, who was already a member here (and who then would have to choose between staying with us, or leaving with her).

And it wasn't even as simple as I've just described it.

Heron had joined our community in the spring. A single dad in his late 40s, whose ex-wife and son remained in the southwest when he moved to the northwest, he had been through his share of relationship heartache. He had often felt himself an outcast, especially as an occasional cross-dresser in a conservative rural southwest area. While he encountered his share of challenges when he



joined our community here, he also discovered many joys, and found himself accepted and appreciated in ways he hadn't been before. The wider web of emotional (if not sexual) intimacy available here also met needs that he hadn't met successfully when living alone or in a nuclear family. He had job skills that we needed, as well as an intuitive, spiritual relationship with the land. He seemed like a natural part of our "tribe," someone who brought new, exciting things to our community. After a trial membership period, we accepted him into a year-long provisional membership. We all hoped he would choose to apply for and be accepted into full membership.

Part way through the summer, Lilith arrived, and soon entered our membership process. In her mid-thirties, she was involved in a long-term, often long-distance, relationship with Rob, who worked as a backcountry ranger half the year. She found herself drawn to our community for many reasons, and also seemed to possess a number of skills that we needed. She was generally perceived as a strong-willed, intelligent, organized, competent, physically striking person—one who tended to either attract or repel people, depending on who they were.

***If they weren't invited to be members, Heron said, he was not sure he could continue his own membership in our community.***

Some community members felt threatened by Lilith. She seemed often determined to get her way, had no hesitation about asking not only for help, but also for what seemed like special treatment, and asserted herself in ways that some less-assertive community members found uncomfortable. Other community members found them-

selves drawn to her—tempted to give her that special treatment that she was asking for. She had high standards of beauty, not only for herself but for her surroundings, and her esthetic sense could add a touch of magic to wherever she put her attention. She attracted a lot of male attention. I found myself liking her, and interacting with her fairly regularly. Heron liked her even more.

Lilith described herself as polyamorous—open to having more than one lover. During Rob's annual stint in the wilderness, he and Lilith lived apart, and each had permission to pursue other sexual relationships. During the six months that they lived together every year, they also had given one another permission to explore polyamory, but in practice, by choice, they had always reverted to monogamy soon after being reunited.

## 24 Sources

raise unexpected funds because we didn't adequately research something earlier; for example, not knowing that our local zoning regulations don't permit our planned population density or clustered housing, or not knowing composting toilets are illegal in our county.

5. **Remembering verbal agreements differently.** Eruptions of resentment, blame, or hostility because some community members appear to be dishonest or trying to cheat others, because we all remember our financial or other agreements differently. We can't just look up the agreements because we didn't write them down.
6. **No communication or behavioral agreements.** Misunderstandings and resentments because group members have widely divergent communication styles or behavioral norms. What are our norms for how people talk to each another, or express disagreement and strong emotion?



7. **No processes for accountability.** Resentment, blame, and flying accusations because some of us didn't do what we said we'd do, and certain projects can't move forward because some earlier tasks are unfinished, causing us to lose money or miss important opportunities.
8. **No membership criteria or new-member screening process.** Resentment and mistrust arising because new people enter who don't share our values and vision, don't align with our community culture, or can't meet our financial and labor requirements.
9. **Being swamped with too many new members at once.** Disorientation, feeling overwhelmed, depression, loss, or panic because the "container" of

After several months as a single communitarian, Heron had found that certain of his needs were still not being met. While he felt connected with others here in many ways, he found himself craving an intimate relationship, and before long he and Lilith had become involved sexually. Lilith had been careful to tell Heron (and all of us) about Rob, whom she still regarded as her primary, long-term partner. Neither Heron nor Lilith were necessarily considering this as anything more than an adventure, with no guarantees about where it would lead.

Rob was also interested in community membership. When his ranger stint was over for the year, he came to Lost Valley and entered the membership process himself. A soft-spoken musician and artist, he was a likeable, funny, if somewhat unassertive person. He had some skills that were also useful to us, although, partly because he was not much of a self-promoter, some members were unsure of how well he would meet our staffing needs. Most members either found him a little mysterious, or felt a resonance with him, or both.

We didn't know how adding Rob to the picture would affect Heron or his relationship with Lilith. But Rob and Heron immediately took a liking to one another on a personal level, and all three seemed to be getting along well. While they were never involved sexually with each other, Heron and Rob agreed that they could both be partners with Lilith, to whatever degree seemed comfortable. This polyamorous relationship gave promise of being a success story in healthy communication and non-jealousy. Many community members appreciated the example it was providing of new ways of looking at love.

Rob and Lilith visited family one weekend. When they returned, they had some news: Lilith was pregnant. And because of the timing, the dad could not have been Rob—it was Heron. Heron

had never planned to have any more children. Rob had not wanted to have a child. But Lilith had wanted a child for some time, although she and Heron had not intended to conceive together.

This development introduced innumerable twists into an unorthodox relationship that had seemed so easy just a week before.

## ***It was an emotionally wrenching meeting.***

During several days of discussion between the three of them, Lilith made it clear that she had chosen to keep the child. They arrived at a plan in which Rob and Heron would share parenting responsibilities—Heron as the biological father, Rob as the “step-dad.” Both Rob and Heron had apprehensions about these roles, but they honored Lilith's decision and committed to taking responsibility with her for the child. In our community circle, Heron told us that, after the initial shock, he was now excited about being a new dad. Rob also said that this was apparently what life had in store for him and that he felt up to the challenge. Lilith was radiant. Although this was unplanned, she knew that this was the right choice for her, and that she wanted to be a mother.

In the ensuing weeks, all did not stay as rosy. With the discovery of her pregnancy, Lilith had found that she had energy for only one partner, and that partner (as it had been for years) was Rob. By her choice, Heron, the expectant dad, was no longer sexually intimate with her. He became despondent at times. Rob and Lilith both acknowledged that this was a complicated situation with more challenges for the three of them than they had anticipated.

The community had its own decision to make. Lilith and Rob had not yet had a membership review for year-long provisional membership. They needed a secure situation in which to have Lilith and Heron's child. Rob was still fairly new to the community, relatively unknown to many of us. Making any kind of decision, in light of all these developments, seemed premature. But we needed to say “yes” or “no” to a long-term



GILLES MINGASSON



GILLES MINGASSON

arrangement so as to allow Lilith to put down roots and prepare for the birth.

Emotions ran high. Heron had alternated between being angry at Lilith for distancing herself from him, and feeling renewed love for her—between wishing she and Rob would leave, and strongly wanting them to stay.

At their membership review, he made an impassioned plea for them to be invited into membership. If they weren't invited to be members, he said, he was not sure he could continue his own membership at Lost Valley.

None of us wanted to lose Heron, and many of us also did not want to lose Rob or Lilith. While some found Rob puzzling, I felt that I understood him fairly well, and appreciated his quirky sense of humor and especially his

***It still seemed unclear what we would decide when they left the room.***

guitar-playing and musicality. I also appreciated the freedom with which Heron, Rob, and Lilith had often expressed their love for one another—not by any overt public sexuality, but by the ease with which they had seemed to relate to one another and to others (including me). They were each very alive,

exciting people, in their own ways—not dully going along with convention, but being who they were as best as they could. They felt like part of my extended family—as if I had known them before. I did not want them to

leave. I felt, at times, particularly pulled toward Lilith. And a friend told me she saw definite signs of mutual attraction (an assessment reinforced by some casual comments Lilith made to me). But some other community members felt differently about Lilith and

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our shared history, values, and culture is threatened or damaged by the sudden influx of more people than we can assimilate easily. (Forming community groups and communities do better to add new members slowly.)

10. **High turnover.** Disorientation, feeling overwhelmed, depression, and associated emotions because too high a percentage of members are continually coming and going for the community to establish a sense of itself. The center does not hold; there's no "there" there.

### Differences in Work and Planning Styles:

11. **Processors vs. Doers.** Conflict between group members who want to process emotions or clear up points of meeting procedure, and those who want to focus on facts, strategies, and "real" things, but who sometimes override other people's feelings or ignore agreed-upon procedures.



12. **Planners vs. Doers.** Tension between those who want to gather facts and data and make long-term plans before taking action, and those who want to leap in and get started.

13. **Spiritual vs. physical manifesters.** Annoyance and impatience between those who want to use visualization, affirmation, or prayer as the primary means to manifest community, but may not feel comfortable with budgets, mortgages, shovels, or power tools, and those who want to use strategic plans, cash flow projections, and work parties as the primary means to manifest community, but are leery of "invisible stuff."

14. **Differences in information processing.** Disrespecting, dismissing or devaluing people who may process information differently (visually rather than aurally,



GILLES MINGASSON

Author, Chris Roth

Rob. Whereas some were puzzled by Rob, they were downright put off by Lilith, experiencing her as overly demanding, even selfish, and (as evidenced especially in group meetings) somewhat domineering. They had been able to give her feedback about that, and it had seemed to be a manageable dynamic so far, but the prospect of her having a baby at Lost Valley seemed to them like a recipe for disaster.

Several children had already been born on site, but in these cases the parents had already been established members who were trusted to (and did) take full responsibility for the impacts of their choices, and were careful to not put excessive demands on the community. In fact, some of these parents had continued to function in their former roles as staff members with very little interruption. But Lilith and Rob were new, and Lilith was already perceived as generally asking for well-above-average amounts of community support, in both physical and energy ways.

In those days, every community member was expected to work full-time as a staff member, supporting Lost Valley's work—at least initially. Exceptions were made, case-by-case, for longer-term members who, for example, wanted to go back to school part-time or have a baby. (We have

since shifted to a model in which members of any type can live on-site, give 8 to 10 hours a week of community service, but can work in their own business or off-site for the rest of the time.)

It was obvious that Lilith would not be able to spend an extended period working full-time in the community before becoming a mother—and that Rob and Heron would also have their work commitments cut into by needing to attend to a newborn. We did not have many birth- or baby-friendly living quarters at that time. We were also short on living spaces in general, and short on staff. In a practical sense, it seemed as if Lost Valley was not an ideal place for Lilith to have her baby, nor were she and Rob the ideal candidates to join us as community staff members at that time. And yet...

Lilith and Rob strongly desired to be at Lost Valley, and told us so in their membership review. And on a gut, relational level, some of us also strongly wanted them here. We had a chance to ask them questions, and then give feedback. Most of what I've described above, and more, came up in the course of that feedback. It still seemed unclear what we would decide when they left the room for our community-only deliberations.

***We realized that we need to start giving that feedback, and having those conversations, sooner and more consistently.***



Our approach in membership matters has always been, "If it's not an obvious Yes, it's a No, or at least a 'let's try this a little longer before deciding.'" Because of all the concerns, it wasn't an obvious Yes. Because of the urgency of making a Yes or No decision, for the baby's sake, it couldn't be "let's wait a little longer, and see how it goes." The answer we came to, much to the dismay of Lilith and Rob (and Heron, and others who had grown to love them as people), was No. It was an emotionally wrenching meeting. By the end, Heron said he had come to peace with whatever we decided. But afterwards, he experienced waves of both grief and anger. For their part, Lilith and Rob were truly surprised by our decision, and obviously very saddened. They did not protest. They accepted the decision and put brave faces on, but were obviously in mourning for a community dream that was not to be for them.

Lilith and Rob packed up to leave. They planned to return to Lilith's mother's house to have the baby. Heron decided to stay behind, to continue to live at Lost Valley and visit his child regularly. A pall seemed to hang over much of the community in the following days. Several of us, including me, had serious misgivings about our collective decision. Spurred by a comment from another community member that indicated that he too thought we had made a mistake, I even made an unplanned, clumsy attempt to open up the discussion again with Lilith and Rob, to no avail (and to the irritation of several others, who were ready to be done with this chapter).

However difficult and painful our decision was at the time, in retrospect all parties came to believe it was for the best. Lilith and Rob received the support they needed at Lilith's mother's house, and realized that they could not have received that kind of focused attention in the relatively chaotic environment here. Heron, who had been

on an emotional roller-coaster ever since the pregnancy started, found that it was easier *not* to be living in such close proximity to his former lover and her partner. Eventually, he left the community, and moved within close visiting distance of his new son. Lilith and Rob eventually split up as a couple, remaining friends, and Lilith became partners with another man who served as a third (and enthusiastic) "dad" to the child.

And we at Lost Valley proceeded through the inevitable challenges of the following year without adding to them the responsibility of taking on a situation we didn't believe we could handle. In the ensuing years, Rob has come back to visit several times, as has Heron. We've seen pictures of Lilith and her son, although she hasn't made it up to visit again yet. All three, however, have expressed appreciation for the time they spent here and for the decision we made, difficult though it was, which helped steer them all in the direction of what they actually needed at the time.

The old wounds and disappointments have healed, and we have all grown from the experience. Lilith and Rob learned and benefited from the honest feedback they received from the community. The community realized that we need to start giving that feedback, and having those conversations, sooner and more consistently in order to avoid the kind of unpleasant surprise that Lilith and Rob encountered at their review. We also realized that we're all learning, all the time, in this experiment called community, and that even the most difficult challenges, conflicts, and missteps ultimately help us evolve in ways that we will ultimately appreciate.

*Chris Roth has lived at Lost Valley Educational Center ([www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org)) for the past eight years, preceded by an equal number of years in other consensus-based intentional communities. He coordinates Lost Valley's organic vegetable gardens and edits Talking Leaves Journal ([www.talkingleaves.org](http://www.talkingleaves.org)).*



CHRIS ROTH

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in wholes rather than step by step) or at a different pace, than we do.

15. **Differences in communication style.** Sociolinguistic differences based on region, ethnicity, subculture, socio-economic background, or gender, or whether a member has lived in communities for decades or just arrived from the mainstream.

### Fairness Issues:

16. **Work imbalances, or perceived imbalances.** Resentment toward those who work less often or less rigorously on community projects than we do, or than they've previously agreed to.



17. **Financial issues.** Arguments over who's expected to pay for what, and if and when money can be reimbursed. Resentment and tension over the relationship between financial contribution and the amount of influence in decision-making.
18. **Time-crunch issues.** Disagreements about the amount of time spent in meetings and on community tasks versus time with one's family or household. Conflict over the best times to schedule meetings or community projects so they're convenient for everyone. Arguments over how consistently community members should contribute to the group and whether it's OK to take periodic breaks.
19. **Gender imbalance and power-over issues.** Power imbalances and resentments if there are considerably more members of one gender than another, or one gender dominating some areas, or one gender consistently teasing, behaving suggestively towards, or dominating the other.

# Our 'Year of Living Dangerously'

(And How We Survived It)

BY LIZ WALKER



*Finishing the bridge between EVI's two cohousing neighborhoods*

**I**f personal conflicts are hard, then community-wide conflicts can be excruciating. It's bad enough having two people involved in a disagreement, each with their own baggage. But if you multiply those two people by five or ten, then the number of interrelationships and amount of baggage grows exponentially. Add some unpredictable group dynamics and a few dysfunctional personalities, and you end up with a big, seething, chaotic mess.

We've experienced plenty of community-wide conflicts at EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI). Not only have we survived, but we've also learned how to better manage conflicts and to reach solutions more easily.

One community-wide conflict at EVI arose between three of the original families in FROG (an acronym for our first neighborhood or "First Residents Group") and the larger community as a whole. Families A and B were very close friends. The men were MIT graduates—brilliant, analytical thinkers and also both stay-at-home dads. The women were medical professionals—a doctor and a nurse-midwife. The two families had checked out several other cohousing groups and decided that ours had the best group process. In fact they moved to Ithaca together (in 1995) to become part of EcoVillage at Ithaca. Needless to say, it felt like a coup to have them choose our group and bring their combined talents to our young community.



**Neighbor Issues:**

- 20. **Behavioral norms.** Conflict over what's considered acceptable behavior in community; for example, to what degree people might intervene in or restrain potentially unacceptable, unsafe, or destructive behavior of other people, their children, or their animals. Can community members request changes in parents' child-raising style, or request that others restrain, train, or fence their animals? What are standards of acceptable behavior outside the community, where someone's behavior might reflect on the community?
- 21. **Boundary issues.** Tension about what community members do on their homesites, in their adjacent homes, or shared common spaces, that can be seen or heard by others, including what noises may be too loud or disruptive to others during certain hours or what physical objects might be an eyesore to others. What behaviors—such as disciplining children, having loud arguments, butchering livestock, drinking, taking drugs, nudity, displays of affection, or sexual expression—are fine for some to overhear or view and which ones are “over the line.” To what degree can fellow community members borrow each other's personal items without asking? What degree of playful, affectionate, or sensual physical touch is welcome to some and unwelcome to others?
- 22. **Care and maintenance issues.** Conflict about standards for taking care of and maintaining jointly owned equipment or tools, and who's responsible.
- 23. **Cleanliness and order issues.** Tension over standards for cleanliness in common rooms, and cleanliness of jointly used items and how they're stored, partic-

Family C was a local family with two children. Both parents worked—one at Cornell and the other at a local publishing house. The two brought experience with alternative technologies, such as solar panels and composting toilets. And they brought a can-do attitude.

It soon became apparent that none of the three families was very happy with EVI. We make decisions by consensus, a process in which all points of view are taken into account. Objections get discussed and solutions are proposed to address them. Facilitators help us work toward achieving a “group mind,” in which commonly held values lead to a clear consensus. After much discussion the community as a whole comes to a decision with which everyone can agree. Sometimes an individual may disagree with the decision but still agrees to abide by it—an acceptable choice within the consensus process. If someone feels very strongly that a group decision is wrong, then the consensus process allows a person to “block” it. Since proposals only come to the floor for a decision after weeks of discussion, proposal writing, and committee meetings, blocking a decision is a very serious step. And usually a very rare one.

**He vowed to never enter the Common House again.**

or if it would not bring personal benefits to their families. Conflicts occurred around spending money, but lifestyle issues arose as well.

The tactics the three men used were very hard to deal with. Consensus-based decision making takes faith, trust, and goodwill—qualities the three seemed to lack. They reminded me of rambunctious young boys on a playground who had not yet learned to be team players. Tom used his considerable intellect to put down anyone who disagreed with him. He spoke at length and was able to talk circles around other people who were less articulate. Upon closer examination, though, his arguments were almost always self-serving. Because people found it hard to interrupt him, or to be the butt of his acerbic put-downs, the group, as a whole, stood by and watched rather than set limits on his behavior.

George worked hard and put in lots of time on the neighborhood finance team. He rarely spoke up at meetings, but when he did, he expressed a lot of anger. Like Tom, he frequently used put-downs and often blocked consensus.

Henry almost never spoke. He was very shy, with an occasional slow sweet smile. A



*EVI Residents take time to celebrate*

As we went about conducting the community's business, we found that more often than not, one of the three families would block a group decision. The men in particular seemed to block if a decision was not going the way they wanted it to,

strict vegan, Henry became disillusioned when we decided to serve meat occasionally at Common House meals. Intended to meet the needs of those members who felt that meat was an important part of their diets, the decision came about only after months



*The First Resident's Group (FROG) at EVI*

of meetings to discuss dietary preferences. We established cooking protocols to deal with the change that would suit our vegetarian and vegan members: There would always be a vegetarian and a vegan main dish at each Common House meal. Cooking pots and utensils used for cooking meat would be kept entirely separate from the rest of the kitchen equipment.

Henry came to one or two discussions, but withdrew from the decision-making process early on. He had a firm idea of what he wanted. When the group decided on something else, Henry did not block the decision but made a vow never to enter the Common House again. When asked to talk about his feelings, he refused. Gradually Henry withdrew more and more from social contact, leaving for work from his back door and hardly ever interacting with anyone outside his immediate family. His moral stand was rigid and unbending—difficult to handle and out of synch with our diverse community.

Aside from taking issue with EVI's decision-making processes, Tom, George, and Henry also saw my leadership as a threat right from the beginning of the project. And their distrust and hostility was particularly hard to bear. With Joan Bokaer, I was a codirector of the whole EVI project. But for several years before our first set of homes were completed, I was also hired

to act as FROG's coordinator. In that role I convened a steering committee that set each week's agenda, published minutes, oversaw subcommittees, and worked closely with our development managers. I worked hard and conscientiously to keep information flowing, identify issues needing to be resolved, and help the group move through the myriad complexities of designing and developing a cohousing project. I saw myself as

a professional organizer, someone who could make sure that we accomplished our goals.

Most people appreciated what I did. But Tom, George, and Henry thought that I had too much power, despite the fact that every decision was made using consensus. The three treated both Joan and me with hostility and frequently criticized us in meetings. And it seemed that everyone else was too afraid to defend us. I had seen that pattern in other groups, and it scared me to see such a toxic dynamic developing here. Since I had no desire to dominate the group, the accusations and criticisms really hurt my feelings. And I became very cautious about taking any kind of initiative.

By the time we had lived in community for two years (1998), the tension between the three families and the rest of the group was becoming unbearable. Mistrust and hostility were rampant. The families felt isolated and unhappy and looked mostly to

***Conflict resolution training changed our behavior. We started challenging dysfunctional behavior in our meetings.***

each other for companionship (even though several individuals in FROG did reach out and cultivate friendships with them). Meetings seemed filled with acrimony. Here we were striving for a strong sense of community, and yet no matter how many special process techniques we tried, a yawning chasm was widening between the men of these three families and the rest of the group.

Our process steering committee (devoted to planning and facilitating group meetings) took action. Why not train the whole community in conflict

resolution? We selected two outside facilitators, set dates, and began in earnest.

The whole FROG community met with the facilitators six times over the following year. At first the sessions focused on simple skill-building exercises, such as “active listening.” We learned how to attentively listen to each other’s viewpoints and then repeat them back. Other exercises taught us how to empathize with each other.

We also learned about some basic healthy group dynamic principles. Our facilitators showed us the importance of having each person take responsibility for expressing his or her own viewpoint rather than remain a bystander. And they cautioned us not to scapegoat people who were perceived as different.

The community divided into conflict resolution groups made up of four or five adults. Groups got together twice a month to practice conflict resolution skills, focusing on any conflicts (even minor ones) between members of the group. As we practiced, our skill levels gradually increased.

Then our facilitators moved us into scarier territory. I’ll never forget the night in 1999 that I sat in the hot seat as 60 of my friends and neighbors peppered me with questions about my leadership and the actions I had taken over the previous eight years as a director of EcoVillage at Ithaca. It was a very direct way to dredge out people’s unspoken criticisms and fears about leadership. Despite the fact that my heart was galloping like a racehorse, I felt that I answered well. I was able to clear up quite a few misconceptions. By the end of

the meeting I was sticky with sweat, but that didn’t stop me from giving and receiving a lot of hugs. I certainly felt clearer in my role as leader. Paradoxically I also felt more a part of the group than ever before.

Conflict resolution training changed our behavior. We started challenging dysfunctional behavior in our meetings. Different

people spoke out when disrespectful comments were made. But despite our best efforts, things didn’t seem to change much.

Meanwhile the three families stayed on. I remember realizing that

they would probably be here for the rest of my life—unhappy, unwilling community members who might verbally attack me or other members at any time. By this time two of the men refused to say hello or to even make eye contact when we passed on the path. The third refused to take part in any kind of mediation or conflict resolution.

Then, at about the same time I finally accepted the situation, things miraculously seemed to shift. Each of the families came to the conclusion that they would be happier leaving the community. It was a huge relief to have them leave and take all their anger and hostility with them. Sadly no one offered to throw a farewell party for them—a harsh reminder of how little connection they had made with others in the community.

Our experience with the three families also changed how we orient prospective members. We now emphasize how important it is to be flexible and willing to talk through differences. And we particularly highlight the role that effective communication plays at EVI. In my view cohousing simply will not work for people who are not dedicated to these principles.

*With permission from EcoVillage At Ithaca: Pioneering Sustainable Community by Liz Walker (New Society Publishers, 2005). Bookstores or 800-567-6772 ext 111; [www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com).*



Author, Liz Walker

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ularly in kitchens and bathrooms, and who’s responsible.

24. **Lifestyle issues.** Conflict arising from items some members may own or activities they may enjoy privately—smoking, liquor, drugs, guns, pesticides, and meat eating—which may be no big deal for some but disturbing to others. Conflict over the degree to which relationships between families, couples, or households may be the business of other members, such as parents’ discipline or lack of discipline of children, open marriages, polyfidelitous relationships, or gay or bisexual relationships. To what degree is how people treat each other in their love relationships the business of other community members?

Every one of these conflicts can be reduced or prevented by well-crafted agreements and procedures, good training in group process, or both.



# When People Don't Do Their Work ...

How we taught ourselves good problem-solving skills  
(and got a cleaner house, too)

*Residents of Stone Soup Co-op*

BY LOU VILLAIRE



LOU VILLAIRE

**W**hat do you do when your housemates don't do their community labor assignments, and then fail to make up their missed hours of work? That's what happened at Stone Soup Ashland, one of three houses in our Chicago housing co-op. We solved this particular problem, and in the process, discovered that the specific solution mattered less than how we got there!

Stone Soup Cooperative Ashland has 18 members—each responsible for four hours' work every week as part of our membership contract. One of these four hours involves cleaning some part of the house with a partner, and which part they clean is determined by the "Work Wheel" process. Every three to four weeks the Work Wheel is rotated by the job coordinator and partners get a new job to do, such as clean the bathrooms, vacuum the hallways, spiff up kitchen appliances, and so on. It seems pretty simple, but over time we saw that many of us just weren't doing our housecleaning tasks. As the bathrooms, hallways, and so on got dirtier and dirtier, resentment grew. Why wouldn't co-op members just do their jobs?

All our agreements and policies are compiled in the Stone Soup Cooperative Handbook. The work policy says that when someone doesn't do their hour of house-cleaning in a given week, if they haven't arranged for a substitute, they need to make up the time they missed. Pretty straightforward, right? But many folks weren't making up their missed hours either.

Even though other house members tease me about compiling statistics, I compiled some on this. For 16–20 months during 2003 and 2005 our housecleaning job completion rate was slightly more than 50 percent—meaning we had a clean house about half the time. I regarded the problem as one of low reward and low penalty. There wasn't much carrot, and there wasn't much stick either.

As you can imagine, this was a hot issue in our community meetings.

We make decisions by consensus, and so in four meetings in the spring of 2005 we considered a series of proposals to solve the problem.

The first proposal was designed to increase accountability, with higher reward and higher penalty. It was brought forward by a few frustrated house members bent on making people do what they were sup-

posed to. They proposed that, first, if someone didn't do their housecleaning hour that week, they'd not only have to make up that hour but their partner in the task, who in fact *did* do their work, would owe the house another half hour of work,

**We heard  
mutterings of  
"policing" and  
"hierarchy."**

for a total of one and a half hours. And if neither partner did their cleaning job that week, *each* would owe the house one and a half hours, for a total of three hours. Further, the proposal included a point system. If both partners did their work, they'd earn three points each for a total of six points. Each time two partners collectively reached 20 points they'd get a week off.



*"Excerpted with permission from Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities by Diana Leafe Christian (New Society Publishers, 2005). www.newsociety.com.*

## 71 Ways To Build Trust & Connection or Reduce & Resolve Conflict

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

### Reducing Certain Kinds of Community Conflicts

1. Common mission/purpose, shared values and goals.
2. Agreements and policies clear and in writing.
3. Fair, participatory decision-making process. If it's consensus, get training in it first; make sure all new group members who will have decision-making rights get trained in consensus first also.
4. New members selected for resonance with common mission/purpose and getting along well with others. Relatively long "exploring member" or "provisional member" periods.
5. Community Pet Policy.

### Creating Community Spirit, "Community Glue"

6. Shared meals, potlucks.
7. Work parties

### About Stone Soup Housing Cooperative

In 1996, a group of activists and organizers in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood began to meet for potlucks to discuss how they could live together in a community. The first Stone Soup Cooperative house was begun in a former convent in the Uptown neighborhood, with a guiding principle of affordable, democratically governed, cooperative housing for people committed to joy and social justice. Stone Soup Cooperative now has three houses in Chicago—two in the Uptown neighborhood and one in the McKinley Park neighborhood. We usually have about 35–40 members total, from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Like other intentional communities, Stone Soup Co-op shares expenses, housing space, and work responsibilities.

—L. V.



This proposal fell flat on its face. Frankly, most people did not like it at all. They wanted nothing to do with partner coresponsibility for failure to do the work and a point system for rewards. We heard mutterings of “policing” and “hierarchy,” so we formed a small committee to revise the proposal, with input from a larger number of our members.

During the time between the first meeting and the second, some members came up with the idea of a lottery as an incentive. In this scheme, if a person didn't do their work one week, they'd pay \$10 into a pool. At the end of each month there would be a raffle. Those who did their jobs for the month could win the pool of dollars. This proposal shifted the burden to the person who didn't do their work, and used a simple cash penalty. In an economists' terms, it took an indivisible good; namely, a shared clean house, and required those who failed to participate to create divisible good; namely, money, for those who did. While this was far more popular than the first proposal, people had strong concerns. What if a person couldn't pay? Could someone just continue to pay rather than do their job? And what would happen to the make-up hours? Would this

proposal help or hinder us having a cleaner house? Some people said they'd block this proposal. So the issue got postponed to the next meeting, with a plea that those who opposed the idea help us come up with a better idea.

At the next meeting we resorted to legalities, handing out the part of our membership work contract with the part highlighted about our responsibilities for our weekly hour of housecleaning. This document, which we had all signed, makes it clear that we're responsible to make up any hours we miss. “SSC may assess penalties or require compensatory payments for failure to perform work,” it says right there in black and white. Furthermore, according to the SSC Handbook, our membership can come up for review by the community if we fail to do our work tasks. So we revised our accountability proposal a third time. It said, essentially: (1) Do your work tasks. (2) Ask someone to fill in for you if you can't to it. (3) \$10/week will be added to your monthly dues for each week that you don't do your job.

Well, this didn't fly either. People pointed out that this revised proposal put the responsibility on House Treasurers to impose and account for a

***We also realized that when a proposal is presented as a “done deal” from a committee, it will probably fail. We all need to participate in figuring out the solution.***



monthly cash penalty. Would this cause an undue accounting burden? Some suggested we remove the requirement to pay fines on a monthly basis. Others suggested that this fine should be paid only when the member moved out of the community. It was suggested that if someone didn't do their house cleaning task three times in one month, their membership would go on probation. For a third time there was no consensus on the revised proposal, and we put it off for further revision.

At the next meeting, for the fourth revised accountability proposal, the committee members tried a new tack. First, they offered an introduction to the problem, describing what had happened over time and how it negatively affected us. Second, they presented an accountability "component list" of various ways to induce more reward for doing the cleaning tasks and various kinds of consequences for not doing the tasks, and asked us all if there was anything to add. Various people added their own ideas. Third, we did a round robin, asking each member in the circle to say what they liked from the component list. We made check marks on the components that got positive comments. Lastly we did a process in which we deleted items on the list with little support, highlighted those with a lot of support, and asked "Is there anything left on the list that you can't live with?" Finally, we put together the remaining reward and consequence components into a new proposal. After an hour of tallying and modifying various components, we had a rewards and consequences formula we could all live with. We then gave it a trial period: the proposal would be in effect for two months, then we'd review it. Here's what we agreed on:

1. If a house member didn't do their housecleaning job one week and didn't make arrangements for someone else to do it for them, they'd owe \$10 to the house. The \$10 would be added to their monthly rent payment.
2. If the person didn't do their work two times in a given month, they'd go on membership probation for two months, during which time they'd have to complete each week's hour of housecleaning. If they didn't, their membership would be up for review. (3) If someone was unable

to do their job one week, they'd be responsible to arrange for someone else to do it and announce that arrangement at a weekly meeting, or coordinate with the job coordinator to find a replacement. Success at last!

We learned a lot from this. First, we realized that crafting a new policy, especially a contentious one like this, takes time. Time to introduce the problem and its context, to discuss it from all angles and unearth concerns, to refine and modify the proposal, and to let a community-owned solution emerge. And we shouldn't expect to do all this in one meeting. We might have to chew on our ideas for a few weeks.

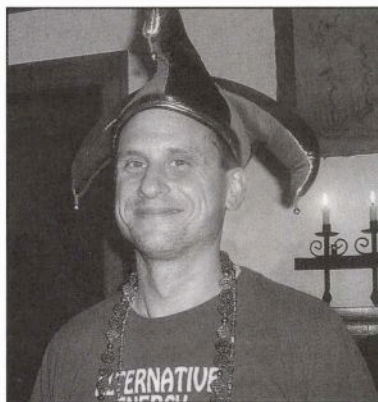
We also realized that when a proposal is presented as a done deal from a small committee—even if the proposal seems reasonable—it will probably fail. We all needed to participate in figuring out the solution. There was not necessarily one right solution to this problem, but there was a right process to finding it.

Lastly, we realized the solution must feel fair and workable to all of us. Fairness is a huge issue for most people, and this was the issue people raised repeatedly in our attempts to resolve this particular situation.

OK, you ask, but did this new policy actually work? Did we get to live in a cleaner house?

Laugh at me if you will for compiling statistics, but I did collect and analyze more figures. By the time we adopted the new policy, our housecleaning job completion rate had increased to above 80 percent!

*Louis Villaire was a member of Stone Soup Cooperative for about three years. He is now part of group starting a new community in Chicago.*



Author, Lou Villaire, at a Stone Soup party

## 71 Ways

8. Cooking together.
9. Camping trips.
10. Renting a rustic lodge over the weekend.
11. Singing together.
12. Playing music.
13. Dances of Universal Peace; contra dancing.
14. Home-grown skits, plays.
15. Storytelling evenings.
16. Drumming circles.
17. Appreciate and thank each other frequently.



Helping people stay accountable to the group (See pg. 19)

18. Buddy System.
19. Meeting Task Review
20. Wall Calendar of Tasks Due & Completed.

Staying in touch with each other emotionally

21. Check-ins.
22. Wisdom Circles, Sharing Circles, Talking Stick Circles.

Adopting Communication Agreements

(which may include such obvious agreements as:)

23. Not speaking until another person is finished speaking (i.e., no interrupting or "talking over" other people)
24. Keeping one's voice in normal vocal range (i.e., no shouting or yelling)
25. Addressing each other respectfully (i.e., not saying things like "What a stupid idea!"; no put-downs or other expressions of contempt or derision; no name calling; no implications that another person has character flaws [even if you think so])
26. No intimidation or threats, direct or implied.

# We Didn't Know Why People Were Leaving ... So We Asked

BY JANICE BLACK

**S**ince our first homeowners moved in to our cohousing community in 2002, over 40% of our residents have left the community or plan to do so soon.

What did this mean? Were we doing something wrong?

We expected some turnover when we designed the community, and learned going in that there is often a flurry of departures among cohousing communities once the houses are built. Still, over 40% in the first 30 months seemed high.

To find out what was happening, we surveyed residents, asking why they left or were thinking about it. It turned out that about half were leaving for reasons that had nothing to do with the community—they fell in love with someone from another town, they accepted a better job elsewhere, they needed to care for family members in another state, ...

The other half (around 15–18%) were disgruntled with the community. While conversations with others indicate that this amount of dissatisfaction is hardly off the scale of normal, we wanted to understand what was going on.

It appeared that some left because the values match was never quite there or the everyday realities of community life didn't work for them (too many meetings, too many rules, not enough fun). These losses were not so hard to take. On the other hand, we also lost members who did seem committed to our common values and well suited to community life. I'm talking about people who participated in meetings, pitched in willingly when there was work to be done, served both as leaders as well as worker bees, reached out in instances of mis-



STACEY MALASKI

understandings, and participated in structured events as well as informal exchanges. Why did they leave?

The survey provided important answers:

- Unfulfilled expectations. The demands of cohousing life did not suit them after all.
- Frustrations with seemingly endless processes and meetings.
- Frustrations with a lack of timely decision making.
- Frustrations with what they perceived as other community members blatantly thwarting decisions we arrived at by consensus, and the phenomenon of “minority rule” through the power of blocking.
- A sense that efforts at spontaneity as well as decisive action were consistently stymied by other members.
- Unresolved and seemingly unresolvable conflicts.
- Prohibitive financial cost.
- The physical designs of the homes not meeting people’s needs.

While these things were undoubtedly factors in why people gave up on our community as their home, we learned in candid, face-to-face interviews that the deepest reasons were perceptions that the common values were being consistently violated. In our Values Statement, for example, we use words like “positive” “respectful” and “fair” in the context of conflict resolution. We say we value “kindness and respect” and that we “listen and strive to understand” and “forgive mistakes.”

The initially committed people who became so discouraged that they left perceived those core values as being severely undermined. They cited instances of negative, disrespectful, and unfair practices; the failures of people with dominant personalities to try to see others’ points of view; and anonymous, rather than direct, criticisms. We heard comparisons to the Salem Witch Trials.



**We also lost members who did seem committed to our common values and well suited to community life. Why did they leave?**

So where are we now? Despite all the loss and dissatisfaction, we’re happy to say that the frequency and intensity of erupting conflicts has greatly diminished. Today, mostly, we see our problems as solvable, not that all our issues have evaporated. We still struggle with some members not taking on a proportionate share of the work; community tasks aren’t always accomplished as quickly as we’d like; and projects which were spearheaded by people who left are sometimes (temporarily) neglected. Yet new people are replacing the departed and there are opportunities for them to step up and contribute.

In spite of our ordeals, we are continuing to pursue our original ideals. We have relaxed; we’ve put our personal ideals about community into more functional perspectives. Hopefully, the recent schisms will leave openings for us to reflect and contemplate higher values. Fear of being thwarted has given way to inspiration and creativity. We appreciate each other, feel less stymied in our pursuit of happiness, and enjoy the fruits of past labors and the promises of more fulfillment ahead. Our children play happily and safely. Community meals are no longer stressful ordeals.

We are happier than we were a year ago—even if our dining room tables are not always spotless, even if rampant clover has taken over some plots of native grasses, and even if the signs at our recycling bins have become waterlogged and illegible from recent rainstorms. Difficult decisions must still be made and huge projects undertaken. Yet we’re approaching the work ahead in a spirit of optimism. We are succeeding because, although we lose sight of it sometimes, we do have shared values and are inspired to persevere through our early losses.

*Janice Black has lived in her cohousing community since its founding in 2002.*

**71 Ways**

27. **No hitting or other hurtful physical contact.** (See pg. 22)

**Adopting a Conflict Resolution Agreement**

(which may include such points as:)

28. **Good faith effort to resolve the problem among those having the conflict.** If this doesn’t work:
29. **A mutually agreed-upon third party mediates.** If this doesn’t work:
30. **The whole community addresses the problem.** If this doesn’t work:
31. **Bring in an outside mediator.** (See pg. 22)

**Adopting a “Graduated Series of Consequences”**

(which may include such points as:)

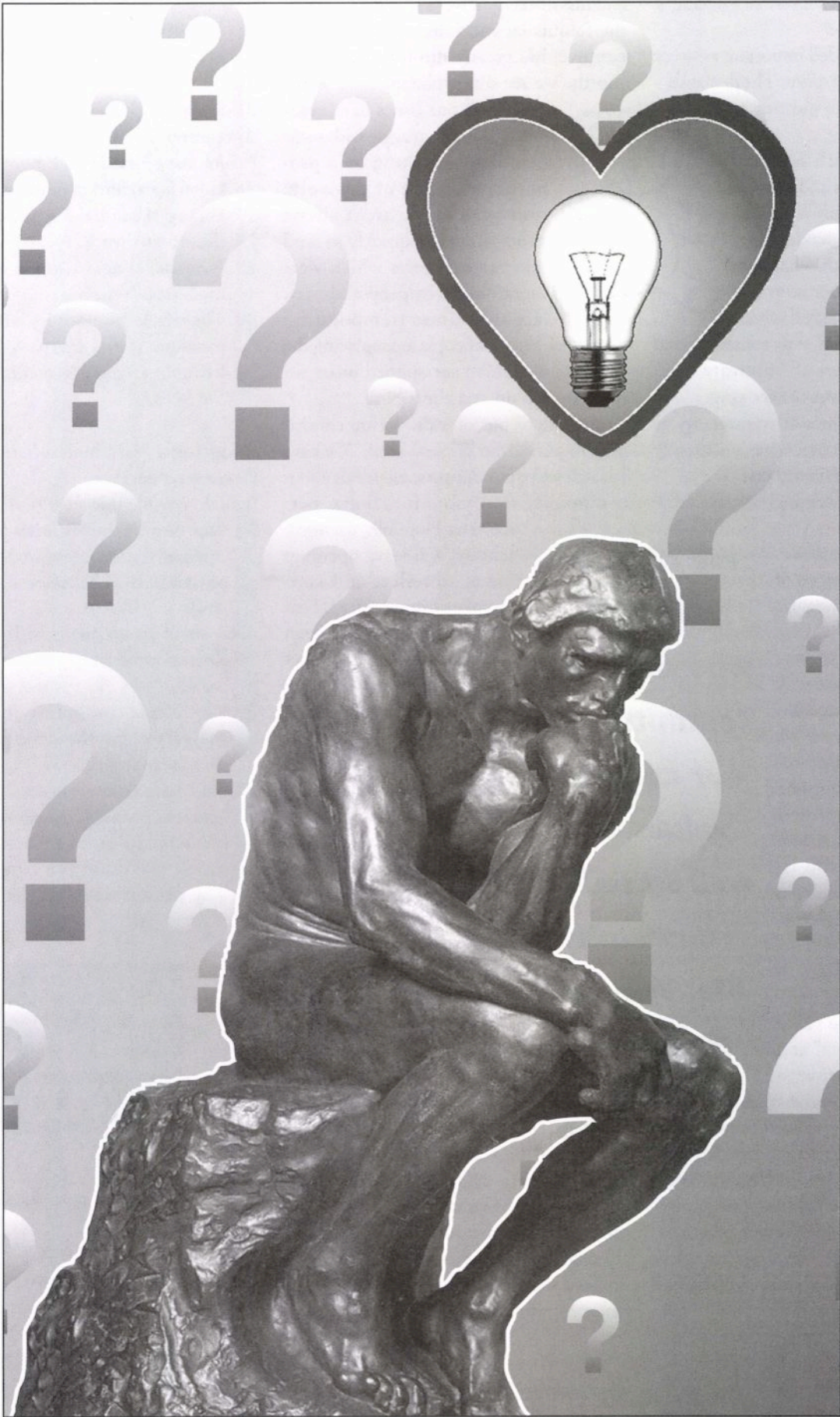
32. **One person meets with the person causing the problem and asks them to change their behavior.** If this doesn’t work:
33. **A small group meets with the person for the same purpose.** If this doesn’t work:
34. **The whole community meets with the person for the same purpose.** If this doesn’t work:
35. **The person reverts to Provisional Member status.** They must change the behavior in order to become a full member. If this doesn’t work”
36. **The person leaves the community.** (See pg. 23)



**Creating a Process Team / Well-Being Team / Care Team**

(whose duties may include:)

37. **Serving as “vibes watchers” for the whole community.** Doing so ongoingly, not just in meetings.



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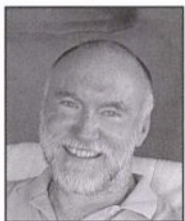
# WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN ...?

What burning questions about conflict in community would you ask an experienced process and communications consultant? In this article, four well-known consensus trainers and community process consultants answer our readers' questions.



*Tree Bressen* is a group process consultant who works with intentional communities and other nonprofits on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. She is a founding member of Walnut St. Co-op in Eugene, Oregon, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this fall. Her website, [www.tree-group.info](http://www.tree-group.info), offers free tools and resources. [tree@ic.org](mailto:tree@ic.org).

*Caroline Estes* is cofounder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon and founder of Alpha Institute, which teaches consensus and offers facilitation services to groups of all kinds. She has been teaching and facilitating consensus decision making since becoming a Quaker more than 40 years ago. Renowned in the North American communities movement, Caroline has taught consensus to most community-based consensus facilitators on these shores, including the other three facilitators whose opinions appear in this article. Caroline has facilitated gatherings of up to 600 people and works with dozens of organizations in North America, including Hewlett-Packard, University of Massachusetts, U.S. Green Party, and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. Alpha Institute: [db@peak.net](mailto:db@peak.net).



*Laird Schaub*, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. [laird@ic.org](mailto:laird@ic.org); 660-883-5545.

*Beatrice Briggs* is the director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Consensus, a professional team of consultants and trainers with affiliates in 12 countries, and author of *Introduction to Consensus*. Beatrice lives in Ecovillage Huehucocoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, and travels extensively giving workshops and facilitating participatory processes in English and Spanish. [bbriggs@iifac.org](mailto:bbriggs@iifac.org); [www.iifac.org](http://www.iifac.org).



## 71 Ways

38. Serving as kindly "fair witnesses" in meetings between community members in conflict.
39. Mediating conflicts between individual community members.
40. Checking with individual members after conflicts and offering emotional support.
41. Offering support and help of various kinds to anyone who's ill, injured, grieving, or depressed.
42. Checking to see if any community members are feeling isolated or alienated; offering emotional support if so.
43. Drafting proposals to address various conflicted or well-being issues in the community.

Individual community members practicing good process skills (which could include:)

44. Active Listening.
45. Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication.
46. Other forms of "conscious communication."

Individual members engaging in personal growth practices (which could include:)

47. Re-evaluation cocounseling.
48. Counseling, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy.
49. Yoga, Tai Chi, Chi Kung.
50. Meditation.

Practicing good communication and process skills as a group (for example:)

51. Active Listening.
52. Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication.
53. Arnie Mindell's Process Work.
54. Naka-Ima or "Heart of Now."
55. EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique).
56. Voice Dialogue.
57. "Shadow Work."
58. Re-evaluation cocounseling.
59. Yoga, Tai Chi, Chi Kung.
60. Meditation.

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If you have questions for these process and facilitation experts, send them to [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org), do "Ask the Experts." (We won't print your name or community if you wish.) Thank you!

**Q** "How can a group create and maintain a strong structure and still have flexibility for changes of life energy to flow?"

"I participated in our community's early planning stages over eight years ago. We have a well-documented structure of agreements, vision, values and interpersonal agreements. For me, some of these agreements are no longer necessary or actively practiced because of the change in life energy from the point when the decision was made. Yet, while in general our community has a great process, many of us seem to have a lot of resistance to open or discuss changes in our agreements, as if it's 'opening a can of worms.' What do you think we should do?"

—Fran Hart, Heartwood Cohousing,  
Bayfield, Colorado

Tree Bressen responds:

Well, one possibility is to just live with it. However, having agreements on the books that aren't being followed tends to undermine the strength of and respect for agreements in general, yes? So that's probably not an ideal solution.

Does your community have sharing circles outside of normal business meetings where such a topic could be raised?

How about an exercise sometime (either in or out of a meeting, depending on your situation) where everybody in the room is given three sheets of paper and on each sheet they can write out a "community agreement wish," either an agreement they wish was in place that isn't now or an agreement currently in place that they wish they could delete? Or you could even specify that you'd like people to write two wishes for new agreements and one wish for removal of an agreement.

Obviously a lot of work went into creating those agreements originally, so it's understandable that people are nervous about revisiting all that. It sounds like people are scared to have a structure shaken up that is basically working OK. But that's just

one guess—can you ask people (perhaps over dinner) more about what they are scared of, or what comes up for them when they imagine discussing this topic?

Another possibility would be a mailbox survey where people have the opportunity to privately check off which agreements they believe continue to be important to community well-being and which have fallen by the wayside. Then, whoever collects the results could share the aggregate data with the group, without outing any particular individual.

There would probably be some surprises in what emerged. I note that any member could undertake such an action without going through official channels, though support might be less that way so I'm not necessarily recommending it.

Consensus does have a tendency to be conservative and I think this is sometimes a shortcoming. In order for groups using the process to thrive, there needs to be sensitivity to and awareness of that dynamic.

Finding a healthy balance between structure and flexibility is an ongoing challenge for groups of every kind. Too much looseness and the group dissolves, too much rigidity and the group dies for lack of fresh air. Perhaps you could raise that itself as an exploratory topic and see how people feel about how Heartwood finds the balance?

Overall this feels like a topic that would benefit from some fun kind of approach, a lighthearted way of addressing the situation such as a skit at a community talent show. Laughter is a wonderful way to dispel fear.

*Caroline Estes responds:*

Apathy, procrastination, and fear of change can get in the way of taking a fresh look at old agreements. If your structure and process is in good shape, the examination of old agreements might better be viewed as letting in some "fresh air" rather than "opening a can of worms." Updating agreements often helps keep the community healthy. Since this seems to be *your* issue then, depending on your community's agenda process, perhaps you should put it on the agenda for your next meeting and sponsor it yourself. However, keep in mind that if

you do so, you should be ready to offer complete and constructive alternatives to the existing agreements, otherwise you will likely not accomplish much.

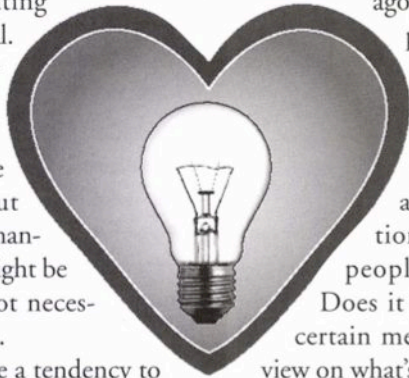
*Laird Schaub responds:*

I have three responses. First, I have an adage which guides me in these situations: "Information is concentrated in the resistance." If your fellow members are reluctant to revisit policies that were crafted years ago, find out why as fully as possible. The answer will be your guide about where to go next.

Does "can of worms" mean recalling difficult and exhausting conversations eight years ago that people now fear repeating? Does it mean a suspicion that certain members have a different view on what's wanted and there's nervousness about crossing swords with those particular folks? Does it mean there's fresh work already queued up for plenary attention and that that should come before reconsidering old work? Does it mean there's fear that the policy considerations will rip the scabs off some unresolved hurts and will lead to more pain than gain? It's quite possible that you'll need to address the underlying resistance before you can get to a review of the old policies.

Second, whenever someone proposes to revisit an existing agreement, I think the litmus test for whether that's a good idea is: "What's changed?" The person proposing the revisit—in this case, you—should be given the chance to state what new information has surfaced since the agreement was crafted, and why this justifies a new look. In this situation, you have been thinking about why "changes in life energy" justify a revisit. While I don't know whether this argument will be persuasive, I strongly support you having the opportunity to make your case.

Third, you can anticipate in any normal group—and I'm assuming Heartwood to be one—a spectrum of attitudes toward structure in general. For some, rules and agreements are comforting. They tell you where the boundaries are and help eliminate or reduce ambiguity and the murkiness of individual



## 👉 71 Ways 👈

### Learning the art of feedback (as individuals, or a group)

(telling someone else about the effects of their actions on your life)

61. Learning to offer feedback skillfully and graciously.
62. Learning to accept feedback graciously. Assuming that there might be some truth in it.
63. Practicing the Gifting Circle process as a group. (See pg. 20)

### Holding meetings specifically to deal with conflict

64. "Heartshare" meetings, in which people speak from the heart, ideally without shaming or blaming, about what's bothering them, usually about a person or situation.
65. "Threshing" meetings, in which people freely vent their frustrations about something without regard to politeness.

### Bringing in outside help

66. Meeting facilitation with an outside facilitator.
67. Additional consensus training.
68. Consultation with a community process and communication facilitator.
69. Consultation with a community conflict resolution facilitator.
70. Professional mediation.
71. Professional arbitration.





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discretion. For others, rules and agreements are straight jackets which artificially limit flow and hamstring working in the moment. Thus, you can expect that some members of your community will be predisposed to like a suggestion to lay an agreement down, while others will have knee-jerk resistance to the same idea—even before the matter is considered on its merits! The group is always trying to balance these two dispositions, and the first step toward getting it right is knowing that it's in play.

*Beatrice Briggs responds:*

Open the can of worms. Set aside a day for a special meeting to review the existing agreements. Call it a "community work day"—similar to cleaning out the storage areas or weeding the garden—so that the task is seen as something practical and useful rather than an emotionally draining waste of time. Bring in an outside facilitator skilled in dynamic group processes. Build in food and fun. I doubt that, in the end, it will be as bad as you imagine and the sense of accomplishment and renewal will be as satisfying as, say, taking the trash to the recycling center.

**Q**"One of our members has often blocked or threatened to block proposals which almost everyone else wants. He does this because he's following his values and vision for what he wants our community to be.

While the usual advice for this situation is, 'The person needs to join another community, one that matches his own vision,' that won't work here because he's a long-time member and not likely to leave. How do you suggest we respond?"

—Name and community withheld by request

*Tree Bressen responds:*

Does your community have an agreed-upon vision and values document? If you do, you can ask this member how what they are saying is directly linked to that document. If they can't demonstrate a link, that's an indication that they may be letting personal needs get in the way of discernment of group interests. If you really think someone is blocking inappropriately, it's essential to speak up about it.



How about a discussion group, or a conversation with the member outside of meeting, focused on the place of blocking in consensus? Can you find out more from this person about what he thinks is an appropriate block? It sounds like he needs a reminder that the consensus process relies on great humility and responsibility in exercising the power of the individual to stand in the way of a decision. "Threatening to block" is almost never appropriate in the consensus process, since blocks should be exercised only after deep consideration. (And only at most six times in a person's whole life, says Caroline Estes.)

Is there a way in your community's process to communicate, "I have major concerns with this proposal," *without* blocking? If not, blocks can become trivialized and frequent.

Another approach is to have a conversation in the group (with that person included) about what constitutes "sense of the meeting," and what are the indicators, how do you know when a sense of the meeting is emerging, what do you feel inside. Then later during a meeting, people can refer back to that conversation, noting aloud what they are feeling and noticing that leads them to believe the group is nearly in alignment, before honing in on addressing that member's concerns.

N Street Cohousing in Davis requires anyone who blocks a decision to sit down six times over three months with a committee of people including supporters of the proposal, in order to work out a common solution. So that's one policy-based solution. But basically my core advice with blocks is to hear what the person wants, until you really understand and can reflect it back to their satisfaction, and then ask them as well as the group how all of the needs present could be met. That is, "What do you think would work for you that would also satisfy the other needs that have been expressed here?"

In addition, your member may need more help in living out the vision they are holding, or their version of the group vision. Can you or other community members offer this person more support in getting their needs met? How can you be their ally, from a genuine rather than manipulative place?

*Caroline Estes responds:*

The basis of consensus rests not on what we individually want, or our individual values, but the group's *common agreements and values*. Standing aside is the proper action in consensus when one's personal values are at stake, but not the values of the group at large. Standing aside allows the group to proceed without violating one's own value system. When someone uses a block, frequently there needs to be clarity with all concerned that you still have a common, agreed upon reason for being together, and only when a decision violates one of these commonly shared values does one have the right to block. A block based solely on personal values is not valid and the would-be blocker needs to have this pointed out to him.

*Laird Schaub responds:*

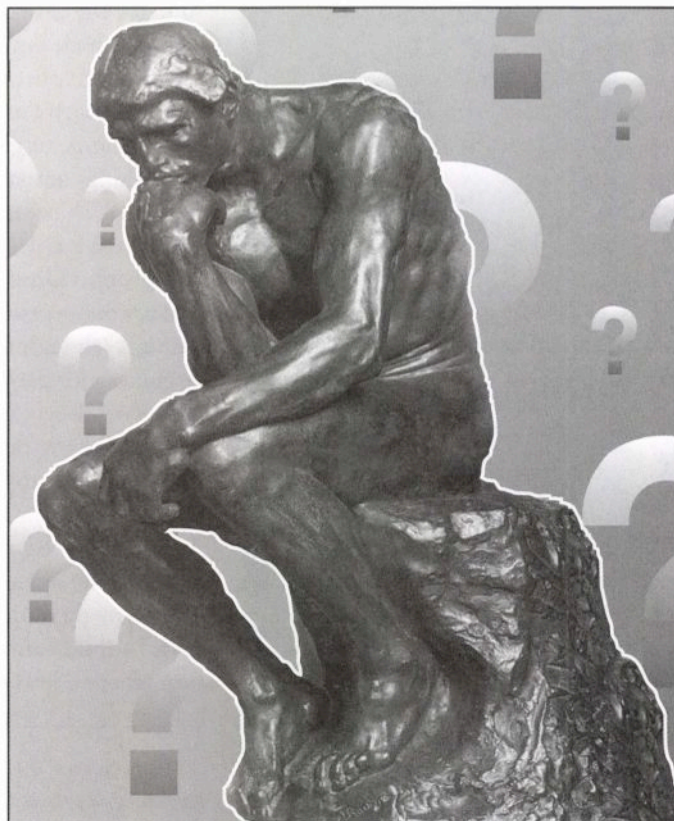
Based on your story, it sounds like the root cause here is a different idea about what the community's common values are, or

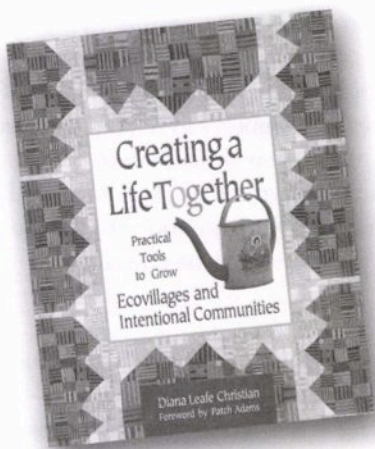
should be. I'd recommend getting as complete a statement as possible of what this person believes the community stands for and then finding out how well this fits or doesn't fit with what others think. Wherever significant differences are articulated, the key question is whether all members can tolerate the variety of positions in the room. If not, you either have to come to an agreement that the community does not take a position in those areas, or you have to reform the group around your new-found clarity about a value that's turned out to be crucial.

*Bea Briggs responds:*

As a first step, I suggest that those in the majority seriously consider the possibility that this person might be right—or at least that there is something in his perspective that needs to be taken into consideration by the larger group. Listen with an open mind, question your own assumptions, and dig deeper into the underlying issues in order to get beyond the fixed positions. Take a relaxed, but lively and genuine interest in this person's point of view. Treat him as if he is holding an important piece of the truth that you do not yet grasp. Be prepared to modify your own stance. Is it possible that the community values are not very clear—or at least subject to interpretation? When the moment of decision arrives, be sure that any person blocking explains his choice in terms of the values and vision of the group and not merely in terms of personal preference. If he succeeds in this, accept the block, give the person a big hug, thank him and trust that in the long run, the wisdom of this decision will become clear.

*Remember, if you have questions for these process and facilitation experts, send them to [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org), c/o "Ask the Experts." (We won't print your name or community if you wish.) Thank you!*





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# Power Steering: Driving Bumper to Bumper Down Leadership Lane

During a community meeting last summer, we took up the topic of power dynamics. At one point, I wanted to talk about the challenges I experienced when taking on leadership roles, and I prefaced my comments with, "I'm a leader in this community ..." I may as well have announced that I was the second coming of Genghis Kahn.

It took us 15 minutes to put out the firestorm that followed, sorting out that I said "I was *a* leader," not "I was *the* leader." An important distinction, momentarily lost in the conflagration of reactivity.

A month later, I was giving a workshop on leadership issues in cooperative groups at the annual Twin Oaks Communities

Conference, and things heated up again. I was trying to make the case that leadership (which I'm defining as the conscious use of power—which I'm defining as the ability to get others to do things or make agreements) is needed in cooperative cultures, and that people volunteering to lead are not necessarily ego-maniacs (though they may be gluttons for punishment). One workshop participant

was not buying this idea of the potential innocence of people who willingly lead, and we got into the molasses swamp. Another wanted to examine the nuance of when you agree on the goals yet don't like the methods or way in which a person leads. A third wanted to isolate the situation where a leader offers to share more

decision making with the group only to have one member use their new power subversively. In short, people were full of things to say and I was, to some extent, embattled over how to lead the workshop on cooperative leadership!

All of this reinforces two points: power and leadership issues are confusing, and people have a lot of thoughts and feelings about it, which means it's a damn good topic.

### Power Mapping

Some things about power tend to be true all the time:

- Balance
- Setting
- Attention

Power is never **balanced** (however much we desire it to be). While we cannot completely eliminate this fact, we can partially address it by being aware.

Some aspects of power balance are situation specific. (For example, you may have expertise on one topic, but not on another.) Some are not (as in the power associated with inherited wealth).

There is a tendency of those with power to be oblivious to the ways in which they have more power than others and the impact this imbalance has on them.

In addition, there are aspects of power and leadership in cooperative **settings** that deserve special attention. Cooperative cultures have in common the express intent to create a flatter power gradient and to elim-



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publisher of this magazine), a process consultant, and a cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.

inate or ameliorate the power abuses of hierarchies. They do this, in part, by intentionally reducing or reversing many of the traditional advantages of rank and privilege.

For all of this, cooperative cultures still need to get things done; they still need leaders. The same people need not always be the leaders: Each time a leader is needed, a choice can be made based on a person's skills, availability, motivation, and acceptability among those to be led—all of which can be consciously enhanced to create a wider range of choices in the future. (Of course, you can also make the choice by habit, but I'm not recommending that.)

People will tend to give as much attention to how things are done as to what is done. In contrast to traditional hierarchical leaders, cooperative leaders depend much more on the voluntary compliance of others. Their power will be directly affected by how well others like or feel taken into account by the leader. There is a tendency to expect cooperative leaders to assume all the responsibilities of traditional culture (available on demand for questions/criticisms about their areas, will step to the plate in times of emergency, will cut through heavy traffic to solve a problem and pull the group together, will put aside personal interests for the group, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound), but without the perks (no higher salary, no new car, no corner office with a view, no slack on how you operate). It's all the headaches and no neck massage.

### All for One or One for All?

Unlike the Three Musketeers, who advocated having it both ways, it's useful to distinguish between power that is used for the benefit of the wielder, and power that is used for the benefit of all. In the former, people are viewed as tools or obstacles; in the latter, they are viewed as allies and assets. As cooperative cultures are meant to enhance the opportunities and quality of life of all, they are typically trying to

diminish the first kind while encouraging the second.

This is an important point—the concept that power can be used well. I'm not saying it always is; only that it's possible and we need to have an idea about how to distinguish between its healthy and unhealthy aspects.

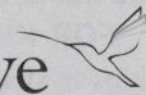
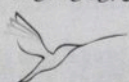
Because we come out of a competitive, adversarial culture and nearly all of us have personal experiences where we've suffered from someone abusing power (by which I mean the first kind), we bring memories of that damage into our cooperative life—that is, it is a lens through which we see the use of power. Until one has experiences of the second, synergistic kind of power, there is a knee-jerk tendency to be suspicious of all attempts to lead. In the extreme, people will prefer passivity and permissiveness for fear of being perceived as a power monger (or perhaps Genghis Kahn). Groups in the grip of this fear tend to indulge in the unhealthy habit of recreationally trashing their leaders (all the while lamenting the dearth of volunteers to fill management slots).

Based on this understanding, you can evaluate each use of power by where it falls on the spectrum between selfish and shared. A major source of confusion and tension regarding power is that everyone does not agree on where a person's actions land in this regard. Where you think you are may be very different from where you're perceived to be (and both may be different

***I may as well  
have announced  
that I was the  
second coming  
of Genghis Kahn.***

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from where you really are!). The key thing here is to be aware of the enormous potential for gaps in perception, and to look for chances to bridge the gaps, or at least understand them better.

### Wearing the *Shoot Here* Shirt

If you're a leader in a cooperative culture that means you're wearing the shirt with concentric circles on the front indicating you're the target. In addition to mistakes for which you may deserve criticism (remember, you're not God), you have to expect to have problems projected onto you, reflecting everyone's baggage from power abuses that don't have anything to do with you. (The trick, of course, is knowing which is which.)

Against this backdrop, imagine what it's like for the leader every time there's a group discussion: it's a minefield. If the leader speaks early, they're accused of dominating the conversation. It forces the topic to be considered in the leader's framework, or squelches input from others who don't care

to have their articulation or opinions compared with the leader's.

However, if the leader waits until later to add their input, then they've seduced people into the dangerous act of making public statements before knowing the leader's thinking, which, when revealed,

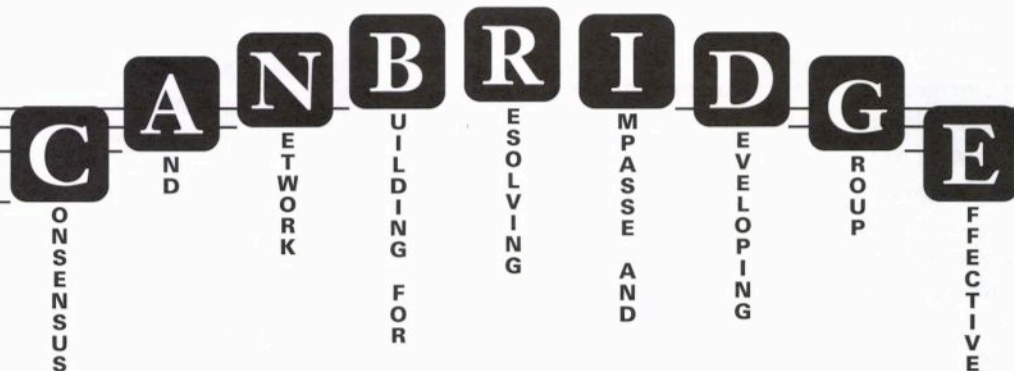
may expose others' contributions as callow or bumbling. And isn't the leader wasting the group's time by letting it flounder? If the leader doesn't speak at all, then they're petulantly withholding their energy and thoughts.

Throughout, there is constant vigilance against the danger of the leader having too much power—all of which, ironically, reinforces their having it.

### Slip Happens

While this is plenty complicated enough, it's worse. One of the most dangerous intersections with respect to power dynamics is around sloppy delegation. Here's how it breaks down:

***This is an important point—the concept that power can be used well.***



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The group works on an issue to a certain point then turns it over to a committee to work further. However, the mandate for the committee is not clear (hey, the meeting ended late and everyone was tired). With all good intentions, a leader steps forward to organize the committee and complete the work. This leader can get in trouble in one of two directions (or both if they're having a really bad day): either people can be unhappy because they believe the leader exceeded their authority, or unhappy because the committee didn't accomplish enough, or quickly enough. (Poor performance also happens, but I'm not talking about that.) After one or two experiences of that nature, the leader gets fed up and stops volunteering. Others, watching what happened to that person, don't want it happening to them and sit on their hands the next time people are asked to fill an ad hoc committee. Pretty soon the committee system bogs down and more work must be handled by the group as a whole. That makes community meetings both longer and more frequent, with people being forced to sit through a

numbing volume of detail. Now you've got gridlock—all of which may be traceable to unclear mandates.

Lesson: keep those traffic lights working, and make sure the lane dividers are clearly marked.

### This Way to the Egress

The good news is that talking about power dynamics helps avoid traffic jams:

- Discuss what constitutes a healthy balance between a group's legitimate need for opportunities to evaluate leadership, and the leaders' need to get support for what they're attempting on the group's behalf.
- Make room for hearing how everyone relates to power and leadership (both in themselves and others) and agree on how you want to view power in your group.
- Periodically visit the perceptions people have about how power is distributed, how you'd like it to be distributed, and what you want to do about it.

Who knows, maybe Genghis Kahn will turn out to be a nice fellow once you've had a chance to talk it over. Ω

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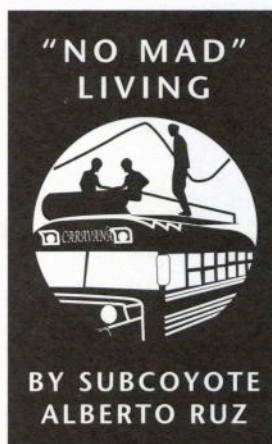
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# Three Nomadic Groups in Argentina

June 27, 2005. El Challao, Mendoza, Argentina. Crossing borders may be one of the most time-consuming and nerve-racking experiences we've come across in our journey. After 18 months living in Chile, we had a greater understanding of some of the Chilean national characteristics, including a generalized fear of trespassing limits. Anything that is not written somewhere as a law is "impossible." And nobody dared to assume responsibility in a situation that might include some "irregularity." Our La Caravana project, for example, defied and challenged those limitations all the time. We did not fit in any of Chile's existing definitions of travelers; we are not tourists, foreign workers, students, artists, or diplomats. Our own definition as "a traveling life school" or a "mobile ecovillage," or a "caravan of peace messengers" is not recognized in the regulations of any immigration office, in Chile or anywhere else. So, we have to change hats all the time, depending on the officers we meet at each national border. Nomadic living implies constant adjustment to new realities: a lot of flexibility and creativity to invent stories and to adopt forms that can be accepted by "The Matrix."



In contrast to Chile, in the short time we have been in Argentina we have met many other libertarian nomadic activists, with a strong ability to create inspiring alternative projects. Here are three I want to share with you.

*The School of Nomadic Arts*, is a work cooperative created in the late nineties by Hernan Paz and a group of artists in the Argentine province of Mendoza. "Reinvent the geography and create new territories," was their motto, and one of their proposals was the founding of "circular villages," places where the habitats would be interconnected, "like the cells of an organism."

The group developed the concept of "UR," (realized utopias), and began to apply this idea by publishing *Exodus: The First Magazine of Magic, for Artists and Travelers*. Hernan Paz brought the three first three issues of the magazine (1998, 1999 and 2000) to our temporary camp in El Challao, and they are some of the best periodicals I have seen. With professional quality printing and high-quality articles and photos, the content—poetry, legends from the South, paintings, music reviews, stories, and essays from artists such as Carlos Castaneda, Antonin Artaud, Edgar Allen Poe,

[www.chamado.org](http://www.chamado.org) or [www.lacaravana.org/beijastlor](http://www.lacaravana.org/beijastlor); [subcoyotealberto@yahoo.com](mailto:subcoyotealberto@yahoo.com).

Alberto Ruz writes from *La Caravana de Arcoiris por la Paz (The Rainbow Caravan of Peace)*: a bus caravan of international ecological activists traveling in Latin America who use theater, music, and performance to teach permaculture, consensus, and other ecovillage skills in towns, cities, and rural areas along the way. Alberto reports: "On June 1st, 2005, after almost nine years since departing from our home in Huebuecoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico, a group of nine caravanistas finally reached Ushuaia on the island of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, the southern-most city in the South American continent. Thanks to all of you who helped us in this historical pilgrimage."

Akira Kurosawa, L.A. Spinetta, and the Beatles, as well as teachers from the schools of samba in Brazil—suggests images from temples in Java and hypnotic rhythms from Africa. [elexo@latinmail.com](mailto:elexo@latinmail.com).

The School of Nomadic Arts developed in recent years, and right now, Hernan Paz and Natalia Corso are working in a communication project called “Asociacion Emprender Mendoza” (Mendoza’s Enterprise Association).

Following the example of Father Jose Maria Iglesias, a priest who, since 1958, has worked with the most marginal neighborhoods of Mendoza, Barrio San Martin and Aeroparque, Hernan Paz and his colleague Natalia Corso are helping transform these areas by creating different worker-owned co-ops, experimental farms, and a school for developing new small-scale businesses. They publish a neighborhood publication, *Manso Puente* (“made in and for the community”), to help bridge the different groups in the neighborhood and serve as a tool to find solutions to their needs. In it, neighbors freely express their opinions, experiences, preoccupations, and life stories. The barrio’s latest project is The Arch, a co-op to market and distribute various local products such as aromatic herbs, honey, rabbit meat, preserves, dried and fresh fruits and vegetables, crafts, prepared food, organic soil from their compost projects, and services such as transportation and tours to nearby rural areas.

Changing “gray territories” into “magic territories” has been one of the main goals of the School of Nomadic Arts, and their work in Barrio San Martin and Aeroparque are some of the most inspiring successes I have found since La Caravana has been traveling in the South. [mansopuente@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:mansopuente@yahoo.com.ar).

*University Trashumante* (An Itinerant University). A couple of months ago we had a visit from Tato Iglesias, an educator from San Luis, Argentina. After a cheerful exchange of stories, he gave me a copy of his book,

**Barrio San Martin and Aeroparque are some of the most inspiring successes I have found since La Caravana has been traveling in the South.**

“Walking Another Country,” with this dedication: “Dear Rainbow friends, I leave you this simple book so you can find in its pages a dreamer and a weaver, an educator like yourselves, who one day decided to travel across this beautiful country, to weave a dream which has become now a collective dream. Hopefully we can continue weaving them. Big hugs!”

“Walking Another Country” describes “Trails of Popular Education,” another nomadic project born at the Faculty of Human Sciences at San Luis University in Argentina. Tato and the *Quirquincho* team, a group of enthusiastic teachers and students, were able to convince the faculty to donate a converted bus and turn it into an “Itinerant University” in 1998.

The project began to tour three northern Argentine provinces: Cordoba, Santiago del Estero, and Santa Fe, and for a year they visited 14 different villages

and cities, living as a nomadic community of educators and artists. In each village or city, they approached and worked with dozens of local organizations, with the goal to “feed their utopian dreams” and to promote the personal and collective growth of both the travelers and the people they reached in their journey.

Through participatory workshops, they focused on communication, theater, and dance, and interacted with other teachers,



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youth, students, barrio leaders, psychologists, and social workers. Some of their goals were to help strengthen alternative organizations, to question the role of human sciences today and the direction of education itself, and to promote self-reliance and autonomy. Using various techniques, they helped many people identify their common problems, learn what brought them together and what divided them, and look into new ways to improve community participation. The Itinerant University team also brought in tools to help people work out any apathy, anger, frustration, or fear—emotions that can prevent people from taking action and changing negative situations, which may be rooted in traditional or ideological conservatism.

Tato's final message to us was: "Nomadic behavior and itinerancy are something latent

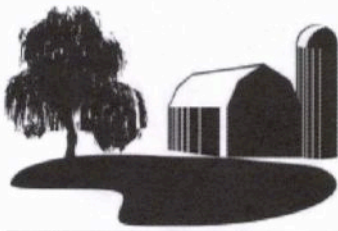
in human beings, waiting for the right moment to germinate ... to get us back on the road again." And traveling with a purpose, as the Quirquincho team does, makes it even more appealing and meaningful. "A

**They work with puppets, music, theater, and storytelling to promote the defense of forests, water, and original cultures.**

nomadic school," a concept our caravan has been promoting for many years, is now being realized by some progressive people in the academic world of Argentina. [www.trashumante.com.ar](http://www.trashumante.com.ar); [tato@unsl.edu.ar](mailto:tato@unsl.edu.ar).

The third story I want to share is the one of *Virtua and Sudor*, a couple of committed artists and activists in Patagonia whom we recently met in our journey to Tierra del Fuego. We met them in El Bolson, a small mountain town in the Patagonian Andes

which has been known since the 1980s as the "Argentinean capital of alternative social experiments." Virtua and Sudor had just published their latest book *En Son de*



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Sones: *Around the World in 580 Days*, with chronicles and stories from their 2003-2005 journeys from Patagonia to Italy; from Paris to the African country of Burkina Faso; from Rome to Nicaragua; and traveling overland in a magic rainbow bus, from Perugia, Italy to New Delhi, India.

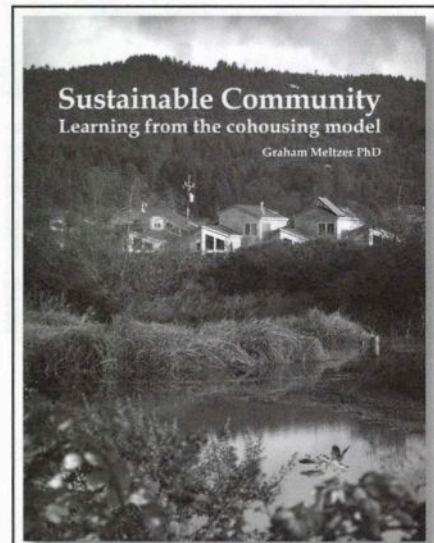
Virtua and Sudor (Jorge and Violeta) have much in common with the organization *Payasos Sin Fronteras*, ("clowns without borders"), an international organization that conveys humanitarian help to places where there is havoc. By putting on their red noses and bringing laughter to soldiers in battlefields, displaced people in refugee camps, and victims of natural disaster, they help alleviate pain and suffering, even for a short while.

Similarly, Virtua and Sudor work with puppets, music, theater, and storytelling, and, interacting with the local people, create plays to promote the defense of forests, water, and the traditions and legends of original cultures. They have spent a few months in Zapatista communities in the tropical jungles of Chiapas in Mexico, supporting the ideals of the EZLN (Zap-

atista National Liberation Army). In Nicaragua they have worked with street children in Managua, fishermen in Las Peñitas, and poor people in the city dumps in Estelli. They have worked in the rural villages around Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, and in schools and hospitals from Turkey to India.

Virtua and Sudor dedicate their arts to promote various social projects, and to support "all the communities in the world struggling to resist" the Matrix. And they do it here and there, on the road, like our Caravana, because the Mother is only one, and we really are "from" the place on the Earth where we stand. [www.virutaysudor.4t.com](http://www.virutaysudor.4t.com); [virutaysudor@yahoo.com](mailto:virutaysudor@yahoo.com).

So far so good. And now, we from the Caravana Arcoiris are preparing to take off to our next destination: Brazil. September 17 to 29, we will be organizing and hosting the next international ecovillage and bioregional *Call of the Beija Flor* gathering near Alto Paraiso, Brazil. We hope to see some of you there too. *Buen camino!* Ω



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*Bill Metcalf, Communities magazine*

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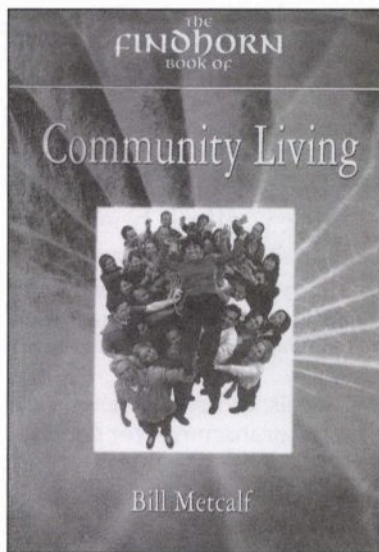
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# REVIEWS



## *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*

By Bill Metcalf

Findhorn Press, 2004

Pb. 128 pp., \$9.95

Reviewed by Diana Leafé Christian

At last!—an engaging and accurate introduction to intentional communities worldwide.

Findhorn Press is the logical publisher for this topic (one of a series of their new

*The Findhorn Book of . . .* series), given their 43-year history as a renowned intentional community.

And Bill Metcalf, *Communities* magazine's international correspondent, is the logical author for such a guide, as he probably knows more about communities internationally than anyone on the planet. A sociologist and social historian at Griffiths University in Australia who has lived over half of his adult life in community, over the last 30 years, Bill has visited and studied dozens of communities in Australia and New Zealand, Japan, Latin America, North America, and Israel. He is a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation, past president of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA), has written seven books about communities, and was overall editor of the intentional communities section of Berkshire Publishing's four-volume *Encyclopedia of Community*.

Grounded in this authority, and writing in a friendly and readable style, the author begins with how he got interested in living in, visiting, and studying communities, and offers a brief history of intentional communities and the ideas that underlie them. To help readers understand core issues such as governance, degree of closeness and shared resources, economic management, and how groups deal with conflict, he takes readers on a brief tour of communities worldwide, revealing how widespread the communities movement is, and how diverse its expressions. He goes into more depth with 11 individual case studies (Community Alternatives Society, Canada; Damanhur, Italy; Darvell Bruderhof; England; Findhorn Foundation, Scotland; Kadarim Kibbutz, Israel; Kommune

Niederkaufungen, Germany; Lothlorien, Brazil; The Wolery, Australia; and Twin Oaks in the U.S.). He briefly looks at how to join or form a new community, and explores various issues commonly found in all communities, from shared vision to money, property, governance, decision making, accountability, conflict resolution, gender relations, sex, children, privacy and autonomy, rituals, socialization, and commitment, then examines common misperceptions about communities and "cults."

Bill Metcalf observes that the communities movement seems to be growing dramatically, both in terms of the numbers of people involved and the numbers of countries where such social experiments are found, and notes that while different kinds of intentional communities are more prevalent at different periods of time, the overall trend is for most groups to become more individualistic and less communal over time. The book ends with extensive resources for learning more.

I really liked the book's international scope: Learning about communities in other countries helps me keep in mind that communities internationally are both similar to and different from those I've come to expect, given that I've mostly observed communities in North America. I liked the author's unique insights about different communities; for example, about the fact that many Findhorn members live nearby but not on the community's property, he wrote: "Some people now see the community as something like a medieval village surrounding and supporting a monastery." And I really like that this is a short book which can be read in an afternoon.

Any concerns I have are minor: the book's unusually small 5" x 7" size, and, in my opinion, poorly designed orange cover, could keep bookstore browsers from realizing the book's value. In my own case I waited over a year to read this gem because it was so easy to overlook! But in this case *don't* judge the book by its cover; if you're looking for a clear overview for friends who ask "What's a community?," just loan or give them *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*.



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## *Head, Heart & Hands: Lessons in Community Building*

By Shari Leach

2004. Wonderland Hill Development  
Company, 2005

Pb. 171 pp. \$20.

Available from [www.whdc.com](http://www.whdc.com)  
(303-449-3232)

*Reviewed by Betsy Morris & Diana Leafé  
Christian*

Shari Leach grew up in Boulder, Colorado, one of the cohousing movement's major epicenters, and is the daughter of Wonderland Hill Development Company president Jim Leach, a leading cohousing developer. As a teenager she began listening in on cohousing planning sessions and grew up to become a group facilitation and leadership consultant to cohousing communities and other groups, and later, president of the Cohousing Association of the U.S. From this impressive background as one of the cognoscenti of cohousing process, she has written a thoroughly helpful guide to process, communication, consensus, and conflict resolution.

While *Head, Heart, and Hands* was created specifically for cohousers, most of its topics are totally relevant for create-community-where-you-live groups as well as other kinds of intentional communities. For example, Shari covers stages of group development, ground rules for communication, defining community values and vision,

Consensus 101, Conflicts and Blocks, running good meetings, "standing teams" and committees, power, participation systems, naming your community, making the most of your common house, coming to agreement on community rental policies, and even writing a community pet agreement. She identifies "major post-move-in trauma issues," and also addresses the challenges of "word-smithing" agreements. Particularly useful are the mapping of group development tasks into ongoing organizational structures to help young communities expand membership and deepen relationships among members. Interspersed with her sensible advice are exercises for groups at different stages of cohousing development—both in the construction sense and as a social unit.

Shari Leach's advice is helpful, practical, and grounded in years of hard-won experience working with groups, yet delivered with a lighthearted touch. For example, from her section on evaluating meetings: "Have you ever tripped over the same lump in the carpet twice? You sure feel like a dork the second time you do it. Why didn't you fix that darn lump after the first time? How come you didn't see it coming this time? My personal best was running into a *very* clean sliding glass door *twice* during the same party. Darn near knocked myself unconscious the second time around. This is why now I'm really into learning from my mistakes. If you can figure out what made a meeting great, or what made it bomb,

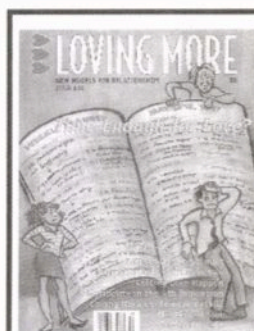
you can have a much better chance of repeating the good experience and avoiding the bad one. No evaluation system? Watch out. I'm here to tell you that it's hard to improve meetings if you don't know what went right and what went wrong."

The no-so-great aspects of *Head, Heart, and Hands* are first, its dismal cover, with a hard-to-read, too-small title and tiny, hard-to-figure-out graphic on dark postboard, which thoroughly belies how good the advice inside is (don't judge *this* book by its cover!). And second, the fact that you can barely *find* it! A self-published work with a spiral binding, as far as we know, *Head, Heart, and Hands* is available only by mail order from Wonderland Hill Development Company. But these are quibbles. We hope that in time, as more and more people discover this gem, it will get a better cover and wider distribution.

If your forming or existing community or community-like group wants better process and communication skills, livelier meetings, and practical tips for conflict resolution—get this book!

*With a doctorate in city and regional planning, Betsy Morris consults for community development corporations in low-income communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, and lives in Berkeley Cohousing. With Raines Cohen, she was co-Guest Editor of our Summer '05 "Cohousing" issue.*

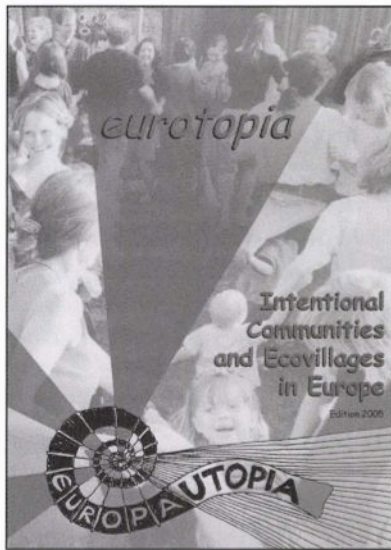
*Diana Leafé Christian is editor of Communities magazine and author of Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities. She lives at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina.*



**Loving More**® is the only magazine on polyamory—open couples, triads & moresomes, sharing a lover, expanded family, sexual healing, jealousy, sacred sex, co-parenting, community, and other topics of interest to those who are open to more than one love. Plus regional groups, events, and personal contacts.

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***Eurotopia: Intentional Communities and Ecovillages in Europe (2005 Edition)***

**Volker Peters & Martin Stengle, Editors**

Volker Peters Verlag, 2005

Hb, 411 pp., 21 Euros (surface), 27 Euros (airmail)

*Reviewed by Tim Miller*

This extensive and authoritative guide to the intentional communities of Europe and slightly beyond (reaching as far as Turkey and Israel) is to European communities what the *Communities Directory* is to North American communities and *Diggers and Dreamers* is to British communities. The latest edition of *Eurotopia* was published in 2004 in German (and reviewed briefly in the Winter '04 issue of *Communities*); now the English version

is available. This new edition is much like its 2000/2001 predecessor, listing 311 communities in 24 countries. Germany leads the way with 95 listed communities, even though the editors, in the interest of geographical balance, left out some 50 embryonic and/or publicity-averse communities that appeared in the original German edition of the book. On the other end of the numeric spectrum, Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey, and Ukraine have one community listing apiece.

A typical community listing consists of a paragraph or two of self-description by the community and its philosophy along with the community's attributes and goals, location, number of members, spiritual or ideological principles, decision-making process, land base in hectares, economic foundation, founding date, network relationships with other communities, the languages spoken by its members, its openness to new members, contact information, and a list of the community's self-provided "catchwords." These lists range from the simple, such as *Lebensgemeinschaft Woldhof* in Germany ("ecological, nonviolent, vegetarian diet") to the wondrously complex and sometimes perplexing lists ("ecological, self-managed, anarchistic, feminist, nonviolent, spiritual, chaotic, inner growth, meditation, yoga, tantra, sexuality, free love, organic diet, vegetarian diet, adult education, pedagogical, free school, seminar-house, peace-work")—only the beginning of the list for the 31-member *Mirapuri-Freidenstadt* community in Italy.

The Foreword includes useful articles on communal money and property, consensus decision making, and the potential communities have for helping solve the

world's massive social and environmental problems. The valuable 65-page Resources section includes 18 different communal networks in Europe, from the *Camphill* movement to the environmentally oriented *Come Together Netzwerk*, the conservative Christian *Twelve Tribes* movement, and the *Global Ecovillage Network*. Another section provides contact information for resources and organizations of interest to communitarians. The book concludes with an excellent annotated list of books on intentional communities past and present.

*Eurotopia* does just what it proposes to do, and does it well. While modest errors appear here and there, such as the failure to provide a network description for the *L'Arche* communities, despite a promise of one (see, for example, p. 110), and listing "communities" with a population of one (see, for example, pp. 101, 211, 237, and 291), these are exceedingly small quibbles.

*Eurotopia* packs a huge amount of information into 400 pages, and 6 by 8 inches and less than an inch thick is an easily portable travel companion. I can attest to that as I have used both the current and earlier editions while traveling in Europe. Of course one needs to make contacts in advance, but many communities welcome visitors, and some offer inexpensive lodging as a sideline business, just as many American communities have long done. The Italian ecovillage *Torri Superiore*, for example, takes in visitors at 30 to 45 Euros a day, including breakfast and dinner; someone willing to work four hours a day can stay for 15 euros, three meals included. That's a great deal in times in which a dismally-weak dollar has pushed the cost of European travel over the top.

The team that compiled *Eurotopia* is based at the German *Ekodörf Sieben Linden* (itself well worth a visit). We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the team members for their labor of love and for translating it into English after publishing the German original. Intentional communities are vibrantly alive in Europe, and *Eurotopia* provides the gateway to them.

*Tim Miller teaches at the University of Kansas and is the author of The 60s Communes and other books about the history of intentional communities in the United States.*

**Northwest Intentional Communities Association**



Communities networking  
WA, OR, ID.

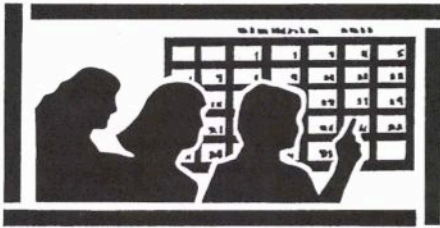
Intentional Communities  
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Newsletter and gatherings.

Huge web resource library at  
<http://www.ic.org/nica>

For sample newsletter send \$1 or SASE to: NICA 2007 33rd Ave S.  
Seattle, WA 98144 Email [floriferous@msn.com](mailto:floriferous@msn.com)

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR



## Sep 23–25 • The Second U.S. Conference on Peak Oil and Community Solutions

Yellow Springs, OH. Community Service, Inc. Keynote speakers include Richard Heinberg, author of *The Party's Over*; John Ikerd; Robert Waldrop; Jan Lundberg; Pat Murphy; Megan Quinn; and Diana Leafe Christian. Registration begins 6/7. [www.communitysolution.org](http://www.communitysolution.org); 937-767-2161.

## Sep 23–25 • The Farm Experience Weekend

The Farm, Summertown, TN. Learn firsthand about life in community. Community dinner, Farm history slide show/Q & A; yoga; community tour; work party; rock and roll benefit boogie; and nature walk. Workshops available on vegetarian cooking, midwifery, strawbale homes (tour), home-based businesses, community & global sustainability, and more. Camping, all meals (other accommodations avail. at additional cost). [www.thefarm.org](http://www.thefarm.org); [Vickie@thefarmcommunity.com](mailto:Vickie@thefarmcommunity.com).

## Sep 23–25 • Elder Cohousing "Getting Started" Workshop

Boulder, CO. Abraham Paiss & Associates. Introducing the Elder Cohousing development process—a resident-planned and managed socially sustainable community for proactive adults 55 and older—for landowners and people interested in creating or living Elder Cohousing, with national cohousing consultants Zev Paiss and Neshama Abraham. \$350; Additional group members, \$300; elder care or building professionals, \$550. [www.ElderCohousing.org](http://www.ElderCohousing.org); [info@eldercohousing.org](mailto:info@eldercohousing.org); 303-413-8066.

Sep 23–26 • Heart Of Now: The Basics  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (Formerly "Naka-Ima.") Part one of experiential workshop about realizing your vision and facing and dissolving the obstacles in the way of being fully and authentically yourself. Through the practice of honesty, in the context of supportive and loving community, we will explore how to be alive, in the moment, and deeply connected with others. Donation, incl. lodging, meals. \$50 registration deposit; suggested additional contribution \$300–\$650. [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

## Sep 23–30 • Permaculture Practicum: Applying Ecological Design

Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. Peter Bane, Chuck Marsh. Permaculture Design Certificate courses for graduates of 5-

weekend or week-long Fundamentals programs. Combines more advanced subjects of permaculture curriculum with design of Earthaven village landscape and culture. Presentations by experienced designers introduce mentored small group design projects. \$675, incl. food, camping. Indoor lodging also available.

[www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

## Sep 24–Oct 7 • Permaculture Design

Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. Penny Livingston, Brock Dolman, and guest instructors. Permaculture Design Certificate course. Ethics, principles, and practice of permaculture, through organic gardening, mulching, natural building techniques, forest farming, water retention and regeneration, erosion control, community processes, and much more. OAEC's 80-acre site, visits to local permaculture examples, and a group design project in almost 100 hours of course time. \$1250–\$1350, incl. meals, lodging.

[www.oaec.org](http://www.oaec.org); [oaec@oaec.org](mailto:oaec@oaec.org); 707-874-1557.

## Oct 1–2 • Ecovillage Planning and Design

Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. Greg Ramsey, award-winning architect of East Lake Commons Cohousing in Atlanta and other sustainable communities. Introduction to ecovillage movement, incl. current ecovillage designs, assessment of local codes and regulations, village site analysis, village design principles, overview of ecovillage development process. Hands-on individual or team-based ecovillage design exercise. \$220, incl. food, camping. Indoor lodging also available.

[www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

## Oct 8 • Fertility Awareness for Natural Birth Control or Pregnancy Achievement

Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. With Corinna Wood. Learn the Fertility Awareness Method, a scientifically validated way to determine fertile times in a woman's cycle, to plan or prevent a pregnancy. \$75–95, sliding scale [www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

## Oct 8–9 • The Earthaven Experience: A Guided Exploration of Community Life

Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. Earthaven: tour, ecovillage slide show, community meals, panel presentation with community members, work project with community members, monthly Council meeting, Coffeehouse evening with entertainment. \$175, incl. food, camping. Indoor lodging also available. [www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

## Oct 9 • Integrated Mountain Farming and Aquaculture

Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. Rod Rylander. Course focuses on increasing the health of the soil through rapid rotation, cover crops, polyculture, integrating animals and plants, terracing, tilapia production, selecting profitable crops and animals, heritage animals, nutrient building, small-animal care, marketing, natural insect control, and weed control. \$55–85, sliding scale.

[www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

a workshop  
in making the

# Post-Petroleum transition

Global production of petroleum per capita reached a peak two decades ago, and yet world consumption patterns are still expanding, still straining the web of nature.

From here on, we need to learn to live with less.

This workshop combines the Permaculture Design Course with an introduction to strawbale, bamboo, fieldstone, cob, and other natural building materials.

Participants will learn ecology, energy and resource conservation, social and community skills, and the practical aspects of ecovillage sustainability. Field trips will include visits to local permaculture sites. Presenters include Howard Switzer, Katey Culver, Diana Leafe Christian, Albert Bates, Valerie Seitz, Gwynelle Dismukes, Matthew English, Scott Horton, Greg Ramsey, Murad Al Khufash, and special guests.

Details:

[thefarm.org/etc](http://thefarm.org/etc)  
[ecovillage@thefarm.org](mailto:ecovillage@thefarm.org)  
POB 90 Summertown  
TN 38483-0090 USA



March 19-April 2, 2005  
and July 22-30, 2005

The Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm in Tennessee offers

- Natural buildings
  - Organic gardening
  - Wilderness mushroom hikes
  - Biological wastewater
  - Alternative power systems
  - Conservation land planning
  - Music, yoga and dance
  - Gourmet vegan food
- Student groups and visitors always welcome.

931-964-4324

**Oct 11-13 • Edible Forest Gardens: Integrating Ecology, Design, and Agriculture**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. With Dave Jacke, author of *Edible Forest Gardens* (Chelsea Green, 2005). Practical information on the vision, ecology, design, and stewardship of perennial polycultures of multipurpose plants in small-scale settings. [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

**Oct 14-16 • Bioneers' "Sustainability Package."**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

**Oct 21-23 • Starting and Sustaining Intentional Communities**  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. Dave Henson, Adam Wolpert. Establishing a land-based intentional community—finding/financing land; advantages/disadvantages of various legal structures f/holding land; decision-making processes; finding like-minded people; financial organization; legal and insurance issues and costs; dealing w/zoning and regulations; long-term planning. Community tour. \$375/425 incl. meals, lodging. [www.oaec.org](http://www.oaec.org); [oaec@oaec.org](mailto:oaec@oaec.org); 707-874-1557.

**Oct 21-24 • Heart Of Now: The Basics**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (See Sep 23-26.)

**Oct 29 • Nourishing Traditional Foods**  
Earthaven Learning Center, Black Mountain, NC. With Corinna Wood. Support optimum health with hearty foods and time-honored

ways of preparing nuts, grains, vegetables, meats, and milk products for maximizing nutrients and digestibility. \$55-85, sliding scale. [www.earthavenlearningcenter.org](http://www.earthavenlearningcenter.org); [info@earthavenlearningcenter.org](mailto:info@earthavenlearningcenter.org); 838-664-9935.

**Oct 29 • Shiitake Mushroom Growing Basics**  
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. How to grow shiitake mushrooms and make money doing it. Will Bates and Frank Michael. [www.thefarm.org](http://www.thefarm.org); [ecovillage@thefarm.org](mailto:ecovillage@thefarm.org); 931-964-4324.

**Oct 31-Nov. 11 • Ecovillage Design Course & Practicum**  
Queensland, Australia. Crystal Waters. Max Lindegger. Lloyd Williams. [www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au](http://www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au); [info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au](mailto:info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au); (59 Crystal Waters, 65 Kilcoy Lane, Conondale Qld 4552, Australia); +61 (0)7 5494 4741.

**Nov 3-7 • Heart Of Now 2**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (Formerly "Naka-Ima.") Part two of experiential workshop about realizing your vision and facing and dissolving the obstacles in the way of being fully and authentically yourself. Donation, incl. lodging, meals. [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

**Nov 4-7 • Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) Fall Organizational Meeting**  
Los Angeles Eco-Village, Los Angeles, CA. Planning, policies, reports, consensus decision-making by FIC board members, staff, and volunteers. FIC publishes *Communities*

magazine, *Communities Directory*, distributes *Visions of Utopia* video, and operates [ic.org](http://ic.org) website and Community Bookshelf mail order book service. Public invited. [jenny@ic.org](mailto:jenny@ic.org).

**Nov 12-14 • Second International Ecovillage Designers Conference**  
Queensland, Australia. Crystal Waters. Max Lindegger. Lloyd Williams. [www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au](http://www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au); [info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au](mailto:info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au); (59 Crystal Waters, 65 Kilcoy Lane, Conondale Qld 4552, Australia); +61 (0)7 5494 4741.

**Nov. 13 • Global Playback for Kindness**  
60 Playback Theatre companies on five continents will simultaneously focus on this topic on World Kindness Day. Acting out the personal stories volunteered by members of the audience, Playback Theater troupes worldwide will honor what is working in our lives, what we're grateful for, how acts of kindness make a difference in our lives, and what this suggests as enlightened ways of addressing the global challenges we face. [raphaelpeter@buncombe.main.nc.us](mailto:raphaelpeter@buncombe.main.nc.us); 828-665-4774; [globalplayback.org](http://globalplayback.org).

**Nov 13-17 • Community Experience Week**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. Immersion in Lost Valley community life: shared meals, work parties, community meetings, and more. [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

**Nov 18-20 • Introduction to Permaculture**  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. With Brock Dolman. Basic principles and applications of permaculture,



## La'akea Community invites you to two events this winter in Hawaii

### *Permaculture Certificate Design Course at La'akea Community Jan 5-17, 2006*

Veteran teachers Jude Hobbs and Toby Hemenway will cover subjects such as: edible landscaping, renewable energy, natural building, pattern observation, mapping, water systems, soil ecology, cover crops, orchard design, propagation and other subjects in an ecovillage setting with a mature food producing tropical landscape and a developed infrastructure. Sliding Scale fees: \$1300-1450. Includes food and camping.

### *Network for a New Culture (NFNC) "Winter Camp" at La'akea Community Feb 6-15, 2006*

Come join us in co-creating a safe, nurturing environment to explore and build new paradigms for relationship with self, others, community, the Earth, and Spirit. NFNC Mission Statement: NFNC is an all-volunteer network of people helping to build a sustainable, violence-free culture through exploring intimacy, personal growth, transparency, radical honesty, equality, compassion, sexual freedom and the power of community. Sliding Scale fees: \$350-600. Includes food and camping.

To register: [www.permaculture-hawaii.com](http://www.permaculture-hawaii.com) or write to: PO box 1071, Pahoia HI, 96778

incl. water catchment, erosion control, organic and polycultural food production, natural building, site design, and more. \$325–\$375, incl. meals, lodging. [www.oaec.org](http://www.oaec.org); [oaec@oaec.org](mailto:oaec@oaec.org); 707-874-1557.

**Nov 18–21 • Heart Of Now: The Basics**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR.  
(See Sep 23–26.)

**Nov 21–Dec 2 • Permaculture Design Certificate Course & Cultural Immersion**  
Queensland, Australia. Crystal Waters. Max Lindegger. Lloyd Williams.  
[www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au](http://www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au);  
[info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au](mailto:info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au); (59 Crystal Waters, 65 Kilcoy Lane, Conondale Qld 4552, Australia); +61 (0)7 5494 4741.

**Nov 24–27 • Living in Actualization in an Interuniversal-soul Cultural Community**  
Aquarian Concepts Community, Sedona, AZ. Ascension Science and Planetary Divine Administration Four-day Seminar. Gabriel of Sedona, Niánn Emerson Chase, \$500 preregistration, otherwise \$700.  
[www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org](http://www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org);  
[info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org](mailto:info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org); 928-204-1206.

**Nov 27–Dec 11 • Winter Permaculture Design Course**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. Two-week hands-on Permaculture Design Certificate course with Rick Valley.  
[www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org); [info@lostvalley.org](mailto:info@lostvalley.org); 541-937-3351, #109.

**Dec 2–5 • Basins of Relations—Starting and Sustaining Community Watershed Groups**  
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. With Brock Dolman, guest instructors. Create North California Coast community-based watershed groups, specifically designed for teams of three to four watershed residents. Watershed processes, salmonid ecology, water quality monitoring, in-stream restoration, biotechnical engineering, uplands erosion control, road restoration, native habitat restoration, sustainable forestry, community group process, and funding opportunities for watershed groups. Application to enroll. \$200, incl. meals, lodging. [www.oaec.org](http://www.oaec.org); [oaec@oaec.org](mailto:oaec@oaec.org); 707-874-1557.

**Dec 5–9 • Solar Installation—Villas Chimay, Isla Holbox, Mexico**  
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. With Ed Eaton. \$400, incl. two daily meals. Accommodations booked separately. [www.thefarm.org](http://www.thefarm.org);  
[ecovillage@thefarm.org](mailto:ecovillage@thefarm.org); 931-964-4324.

**Dec 5–15 • Permaculture Design Certificate Course & Cultural Immersion, India**  
Max Lindegger. Lloyd Williams.  
[www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au](http://www.ecologicalsolutions.com.au);  
[info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au](mailto:info@ecologicalsolutions.com.au); (59 Crystal Waters, 65 Kilcoy Lane, Conondale Qld 4552, Australia); +61 (0)7 5494 4741.

**Dec 9–12 • Heart Of Now: The Basics**  
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR.  
(See Sep 23–26.)

**GreenSingles.com**  
Free Photo Ads for progressive singles in the environmental, vegetarian & animal rights communities. Thousands of searchable ads for friendship, dating, marriage. Quick & easy sign-up. Celebrating our 20th year!

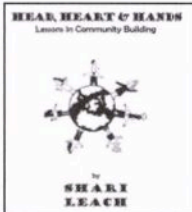
"where hearts and minds connect"

**VeggieLove.com**  
Free Photo ads for single vegetarians, vegans, raw foodists and others who seek a plant-based diet. For friendship, dating, marriage. Sign up in minutes and meet your VeggieLove.



We Love What We Do Because We Do What We Love  
**Wonderland Hill Development Company**  
Expert Cohousing Builder and Developer

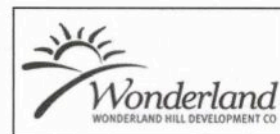
**Now Available!! Head, Heart and Hands**  
*Lessons in Community Building* by Shari Leach



Shari is a community building expert and former President of the Cohousing Association

Order on our website:  
[www.whdc.com](http://www.whdc.com)

- 15 completed communities in CO, CA and AZ
- Pioneering Elder Cohousing in the US
- New Communities forming nationally



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# Reach

## COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS



REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach has ads for workshops, goods, services, books, products and personals of interest to people interested in communities.

You may use the form at the bottom of this page to place an ad. **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE WINTER 2005 ISSUE (OUT IN JANUARY) IS NOVEMBER 20.**

The special Reach rate is only \$0.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$0.50 per word thereafter for all ads) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple insertions as well: \$0.23 per word for two times and \$0.20 per word for four times. If you are an FIC member, take off an additional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to Communities, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions and category to: Patricia Greene, 381 Hewlett Rd., Hermon, NY 13652; phone 315-347-3070, email: patricia@ic.org (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at [directory.ic.org](http://directory.ic.org). Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the Communities Directory, with a new edition coming out annually. Contact: [directory@ic.org](mailto:directory@ic.org) or 540-894-5798 for more information on being listed in the Communities Directory.

**ABUNDANT DAWN, Floyd, Virginia.** Our 90 acres of beautiful mountain land is home to two small pods/sub-communities, Dayspring Circle and Earth Pod.

Our land includes a river, forests, pastures, barns, gardens, homes, a community house and temporary housing available for new members. We are looking for additional members for our existing pods and are also open to an additional already formed group to join us as a pod. We welcome individuals and families of diverse peaceful lifestyles and are particularly interested in adding some families and younger folks to our mix. [www.abundantdawn.org](http://www.abundantdawn.org); POB 433, Floyd, VA 24091; 540-745-5853; [info@abundantdawn.org](mailto:info@abundantdawn.org)

**AQUARIAN CONCEPTS COMMUNITY, Sedona, Arizona.** Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 100 adults and children. International members. Global change work for Destiny Reservists in Divine Administration. God-centered community based on teachings of *The URANTIA Book* and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation *The Cosmic Family Volumes* as received by Gabriel of Sedona. Organic gardens. Starseed Schools of Melchizedek, Global Change Music record label, CosmoArt, CosmoTheater, and audio and video productions. Light construction, stone masonry, landscaping, cleaning and maintenance. Serious spiritual commitment required. POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 928-204-1206; [info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org](mailto:info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org); [www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org](http://www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org); [www.globalchangemusic.org](http://www.globalchangemusic.org)

**AQUARIUS COMMUNITY, Vail, Arizona.** Share picturesque mountain wilderness ranch blessed with ideal weather. \$150/mo. includes utilities. SASE. Box 69, Vail, AZ 85641-0069; [jkbubias@hotmail.com](mailto:jkbubias@hotmail.com)

**CAMPBILL VILLAGE MINNESOTA, Sauk Centre, Minnesota.** Part of the International Camphill movement. Located in rural central Minnesota. Life-sharing community of 60 people, 25 of whom are adults with special needs. We are on 400 acres—woods, fields, river, ponds. We have a dairy farm, beef farm, weavery (rugs and scarves), woodshop (toys and household items), bakery (bread, cookies, cereals), dollmaking shop, food processing kitchen and large vegetable gardens. We provide our own bread and biodynamic/organic meat, milk and vegetables. We live and work together with respect for each person's abilities. Although we work out of a nondenominational Christian philosophy, we accept people of all spiritual paths. Fostering a mood of reverence and gratitude is an essential part of Camphill life. We celebrate the seasonal and Christian festivals of the year with songs, stories, plays and other activities that are prepared together in the community. We seek people to join us—families, couples, single people. We need people who can be House parents (usually with four special needs people and one or two other "coworkers"), a dairy farmer, gardeners and people willing to lend a hand wherever needed. We are looking for long term, committed people generally starting with a six month get-acquainted period. We provide health insurance, three weeks vacation and meet each person's needs as possible. For information: 15136 Celtic Drive, Sauk Centre, MN 56378; 320-732-6365; Fax: 320-732-3204; [CVMN@rea-alp.com](mailto:CVMN@rea-alp.com); [www.camphillvillage-minnesota.org](http://www.camphillvillage-minnesota.org)

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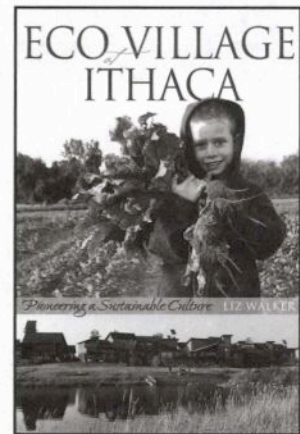
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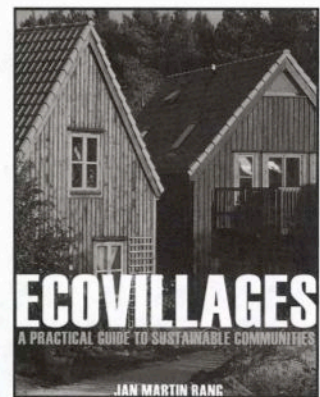


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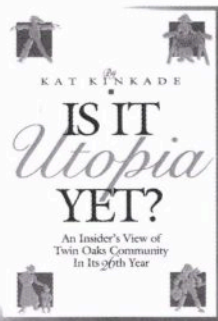
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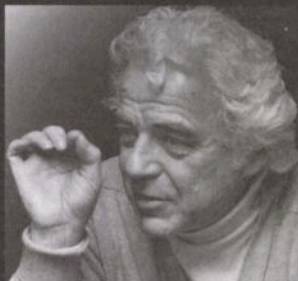
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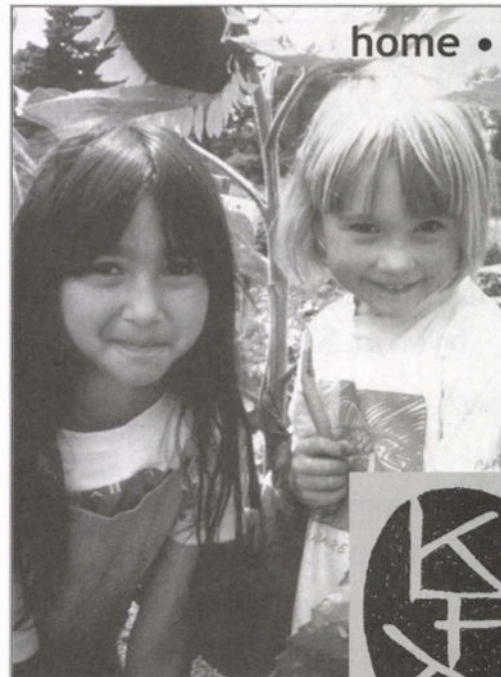
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**TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia.** Twin Oaks has been crafting culture and sustainable community for over 35 years. We are currently looking for new members, and would love to have you visit. Right now we would especially like more woman members. We can offer you: work in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of nonviolence, feminism and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live an ecological and income-sharing lifestyle. For information: *Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; [twinoaks@ic.org](mailto:twinoaks@ic.org); [www.twinoaks.org](http://www.twinoaks.org)*

## COMMUNITIES FORMING AND REFORMING

**ECO-FARM, Plant City, Florida.** We are a family farm near Tampa, Florida working to create a sustainable, farm-based intentional community. Our interests are: achievable sustainable living, alternative energies, books, drumming, environmental issues, farming,

social justice, etc. We farm vegetables and ornamental trees, and also have a small farm mechanic shop in which community members participate. If interested, check out our web site at [www.ecofarmfl.org](http://www.ecofarmfl.org) and phone: 813-754-7374.

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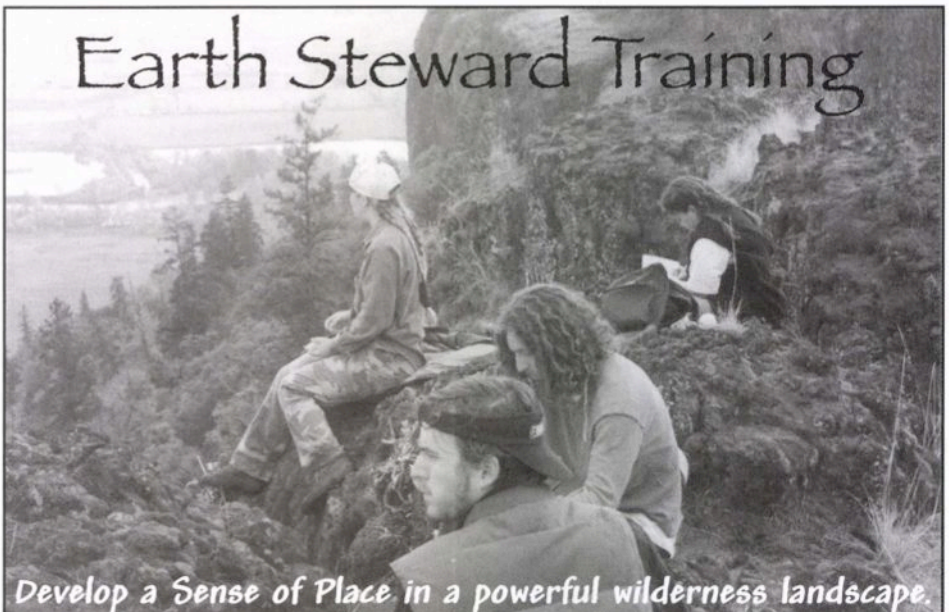
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**SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri.** Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2005. Gain experience in organic farming, food processing, tempeh production, homestead maintenance and construction skills, consensus decision making, group and interpersonal process. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for six weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: 660-883-5543; [interns@sandhillfarm.org](mailto:interns@sandhillfarm.org); [www.sandhillfarm.org](http://www.sandhillfarm.org)



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## PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

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**THE CONSENSUS POCKET GUIDE:** This 80-page guide offers leaders and facilitators the basic principles and methods for bringing about consensus-based decisions. A portable, easy-to-read reference. \$11.95 plus s&h. Purchase at [www.consensustools.com](http://www.consensustools.com) along with other tools for participative decision-making. Call 303-440-0425, ext. 3 or email: [info@consensustools.com](mailto:info@consensustools.com)

**NEW SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTERS** contain original research on a variety of issues relative to living in a post-oil society, such as: Cuba: Life After Oil, Community Resurgence and Oil Depletion, Peak Oil and Peak

Technology, Peak Oil and Peak Empire and more. Upcoming issues will cover the Second U.S. Conference on Peak Oil and Community Solutions held September 23-25. *New Solutions* is published by Community Service, Inc. (CSI), under its new program The Community Solution. CSI, a nonprofit organization founded in 1940 to promote small local community, is the original founder of the FIC. Yearly subscription/membership is \$25. For a free sample of *New Solutions*, contact us at: <mailto:info@communitysolution.org or read them on-line at [www.communitysolution.org](http://www.communitysolution.org) Write or call: POB 243, Yellow Springs, OH 45387, 937-767-2161.

**HAVENS: Stories of True Community Healing.** New book by Leonard Jason and Martin Perdoux presents a relatively low-cost and effective solution growing in neighborhoods across the country: true community. People are moving in together to meet each other's needs and to offer a way to recover the caring, structure, direction and respect that a healthy family can provide. People living together in these healing communities include the elderly, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts and people suffering from mental illness and chronic illnesses. To order a copy of this book from Praeger Publishers, call 1-800-225-5800.

**INTRODUCTION TO CONSENSUS.** Useful information about participatory group process and sustainable decision making. Includes 28-page Guide For Facilitators. Also available in Spanish. *Briggsbea@aol.com*; \$15 check or money order to *Beatrice Briggs, POB 25, Black Earth, WI 53515*.

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## PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 72)

personal stories and talking about needs and concerns are usually effective ways to begin. A related tool from the consensus process is to encourage people to look for the “grain of truth” in what another person is saying, especially if the statement itself carries a charge that might add to the tension. This practice can help the participants’ get beyond their surface awareness and really get to the core issues.

Some other good tools for doing this work come from teachers with a lot of experience working with community groups: Marshall Rosenberg’s Compassionate Communication (a.k.a. Nonviolent Communication), and Susan Campbell’s “Getting Real” and “Truth Telling Skills.” These processes have folks share their surface level of perceptions, concerns, and suggestions, and then delve into the deeper layers of what’s going on for the individuals—the gut-level stuff that drives the more visible attitudes and behaviors. Rosenberg focuses heavily on how to identify people’s unmet needs; Campbell encourages folks to examine their own “self talk” (those judgmental little voices chattering in your head) and to share that in a way that helps participants understand and appreciate each other. Both processes are most potent when shared in the presence of a compassionate, supportive group.

All these techniques address the most common cause of misunderstandings and conflicts: individuals making incorrect assumptions about the motives and intentions of others. If we can collectively get beyond that trap—with a little help from our friends—much of the other work becomes obvious and much easier to accomplish. It probably doesn’t much matter which tools you add to your kit ... as long as we believe there’s a good solution to be found, and have a commitment to finding it.  $\Omega$

*Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 32 years, and is editing part two of a video about intentional communities, documenting the vision and passion that drive the movement and tell stories about what works.*

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## Truth? Or Consequences ...

“**T**ruth” is a slippery term, most often defined in a circular way as “the quality or state of being true,” with “true” being defined as “consistent with fact or reality; not false.” But what is reality except a summary of our beliefs—our best guess for how to make sense of what we’ve experienced—which is closer to the common understanding of “wisdom,” a word with a comfortably elusive “degrees of truth” quality to it.

Truth is an abstract concept, subjective, and thus ultimately unverifiable at the deepest levels. A person can believe that something is true, yet it is always possible that new information or a new understanding will emerge that either contradicts or expands their old belief: the Earth is flat; no, the Earth is round; no wait ... it’s an ovoid shape, a sphere slightly flattened at the poles.

Agreement about the material world is commonly self-regulating: contradicting the laws of nature can result in swift and sometimes painful consequences. Unfortunately, Earth time is much slower than human time, so sometimes the planet’s feedback about destructive human practices (e.g. global warming or widespread pollution) doesn’t come soon enough and clear enough to persuade us to change our behaviors before severe ecological damage has been done.

However in the esoteric and social realms—philosophy, psychology, religion, relationships, economics, community visions, etc.—what ultimately matters is not so much “what is,” but rather what people agree on. Most disagreements and fights are the result of people’s differing opinions about what is true or right, and most often those are resolved by social processes, physical force, or avoid-

ance rather than by an impartial reckoning of what is really going on.

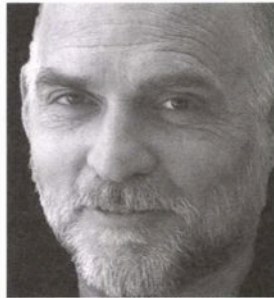
The best solutions—the ones that work for everyone affected, that bring about a sense of cooperation and harmony, and that endure the test of time—are typically the ones that emerge through interactive processes among all the parties affected and really address the deep underlying needs. If a process doesn’t get to the bottom layer of many complicated and interacting levels of individual and collective truths—many of them floating below our conscious awareness—sooner or later the unresolved issues will work like a burr under a saddle, generating enough irritation that conflicts emerge and remedial action becomes necessary.

Two key conditions support the process of reaching successful solutions: 1) maintaining a sense of connection between the parties involved, and 2) sharing a belief that a good outcome will be reached. People with

a perceived common bond are more likely to invest the time and energy necessary to come up with a mutually satisfactory outcome than a group of unconnected individuals, and usually they have more information about each individual’s needs and wants to work with, thus increasing the odds of finding a win-win solution. Further, a group that believes in its ability to solve a problem is more likely to find solutions than a group that is constrained by polarization or doubt—tensions that can make people blind to possibilities and discourage folks from thinking “outside the box” when that’s exactly what’s needed.

It’s tricky to find ways to share our truth in terms that resonate with other people’s experiences. However, sharing

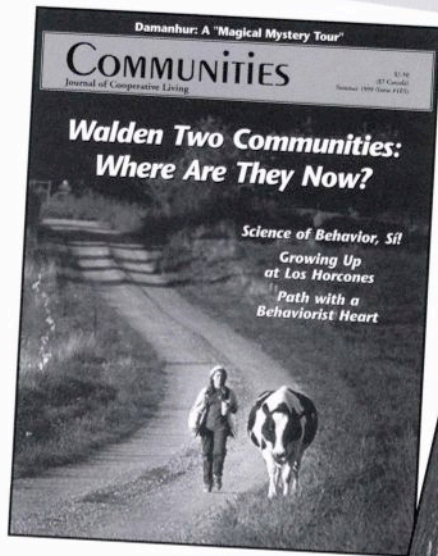
(continued on p. 71)



BY GEOPH KOZENY

***A group that believes in its ability to solve a problem is more likely to find solution than a group that is constrained by polarization or doubt.***

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