

WHEN SOME OF US DON'T SUPPORT AN EXISTING AGREEMENT

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Temporary Community What Do We Learn?

What Interns and
Work Exchangers Say
....About Us

Is Hosting Work
Exchangers Worth It?

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Spring 2007 • Issue #134

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SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook



"At last, here is a guidebook to a new way of aging for older Americans ...

-Kathy Goss, Journalist, review for Amazon.com

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook

"This book is the most comprehensive and up-to-date book currently available on the topic of senior cohousing ...

... Durrett has done a superb job in thoroughly covering the psychological and social aspects of cohousing in addition to the logistics, operations, and design

elements. Although an architect by training, Durrett has an intuitive feel for what a reader needs to know about this fast growing new trend. The comprehensive nature of this book, demonstrates Durrett's knowledge of the topic from a holistic perspective way beyond the mere design facets of creating cohousing communities. He innately understands all the concerns, fears, misunderstandings, and objections people may have about cohousing – and logically and thoroughly addresses each one in an easy to follow logical style.

Not only is this book unique in its subject matter, but also the presentation of the content is the most comprehensive and "usable" of any book currently available on this subject. Durrett's book quite simply is the "gold standard" for anyone interested in this subject. Regardless if you are a layperson wanting basic information, a highly motivated individual wanting to create a cohousing community, or a professional working with seniors and/or the aging field, this book is a "must read."

Senior Cohousing is not only a pioneering book in its presentation and coverage of a fast growing social and lifestyle trend, but it is an insightful, comprehensive overview addressing every aspect of cohousing. This book is cohousing from A to Z – all presented in an engaging and easy to follow format. Durrett is clearly the US leader and expert in this field, and his book is guaranteed to have far-reaching impact as people become more aware of this practical, economical, creative, and resourceful way to live."

– Alice Jacobs Ed.D., MS;
Senior education and learning specialist

"... and cohousing – perhaps the most creative housing options for seniors – is one that we can make happen for us NOW ... It is easy to read, highlights all the major issues one needs to anticipate, and gives clear how-to-do-it guidelines to a group wanting to take charge of their own housing future. It tackles problems that any group will undoubtedly face and gives helpful solutions, making the often daunting task of creating a cohousing community seem "do-able." It is a very inspiring testament to growing old "in community."

– Lisa Anthony,
Second Journey
secondjourney.org



Senior cohousing is an entirely new way for seniors to house themselves with dignity, independence, safety, mutual concern, and fun. Developed with the residents themselves, senior cohousing combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared facilities and community living. Senior cohousing residents live among people with whom they share a common bond of age, experience, and community – a community they themselves built to specifically meet their own needs.



Twenty years of working with, and living in, cohousing helped create this 249-page book by Charles Durrett, licensed and award-winning architect. After the first introduction of the cohousing concept

to the U.S. by husband-and-wife team Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett in 1988, almost 100 such communities have been built and more than 150 groups are currently in the process of creating a cohousing community.

Illustrated with photos and graphics, this book addresses in great depth the advantages and the why and how of senior cohousing. This book is also for younger people working with their parents to come up with alternatives to traditional retirement homes, in the same way they now plan their finances, to also consider the need to address their social and emotional well-being. The book is divided into four parts: Introducing Senior Cohousing, Senior Cohousing in Denmark, Creating Senior Cohousing, and Pioneering Senior Cohousing in America. The book offers detailed steps, so anyone can create a senior cohousing community.

To order the book 'Senior Cohousing', send check payable to:

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PHOTO:

Jan Steinman

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Life in Cooperative Culture

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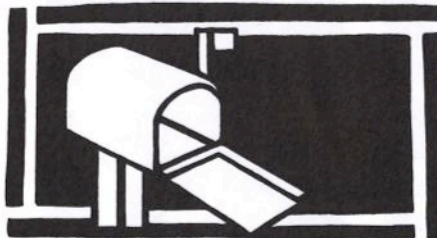
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LETTERS



Communities Magazine wants your feedback. What do you love, what do you hate, what did you notice about our last issue, what do you think we should be covering more of? Please send us your thoughts and feelings: communities@ic.org.



Agreeing with Chuck Durrett's Statement (Fall '06 issue)

Dear Diana,

I feel your passion about intentional community in your review of Charles Durrett's *Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living* in the Fall '06 issue. As you stepped onto your soapbox and rebutted Mr. Durrett's statement in his opening chapter, it stimulated me to respond!

Editor's Note: The reader is commenting on the following part of the book review:

Once again an important cohousing activist perpetuates the myth that non-cohousing communities "are often organized around strong ideological beliefs and may depend

upon a charismatic leader to establish the direction of the community and hold the group together." In contrast, Chuck Durrett says "cohousing essentially offers a new approach to housing—it does not impose a new way of life on its residents . . . cohousing communities espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment." . . . Any relatively uncritical reader is going to believe the clear implication that most non-cohousing communities have "strong ideological beliefs" created by "charismatic leaders" who "impose" a new way of life on community members. This mangling of facts has been going on since the early days of cohousing, and here it still is 20 years later. I'm getting kind of tired of it, aren't you?

First let me say that I more or less agree with Mr. Durrett's statement—it has been an issue for me (and others) as we search for intentional community. When he states that most have "strong ideological beliefs," I feel you misinterpret as you limit the definition to a particular spiritual path. Strong ideologies include practices like sustainable living, consensus decision-making, shared income, off-grid power, organic farming, vegan only, same sex only, elder only, etc. Most intentional communities come together usually *because* of the desire to create an environment focused on a "strong ideology"—and I find that many mainstream people are not willing to commit to such a focus. (This is neither right nor wrong; it is what is.) How many communities can you point out that have no ideology other than it is just a bunch of people who live in the same place?

Secondly, it is usually an individual or two (or three) who start the ball rolling. (As I read the advertisements for new groups *trying* to form, I find it is usually an individual or two who are attempting to put something together, and it is their energy that makes or breaks the formation of that group. This also does not mean that at some point the community must

re-learn the habit of operating as a “group” rather than some hierarchical structure.) And is it not common for many communities to fall apart as the core person(s) decide to move on?

As for “imposing,” I don’t think Chuck Durrett was referring to the Jim Jones pathway—but more of the requirements of joining the group. Example: if you join our community you must agree to do things the way we want you to, or, I am afraid, we will have to set you straight or send you on your way. Isn’t one of the biggest problems in a community dealing with the people who just don’t or won’t buy into “the plan”?

I also note that many, many listings on ic.org are for groups *trying* to form—how many actually “make it?” (How many of the listings are “wish lists” that never come to fruition?) What are the elements of starting a group that is still together? A common ideology that many have bought into? A core group of charismatic leaders? (Until “group-think” emerges, isn’t charisma a positive energy to use as an attractor to those who might not “get” the ideology at first? “Geez, I really don’t get the point of growing all my own food but I sure like John and Mary!”)

I guess that what I am trying to say is that Mr. Durrett is for the most part correct—and rather than deny it vehemently—I think we intentional-community-loving kinds of peoples should acknowledge that it seems to be the way things “happen”—and sometimes it goes astray (as in Jim Jones, Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and other such maladies)—and a lot of the time it leads to social change!

Catherine Murphy

Co-founder, Tenemos Community
Tampa Bay, Florida

Holistic Communities Questionnaire

Dear *Communities* Magazine:

I’d appreciate if *Communities* readers would email me and answer the five questions

in the following Holistic Communities Questionnaire. By “holistic communities,” I mean communities of people who address the whole person by: (1) affirming a progressive, systemic worldview, (2) helping each other become better human beings, (3) enjoying life together, (4) directly assisting others in need, and (5) engaging at least once monthly in political action together.

Here are the five questions. Please answer each question with either Yes, No, or Not sure. For the second question, if it’s Yes, please describe your community and give contact information.

1. *Do you believe that the progressive movement needs to grow holistic communities of people who: a) affirm a progressive, systemic worldview; b) help each other become better human beings; c) enjoy life together; d) directly assist others who are in need; and e) engage at least once monthly in political action together?*


2. *Do you belong to a holistic community of this sort or know of any such communities?*

3. *If you do not, would you like to belong to and participate in a holistic community?*

4. *Might you be interested in encouraging one or more organizations to which you belong to expand their activities in order to adopt a more holistic approach?*

5. *Would you like to subscribe to a monthly email list to be kept informed concerning progress in the development of holistic communities?*

After more than 40 years of activism, I’ve concluded that the progressive movement needs to include the promotion of holistic communities as one element in its overall strategy. By circulating this questionnaire, I’m hoping to find holistic communities—because so far, I’ve found none. Some activist organizations, for example, conduct activities like training speakers to improve political skills. But this narrow, technical focus can reduce people to instruments. And it falls short of an open commitment to broad self-improvement—as could be fulfilled, for example,



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by conducting a support group during which members could discuss any personal problem. Other activist organizations convene valuable informal social events that foster supportive friendships. But these organizations typically do not clearly identify self-improvement and mutual support among their central goals, and they don't conduct for all their members open-ended, structured activities that clearly focus on personal growth, such as support groups. Consequently, friend-

ships among members often lack real depth, which mirrors the society-at-large. So, thus far, I've encountered no organization that incorporates all five of the components listed above into their work.

I'd like to encourage the creation and growth of holistic communities dedicated to providing *everyone* the means to a peaceful, meaningful, and happy life in a safe and sustainable environment. I'd like to spread the word about any holistic communities that already exist, and facil-

itate communication between people who share an interest in these ideas. Toward this end, I'll establish an email list that will inform subscribers—no more than once a month—concerning developments along these lines and post on the Web a list of activities that organizations and informal associations can use to enrich their lives.

Wade Hudson

Editor, *Progressive Resource Catalog*
 whudson@igc.org
 www.progressiveresourcecatalog.org


You'll find more information about politically active intentional communities in issue #100, Fall, 1998, "Political Activism in Community." Our website offers back issues: communities.ic.org.
 —Editor



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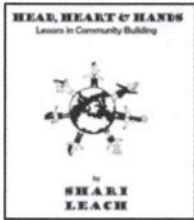
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The Marriage of Marriage & Community: *My Labyrinthine Path to the Altar*

When I turned 21, I had already made up my mind: I was never getting married.

I went to college in the late 60s, during the height of protests against the Vietnam War. It was a time of great social unrest and there was a widespread anti-establishment analysis on campus. I was right in the thick of questioning the status quo, and, coming out of college with that pure certainty and righteousness that's peculiar to 21-year-olds, religious zealots, and used-car salesmen, I was adamant that neither church nor state had any business regulating relationships between consenting adults.

Mind you, I was not anti-commitment; just against legal entanglements and the Lutheran folderol I was brought up with. I was going to lead the simple, thoughtful life; one that was inquisitive, but not acquisitive. Well, there's been plenty to think about and I have few possessions to my name, yet my life has been anything but simple.

The Birthday Ambush

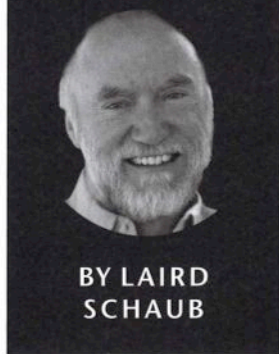
The first major challenge to my no-marriage stance came ten years after

college, when my first child was born. After being up all night to support my partner through labor, I caught my son as he emerged into the sunshine streaming through our bedroom window that January morning. Loopy from joy and lack of sleep, I called my parents within the hour to share the news, and my mother's first comment was "I'm sorry you decided to have a bastard." That was not the reaction I was looking for. My parents had decided to play hardball, and chose that moment for their opening salvo. Ouch!

While I was pretty pissed at their reaction, I realized after calming down (and getting some sleep) that they had a point. Now that I'd entered parenthood, I was making choices that would affect my kids' lives as well as my own, and I wasn't giving them a voice in the matter. How responsible was that? (Welcome to parenting.)

Still, I stuck with it, and never seriously wavered in my position about marriage until well into my 40s. I had a number of relationships over those years and have always considered myself as looking for a longstanding partner. I just

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



BY LAIRD
SCHAUB

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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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.

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.

Patricia Greene, Advertising Manager, patricia@ic.org; 315-347-3070; 381 Hewlett Rd., Hermon, NY 13652.

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.

wasn't looking for a wife. While none of my relationships lasted (this was in pointed contrast with my four siblings, all of whom were still with the person they had married decades before), I never felt it was because I wasn't willing to commit. I just hadn't found the right person.

Each time, I would learn a little more about myself and what I was seeking. Each time, I entered into a relationship thinking this would be the one that would last. Each time, I was wrong. It's humbling to look back over some of those "lessons" and try to make sense of why the learning was so slow and painful. (Why did I think this person would be a good partner when they were clearly ambivalent about being with me? Why did

married couples and the village. It was not hard for me to translate this into the interplay between couples and intentional community, and it was a revelation.

At this point I'd had a quarter century of community living under my belt and was thoroughly familiar with the typical hands-off approach that most secular groups took when it came to couple dynamics. As long as partners weren't hitting each other or claiming abuse, communities mostly stood back and let lovers find their own way through the thickets. If you wanted out of a difficult relationship, the community wasn't going to let any outdated, bourgeois attitudes about marriage stand in your way. Even though

Marriage was more than a contract between two adults; it was also a commitment between the couple and the village.

I stay so long in struggle with that person when it was obviously not working?)

Inspired by the Dagara

Eight years ago, my carefully constructed Hadrian's Wall against the barbarism of marriage was breached by a slim book by Sobonfu Somé entitled *The Spirit of Intimacy*. I was consulting at a community in Michigan and this volume was on the shelves of the room where I was gusted. It was one of those serendipitous moments when you bump into the right book at the right time, and magic happens. The subtitle was *Ancient African Teachings in the Ways of Relationships* and I picked it up. Sobonfu, and her partner Malidoma, write about the traditional ways of the Dagara, their native West African tribe, and its application to modern life. This particular book focused on the inter-relationship of

communities were frequently—and on occasion spectacularly—affected by tensions between intimate partners, we stoically carried on as if we weren't.

The Spirit of Intimacy offered another way. Among the Dagara, marriage was more than a contract between two adults; it was also a commitment between the couple and the village. Explicitly recognized as a stakeholder in the marriage's success, the village had the right to expect support from the married couple, as well as the responsibility to be there for the couple in times of need. I liked that.

It caused me to rethink the relationship between community and couples. Now, instead of seeing the group as a neutral bystander, I saw it as pro-relationship, where the default position was to actively offer to assist a couple as it labored through tough times (rather than holing up in the

cellar waiting for the storm to pass, or waiting in vain for a call for help). While it's still possible for partners to break up, that's not the place where you start. If a couple rebuffs inquiries about their troubled dynamics with "It's none of your business," the group could respond: "Yes, it is."

My resolve about this approach had an immediate application at my home community, Sandhill Farm, where we were paralyzed by a complicated relationship snarl. Two established members—who were in different long-term relationships—started sharing with each other their frustrations with their partners, and wound up proposing to launch their own lover relationship in addition to continuing their existing ones. While they were shiny-eyed and optimistic about their creative solution for addressing unmet needs, neither of their existing partners saw this as a positive development. The four of them were stalemated about how to proceed, and the group was in trouble.

As the only long-term member who did not have a song in this musical, I was in a unique role. Buoyed by my Dagara-inspired perspective, I found the courage to ask that we discuss the

what it meant to be a member. Relationship dynamics as they affect the group were now on the table.

Doing The Rite Thing

As potent as that was, there was another theme to the book that touched me deeply: how ritual has been woven into the fabric of village life. Somé invited me to compare and contrast the material glut and spiritual impoverishment of Western culture relative to that of the West African traditional village. I agreed with her that we are, by and large, a possession-obsessed and ritual-starved society, and I wanted to do something about it.

Thus, by degrees, marriage was starting to look better. I was getting excited about defining it in terms that echoed the Dagara treatment. My life has been devoted to the creation and nurturance of community, and it appealed to me to see marriage as a give and take with one's circles of community. In addition, a wedding is a wonderful opportunity for ritual and celebration. It creates a platform for proclaiming the intentional nature of the commitments.

However, even as all this was incubating, I still didn't have a partner where the fit was strong enough to make these

Relationship dynamics as they affect the group were now on the table.

relationship dynamics at community meetings, something we had rarely done unless the couple asked for the attention. Without taking a position one way or the other on the proposed new liaison, I could pour my energy into being helpful to the established, beleaguered relationships—the ones I now saw I had a responsibility to support.

This was a watershed moment for me in how we defined our community, and

commitments. I got close a couple times, yet always something crucial was missing. Until October 2005, when I gave Ma'ikwe Ludwig—a woman I'd known for nine years—a back rub one evening after an all-day workshop. One thing led to another and before a month was out we had agreed to marry.

While the proposal sprang forth in an unplanned moment of inspiration at 5 am, once I'd found the right person, the

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decision to marry was easy. (As a bonus, it gave me a terrific opening for a bit of theater the next week when I announced the engagement for the first time in front of the 30+ family and neighbors gathered for our annual Thanksgiving dinner. Jaws dropped.)

Ma'ikwe and I share a dedication to a life of inquiry and service (which is why we are friends); we share a passion about building and promoting community (which is why we work for FIC); we share a lust for life and for each other (which is why we are lovers); we share a Dagara vision about what a partnership can mean (which is why we are getting married); and we share a commitment to a public life and embracing ritual (which is why we are having a *big* wedding).

What we don't share is the same zip code. Or even the same time zone. Her village is in New Mexico; mine is in Missouri. Because it is our express intent that our marriage will enhance the communities to which we belong, we will be attempting a mobile marriage, and there are unanswered questions about how we'll make that work. Still, the early signs are hopeful. Ma'ikwe has already provided valuable help as an outside facilitator at Sandhill meetings, and I have been doing a series of consensus and facilitation trainings in Albuquerque.

(As an example of the complications the marriage will create, I am now in discussion with my income-sharing community about how to view finances with my wife-to-be. Like most couples, we intend to combine money. That, however, creates a problem: from a financial perspective, I'm already married to Sandhill and I'm not seeking a "divorce." What portion of my earnings should go to the community and what should go to Laird/Ma'ikwe? It turns out that I'm inadvertently committing economic bigamy, and together we're feeling our way through these uncharted waters.)

Our wedding, coming up this April in Albuquerque, will be a major celebration, with hundreds of friends and family gathering from all over the country. It will last four days, and has been designed for breathing room, so that the people who are helping us to celebrate and make the commitment can suspend their regular lives and have the spaciousness needed for conversation and connection with the bride and groom, and with each other. We intend this to be much more than a cattle call reception line, a blur of digital images, and smiles from across the room. It will be a time to laugh, a time to tell stories, and a time to be brave for love.

Now that I'm 57, I've changed my mind: I am ready for marriage.☸

COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

"Are You Growing Much of Your Own Food Yet?" Summer 2007

Does your community or organized urban or suburban neighborhood grow vegetables or fruit during the growing season? Are you and your community, or neighbors, considering, or preparing for Peak Oil issues and rapidly escalating food costs? Are you participating in community gardens, CSA farms, or local food bartering systems? Is your group storing food with low-tech means (canning, fermenting, etc.?) During hard times, how would your group meet its nutritional needs for fat, protein, or carbohydrates?

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"Does Your Community Influence the Wider Culture?" Fall 2007

Has your community's or organized neighborhood's sustainability plans or practices changed the attitude, behavior, or practices of any visitors, neighbors, or local zoning, building code, or traffic control officials, or changed any local city or town ordinances? If so, how? Have your group's practices in cooperative decision-making, communication and process traditions, or shared resources influenced any neighbors, visitors, or local officials? If so, how?

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For more information on this and other New Culture events and activities, contact us at:

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Honoring Eileen Caddy

"All is very, very well"

On December 13, 2006, Eileen Caddy, 89, one of three founders of the Findhorn Foundation community in northern Scotland, died peacefully. Her health had been gradually fading and she was cared for at her home in Findhorn by family and friends over the past two and a half years.

"Our community, locally and globally, are celebrating her life and her release into the light of the Beloved, as Eileen herself has asked us to do, rather than to mourn her death," writes Robin Alfred, Findhorn Foundation Trustee and Eileen's friend over the last decade. Eileen Caddy requested that a simple funeral be conducted as soon as possible and that media and public attention

be held in abeyance until after her cremation. The community followed her wishes, cremating her body on Monday, December 15th. "A memorial service to fully and publicly honor her life and all the gifts she has given to us, will be organized early in the New Year," Robin Alfred continues. "In this time of transition we ask that you share in our

happiness, knowing Eileen would want us to remember, as in her favorite saying, 'all is very, very well . . .'"

In 1965 Eileen and her then-husband Peter Caddy and their friend Dorothy MacLean began what was later to become the Findhorn community in a trailer park near Forres, Scotland. As you may already know—since the story of Findhorn's

founding has attained near-legendary status in the communities movement—Eileen had begun to receive inner spiritual guidance for their personal spiritual growth and on how to lead and develop community among the small group who began gathering around them. At the same time Dorothy MacLean was receiving inner guidance

on how to best raise each vegetable in their small garden, from sources which identified themselves to her as the overlighting souls, or *devas*, of each plant. Thus their garden flourished, and its abundant, extremely healthy, and often gigantic vegetables growing in poor sandy soil in a frigid northern climate made the local news. Peter Caddy, a former RAF officer

FELLOWSHIP
NEWS



BY DIANA LEAFE
CHRISTIAN

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities magazine. Robin Alfred is a Trustee of the Findhorn Foundation.

who was uncompromisingly devoted to spiritual discipline, led the group in following all the instructions Eileen and Dorothy received. In 1966, they began publishing Eileen's guidance, and with that and the news about their garden, the first visitors began arriving. In 1967, Eileen's first booklet, *God Spoke to Me*, was printed and 25,000 copies distributed worldwide. Five years later, in 1971, Eileen received guidance that she would no longer be receiving guidance for the young community: from that point on the group must learn and grow on its own. In 1973 the group formally organized as the Findhorn Foundation.

Over the next 20-plus years, Eileen Caddy continued to contribute to and influence Findhorn and people worldwide, through offering spiritual workshops at Findhorn and writing two more books, the bestselling *Opening Doors Within*, published in 1987 (translated into 27 languages), and her biography, *Flight into Freedom*, published in 1988. She also experienced changes in her personal life; in 1979 she

Today the tiny community started by three spiritual pioneers in a windy trailer park is one of the most famous and successful intentional communities in the world. Now with 30 acres, 80 resident members, and 350 additional members and friends living onsite or nearby, Findhorn Foundation is the UK's leading spiritual community and ecovillage settlement. Over 3000 visitors a year attend its classes, workshops, and college-credit courses on various aspects of spirituality and sustainability. (See "How I Learned to Hug a Windmill," pg. 52.) In 2002, an economic impact study commissioned by a local accounting firm showed that the Findhorn Foundation generates 4 million Euros a year and 400 jobs in the local region.

In his tribute to Eileen Caddy, Findhorn Trustee Robin Alfred calls her "a courageous, dedicated, radical lover of God." Here are excerpts from his funeral tribute:

I feel hugely blessed and privileged to have known Eileen as a friend, a teacher, and as

"Have you invited in grace?"
Have you asked for help?
Help is available, you know."

and Peter dissolved their marriage and Peter left the community. In 1996, at the age of 79, she retired from leading workshops. In 2000, her writings were put on Findhorn's website, reaching millions of regular readers worldwide.

In 2001, at the age of 84, Eileen Caddy was noted by the BBC television program "The God List" as among the world's 50 most influential spiritual figures. The following year she was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire), "for services to Spiritual Inquiry" in the Queen's New Year's Honors List.

an adopted "son". She has influenced me and my life in countless, and beautiful, ways, and in this short piece I would like to share some of them.

I first got to know Eileen when I was working in the Foundation's management team, focalizing the Reinvention process between 1997 and 1999. This period involved us looking, collectively, at the fundamentals of our community—our identity and structure, values and ethics, decision-making, staffing, pay and remuneration, everything, in fact.

Throughout these conversations, Eileen consistently spoke of the centrality of God

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to our purpose. If people come here for community, this is not the place for them to be. If they come for workshops, this is not the place for them either. If they come for organic food and ecological houses, this is not the right place. This is a spiritual community, and that is at the heart of everything. If you don't want to listen within, and pay attention to the spiritual nature of the community, then you had better live elsewhere.

Such conversations, with both Eileen and Dorothy, fed into our community dialogues to help us coalesce a Mission Statement, adopted on 21st September, 1998, which read: *The Findhorn Foundation is a centre of spiritual service in co-creation with nature, encompassing education and community.*

Eileen was happy with that.

At the age of 84, Eileen Caddy was noted by the BBC as among the world's 50 most influential spiritual figures.

These conversations also built the foundations of our friendship. I still can't really fathom out why we became so close but we did, and I am deeply grateful for that.

Eileen and I carried on meeting and talking for many years. Throughout these times, she embodied a calm, clear, yet radical simplicity. I would go with my questions and issues, about the community, its development, management, and finances; and about my own life, my relationships, work and my spiritual longing. I would often go into her house fraught and frowning, and come out calm and optimistic and really feeling, that yes, "All is very, very well." It was a little like receiving darshan—the transformation that comes simply by being in the presence of a more illumined person. Her ability to be completely present with me, listening to me, and then reflecting back the simplest truths and questions; "Have you invited in grace?" "Have you asked for help? Help is available, you

know." consistently brought me to a deeper, more expansive and more trusting place.

The other quality I want to highlight is her radical nature. Many of the most poignant episodes in her life required a truly radical heart to embrace them—leaving a husband and five children to be with God and Peter; meditating for hours on end in a cold outdoor toilet in a caravan park; touring the world giving teachings and workshops as a shy and more naturally retiring woman; and just living a life so totally dedicated to surrendering to the still, small voice within. These are radical ways to live.

And when I would talk to her, she was always wanting us/me to do the courageous and radical thing. Shake up the structures, break open the forms—spirit can't flow if systems

have become crystallized and rigid. She was always pushing for change. Be bold! Ask for help! Just do what you feel is deeply right.

In the last years of her life, she struggled to come to terms with her inability to do much. "Now I am being told I just have to be," she would say. And she grew into that too. When I talked to her about where I had just been or what I was about to do she would be patient and attentive, but when I talked of God, or of lessons given to me by my spiritual teacher in the USA . . . her eyes would light up, and she would squeeze my hands tight. Most recently, I told her I was going to America to spend some time with my teacher in a spiritual intensive . . . she leaned forward, eyes shining. "Excellent!" she said. "I am so happy about that."

Nothing gladdened Eileen's heart more than the sincere intention to surrender to God. After all, as she might say herself, "What else is there?" ❁

Primitive Life, City Living

This article describes a graphic event that may be offensive to some readers. While it is not our intent to offend, we have chosen to run it because it deals with important questions about what it means to live sustainably in the modern world.

—Editor

The dead, skinned dog looked like a dancer in midair. Maybe his soul was just leaving him, in the transition between spheres. I do not know if dogs have souls. I could tell you the story of the time I saw a deer killed in the flats of Kansas during a gray winter dawn. When the hunters opened his chest, steam rose warm from his insides. And I couldn't help thinking: his soul is leaving him in the form of evaporating water.

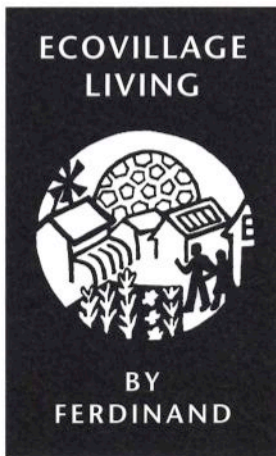
But this time it wasn't a hunter who killed the creature. Not a hunter who opened him along his underside. It was a car that killed him. Someone dropped the dog carcass off in a street just behind our urban Los Angeles Eco-Village. And it was my friend Somerset who took a knife to his skin.

We were outside working on the fence by the alley. My friend Kirly said, "Hey, there's a dead dog on the street."

"Where?" asked Somerset. And Kirly led him out of the alley, while I kept an eye on the tools. They came back in a few minutes, Somerset carrying the large animal. "I'm going to skin him," Somerset announced boldly. And I knew he could do it, because he'd begun to teach me

how to skin animals for their hides a few weeks earlier when we found a white rabbit dead on a street corner about a mile away. We lay our bikes on the sidewalk and skinned the rabbit right there. We got curious stares and questions from drivers and pedestrians. Somerset had taught himself how to skin on roadkill animals years ago. He is not a person who wants to see anything go to waste.

Somerset lay the dog down on a parking space in the alley. We placed cardboard boxes around it to make it less visible. People passing by didn't say much. In this alley beside the Filipino market, you don't get a lot of comments. Somerset tied a bandana over



Ferdinand (a fictionalized name) is an L.A. Eco-Villager who likes human-powered transportation, words, drawings, and cacophonous sounds. www.laecovillage.org.

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his mouth and, with gloved hands and a serrated knife, began the work. There wasn't a lot of blood, just Somerset's loving and patient hand pulling the skin off, separating it from the fat tissue. At some point, the parking lot attendant said the boss was coming and that we'd better move along. We used an empty rolling trash bin for the half skinned carcass, moving it onto a more private space to complete the work.

Somerset was telling me that not many people in the U.S. get to see this, and it's such a part of life in cultures where people live closer to the Earth. "Yes, it's such an ancient skill," I reflected. "You find a dead animal, and if you can, you take advantage of it. Because that's the way nature works. Not a lot of people get to see the other side of the packaged meat and leather shoes these days. Death and the life cycle are covered by a mountain of styrofoam and saran wrap."

A few other Eco-Villagers got wind of what was going on, grabbed a few shovels and began digging a grave in the front yard of an abandoned house across the street.

Suddenly a police car pulled up and began asking them questions—someone had called them about the pending burial. "Yes," one of the diggers told them, "a dead dog was found in the street. We're taking care of it."

"Good," the police said, and left. The three Eco-Villagers continued digging the grave site. It was a big dog.

After almost two hours, an exhausted Somerset had successfully separated skin from body. We immersed the hide in a bucket with salt and bleach and water, using some stones to keep it from floating to the surface.

"It's a beautiful posture," Somerset admired, gazing at the dead dog. "He looks so peaceful."

I took some pictures. "He looks like a dancer in midair. Or just like a dog jumping, contemplative, naked," I mused.

We carried the dog to the burial site where Somerset gently lowered it into the large hole the others had dug. More Eco-Villagers began gathering

***"I'm going to skin him,"
Somerset announced boldly.***

around. "What do you want to say . . . what would you say if you were at your own funeral?" Somerset asked.

"Here we are, putting you under the Earth as will happen to us at some point too," I said. Then Somerset took his shirt off and covered the dog, which was lying curled as if he were sleeping. He sprinkled soil over the dog with the shovel, and handed the shovel to me to do the same.

And then Dale came around, and began making fun of us, teasing us about how we were going to make some thongs out of the hide. Dale is a jester by heart, and

***A spontaneous collaborative effort in spirit,
in community, for the Earth.***

as jesters do, tells sharp truths entwined with his jokes. Then, even Dale said some words: "This dog died on the road, on the road we travel so often, on the road we could die on as dogs sometime."

I grabbed another shovel and we finished the burial. Then Lois came around and asked what we were doing. "Somerset just got done skinning a dead dog," I told her. She thought I was joking. When she realized I was telling

the truth, she marveled at the story. She saw a community in action taking care of things together. A spontaneous collaborative effort in spirit, in community, for the Earth. When she shared her thoughts, I saw the same thing, although with my shovel in hand, I was also thinking of the old ways of doing things. I saw a natural collaborative action that we performed even despite some differences among us—self-reliant effort to deal with a local incident which is normally taken care of by making a phone call to a government agency.

"Somerset is a very elegant man," I said to Lois after we shared our other thoughts.

"Why do you think so?" she asked. "Because he honors the old ways. Because he gave the naked dog his own shirt, like a fair exchange of skins."

"That is elegant," she agreed. Later we found out that the police came because someone called the city's Department of Animal Services, the agency responsible for picking up and disposing of dead animals. They requested the police to investigate. We found out it was one

of our community members who called. The idea that a community member invoked an external agency rather than trusting us to take

care of it was difficult for me.

I went to help Somerset hose down the part of the alley where he skinned the dog. "If I die, and you are around," asked Somerset, "will you will say the same thing at my funeral, and nothing else, simple as that?" I agreed.

"And you will do the same if I die too," I said. We walked inside.

For weeks, as the dog's hide was drying inside a garage in the back of

our building, different versions of the story flew back and forth, in meetings and on email. The community member who called Animal Services didn't agree with skinning the dog. Once she told me, "If we are not going to skin humans, we shouldn't be skinning other animals." She liked the burial though. She asked me if it would be "elegant" if Somerset got hit on the road and someone took his skin. And I said, "If done respectfully, that would be elegant indeed." Not a trace of sarcasm.

What, we wondered, would the city have done with the remains? So I researched it. Most of us thought dead animals on the road got cremated. As if purified by the flame. Or dignified by burial. But it turns out they get recycled through a process called "rendering." The dead animals are placed in large vats, heated up to 265 degrees Fahrenheit to kill pathogens. Then fat, liquid, and proteins are separated through a series of

mechanical processes. Depending on the quality of the end result, these fats, liquids, or proteins are sold to manufacturers who put them into lubricants, polish, soap, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, gelatin, fertilizers, and pet foods—although dogs and cats are not used for pet foods—and agricultural feed.

"Although it is recycling," I told the objecting community member, "I don't think rendering is in any way more elegant than skinning this one animal and giving it a thoughtful burial."

In 2003, Los Angeles County had to dispose of 80,000 dead animals. Of those, 21,000 were roadkill in the streets and 42,000 were dogs and cats euthanized at vets' offices and animal shelters. Cremation wouldn't be viable and it is not safe to put euthanized animals in landfills, because the euthanizing agent present in their bodies, sodium pentobarbital, could sicken or kill other animals that might scavenge in the landfill.

It is difficult to experience the life and death cycle through large-scale anonymous industrial processes. But when trying to live an ecovillage life in the middle of the city, one is open to this contrast of primitive life and city living. Unmasking death. Confronting established patterns with subtle gestures.

I truly enjoyed Somerset's reflections on the act of skinning the dog. It was like a long meditation. A moment to admire the body of our companion species. How much alike we are. Paws, face, ears, groin. How are beings turned into matter, into soil? How do we pay respect to the transformation? How do we honor it? How are we part of it? Is this something we can find out by calling a city department?

I think it takes a little courage. And, yes, a little blood and soil, and composting, and dialogue, and clashing sensibilities. A reinvention of the old ways. ❁

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When Some of Us DON'T Support an **EXISTING AGREEMENT**

Q. *I understand that in a consensus-based group, people are supposed to follow whatever agreements have been made in the past unless a new agreement, agreed on by everyone, replaces it. But doesn't this put too much power in the hands of the original members? A few sticks-in-the mud could keep any change from happening, and often these long-time members aren't necessarily acting in the best interests of the group. Do you have any suggestions on how to find a better balance between stability and change while respecting the essential spirit of consensus?*



Beatrice Briggs responds:

For me the principle value of the “only way to change a consensus agreement is by reaching another consensus” rule is to respect the conscientious work of the group who, after considering all points of view on an issue, reaches an agreement that they all can support. Problems typically arise when, at the very next meeting, one or two members who were not present at the meeting at which the decision was taken try to re-open the discussion and change the outcome. This usually meets with outraged resistance from those who participated in the original decision and want to move on to other issues. The only solution to this dilemma is to make sure that all interested parties are advised when the issue is to be decided—and that one faction does not deliberately schedule the decision for a time when the “opposition” will not be present.

In the case of agreements that need to be modified to reflect changing conditions, I suggest the following precautions:

- Include a “sunset clause” that requires all, or certain, decisions to be reviewed and renewed after a certain time. If not explicitly renewed, they “fade into the sunset,” i.e., are no longer valid.
- Ask both the “sticks-in-the-mud” and the advocates for change to make a strong case for their respective positions, explaining the reasons why the agreement should or should not be modified, what benefits could be gained and what diffi-

Problems typically arise when one or two members who were not present at the meeting try to re-open the discussion.

culties could be encountered if their view prevails, always keeping in mind the interests of the group, rather than their personal preferences. Then let reason prevail.

- Be sure that those promoting change are willing to do most of the work in implementing the new proposal. Sometimes resistance on the part of the old guard is simply battle fatigue!

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 Huehucoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, and travels extensively giving workshops and facilitating participatory processes in English and Spanish.



Laird Schaub responds:

There are a number of ways that the dynamics between old members and new members can get out of balance. Without coming down on one side or the other, let’s illuminate the issues at play. First, how well is the group making clear to new members what body of agreements are already in place—so they’ll be more fully informed about what they’re joining? Underneath that is the job the group has done to provide the rationale for those agreements, so that the new folks can discern whether they have original thinking on the matter (or just warmed up leftovers). It’s not fair expecting newbies to be aware of information that is obscure to them. That said, it is reasonable to expect new members to avail themselves of the information extant and to research why things are the way

How well is the group making clear to new members what body of agreements are already in place—so they’ll be more fully informed about what they’re joining?

they are. Just bursting on the scene with naive enthusiasm and expecting all the long-term folks to dance to the tune of the new hornpipe is downright disrespectful.

Let’s suppose however, you’ve passed those first two hurdles and the new folks have done their homework. If they still think they have a new angle on an existing agreement, they should be given air time to make their case. Then, if you have “a few sticks-in-the-mud” who “aren’t necessarily acting in the group’s best interests,” that can certainly derail the conversation. In the extreme, it may suggest a lack of alignment about the group’s purpose or common values, which is a major problem. [Caution: do not assume that being unpersuaded by the new voices equates with not acting in the group’s best interest. Reasonable people can and will disagree.]

In consensus, the “sticks-in-the-mud” have the same responsibility as anyone else in the group to make clear the ways in which they see any proposed action—in this case, a change from an existing agreement—not to be in the group’s best interest as opposed to simply a matter of personal preference. While they have the right to stop the group from making a “mistake,” they have the responsibility to make clear how the

proposed action works against the group's purpose or common values, or is otherwise inferior to the existing agreement, or get out of the way and give the new ideas a chance.

Underneath all this is another issue: the challenge of integrating new members. If a group desires fresh blood, existing members need to step to the plate in making the agreements and culture of the group as transparent as possible, both to make plain what the group is about (so that the best matches will be found), and to expedite the acculturation process. There is a significant power gradient between new members and established ones, and if a group is serious about integrating new folks, then the old-timers need to commit to bridging this power gap by educating new members about what the group has done and how it conducts business, and then by displaying a genuine openness to new ideas. "Been there, done that" responses will not get the job done.

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 involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. 660-883-5545.



Tree Bressen responds:

My community has struggled with this issue over time. Some of our residents have come to see an agreement not being followed as a sign for further conversation needed, rather than viewing it as a problem to curtail. That supports the spirit

of the consensus process, but sometimes runs up against real-world limits on time and energy. If someone puts an item on the agenda list but we don't get to it for months, what happens in the meantime? The people who don't like a policy feel oppressed if they follow it, while the people who support it feel betrayed if it's not.

In practice I've seen a variety of responses to the dilemma. Some groups have guidelines for when to reopen a decision, such as when a quorum of members requests it, or when new information is available (see my website at treegroup.info/topics/B21-reopening for a list of these options). The sociocratic consensus system includes a review period for every decision. While that doesn't necessarily solve the problem of what to do if there is no agreement at the review point, it at least puts the forces of change and stability on a more equal footing than in some other consensus systems.

I think it's the responsibility of the people who want to change something to initiate the process. If they take the time

to find out the history of a particular agreement and understand the reasons for it, their efforts are much more likely to be supported by the members who participated in the creation of the original agreement. It's not fair to the group for someone to unilaterally stop following a policy just because they personally don't like it. A group's policies and agreements reflect an expression of the group's will and were usually arrived at after considerable deliberation, and it undermines the group to cross them. At the same time, the other group members (usually those who have been there longer) need to take seriously the concerns of those who want change. A group that cannot maintain some flexibility will lose energy and decay over time, and it is incumbent upon the older members to do some soul-searching to discern the difference between their personal preferences or what they are comfortable with

A group's policies and agreements reflect an expression of the group's will and were usually arrived at after considerable deliberation.

versus what's best for the whole. There is also a responsibility on all parties to ensure that incoming members are fully informed as to what agreements they are signing on with when they join.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant who works with intentional communities and other organizing. She is a founding member of Walnut St. Co-op in Eugene, Oregon, which celebrated its sixth anniversary in 2006. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses lower-case "i" in her articles "as an expression of egalitarian values.")



Caroline Estes responds:

This is a common problem for many communities and secular groups. When secular communities adopted consensus from the Quakers, which use the process in a spiritual context, the basic agreements about how to use consensus often changed. With the basic Quaker belief, "there is God in everyone," there was a unified agreement from which to proceed.

So, while trying to practice pure consensus at Alpha Farm, where I live, we added an agreement to answer the problem

of turnover of people, outgrowing some old agreements, and so on. For any decision that we consider might need to be revisited in the future, we add a sundown clause. That is, after

For any decision that we consider might need to be revisited in the future, we add a sundown clause.

an agreed-upon date in the future, the agreement will be null—and a new agreement must be arrived at. If there is no agreement of our members at that time, there is then no agreement to proceed on—or we must craft a new agreement.

The downside of using sundown clauses is that you must create a process calendar and keep it up-to-date so that agreements can be reconsidered in a timely fashion.

This seems to work with the groups where I have taught consensus.

Caroline Estes, cofounder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon and Alpha Institute, which teaches consensus and offers facilitation services, has been teaching and facilitating consensus for more than 40 years. Caroline has taught consensus to most intentional community-based facilitators in North America, and works with Hewlett-Packard, University of Massachusetts, U.S. Green Party, and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, and many other organizations. db@peak.net.



Karl Steyaert responds:

When it comes to this question of maintaining and changing agreements, I particularly enjoy drawing on the approach employed in sociocracy. In sociocratic decision-making, all decisions have a “term limit,” whether it is an agreement to have a five-minute check-in at the beginning of meetings, or the selection of someone to the position of treasurer for an organization.

Essentially, this consists of having a review date on decisions, so that an organization revisits the choice made in the past and determines whether the decision is continuing to meet the needs intended, or whether a new, adjusted strategy might better meet the needs in the group. Term limits thereby allow for dynamic organizational learning, relying on an ongoing feedback loop: from deciding to acting to assessing, and back to deciding.

For example, in September a member of my community had a proposal for a rotating “house tending” system. Seeking

order and ease, she suggested a plan with each community member taking responsibility for a particular set of house chores (recycling, trash, cleaning, etc) for the month. Because some community members had concerns about the new arrangement, we set a term limit of two months, deciding to revisit the policy in November.

In November, we saw the term limit marked on our community calendar and revisited the decision. Finding that people were wanting more companionship and variety in their house tending, we adjusted the policy by creating teams of two people for each set of chores, and rotating every two weeks, setting a new term limit on this decision as well. However, if the house tending system had been working smoothly, we simply could have set a new term limit, say, to revisit the original decision in six months or a year.

In sociocratic decision-making, all decisions have a “term limit.”

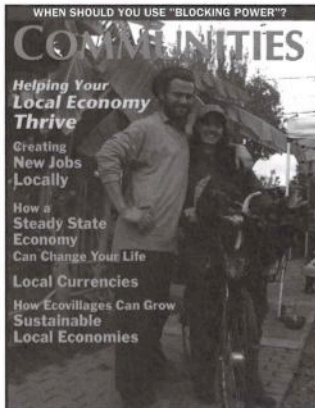
Not only does this approach prevent old decisions from becoming “stuck,” but it also encourages more freedom and confidence in trying out with new ways of doing things, as all decision-makers know that they will naturally revisit the choice and can make another agreement when the term is up. Ultimately, I find that this kind of adaptive decision-making is essential to a healthy, evolving organization and leads to decisions that meet more of the needs of everyone involved.☸

Karl Steyaert is a facilitator, trainer, and consultant who enjoys cultivating life-serving systems for individuals and organizations. Formerly an educator and facilitator at the Findhorn community in Scotland, he has experience in formal consensus, Nonviolent Communication, and sociocratic decision-making methods. Karl is also the cofounder of Bodhi House, a living-learning community based in Oakland, California. ksteyaert@gmail.com.

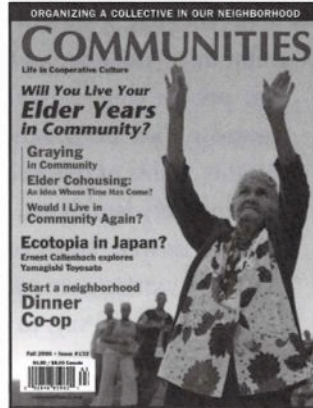
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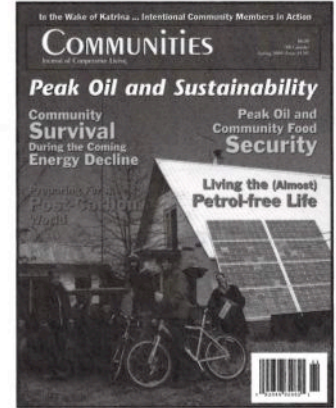
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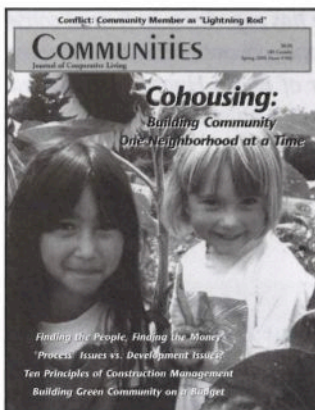
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A Community that Cherishes You



STACEY MALASKY

When we arrived at the small rural community for a weekend open house, it was pretty obvious there was something wrong. From what we'd read and heard, the 20-year-old community of a dozen or so members seemed to have their act together, so the odd "vibe" was confusing. The weekend was a well-planned event in a carefully thought-out community plan. Everybody was cordial, but stand-offish, maybe a bit defensive, and there was a strong sense of sorrow in the group.

It was none of our business, and we didn't want to pry, but to come into this sort of a situation without any knowledge of what is going on is quite disturbing. A kind soul saw our discomfort and quietly told us that one of the core members had left the community and her husband to pursue other interests. Everyone seemed shaken. Her husband—we'll call him Mark—a normally vibrant, outgoing man, looked for all the world like a cancer patient, with a pain frozen deep inside him. We were at a loss as to what to do or say ourselves, but in this time of grief we saw something special happening. The community really was bearing him up emotionally. Most of it was subtle—a hand on his shoulder or an arm around him, a gentle back rub, taking up a conversation when he lost the thread, pointing out something to do when he looked like he was fading. Mark's community "family" was doing their job as well as I have ever seen; validating him, soothing him, needing him. I remember thinking, "This is what community can be."

*I remember thinking,
"This is what community can be."*

Mark seemed to know what he still had despite his loss. He was also reaching out to his community, letting the healing happen, because they needed it too. Late one night, a toddler and her mother were having the customary argument about bedtime. Both mom and girl were angry and beyond tired. There was no way mom was getting those pajamas on the little girl without a fight. Fortunately the little one knew what she wanted. She wrenched the pajamas out of mom's hand and made her way determinedly across the room. With

a satisfied grunt she handed the pajamas to Mark and climbed up in his lap for him to put them on her. As he started to laugh something cold in him that was melting seemed to melt a little faster. Soon almost everyone was laughing. Mom even managed a smile. I was reminded what a blessing it is to live in a community that cherishes you. ☼

Chris McClellan, his wife and four kids live in Ohio when they aren't out gathering information for the natural building books he writes and publishes. As a board member for the Natural Building Network, Chris helps promote the idea that small, simple houses built from local materials with community support are good for the soul, the neighborhood and the planet. www.naturalbuildingnetwork.org



DEBORAH G. LEIGHTON

Board members and students engaged in service—in this case, repairing a drainage culvert behind the California Fresh Buffet parking lot. (Left to right) Lamiel Phiri, CPL graduate from Zimbabwe; board member David Baggett-Fyten; and Stephen Leighton, MD, a CPL faculty member.

I Slept and Dreamt that Life Was Joy

After 20 years of volunteer service,
the Center for Purposeful Living
became a residential
intentional community.

*I slept and dreamt that life was joy;
Then I awoke and realized
That life was Service.
And then I went to work—
And lo and behold I discovered that
Service is Joy.*
—Rabindranath Tagore

At 7:45 on a sunny Saturday morning, my wife Penelope and I walk from our small housing unit through the 15-acre site of our intentional community, the Center for Purposeful Living (CPL) to our main Center building to begin a community workday. About 20 people of all ages are already gathered in a circle, and more are arriving. We sense a joyful anticipation in the group; it will be a pleasure to work outdoors today. At 8:00 a.m. we join hands for a moment of silence. After a few questions and last-minute work assignments, we set off to begin our projects.

One crew will wash and seal the deck area around the flower garden; another will paint some of the buildings; a third group will prepare the ground behind the new set of housing units for a new lawn. Two men who have been involved with the Center's work for 20 years will top the Cyprus trees along the front berm. My group will sand and paint an old metal swing set for the children.

As I work on the swing set and scan our beautiful grounds, I see the three sets of recently constructed condominiums, our main Center building, the multi-purpose building, and the Family Care medical offices. I am filled with awe at what a dynamic organism the Center for Purposeful Living has become. And yet, when we started out 20 years ago, forming a residential community was not our primary intention at all.

I'd like to tell you how we came to found our intentional community—which didn't actually have anything to do with community living at all until the last few years of our 20-year history!

Our project began in the mid-eighties, when a small group of volunteers began caring for terminally ill people at the rural farmhouse home of one of the volunteers in the foothills of western North Carolina. Some volunteers commuted from other areas, and a few lived full-time on site. It soon became clear that as lovely as our rural setting was, its remote location was hindering our ability to engage more volunteers and connect with a larger number of the ill and dying people we wanted to serve. After several group meetings and lengthy



AUGUST L. MEYLAND, III

CPL ran the all-volunteer Care for the Terminally Ill Project from 1991 through 2000. Sachiko, a volunteer from Japan, cares for one of the Center's hospice guests.

abilities, mediation service, and health and wellness programs for hundreds of people, all delivered at no charge.

As you can probably imagine, when we first began we often found it challenging to work cooperatively. Some felt strongly about how the center's operations should be carried out, and didn't hesitate to make their views known. Those who were less assertive tended to go along with the group's decisions, even when they didn't agree with them. Still others would react with hurt feelings or irritation to perceived

When we first began we often found it challenging to work cooperatively.

discussions, we decided to relocate 70 miles away to a 15-acre site on the outskirts of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

By this time we had achieved a much higher degree of cohesiveness, stability, and capacity to cooperate than we had when we began. So in Winston-Salem we took on a much larger vision and created a nonprofit organization, the Human Service Alliance (HSA), with four projects: hospice care for the terminally ill, respite care for children with severe dis-

abilities. Over time, we learned how to be more cooperative and productive group members.

For example, Stephen, a longtime volunteer and CPL board member, describes his learning process. "I volunteered part-time in the health and wellness project, where we assisted people with a variety of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis, and chronic post-traumatic pain. Each client was served by a team of health practitioners from different fields.

“When I started working as a member of these teams, I assumed that, because I was a medical doctor, I knew more than the other members of the team. I thought of myself as an authority. But I soon discovered that the other team members often were able to help the client even more than I could. They sometimes had insights which were far more useful than mine.

“Gradually I learned to become a better team player. I learned to work with others as though we are all of one mind, for the benefit of the client. This lesson has been more powerful and more satisfying than anything else I have ever experienced in my medical career.”

All along our project has been self-funded, as many group members donated around ten percent of their annual income. How could we afford to volunteer full time and donate money as well? It sure wasn't because we had wealthy backers or large donations! Rather, it was often the case that one family member—sometimes the husband, sometimes the wife—worked at a regular paying job or was self-employed, and the other spouse offered the volunteer care, often full-time. And together these couples would donate some of their annual earnings to the project. Others simply volunteered after work and on weekends. This arrangement would change over time: sometimes the working partner worked fewer hours or left



CPL operates California Fresh Buffet restaurant as part of their one-year Transformation Through Service education program. Benjamin Pusser, DO, a graduate of the program, serves freshly-baked cheese biscuits to customers waiting for a table.

TODD THORNBURG

for going to great lengths to create a loving, homelike environment for our hospice guests.

“Howard was 87 years old and dying of prostate cancer,” one of our volunteers recalls. “One evening when I was on duty, Harold was breathing irregularly and appeared to be quite frightened and agitated. He was waving his hand shakily. He had been semi-comatose for several hours. Then it occurred to

me to put my hand over his heart. When I did that, he immediately responded by putting his hand on top of mine; and then I put my hand over his hand. There we were, our hands stacked one on top of the other. He immediately quieted.

“When I had to leave to care for another guest, Howard became agitated. Then I returned, put my hand back on his chest, and he calmed down. It was obvious that it was very soothing for Howard to have someone by his side.

“When another volunteer came into the

room, we both sang a hymn. Then she got a hymnal and we sang some more hymns. At one point, the two of us started giggling about how tolerant Howard was of our untrained voices. It was very difficult for me to leave Howard's side that afternoon, even when the shift ended.

“That was the most important thing I had ever done in my whole life—to be at Howard's side at a time like that. It wasn't glamorous and it wasn't for anyone else to

How could we afford to volunteer full time and donate money as well?

their job and began volunteering as well. We didn't have any rule or agreement about how we managed our volunteer hours or gave financially or how much to give; it just seemed to work out this way.

A few years later we held a successful fund-raising campaign and financed the construction of a two-story, 8,000-square-foot facility on our Winston-Salem site to house six guests at a time in our Care for the Terminally Ill project. There, HSA volunteers quickly earned a reputation

see, but it was one of the most profound love stories I had ever participated in. It became clear that if Howard had been my own father or brother, I couldn't have loved him any more than I did in those moments we shared together.”

Our volunteers to HSA came from the U.S., Europe, the former Soviet Union, China, Australia, Japan, South America, and Africa to live at the Center and volunteer full-time—some for as long as a year. At the same time,

we members of the core group committed to regular caregiving shifts and assumed responsibility for managing the daily operations of the Center, day and night, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. The Care for the Terminally Ill Project provided annual services valued at more than \$500,000 on an annual budget of only \$65,000, thanks to our all-volunteer model.

independent documentary producer Bill Mosher created a 30-minute documentary about the Human Service Alliance, "Touching the Soul," for the PBS *Visionaries* series. In response to growing public interest in HSA's work, Board member Sanford Danziger, MD, and I compiled and self-published a book, *Better Than Money Can Buy: The New Volunteers*, about

The doctor's patients enjoyed driving by and seeing their physician—sweaty, grimy, and tethered to a rope—pounding nails into the roof.

Not only were the volunteers' lives transformed by their service experiences at HSA, the guests and other individuals served by the volunteers were transformed as well. For example, Amy was 82 when she came to HAS, and was soon famous for being one of the most acid-tongued and demanding of our guests. Her sarcasm and criticism were razor-sharp and she used them unsparingly on our volunteer caregivers.

At first, many of the volunteers were put off by her behavior. Some had thoughts of how to avoid her. But outwardly, they cheerfully attended to Amy's many whims. Whether they felt that way or not, the volunteers acted as if being chewed out by Amy was the most wonderful thing that could be happening at that moment. In some sense, this was true.

With all the love that she was receiving, Amy couldn't help but respond. Slowly but surely she began to soften. It was visible in her face and eyes. Amy criticized her caregivers less and less, and finally stopped. On occasion, she thanked them. Then they began to sing songs and hymns together. Amy had once sung in a choir and loved to sing, so sometimes several volunteers would go into her room and all would sing joyfully for an hour.

After several weeks, Amy began to inquire about individual volunteers. She looked forward to their periods of service, and she didn't want to see them leave when their volunteer shifts came to an end.

One day Amy asked to see one of the volunteers who had cared for her during her first week at the Center. "I just want to apologize for being cruel to you the first time I met you," she told the volunteer. "I knew what I was doing. I did it on purpose and I'm sorry. Please forgive me."

Amy's transformation became a powerful lesson for the volunteers who witnessed it. They clearly saw that their ability to maintain a positive attitude during the initial difficult weeks was a miraculous gift to Amy.

In 1991, the first President Bush named the Human Service Alliance as a "Point of Light." A few years later,

our group-based service work and the principles and practices we were learning along the way.

One of our most ambitious projects was when we purchased and totally reconstructed a large, deteriorating firehouse on property next to our property, with 40 volunteers, aged 13 to 75. Each weekend and many evenings for four months,



AUGUST L. MAYLAND III

Service is emphasized in every aspect of CPL's activities, from repairing culverts and caring for the terminally ill, to preparing food with love, like this volunteer in the Center's kitchen facilities.

work parties tore through cinder-block walls, pulled out antiquated furnaces and ducts, and gutted the building. Then these same men and women rebuilt it again. Only a few had prior construction experience, and they became the hands-on teachers and supervisors of the others.

Replacing three layers of old roofing on a high, sharply pitched roof was a major challenge. None of our volunteers had prior experience in roofing. Several roofing companies said the work was far too dangerous for amateurs and would not even offer suggestions about how it might be done for fear of liability should someone be hurt or killed.

We formed a roofing team to take on the challenge, consisting of a salesman, a biochemist, a lawyer, a medical

On some weekends, 25 inexperienced workers swarmed over the building's interior and exterior. Some accidentally dripped paint on others, or sawed off a piece of wood being used by another. Yet everyone was calm, focused, and joyful, and the work proceeded smoothly.

Like this renovation project, the round-the-clock demands of HSA's service projects continued to furnish an abundance of learning opportunities for our group. Whenever conflicts arose or when some of us started to push our own personal agendas, we asked ourselves a simple series of questions that would invariably transform negative and disruptive energy into something more positive and constructive: "What is our purpose? What will produce the most good for the greatest number?"

Many of us have discovered what we call "reversing the flow," that when more of one's energy is channeled into selfless service, one begins to change.

doctor, a truck driver, and several businessmen. The team got a book on roofing, bought materials, and learned as they went along: how to yank up the old shingles without slipping, how to transport 80-pound packs of new shingles across the steep slope, how to work safely as a team in a new situation. The doctor's patients enjoyed driving by and seeing their physician—sweaty, grimy, and tethered to a rope—pounding nails into the roof.

What is my motive or intention? What needs to be done now, or what's the next right thing to do? Am I willing, right now, to leave my personal agendas at the door while I am serving?" Over time we developed techniques for recognizing when our thoughts, feelings, or reactions to others were turning negative and consciously replacing them with positive and constructive thoughts and responses.

(continued on p. 74)

Our Nonprofits

Human Service Alliance (HSA) is a charitable nonprofit based in Winston-Salem, N.C., with the mission of serving, and providing others with the opportunity to serve, as members of a cooperative group. From the late eighties until 2000, HSA operated four service projects: care for the terminally ill, respite care for disabled children, mediation, and health and wellness, all of which were provided at no charge and staffed entirely by volunteers. In 2000, HSA terminated these projects to launch the Center for Purposeful Living and its year-long educational program, along with its service-learning laboratory restaurant, the California Fresh Buffet.

Center for Purposeful Living (CPL) is an affiliated educational nonprofit that offers a year-long

educational program in personal transformation, service entrepreneurship, and practical spirituality. It also is the name of the intentional community of CPL core board members who live in small common-wall housing units on the Center's 15-acre campus. (www.purposeful.org)

Foundation for Purposeful Living, a project of CPL, gives up to 5 percent of its endowment value of one million dollars-plus in small grants (\$1,000 to \$10,000) to support diverse and innovative forms of service, educational, and research endeavors that are volunteer- and group-based and embody the spirit of cooperation. (www.purposefulfoundation.org)

—J.K.



*Lively discussion and catching up on each other's news helps build a sense of community among WISE Circle members.
(Left to right) Karen De Soto, Doreen Blumenfeld, and Marilyn Townsend.*

WISE Circles Communities of Support for WOMEN

BY DOREEN BLUMENFELD

Wow! As I sat in my small pine-paneled counseling office in northern California, I heard the same story one more time. The woman in front of me was 52 years old, divorced, had an adult child living in a distant city, and she was talking about feeling isolated in our small town.

I was a counselor in a rural county wellness program, with a client base comprised of county employees. Many of my clients were women in the 40-60 age range. The most common issue I was hearing was the stress of being alone in mid-life,

how lonely that felt. These women desired a greater and more meaningful connection with others.

And like many women working full time and doing the usual home chores, she was dog tired. I heard varieties of this same situation from many women, married and single, rich, poor, and in between. Most were concerned with maintaining their health and their quality of life, and yet many yearned to participate in social action, practice a spiritual life, and kick up their heels sometimes in fun. Often really tired at the end of the day, they wished they had support and encouragement

to make the needed changes. I also wanted my own life to be better in these very same ways.

As a 57-year-old, I knew I didn't have the energy I'd had when I was younger. I had a more difficult time completing outdoor projects on what I laughingly refer to as my "ranch,"

wooded acreage with my friendly feral cat colony. I was

feeling discouraged by a chronic health condition. As a result of the emotional turmoil after various friends and family members died, I realized that life was ticking away a lot faster

than it seemed to when I was younger. Too much of my time was spent in financial survival and not enough time in sharing and enjoying life. I wanted to savor the dear friends I had and I wanted to spend more time with them. Our busy and varied work schedules frequently made it difficult to meet for dinner

or a weekend afternoon. I could also identify with the fear of

growing older without extended family support. I need support driving to medical procedures and in general dealing with health challenges.

Sometimes I just wanted a place to be deeply heard.



Field trips and hiking excursions are part of the community-building process. Group members Holly Barnard and Jan Pallen-Fike at Yosemite.

I wanted an exercise buddy and companionship in exploring my creative dreams. Sometimes I just wanted a place to be deeply heard.

For years I admired the spirit of intentional communities. However, supportive as they seemed to be, I was not willing to make the major lifestyle change to become part of a residential community. I wanted more privacy and autonomy than I thought I'd have if I lived in community. But as a fairly innovative person with a lot of initiative, I longed for a supportive nonresidential community for myself, which could also serve as a model for others.

After much discussion with friends and researching different organizations, I launched WISE Circles (Women Involved in Supportive Engagement), small, nonresidential women's support communities based on practicing the values and meeting the needs of myself and many of my clients and friends as we face the "third trimester" of life.

The women's support group process from earlier decades didn't seem to fit for our current life challenges. I didn't want a group that only talked about problems, complained about what a drag it is to get older, or only processed personal issues. I wanted a group that was proactive and would make contributions to our world and encourage each member to examine her life. I wanted to create a model that would withstand the needs of aging members and also not fall apart because of control issues or lack of focus.

I wanted to provide a specific structure for women who were inexperienced with group process as well as for expe-

for over a year now. Some of us were friends before, and some are new friends. One woman is semiretired, three are employed and dealing with stressful jobs, and two of us are struggling self-employed mavericks. Only two group members are able to look forward to actual "retirement" benefits or sufficient assets that will provide for expected needs as we age. The remainder of us plan on being creative in meeting our retirement needs. Our youngest member is 48 years old and our oldest is 60.

Before our group, I saw my friends infrequently, but now I can count on a monthly meeting of approximately three or four hours that nourishes my spirit in a deep way. We

usually meet on a weekend afternoon, but we sometimes meet on weekday evenings. We love to share a great potluck meal. In fact, our meals became so elaborate that it began to be too much work, so we cut back to only two or three people contributing something light or snack food. We learned to limit our check-in to approximately ten minutes each, without any cross talk unless feedback is requested.

It has taken us almost a year of processing our various health, emotional, and relationship challenges to move on to a level that is outside of the immediacy of our own personal issues and survival fears. As one of several guides of the group, I was

aware of some of the "growing pains" perhaps more than some other members. We had some hesitation about opening up our personal homes for meetings—how tidy did our home need to be for viewing to meet our personal comfort



Author Dorren Blumenfeld created the first WISE Circle so she and her friends could experience more mutual support and connection.

Now I can count on a monthly meeting that nourishes my spirit in a deep way.

rienced group members. I wanted a means by which a woman, new to a community, could create a connection with like-minded souls. After months of thought and discussion I finally came up with a model that is simultaneously quite structured yet time-flexible enough to account for individual needs or preferences.

I decided to try out the WISE Circle model for myself and my immediate friends. Our six-member group has been meeting

level? Once we shared our various personal spaces, fears of such judgments evaporated.

We now know each other on a much deeper level, and we are beginning to be more actively involved in taking on political and ecological issues. Some of us have volunteered to research and present different ecological and political issues to the rest of us. We write brief letters in support of ecological

(continued on p. 75)

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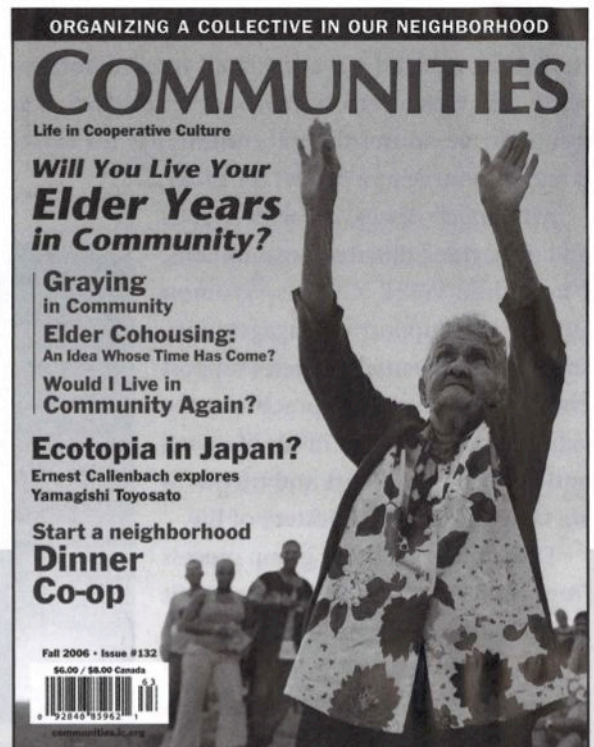
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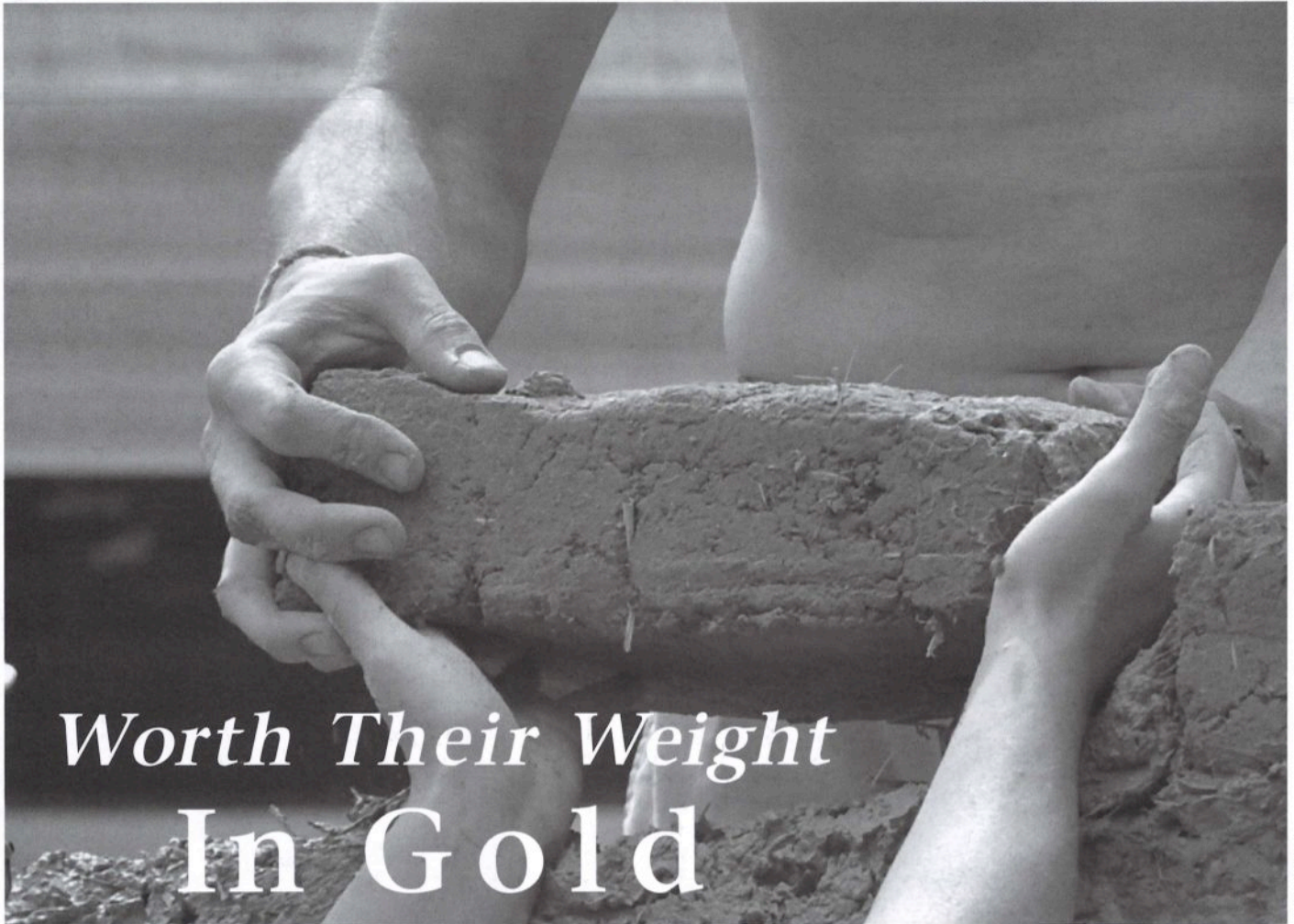
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Worth Their Weight In Gold

ALBERT BATES

While interns, work exchangers, and residential course participants certainly get a lot out of temporarily living in community, they're also a wonderful source of potential wealth for their host communities. They just might stay, join the community, and contribute immeasurably to its long-term well-being. I should know. As part of the membership committee at Earthaven Ecovillage, I'm always on the lookout for potential new members.

And everywhere I look I see powerfully contributing community members who started out here as temporary folk—trading room, board, life in community, and sometimes workshops, for labor, or labor and money. For example, Brian Love spent the summer at Earthaven as a permaculture intern in 2001 when he was 16. Now 21 and a full community member, Brian co-focalizes our Forestry and Agriculture committee, serves on our Finance, Projects, and Strategic Planning committees, regularly facilitates community Council meetings, and co-owns and co-manages both an onsite natural building construction firm and a four-acre integrated food/fiber/fuel agricultural project. In fact, Brian was part of the two-man team who designed and built the new overnight lodging facilities on my homesite.

Kimchi Rylander, a summer permaculture intern in 2002, stayed on to join us and now serves in the key role of "Airspinner," providing leadership and management skills to our Promotions, Visitors, and Membership committees. Community member Gaspar Robles first spent a year as a work exchanger in 2003, and now serves as our resident chiropractor and a skilled repair and maintenance worker. Cynthea Lee Rose began as participant in a two-week work camp in 1998, became a work exchanger in 2006, and now as a Provisional Member, serves on our Local Currency and Promotions committees. And, I'm proud to say, Cynthea has a new part-time job here—as layout manager-in-training for *Communities* magazine. So from my particular perspective, interns and work exchangers are worth their weight in gold.

But does everyone feel this way? Is hosting people who come and go the best use of a community's time? How does it feel to invest the heart and time in making new friends, only to say goodbye? Do our well-intended programs for temporary residents sometimes go awry? And what do interns and work exchangers have to say about us?

We'll plunge right into these opinions and the issues behind them in the next few pages. You may never see an intern the same way again!☼



JAY STEINMAN

Interns and work exchangers learn a wide variety of sustainability and community living skills, like Volunteers For Peace volunteer Audrey Lothe, who learned to build with cob at O.U.R. Ecovillage in British Columbia.

What Interns and Work Exchangers Say *About Us...*

I absolutely loved my stay at Lost Valley, recalls Polly Robinson, who served as an intern and later a live-in course participant at Lost Valley Educational Center in Oregon. “I loved being surrounded by people of all ages who genuinely cared for me, and the generally relaxed atmosphere of the place, I felt like I was a community member the whole time I was there.”

Communities magazine asked a handful of temporary communitarians—work exchangers, interns, and live-in course participants—to share their experiences of temporary com-

munity. These women and men reported that their lessons were often planting and building; their teachers, the gardens, animals, and children.

“I went through a full-on transformation.”

Nathaniel Nordin-Tuininga, who also lived at Lost Valley, first as a work trader, then an intern, and lastly as a residential student, is equally enthusiastic about his time there.

“Interacting with Lost Valley and participating in both their permaculture and personal growth workshops taught me so much about myself, my relationship to the surrounding environment, and my connection

with others. I learned a great deal about my own capacity to grow and develop into the person I most want to be, while cultivating a harmonious relationship to the rest of the natural world. I was introduced to new ways of interacting with plants and animals in order to meet my basic needs. I received personal instruction and hands-on training in land and garden projects. I participated in yoga, dance, mediation, saunas, hot tubs, stargazing, sports, games, group outings and other events—and always had an amazing group of people to share these experiences with. And emotional well-being was better attended to at Lost Valley than in any other community I have visited or been involved with.”

Similarly, work exchanger Ron Laverdiere found true utopia at La’akea Community in Hawai’i, not because it was perfect—but because it was real.

“At La’akea I was able to be fully honest with myself in all aspects,” he reports. “This came from being transparent in relationships, offering support whenever it

“I learned to stretch myself.”

was needed and feeling supported at all times, plus the willingness of community members to connect in speech or dance or music.”

Even the simple joy of eating food on the same day he helped harvest it amounted to a life-changing experience for him.

“Everything in my life was up for question and I resolved many issues with the help of the community,” he adds. “I went through a full-on transformation during my time there.”

Surprising perhaps is the amount of time such a transformation required. In Ron’s case—just a month.

As enthusiastic as many folks are about their time in community, some had concerns as well.

Nathaniel notes that finding enough personal space at Lost Valley was challenging at times.

Michael “Mojohito” Tchudi, an apprentice and then a work trader at Emerald Earth community in northern California, found that the community’s policies regarding interpersonal interactions only served to become chal-

lenges themselves. “A disadvantage of maintaining a practice of nonconfrontational communication is that it was difficult and awkward to address issues of disrespectful or passive-aggressive behavior with permanent members of the community,” he says.

Sometimes the short-term nature of the experience hindered the social acceptance of people who don’t have an outgoing nature.

“As an introvert who doesn’t make friends very quickly, I did sometimes miss the close relationships that long-term living situations have provided me in the past,” recalls Carrie Dickerson, who lived at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia for three months as a conference intern. “This was also my first experience living away from the city.”

What’s in a Name?

Work Exchanger, Work Trader. The community exchanges room and board for labor. Usually it’s a straight-up trade, but sometimes the work exchanger pays a small fee; often just to cover the cost of their food.

Intern, Apprentice. The community offers a more formally organized educational experience with onsite courses and workshops as well as room and board, in exchange for labor and a substantial fee. An internship or apprenticeship is often in a specific area, such as garden intern, natural building apprentice, and so on.

Residential Student, Course Participant. The community (or one of its members) offers a formal educational program such as a class, weekend workshop, or longer-term course, and room and board, for a fee (and sometimes for work in the community as well). Community-based courses can include yoga, meditation, permaculture, natural building, herbal medicine, and so on.

—Editor



Polly Robinson



Michael "Mojohito" Tchudi



Molly Morgan

RICK BEACH

Mostly, however, the people we talked with found that their growth experiences in community far outweighed any challenges.

"Most notably I discovered that my capacity for physical work and exertion is far greater than I had thought, and that I am capable of working in rather extreme heat," observes Mojohito. "Maintaining a lifestyle of living close to the land and contributing in projects that directly benefitted both the community and myself was so satisfying."

Work trader Molly Morgan turned 50 during her three-month stay at Emerald Earth, a milestone that she says was accidental in timing but rich with its rewards.

"I learned to stretch myself while there," says Molly, whose interests were building and gardening. "I was learning so many new things, and I was really clumsy and slow at them, but the community members were unfailingly supportive and patient with me. I learned that even at mid-life I could feel awk-

What Community Hosts Should Know

"Be as transparent and up-front about expectations and opportunities as possible, such as, for example, different housing options available, and possibility for longer-term participation in the community," advises Michael "Mojohito" Tchudi, who served as an apprentice and work trader at Emerald Earth in California. "Also, permanent members need to be highly proactive in addressing internal issues and personality conflicts to minimize the negative effects these can cause on short-term residents," he cautions.

"Thoughtful planning, organization, and setting realistic expectations are key," advises Jodie Emmett, who has a background in nonprofit management and program development, and recently completed a 10-week natural building course in a rural ecovillage. "Expressing a realistic picture of the program will allow potential course participants to determine if it will be a good fit for them. Telling people the community is one thing but providing another underestimates the participants. This kind of dynamic requires the community to go above and beyond the students' expectations in order to succeed, but it usually just sets up the community for failure."

"The Emerald Earth people needed to interview me and also work with me to be sure they all thought I would fit in," recalls Molly Morgan, who was a work trader at Emerald Earth. "You can do a lot of interviewing, but there's always a vibe that's important to check out in person before you both commit to serious time together."

"Having a personal liaison or 'go-to' person from the community is helpful," suggests Travis Fowler, who was a work exchanger at La'akea in Hawaii. "Also, having an up-front agreement to how long a visit is going to last and/or how to deal with situations that aren't working out is very important. There shouldn't be any surprises surrounding this."

Ron Laverdiere, also a work exchanger at La'akea, found morning check-ins especially helpful. "Morning check-ins were a really good way of connecting community residents to each other," he recalls. "It also helped me to feel that I was important to the community. I had everyone's attention at least once every day."

—D.F.

ward and untalented and still be okay with learning new skills and processes. It was humbling and encouraging.”

For many temporary residents it seems that the most amazing experience a community offered them was the simple gift of caring, a social blessing many reported to be far too rare in their regular lives in fast-paced, money-obsessed mainstream society.

“I loved the fact that the well-being of the people of the community was just as important as the work,” says Polly Robinson about Lost Valley. “I loved that there was such a diversity of thought and ways of life, yet we all accepted each other, and for the most part, lived together in peace.”

“I learned a great deal about my own capacity to grow and develop into the person I most want to be, while cultivating a harmonious relationship to the rest of the natural world,” notes Nathaniel about Lost Valley.

Although the level of participation for temporary workers obviously varies from community to community, Molly recalls that Emerald Earth welcomed her into a role far more substantial than that of visitor or observer. She was made to feel just as welcome at the meeting places or around the kitchen table as any of the full-time residents.

“The community members were very open about their lives and inclusive of the work traders,” she says. “There were very few meetings to which we were not invited. I asked a lot of ques-

The problem occurs when participants see the gap between the founders' vision and what's actually on the ground.

She stressed that she'd never felt so well cared for in life. “It was the first time I had ever had all my needs met—physical, emotional, social, spiritual. I had so much love and support that I felt like I was able to truly flourish.”

Travis Fowler, another La'akea work exchanger, explained how living in such a radically nurturing environment truly proved to be the social garden he needed for growing into the person he desired to be in life. “I realized how emotionally closed I was in the ‘real world,’ how I could not express my true feelings or ask for what I wanted or needed for fear of being judged. The community was supportive and was a safe place to express myself. In the community, I felt more free to give the love I was keeping inside—and wow, that felt good!”

tions and I was never once told it was inappropriate to ask that nor received any other bad vibe. This was especially important to me because the community was dealing with some very serious personnel issues while I was there and not knowing what was going on would have been very uncomfortable.”

The communities in our small sample seemed to do a pretty good job making their short-term residents comfortable, too. Although rustic accommodations can often be a visitor's complaint, many of these visiting workers stressed that the drastic and unique change in housing and food only amounted to an even better experience for them.

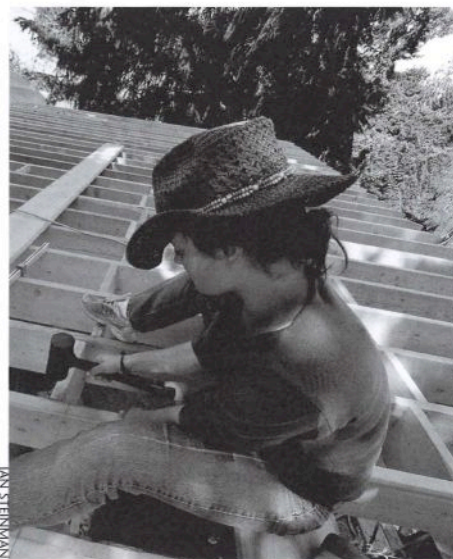
“I felt particularly grateful to stay in a beautiful, hand-built natural straw bale and cob house,” Mojohito says.



Travis Fowler



Guillermo Maciel.



Jodie Emmett

"I was always well fed, and always had a warm dry place to sleep, so my physical comfort along with everything else was well taken care of," says Polly about Lost Valley. (Yet Nathaniel must not have thought so, since he recommends "improved housing options during the rainy season" for the same community.)

Although Molly disliked her stint living in a tent at Emerald Earth, she raved about the meals. "The food—it was sensational! I ate a lot and still lost 15 pounds. It was great!"

"What I really enjoyed was the intense focus of learning natural building techniques, the opportunity to share our experience in the natural building trade, and the variety of people and experiences in the program," recalls Guillermo.

Yet the couple was surprised to find differences between their expectations of a course and the reality they found once they got there. For example, they expected to be living in an intentional community, but soon realized that only the program

***Sometimes they didn't know what was expected of them
in terms of work hours, community participation,
financial arrangements, or how long they could stay.***

Two short-term residents both liked and felt some disappointment in their community stay. Guillermo A. Maciel and Jodie Emmett were participants a ten-week natural building course at a rural ecovillage. "I liked the natural building teachers immensely," Jodie reports. "Two instructors in particular were incredible people; each was an inspiration to me. I also enjoyed the natural building projects we worked on in other locations, as well as the optional weekend workshops on specialized topics. Plus, we were living in a gorgeous setting."

director/founder and his partner lived on the property on a permanent basis; the other founders either lived elsewhere or were no longer involved. "It would have been a lot easier for all of us if we were told in advance that there was no 'community' currently," Jodie observes. "And that the founding group was going through a transition and wanted natural buildings for what they would be doing sometime in the future."

Guillermo and Jodie also expected that they and the other students would have much more say in how they'd live their daily lives in a place which was billed as "your community." But they were often told that they couldn't do or make use of certain materials, go to certain locations or use certain buildings on the property, or employ certain kinds of communication styles. "It was difficult to tell when appropriate regulation of behavior was for the common good of our 'community' of students, and when it was just micro-managing us to fit the program director's vision of community," recalls Guillermo. It gradually became clear that there were three distinct parties on the property with different rights and responsibilities: the program director and his partner (resident owners who had final say on everything), the program staff (who reported to the program director), and the course participants, who didn't in fact have much decision-making voice. "There was a genuine intention to create an inclusive environment and avoid an 'us versus them' mentality," he adds, "but unfortunately, towards the end of the program, we failed in this intention." The process was exacerbated when the program director would change the rules about what was expected of participants, or what was or was not allowed on the property. It would have helped, Jodie points out, if there had been complete transparency about the role the students were to play in the evolution of the ecovillage.



TONY SIRNA

Ted Sterling

Yet the couple respects the program director and admires what he's trying to accomplish in the project. They don't believe he misled the group consciously. "I think the idea that the community belonged to everyone is part of his vision about what a community could and should be, and he was trying to tell this to *himself*—like having his own personal mantra," Jodie speculates. "I don't think he could be honest with himself about the real situation, because visionaries can live inside their visions—the problem occurs when participants see the gap between the founders' vision and what's actually on the ground."

In fact, the most common concern of the people *Communities* interviewed was "structure." Many of these temporary residents, while insisting on the magic of their stay, admitted that the lack of a more formal structure ended up cheating their experiences out of some of the potential worth. They gave examples of not knowing what was expected of them in terms of work hours or community participation, a lack of communication regarding financial arrangements or how long they could stay, and sometimes a general lack of any kind of direction for the work they were expected to do.

Several suggested that communities who host short-term workers designate a go-between who could meet with them not just at the beginning of their stay, but several times throughout the visit to check their progress.

One suggested that communities also work to get a commitment from long-term residents in terms of their treatment and involvement with visitors. "Make sure there is a solid commitment on the part of as many community members as possible for including temporary members and rolling them into the fabric of daily life," advises Ted Sterling, who served as a three-month intern at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri.

But Ted certainly liked what he saw at Dancing Rabbit, so much so that a year and a half later he moved back and remains as a full-time resident today.

"I met my partner here. We now live here in a home we built and have had a child together, Aurelia, who is not quite six months old," he says. "Talk about life changing! I consider myself a changed person." ❁

Darin Fenger works as a newspaper reporter in southern Arizona.

Planning Your Own Community Adventure?

Field-Tested Advice from Interns and Work Exchangers

If you're planning your own short-term stay in community, consider the advice of these experienced community visitors.

- Get comfortable with the community members. I was hesitant to open up at the beginning, but when I saw community members speaking from their hearts, it made me comfortable enough to follow suit. Do your research. I read about La'akea first, and went there with some confidence that I would fit in. It's important to know what you're getting into. —Ron Laverdiere

- Don't be shy or embarrassed to ask questions or ask for what you need. Strive to be emotionally honest—even if what you have to say is not the 'easy' or 'pretty' answer. Don't be afraid to share affection or appreciation. Be confident that you can handle anything that comes your way. —Travis Fowler

- If you have a good sense of what you want to learn and experience while at a community, make sure you communicate what you want clearly and have an agreement about how this is going to happen. Go into the situation with an open mind and heart to see if you can learn and experience things you'd never have imagined. —Molly Morgan

- Discover and establish boundaries between your personal time and community time. If you don't take the time for personal space, it may become difficult to engage fully with the community. Keep an open mind, actively seek out projects that engage you, and cultivate kindness. —Michael "Mojohito" Tchudi

- Live it fully. Plunge in with abandon and trust those around you to respond to your zeal. Act as a community member to the extent that you can, contributing to making the community one that you would like to live in. —Ted Sterling

- Ask yourself ahead of time how participating in the community's program is part of your own vision and values, and how it will further your own goals. —Guillermo A. Maciel

- Even if you already know a lot about community or the subject of focus in its course or program, really learn to be a student; stay in a proactive observer space. Take what you need from the experience. And if things aren't quite what you expected, know that you can change your experience; it's only temporary! —Jodie Emmett

—D.F.



DONA WILLOUGHBY

Work exchangers at La'akea work in many areas, including food production, like Aniko Willoughby.

Is Hosting Work Exchangers *Worth It?*

Brittany stops by my cabin for a few moments of intimate talk before dinner. (Brittany came here at age 27 as a work exchanger, and after six months of living with us and loving our land, decided to pursue membership. We're elated that she has chosen us as her family and home community. As she and I listen to the melodious birdsong resonating through the rainforest, she gazes out the window and asks, "Do you think it is worth it having work exchangers? Wouldn't it be easier to just do the work ourselves?"

While we called these folks "work exchangers," we soon realized they were much more than that.

It's a valid question. At La'akea, our intentional community on the "Big Island" of Hawaii, we invite folks to live and work here in exchange for a place to stay and the chance to share community life. Today two work exchangers left, and as a result Brittany feels lighter, like a burden was lifted.

La'akea was a permaculture demonstration and educational center for 12 years when our group purchased the site in 2005. Our five members and four trial members include teachers, healers, administrators, facilitators, co-counselors, permacul-

turists, tropical gardeners, carpenters, coconut palm-climbers, and long-term communitarians. We embrace sustainability in our relationships and in our interactions with the Earth, and attempt to produce most of our food on the land. Although the tasks necessary to grow food and keep our home and retreat center functioning are immense, our lives flow with

residents come from all walks of life. They are of varied ages (more younger than older), and are of varied ethnic, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds. They find us in assorted ways: from our exhibit at a local Earth Day celebration, the WWOOFER catalog (“Worldwide Workers on Organic Farms”), our larger Network for New Culture community, our website,

Some arrive penniless and with no transportation. Most have never lived off the grid or lived in an intentional community.

nature and with each other. Life is abundant and good! Why then, do we invite people we don’t know to live here??

It began when, shortly after our arrival, various people began asking that they live with us in exchange for labor, and we agreed. While we called these folks “work exchangers,” we soon realized they were much more than that. We are such a small and intimate group that even short-term residents become woven into the fabric of our community and our individual lives. They not only work alongside us, but participate in our heartshare meetings and morning check-ins, cook with us, eat with us, play with us, and sometimes even bathe with us. We want to support them and we want them to support us in return. Actually, I would like more than that: I would like to open my heart to them and love them. I prefer that people who live here become long-term friends, extended community members, or even core community members. These temporary

or by word of mouth in our local community here on the Big Island. Some arrive penniless and with no transportation. Most have never lived off the grid or lived in an intentional community.



Work exchangers Rose Orleans (left) and Britany MacFarlane, now a trial member, build a chicken coop.

Over the past 18 months, some of the most amazing work exchangers have shared our lives. Their creativity, intelligence, enthusiasm, and joy have enriched us. With the help of these new friends we have planted hundreds of trees, started a mushroom project, and planned and completed a kitchen garden. They have enthusiastically kept the ever-encroaching rainforest jungle at bay with machetes and saws. They have also surfed, held *kava kava* parties (with *kava* roots harvested from our land), built bonfires, played guitars, written new songs, and danced wildly at our marimba concerts.

At the same time, hosting work exchangers has sometimes burdened us with additional work and emotional turmoil,

especially when we attract people who don't share our values of openness, realness, and transparency in communication. We have learned to understand and conserve our own resources of emotional energy. We cannot be available to minister to the emotional needs of work exchangers having difficulties, for example, when our own energies are depleted. The delicate balance of keeping ourselves nourished while nourishing others is not easy. In a community as intimate as ours, maintaining this energy balance is both a personal and a community challenge.

Over time, we have improved our work exchange application process. Our application form now includes questions about a potential work exchanger's specific physical and personal growth skills. We've learned to recognize "red flags," such as when someone requests a work-exchange position because, "I need a place to stay tomorrow." Such inquiries now get more investigation. We're learning when to accept work exchangers, or when, for their sake as well as ours, to turn them down.

Because living in community and living off the grid is very different from how people in mainstream culture live, we have compassion and offer support for the transition folks must go through when they first arrive here. Each work exchanger is assigned a community mentor or liaison. The liaison checks in frequently with the



Work exchangers Darren Lawley and Misha Willoughby with Ruby, one of La'akea's hens.

JUDY DOLMATECH

here, until they and we establish trust about their number of hours worked. The whole community reviews each work exchanger's progress two weeks after their arrival. We ask for and guarantee only one month's stay. As much as we want

to be inclusive, if the fit is wrong, we give a work exchanger two weeks notice to leave.

We try to communicate clearly ahead of time what it will be like to live off the grid in a tropical rain forest, doing manual labor. Mosquitoes, noisy *coqui* frogs, taking only short showers, and mildewed clothes can be part of one's experience here. Because of the problems we've experienced when newcomers lacked knowledge about our systems (battery banks, gray water treatment) or tropical plants (for example, hacking down with machetes our largest passion fruit vine and a rare, exotic Himalayan Damaru tree), we take time for an extensive orientation process to our way of life, a process we're continually fine-tuning.

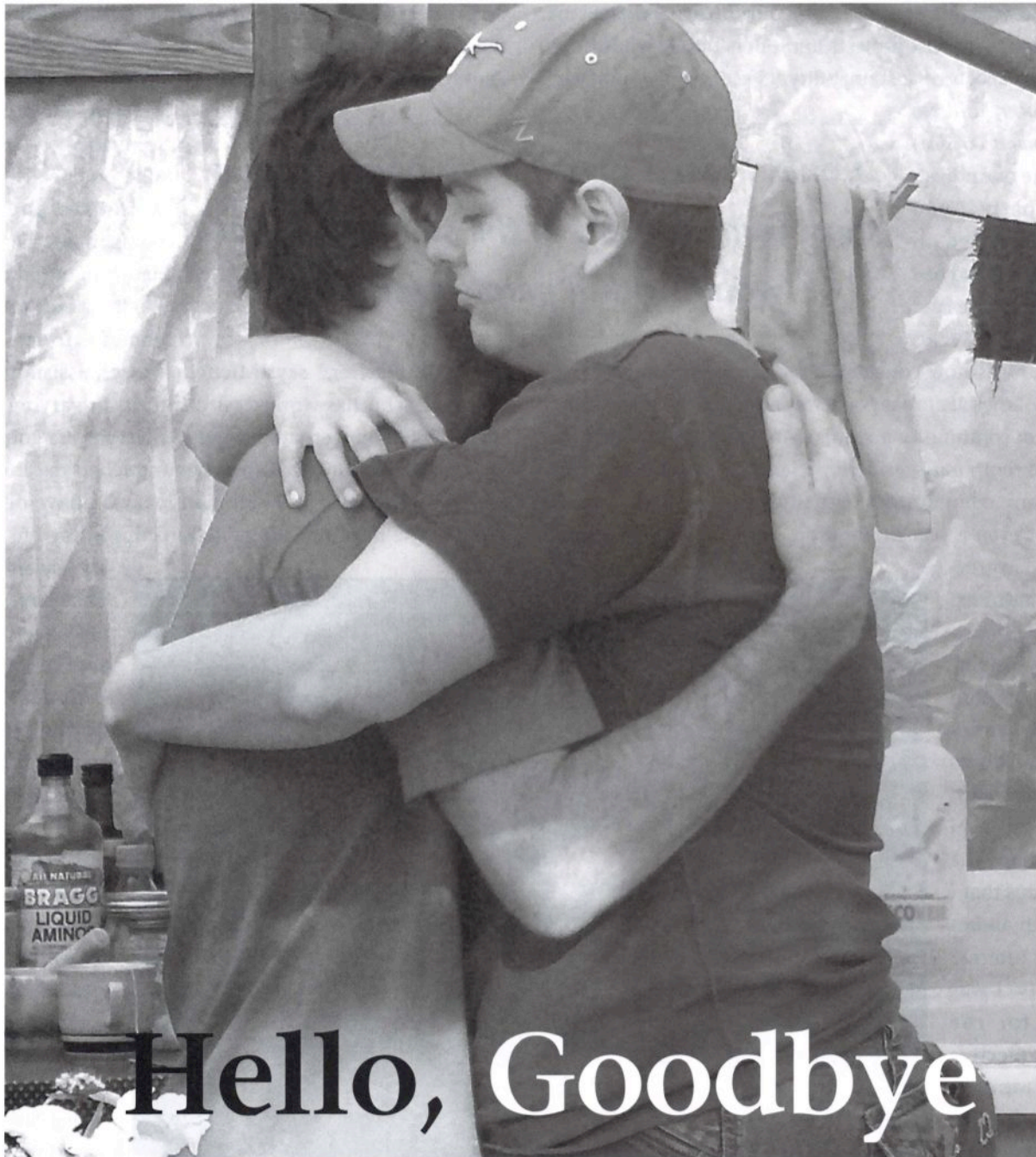
We request that work exchangers do 14 hours of labor a week. Some people are either unable or

unwilling to complete this work. When that happens, it's crucial that we get at the truth, which may mean that the work exchanger is not supporting our community, or that we cannot meet their needs. It's becoming easier to address this situation as early as possible when it arises.

With the help of these new friends we have planted hundreds of trees, started a mushroom project, and planted a kitchen garden.

work exchanger and tries to resolve any problems that arise as soon as possible. We encourage ourselves to address any irritations and conflicts with work exchangers sooner rather than later, since suppressing such issues allows them to get bigger and drain our group's energy. Liaisons also check the work hours that work exchangers record during their first two weeks

Integrating work exchangers into our daily community life has been a work in progress, especially in terms of food, domestic skills, and communication style. One of the first decisions we reached as a new community was to not subsidize financially the food work exchangers consume. We grow about half our own food, and buy the rest, mostly from local
(continued on p. 76)



Hello, Goodbye

MARK MAZZIOTTI

As I looked around the room at the circle of bright faces and the sumptuous array of food, I was aware of my reluctance to fully engage in this celebration. It was a goodbye dinner for Andrea, an office intern who had been living for the past year at Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC) community in northern California. Andrea was a part of my life in the same way that Brock, Carol, Martha, or any of the other longtime community members of OAEC were. During the short time that she lived here, Andrea and I had

shared meals, walks, and candid conversations. The fact that she was only living here temporarily was never a barrier to our friendship.

But on the evening of Andrea's parting celebration, I understood, just then, that the shape of our relationship was about to change drastically, and I withdrew from the celebration in an attempt to protect myself from feeling too sad. While I felt certain we would remain friends, there's a qualitative difference between being a friend at a distance and living in community together!

The community is comprised of 16 permanent adult residents, 5 interns, and 5 kids, aged 1 to 11, living on 80 rural acres near the town of Occidental, California. OAEC, the non-profit educational aspect of the community, engages in environmental activist projects and offers public workshops on various aspects of sustainability. (See *"Heirloom Gardens,*

Clean Water, and No GMOs," Summer '06 issue.)

At the time of Andrea's farewell party, I had recently married an OAEC resident, and had been living on the land for less than a year.

Although I was now considered a permanent resident too, my sense of myself at that point was more like an intern than a long-term community member. (An "internship" is a more structured temporary residency than the "work exchange" role in many communities. Usually an internship is many months or even a year in duration, and can involve formal or informal instruction in the internship area: office management, gardening, maintenance, etc.)

Did my perception of myself as more like an intern than a long-term member shape the relationships that I formed with Andrea and other interns? Absolutely. I was grateful for the interns' collective presence. I was comforted by the fact that I wasn't the only one trying to find my footing on new terrain. What I hadn't accounted

for while forming these new relationships, was that while I would stay and continue to grow into my new home, Andrea and the others would leave.

By definition, internships are temporary situations. An intern arrives, settles in, achieves a certain level of comfort, and then (rather quickly, it seems), packs up and leaves, only

to be replaced by another fresh face. As I gradually became aware of this pattern, my sense of curiosity grew. Could I invest myself emotionally with a short-term resident in the same way that I would with a permanent one? Would it be worth the potential heartbreak? How did the more seasoned residents deal with this phenomenon? To find out, I spoke with

residents about how they were affected—emotionally, practically, in their work-lives, and in relationships—by the transitory nature of our internships.

"I see each intern who comes into my life as a

profound teacher," says Michelle Vesser, assistant garden manager, who has worked with interns in varying settings since 1988. "I never know what the lessons are going to be, although over the years they have touched my life deeply and allowed me to grow in many ways. I have developed some of the most fulfilling relationships in my life through

my time with interns. They have brought me a tremendous amount of joy."

OAEC's garden interns generally arrive in early spring and stay through early winter. Michelle uses the quiet hours in the winter garden to go within and rejuvenate, so that she feels fresh for the new interns who will arrive in the spring. She acknowledged the difficulty of seeing the interns leave, but for her, remembering that beginnings are

inherent in every ending helps her to enjoy the natural rhythm of the cycle.

But some community members expressed discomfort with this impermanence. "For the first few years I was really close to each intern," says OAEC cofounder Dave Henson, who has been working with interns at OAEC since 1994. "But it was a

Could I invest myself emotionally with a short-term resident in the same way that I would with a permanent one?



Interns at OAEC also get to play around, like maintenance intern Stephanie Smith with facilities manager James Pelican.

EMILY COLEMAN

repeated heartbreak to go deep with someone, only to have to say goodbye after six months or a year. Today, I am by no means closed down towards the interns, but I've learned to keep my emotional and intellectual boundaries."

"I've grown weary of saying goodbye," notes Doug Gosling, OAEC Garden Manager, a resident of the land since 1982. Doug tends to begin his relationships with interns slowly, holding onto the knowledge that they are short-term. But he adds that, despite this dynamic, a handful of interns have become his lifelong friends. He also notes that the interns who really "get it"—the ones "who discover the magic of the gardens"—ultimately have a more difficult time leaving at the end of their tenure. This is undoubtedly true, but based on what I've observed, not one of these particular garden interns would have traded the discoveries they made living here for a less painful parting.

Discovery and personal growth are not explicit goals, but rather consequences of interning at OAEC. Besides the obvious development that interns undergo during their stay, a subtler phenomenon is the personal growth opportunities for permanent residents.

"The interns keep us flexible," observes Facilities Manager James Pelican, who has been supervising interns since 2001. "They bring a new energy into the place, and strengthen us socially." He emphasized that the presence of interns helps prevent community members from getting too set in their ways. Nearly every community member that I spoke with echoed this sentiment.

"Every intern brings his/her unique gift, and every one has taught me something about some aspect of my job," James adds. "It's necessary to have interns, even with their inevitable departure. I always feel a certain grief when they leave, but the spice that they bring to the community, and the constant creation of new dynamics makes it worth it."

If community members are meaningfully touched by the presence of interns on the land, then it goes without saying that interns are affected, perhaps even more so, by the time they spend here. Ironically, for every resident who expressed some reluctance to completely open themselves to deep relationships with the interns, there was an intern who firmly stated that the impermanence helped them



JIM COLEMAN

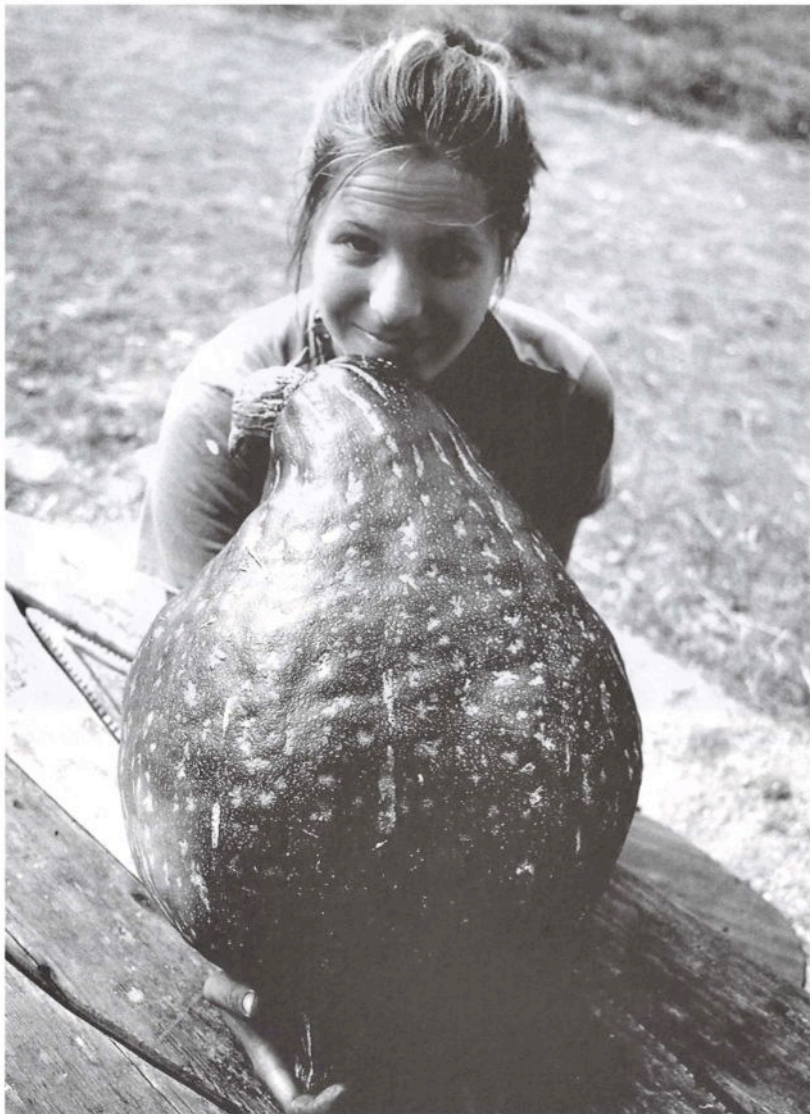
Garden interns Brooke Budner (left) and Monique Wentzel take a break with new OAEC infant Lucy Coleman.

***"Every intern brings his/her unique gift,
and every one has taught me something
about some aspect of my job."***



JIM COLEMAN

Stephanie Smith and James Pelican mix cement for the foundation of a new building.



DOUG GOSLING

Garden intern Brooke Gentile sometimes discovers gigantic vegetables, like this Green Hubbard squash.



JULES PELICAN

Facilities Manager James Pelican (right) instructs maintenance intern Dawn Smith on repairing a water filtration system.

to open themselves up—to both people and place—in new and profound ways.

Brooke Budner was a garden intern at the OAEC for nine months in 2006. “I’ve learned not to take the ripening of the quince for granted, because I won’t see it again,” she says. “I know that I won’t always walk past the abundance of the blackberry bushes on my way back to my home. This is my one chance. This is my one time to live in this meadow . . . and then it will pass. While I have it, I really want to be here to enjoy it.”

Brooke feels honored to be part of a lineage of caretakers for the two 30-year-old gardens, whose heirloom fruits and vegetables have been cultivated continuously since even before the OAEC founders bought the property. However, she also acknowledges the challenges. “There is definitely a continuity to the gardens, even though no one individual here is permanent. Not working towards an end can be hard. I’m used to doing one thing to completion. Gardening is different; you’re never really finished. When one of us walks away from the garden, we often joke, ‘When I get back, the garden will be finished, right?!’”

Like other interns, Brooke participates in the nightly community dinners. She notes that she feels closer to community members who attend these dinners, as opposed to those who often dine at home. I think her comment is

“I am by no means closed down towards the interns, but I’ve learned to keep my emotional and intellectual boundaries.”

important. It serves as a reminder that it is not solely the responsibility of the intern to try to mesh with the community; community members must also show up and play their part as well.

Dawn Smith, from Alberta, Canada, is OAEC’s current maintenance intern. She relishes the combination of education and everyday living

that the internship provides. "Through sharing meals, chores, and a hot tub," Dawn says, "I have discovered that the leaders of the ecological revolution are regular people—they're not all that different from me!"

While I am no longer a newcomer myself, I still tend to resonate emotionally with the interns. I have relaxed, played, and shared confidences with many of them. I am grateful for the constant reminder of impermanence that their presence

"I've grown weary of saying goodbye . . ."

Dawn does not view her year-long internship as "short-term," noting that, for her at age 24, a year is a long time! "It is a relief that the duration of the internship is set—that way, the expectations are very clear. A year is a long enough time for me to invest myself fully. It is time enough to learn, and to be useful to the community."

Jessica Soza, a garden intern for seven months in 2004, was also able to use the short duration of her internship in a positive way. "The impermanence was easier to deal with because of the well-defined time limits," she says. "Knowing that my time at OAEC would be limited, I was able to fully appreciate it while I was there. I knew that it wasn't going to be forever."

Like Brooke and Dawn, Jessica found the "be here now" aspect of her internship transformative. I liken it to Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh's phrase, "Present Moment, Wonderful Moment," the idea of living fully and appreciating the beauty inherent in even the most mundane moments. In our everyday lives, when faced with the seemingly infinite number of days before us, how many of us can honestly say that we appreciate each day for the gift that it is? This, I feel, is the experiential gift that community interns have to offer us—appreciating the moment, knowing that their stay here is finite, and enjoying it anyway.

A few days after Andrea's going-away party, while picking up my mail in our main office, I heard an unfamiliar voice. I looked up, and there at Andrea's desk was Kate, the new office intern. Swallowing my initial reaction of "who-are-you-and-what-are-you-doing-at-Andrea's-desk?!", I approached and introduced myself, participating in the litany of questions that always accompanies the arrival of a new intern. Where are you from? How did you hear about the OAEC? Have you lived in community before? And so on.

About a month later, I was taking a walk with Kate—talking about relationships, novels, and the pros and cons of being the oldest child in a family—when I recognized what had happened quite naturally. Kate was no longer Andrea's replacement. She was no longer the new intern. She was Kate—fabulous foot-massager, sharer of silly stories, and a warm new friend.

brings, and I aspire to return—again and again—to this important lesson. And while I will continue to appreciate the rest of my time here with Kate, I also look towards the day when someone new is sitting in her place.☼

Jules Pelican has lived at Occidental Arts and Ecology Center since November 2004, and is married to OAEC resident James Pelican. She works for the BA Program at New College of California, whose degree program in Culture, Ecology and Sustainable Community focuses on many of the skills needed for successful community building.



JIM COLEMAN

The wheels of goat milk cheese made by garden intern Brooke Budner became a staple food for the entire community.



Natural Building

BLUES

*Lessons from
a Natural Building Internship*

"When I made a mistake, I went back next time, knew what it was. I didn't do that no more."

—James Brown

The awkward silence in our morning meeting was shattered, thankfully, by what sounded like a glass breaking in our makeshift outdoor kitchen, only louder. It was a still morning and already tension lingered with the humidity in the air—tension carried over from yet another processing session the night before. When we heard the second crash we knew it wasn't an accident. Things happen in threes. I turned toward the noise in time to witness the smashing of the final dish on the cast iron sink. That may have been the point when we realized our intern program was over.

Our 15-week natural building internship at a rural community offered a stellar lineup of weekend workshops: strawbale building, permaculture design, useful plants walks, living roofs, and a hands-on class on food fermentation. Our interns,

When we heard the second crash we knew it wasn't an accident.

meanwhile, were skilled in all manner of modern and metaphysical disciplines. Architecture, herbs, Rolfing, religion—we had a specialist for any contingency.

Fresh from leading a natural building workshop in South Africa, and with three years of experience doing and teaching natural building, I was the program co-teacher and intern coordinator along with an amazing builder from the local area. This was to be my first experience with a program of this length, but I felt confident. After nearly 15 years working quietly as a graphic designer, I had entered the new worlds of natural building and community living with trepidation, but had quickly found them to be a perfect fit—so perfect, in fact, that I felt prepared for anything life could hand me. And now I was surrounded by a veritable dream team of other workshop leaders, all banded together to practice natural building

in the beautiful surroundings of a model intentional community. What could go wrong?

Shelter, food: it's a good idea to make sure you're covered on these two bases when planning an internship program—or any other endeavor involving life on Earth. We managed to come up short on a both of these right out of the gate.

The plan was for the interns to camp for 15 weeks in a rainforest. Cool—we just looked for a relatively level spot in the woods and pitched our tents. Tent platforms—what are those? Not having tent platforms while camping in this kind of weather is what permaculture co-founder Bill Mollison would call a Type 1 error: a kind of broad, basic mistake likely to doom nearly everything else. Needless to say, we got hit with the perfect storm during the first couple of weeks. The upside is we got to do a lot of creative swale-



MARK MAZZIOTTI



MARK MAZZIOTTI



MARK MAZZIOTTI



MARK MAZZIOTTI

digging. The downside is that none of it really worked and damp tents remained our ever-present companion. People get cranky when all their stuff is wet.

On to food. There were seven interns and myself to cook for and clean up after in the community's outdoor kitchen. None of this was the problem. Nor were the coolers that had to be restocked with ice every other day to keep our food from spoiling. Exactly who would do the cooking, the cleanup, and the restocking was the snag. When would we eat? Where would we eat? How much intern help was needed to prep meals? How much intern help was needed, generally? When would we wake up and start the day? What was our daily schedule?

You know, I swear, we did have a plan in advance. But what about consensus-building? Why not try to work out something everyone could agree upon?

It's a good indication that something is wrong with your group process when you can't get it together to settle on how many rings the dinner bell gets. I think at one point we decided that a sort of random calypso thing would do the trick. Or your group can't decide when to wake up. Intern One was up with the sun. Intern Two liked to sleep a little later. Maybe we could all do Qigong before our morning meeting. Maybe we should meditate first. Are you getting the picture?

People get cranky when all their stuff is wet.

Buildings need structure. So do natural building internships. In the role of coordinator, I didn't provide the necessary structure to build the intern program around. Had I underestimated the difficulty of consensus building? Or overestimated its importance in basic decision-making? Whatever. I know now that I should have asserted more leadership to get small decisions made quickly.

As a teacher—and this is the harder one to reconcile—I had underestimated how much preparation I needed to do to deliver the academic section of the program. We had planned for approximately 15 classroom sessions on topics ranging from site selection to structural engineering. It wasn't a lack of time, or even I think laziness, but maybe just a lack of experience. My being in a constant state of catch-up had a ripple effect throughout my other responsibilities.

Nevertheless, we plodded on, adjusting the schedule, tweaking the calendar, and trying to stay dry. We even managed to have some fun. Not enough, but some. Master natural



MARK MAZZIOTTI

builders pulled us through the weekend workshops. We did lots of Qigong. We made raw chocolate. We learned to say “y’all” instead of “you-guys.” We made friends with the people of the community. We got to see how the community lives and breathes. We settled into its trees.

In the end maybe we all got something out of it. After all, how many people get to see authentic plate-smashing? And maybe workshop instructors always learn the most. I’m grateful that, in our final evaluation, other workshop leaders suggested

Why are you here, people? An intern yelled out, “To smash plates!”

But now it was eight weeks into the program and an intern was smashing plates. If I remember right, one of us had just yelled, “Why are you here, people?” no doubt hoping to rally us toward our shared goal, “To build!” Instead an intern yelled out, “To smash plates!” and I don’t think she could have been wiser. At that moment, it was the best use of plates we had. And shortly after, we finally acknowledged with relief that we would agree to end the program seven weeks sooner than originally planned.

things they might have done differently to help the project along. But I know one thing I won’t forget. My skills at implementing some of the tenets of community living had endured their first major test, and I got ... well ... all wet.♻️

Mark Mazziotti teaches natural building with varying degrees of success. He recently returned from South Africa where he is helping build an ecovillage that serves children affected by AIDS. He is planning to homestead this year at Red Earth Farms community in Rutledge, Missouri.



SARAH STEINBERG

Melissa Godbeer, a member of the student group, appreciating one of Findhorn's windmills.

How I Learned to Hug a Windmill

An Inside Look at the Findhorn Community Semester

This past fall, during my senior year at College of the Atlantic in Maine, I took courses for three and a half months at the Findhorn Foundation in northern Scotland., a 44-year-old ecovillage internationally recognized for its sustainability education. I discovered the Findhorn Community Semester through Living Routes, a U.S.-based organization that sponsors study-abroad programs in seven ecovillages around the world. Living Routes' courses are designed and taught by ecovillage residents and granted credit by the University of Massachusetts

at Amherst. This affiliation allowed me to easily transfer the full semester's credits back to College of the Atlantic and apply my federal financial aid to the program.

On September 1, 2006, I joined 11 other American students to begin our adventure at Findhorn. We took four college courses—Applied Sustainability: Ecovillage Living at Findhorn; Theory and Practice of Group Dynamics and Conflict Facilitation; Worldviews and Consciousness; and Exploring Sustainable Living Through Creative Expression—and were

responsible for three weekly work shifts in Findhorn's community kitchens and gardens. Classes, work, homework and any socializing time we could fit in made for a busy week!

I appreciated that our classes were all experiential; the 12 of us did everything from dancing the 5 Rhythms, a spiritual practice developed by dance therapist Gabrielle Roth, to touring Findhorn's Living Machine wastewater treatment facility, which purifies much of the community's graywater in a constructed ecosystem. We did not have to sit in a classroom talking about wind power; we got to go out and hug Findhorn's four windmills, learn up close how they worked, and paint a collage on the windmill named "Joy." (I liked how Findhorn gives its tools more character and respect by naming them; for example there was Mr. Oak, a wheelbarrow; Dolly, a dishwasher; Joy, one of the windmills, and so on.)

***I appreciated that our classes
were all experiential.***

Applied Sustainability was the class I was most excited about when applying to the program. It brought together topics like ecological footprinting, renewable energy, waste management, transportation design, green and natural building techniques and organic farming. Our teacher, Jonathan Dawson (who is also president of Global Ecovillage Network) was very articulate. He said things in ways that helped me think differently about familiar subjects and make connections I had not realized before. In one class, Jonathan showed us slides of ecovillages all over the world and described their many different activities. He said the vast majority of successful ecovillages are in service of some greater good, as Findhorn is in its spirituality and sustainability education programs. Another day in that class we did rough calculations of our individual ecological footprints—the amount of arable land necessary to support our consumption habits and daily activities. Findhorn as an institution has an ecological footprint per capita half the size of the average person living in the UK, with its greatest savings in the food and energy sectors. As Jonathan described it, considering the



Findhorn member Lisa Shaw introducing the student group to the windmills.

SARAH STEINBERG

fossil fuels required for all the pesticides, packaging, and transportation required to produce food, we are practically eating oil! I had tried to limit my energy use in other ways, but I had not thought of food in these terms before. It was interesting to look at it that way, and comforting to know that a lot of the food we ate at Findhorn was grown organically in our very own gardens. Back home now, I am trying to continue eating primarily locally grown, organic food.

control of my thoughts and actions. To some extent I already knew that, but talking to people at Findhorn really made me take this enormous power to heart. Now if I am not happy with myself, or with the way things are, I realize my circumstances in any given instance are that way because of what I have or have not done, at least to a great extent.

Living at Findhorn changed me in other ways, too. For example, I had been struggling with the idea of ecovillages and their place in the world. It was so peaceful at Find-

We were treated like part of the community, however transient.

Findhorn's work-study programs for visitors last anywhere from a week to six months. Our semester program was actually one of the longer programs, and it allowed me to experience the community more like a long-term resident would, seeing new people come and go. However, from the vantage point of more permanent residents, our group was just like the many other visitors, appearing one day and leaving a jam-packed 14 weeks later, with a new batch of students to arrive two months later.

Yet from very early in the semester, our teachers and focalizers emphasized how the 12 of us were not just visitors; they encouraged us to think of ourselves as full community members and to act accordingly. I had been worried about what Findhorn members would think of this group of American students coming into their midst. But when we got there, I found that we were treated like part of the community, however transient. I was just as present in the lives of everyone at Findhorn as they were in mine, and was no less of a person because I was only there for a set amount of time. And for me, this was not some timeless break from "real life"; it was simply another chapter. I learned that I have the power to change my perspective like this, and that I have

horn, yet I sometimes felt antsy because I was not out living the life of an activist like I was used to. I was thinking ecovillages were little bubbles of peace and sustainability, but I didn't quite see how they would make the world a better place unless a revolution came and everyone moved to ecovill-

ages. But one day during our Applied Sustainability class, Jonathan described ecovillages as laboratories for social, environmental, and technological experiments. He said education and consulting for others about ecological sustainability are two key ways ecovillages can spread their ideas to mainstream culture. I had thought that it was a shame for Findhorn members to be teaching our group so much, only to have us leave and not give much in return to the community. But actually that's the purpose, to fill us with ideas and then send us out into the world to make it a better place. Ecovillages that do not want to host students can offer con-

sulting services to local municipalities, for example. This idea was driven home when it was announced later in our stay that the Royal Air Force base next door had seen the success of Findhorn's living machine wastewater treatment facility, and had installed its own reed bed system. Now I recognize that ecovillages are hubs rather than bubbles.



Painting ecological footprints on the windmill named Joy.

SARAH STEINBERG



Harvesting potatoes from Findhorn member Craig Gibsone's, compost pile.

SARAH STEINBERG



The student group preparing for a sweatlodge.

EMMA ALGER

In December, I returned home feeling empowered to make a serious contribution to my college town, Bar Harbor, which is also a popular resort destination. The small, year-round population there is overemployed in the summer when millions of tourists come to visit by car and cruise ship, and underemployed when tourists go home in the winter. The money residents earn in the summer seems to leak out of the town boundaries during the fall and early winter, and by January, many people are struggling to make ends meet. So my

Finally, I was consistently amazed by how each Findhorn resident seemed to be a wealth of knowledge just waiting to be tapped. From permaculture to car-sharing, raw diets to vermiculture, composting toilets to pottery, alternative currencies to bagpipes, and player pianos to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—you name it, I found someone in the community with a wealth of first-hand knowledge on the subject. Everyone has taken a different path in life and gleaned a wealth of knowledge along the way. Never

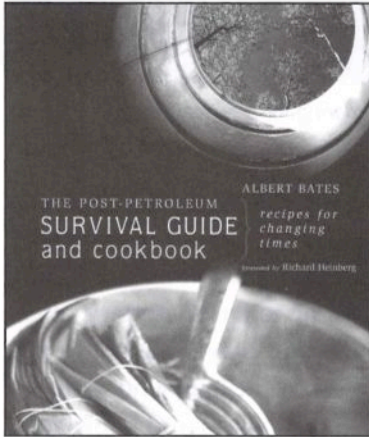
We did rough calculations of our individual ecological footprints—the amount of arable land necessary to support our consumption habits and daily activities.

senior project this year is to establish a local currency in the town. It will be like the “Eko” currency used at Findhorn, where one British pound could be exchanged for one Eko. At Findhorn, a community bank called “Ekopia” grants the British pounds they collect in exchange for Ekos as low-interest loans to local businesses and organizations. While not everyone at Findhorn uses Ekos, all the on-site business owners, and a few in the neighboring village, accept them as they would cash. In actuality, it is as if people agreed to exchange IOUs while their money was invested in the community. Findhorn member David Hoyle, who started the Ekopia project, explained to our sustainability class how the system works. At that point I felt really empowered and ready to lead this economic revolution in my town. In the past, I have often taken supporting roles in various projects, but when I suddenly felt inspired to create and lead this project, I knew I had to do it!

underestimate who sits down across from you at the lunch table, and do talk to “strangers”; every person is a potential friend and ally, each with a unique story and passion. Talking with others has gotten me interested in things I never thought I would be interested in. Simply listening with an open heart and mind has taken me much of the way. The collective wisdom in an intentional community is immense. That is one of the main things I learned at Findhorn, where the whole community is a wonderful classroom. ♻️

Sarah Steinberg is a senior at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. She lives at the Downeast Friends Community.

REVIEWS



The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook: Recipes for Changing Times

By Albert Bates

New Society Publishers, 2006
Pb., 237 pp. \$19.95

Reviewed by Diana Leafé Christian

Ecovillage activist Albert Bates offers an engaging, straightforward, practical roadmap to meeting our daily life needs during hard times—from



potable water and nutritious food to energy and transportation.

As you no doubt already know, “Peak Oil” refers to the point in time when oil and natural gas reach their absolute peak of production, after which the world will have less and less of each of these fuels, which will relentlessly drive up their prices and unbearably stress an already fragile global economy. And, as the author reminds us, it’s not just fossil fuel prices that will dramatically rise, but the price of everything in our lives—since oil is used not only for transportation and heat, but oil or natural gas are critical components of virtually millions of products, including plastics, the fabrics used for most clothing, commercial building materials, pharmaceutical drugs, and commercial fertilizers. Even if we personally don’t use products like these, escalating prices of oil and natural gas will affect how billions stay warm,

opportunity. He explains what holds the global economy in place, how local economies work, and what we can do on a grassroots level to put healthy local economies in place now. He examines alternative fuels and their uses, and what we can do to start using them. But mostly he advocates changing our attitudes and changing our lifestyles, through reducing our use, recycling, conserving, and growing our own food and generating our own power. Chapters include Save Your Water, Manage Your Wastes, Create Energy (cutting-edge research on new ways to generate heat and electricity), Grow Your Food, Store Your Food, Be Prepared (preparing for emergencies), Change Your Ride (cutting-edge research on alternative fuels), Change Your Need (stay at home, walk, cycle, get a horse, share a ride, share a car, use mass transit, taxis and buses), Imagine Sustainability (ecologically sustainable site and building design), and Quit Your Job (slowing our fre-

He doesn’t shirk the “What about hungry marauders?” question.

move from place to place, clothe and house themselves, and eat. In such a strikingly changed economy, tens or hundreds of thousands will no doubt lose their jobs, which will of course affect even those of us who scorn petroleum products in favor of riding bikes, heating with passive solar, wearing natural fibers, and eating organic. So no matter how ecologically sustainable we may live our lives now, this is gonna affect us, big-time.

So The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide is a helpful, hopeful resource for what Albert Bates considers a horrible predicament—and wonderful

netic pace, finding balance). In his last chapter, he explores the need for sustainability in a larger scale, in the New Urbanism, ecocities, and intentional communities—including cohousing, ecovillages, and community-inspired ways of making decisions and resolving conflicts. Not to mention the healthy and delicious-sounding recipes that appear on almost every other page.

Albert writes in a conversational, engaging style, and his chapters are packed with pithy, memorable insights. We must try to accomplish sustainability with a more or less steady-state economy, he observes, “in which we

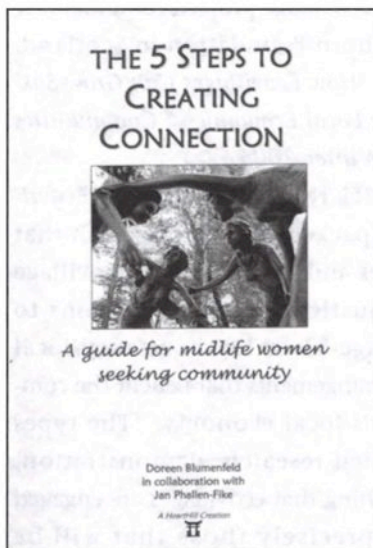
destroy nothing, re-use and recycle, and try to keep the natural world, which provides our every need, healthy and robust."

He doesn't shirk the "What about hungry marauders?" question for intentional communities. Don't stockpile guns and ammo, he says, which wastes money and adds to the overall danger and reduces your safety. "People are safest by simply living in non-threatening communities," he says. "Violence arises from many sources, but fear and anger are accelerants. By reducing those, you are safer." After cautioning us not to expect a group of altruistic warriors to come in and rescue us as in *The Seven Samurai* or *The Magnificent Seven*, he writes: "One priority for any community should be to have well-trained security people—a constable, a sheriff, and deputies or a larger police force. This might even be a good use for some of your gun nuts, as long as they owe their first allegiance to the community and don't come to think that they are in charge. Support and nurture them."

I especially enjoyed the many evocative quotes from leading post-petroleum-era thinkers. Here's Matthew Simmons, oil analyst and energy advisor to the Bush administration: "We have to liberate the workforce from office-based jobs, and let them work in their village, through the modern technology of emails and faxes and video conferencing. We have to address the distribution of food: much of the food in supermarkets today comes from at least a continent or two away. We need to return to local farms. And we have to attack globalization: as energy prices soar, manufacturing things close to home will begin to make sense again."

And my favorite, from Albert again: "Get in shape. Take a permaculture course. Get out of debt. Buy what you

need to feel prepared for anything. Sell the rest. Take up a challenging hobby that keeps you stimulated and having fun. Grow your own food. Store what you eat and eat what you store. Help your neighbors and get to know them better."



The Five Steps to Creating Connection: A Guide for Midlife Women Seeking Community

By Doreen Blumenfeld, with Jan Phallen-Fike

WISE Circles/HeartHill, 2004, 2007
72 pp. \$19.95

Available from:
Virtualbookworm.com Publishing

Reviewed by Diana Leaf Christian

The Five Steps manual offers step-by-step instruction on initiating, organizing, and maintaining a WISE Circle group. It describes a member's responsibility

to be therapy or a process group, and it squarely faces the potential issue of group members not feeling good about a member once the group gets going. "If someone does not seem a good fit, it is okay to tell them that they don't seem a good fit for the current configuration of members, or that there appears to be a conflict of roles that might prove to be uncomfortable or conflictual. Acknowledge their desire for community and compassionately encourage them to develop a group of their peers or acquaintances." She suggests that group members observe healthy boundaries and not discuss issues with other people outside the circle, which is important in keeping the circle a safe sanctuary for group members.

Different groups might come up with different kinds of activities depending on their members' interests. Creating a buddy system for mutual aid, studying spiritual books, taking classes together, creating an emergency relief fund for unforeseen difficulties, car pooling, setting up weekly community meals, arranging clothing exchanges are all the kinds of things women can do for mutual aid and support.

Some members will start things; some will be good at strategic planning, some will lend adaptability skills, Blumenfeld observes. Some will take more active roles; some less active roles. The WISE Circles could evolve into members becoming housemates or other kinds of shared housing situations, such as, for example, moving into a cohousing community together.

Ideally, Blumenfeld notes, a Circle would grow and change to meet the

"It's simple, and extremely rewarding."

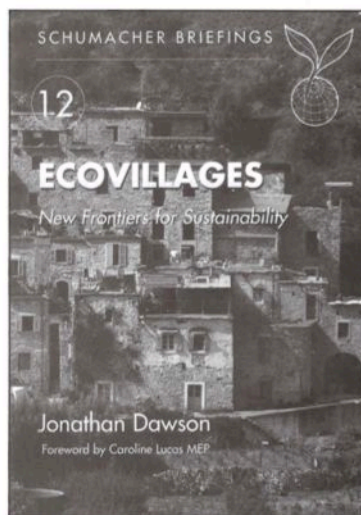
and offers suggested guidelines for facilitators and communication in meetings. It notes that WISE Circles are not designed

needs of both the individuals and the group as it provides support for each woman for the rest of her life. She will hold

the connection of all circles and publish a quarterly newsletter to assist in building greater community and respond to questions on email.

Appendices offer guided meditations for different purposes (to open the circle, close the circle, to center and focus, to ease conflict, to increase energy, for healing), suggestions for conflict resolution, frequently asked questions, forms and handouts, and a shared housing questionnaire.

I found *The Five Steps to Creating Connection* simple and straightforward, with the kindly, helpful tone you'd hope to find in such a group of friends.



Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability

By Jonathan Dawson

Green Books (U.K.), 2006
Pb., 94 pp. \$11.20

Available in North America
from Chelsea Green Publishing
www.chelseagreen.com

Reviewed by Diana Leafé Christian

This latest Schumacher Briefing Paper, prepared for the prestigious Schumacher Society in Great Britain, is the ecovillage book I've been waiting

for—grounded, credible, thorough, well-organized, a pleasure to read, and international in scope. Jonathan Dawson is the perfect ecovillager to write it, too—President of Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), executive Secretary of GEN-Europe, consultant to West African ecovillage projects, and member of Findhorn Foundation in Scotland. (See his *"How Ecovillages Can Grow Sustainable Local Economies,"* *Communities* #133, Winter 2006.)

A quick read, just 94 pages, *Ecovillages* is packed with information that surprises and inspires: from ecovillage social justice activism programs to ecovillage-based local currency/local credit arrangements that benefit the community's local economy. "The types of applied research, demonstration, and training that ecovillages are engaged in are precisely those that will be needed to navigate the rough waters ahead," Dawson observes. "... reforestation, seed-saving, place-specific technologies for energy-efficient

Communities, and movements and organizations, such as The Ladakh Project and the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka. It examines in depth five distinctly different kinds of ecovillages—Auroville in India, Mbam and Fauone in Senegal, Ökodorf Sieben Linden in Germany, Ecovillage at Ithaca in the US, and Ecovila in Brazil. While quite diverse, these communities nevertheless model five fundamental attributes of ecovillages, leading Dawson to suggest elements of a new ecovillage definition:

- (1) Private citizens' initiatives
- (2) in which the communitarian impulse is of central importance
- (3) that are seeking to win back some measure of control over community resources
- (4) that have a strong shared values base (often referred to as "spirituality")
- (5) and that act as centers of research, demonstration, and (in most cases) training.

He examines eight different beneficial activities of ecovillages over the

The applied research, demonstration, and training that ecovillages are engaged in are precisely what will be needed to navigate the rough waters ahead.

housing, food-growing, energy-generation, the development of inclusive decision-making structures, voluntary simplicity, and so on—appear not so much idiosyncratic tinkering as the very stuff that the building of future societies will be made of."

Ecovillages begins with a look at how the ecovillage movement got started. This includes events, such as the founding of Gaia Trust in Denmark and its commissioning the report, *Ecovillages and Sustainable*

years and gives specific examples of each, which I found one of the juiciest parts of the book—designing low-impact human settlements; promoting sustainable local economies; growing and processing organic, locally based food; doing Earth restoration projects; reviving participatory, community-scale governance; helping normally marginalized people; promoting peace activism; and offering holistic education. He believes that because of their small scale, shared values, and "sheer

energy and creativity," ecovillages are more effective than other change agents to introduce new technologies or models to their neighbors. He likens ecovillages to yogurt cultures: "small, dense, and rich concentrations of activity whose main aim is to transform the nature of that which surrounds them."

the sharp increase in the price of land; the difficulty in creating small-scale, local economies because of an inability to compete with cheap, mass-produced goods from poorer countries; and tighter government regulations. This is why, he explains, most ecovillages in the North remain too small in population and influence to function

ture for global markets and tourism, and ubiquitous media messages promoting consumerism and undermining traditional values and lifestyles.

Ecovillages in the North are further challenged by being financed mostly by their members, with limited access to official sources of funding, which necessarily keeps their scale and impact small.

It is not enough to simply wait for the new, decentralized, ecovillage-friendly world to appear.

Even so, he acknowledges, ecovillages are still largely peripheral to mainstream society and their growth and expansion is much slower than the movement's founders expected back in the early '90s. Starting and maintaining ecovillages is much harder in the industrialized North than it was in decades past, for several reasons: because of

effectively as research, demonstration, and training centers, or to have much clout in changing local regulations. Sustaining ecovillages in the South is also difficult, he says, because of global warming, which especially affects poor, rural areas there, and globalization, which turns increasing amounts of arable land into plantation agricul-

They're also limited by what he sees as a trend towards greater individualism and "the progressive weakening of the core communal impulse." By this he means, first, ecovillagers building their own individual dwellings rather than the community as a whole providing standardized, common-wall housing for its members, utilizing economies

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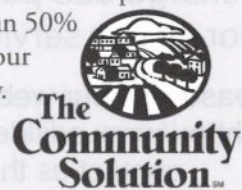


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of scale to make the cost of construction lower, a criticism which Richard Register also noted in "The Village Can Save the City," (*Communities* #129, Winter, 2005).

Second, "core communal impulse" also refers to having an income-sharing economy, which he calls "economic solidarity." Apparently in Europe and other continents most ecovillages are income-sharing, rather than being independent-income communities as in North America (with the exception of Twin Oaks, which he includes as an ecovillage, and some smaller groups within larger

mediate neighbors, who might be unsympathetic to or unaware of the potential value of learning from their ecovillage neighbors.

In his last chapter Dawson looks at what ecovillages can do to be more effective. "It is not enough ... to simply sit and wait for the new, decentralized, ecovillage-friendly world to appear," he cautions. "Whether one is persuaded of the imminence of a cataclysmic global collapse or simply planning for making the transition to a world where we will need to provide for more of our own needs, it makes sense to ensure that, as far as is possible,

***Dawson calls on local and national
governments to recognize
the value of ecovillages.***

ecovillages in the US, such as Dancing Rabbit and The Farm). He points to Kommune Niederkaufungen in Germany, Twin Oaks, and Camphill communities as having income-sharing models to be emulated.

Another challenge he examines is the need for ecovillages to become "less insular and more enmeshed in the fabric of their own bioregions." He observes that while some larger ecovillages beneficially affect their regions, it's hard for most small ecovillages—and he points out that most are small, under 50 people—to be truly effective change agents, because "small ecovillages have so few hands and are so busy just staying afloat that there is little spare capacity for service to a wider cause." Lastly, ecovillages often find themselves caught between the desire to cater to the needs of their consumer base or ideological allies (who often live far away) and those of their imme-

the wisdom, the models, and the technologies developed within ecovillages are mobilized for the wider public good." He notes the important role played by those larger ecovillages which do have an effect in their bioregions: EcoVillage at Ithaca in the US and Sieben Linden and ZEGG in Germany. He includes the Ecodyfi initiative in Wales, where the well-known Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), an educational center that grew out of an intentional community, helped forge an alliance of local community organizations and government agencies to create a "sustainable community regeneration" in the Dyfi Valley.

He advocates that ecovillage activists deal with how difficult it is to start new ones, and suggests learning from the cohousing movement, and notes the success of The Village, an Irish ecovillage project which overcame

zoning challenges by working collaboratively with county officials.

Lastly, Dawson calls on local and national governments to recognize the value of ecovillages, noting that “the community banks and currencies, the CSAs, the eco-technology enterprises, the community-based governance structures are precisely designed to breathe life back into depressed communities.” He cites examples where local governments have recognized the value of ecovillages, from the new “Ecovillage Zone” created by the local government of Byron Bay, Australia, to the proposed sustainability zoning plan of Tinker’s Bubble community in the UK.

Conventional communities, neighborhoods, and towns will need to deal with what he terms “the coming energy famine,” and will have little choice but to relocalize themselves in the same ways ecovillages have been pioneering. “This is a moment of opportunity for ecovillages,” he concludes, “to dare to leave the safe niche of ‘being alternative,’ and to enthusiastically embrace the challenge of helping mainstream society over the next several decades.” I found *Ecovillages* exhilarating, and practically inhaled it in one sitting. I want everyone who cares about sustainability and intentional communities to read it! I plan to make it available to participants of every course I teach on starting new ecovillages from now on, and I highly recommend it as a resource for every course on ecovillages, permaculture design, and global sustainability.

Diana Leaf Christian is editor of Communities magazine, and author of Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities, and the forthcoming Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community (New Society Publishers, May, 2007).

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Sirius Community Experience Weekend
Sirius Community, Shutesbury, MA. Two-day immersion in Sirius community life: shared meals, work parties, meditation, community meetings, and more. \$20/day. Contact Sirius for dates. www.siriuscommunity.org; sirius@siriuscommunity.org; 413-259-1251.

Mar 17-30 • Permaculture Design 2-Week Intensive
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. Brock Dolman and Penny Livingston. Two-week intensive Permaculture Certificate course. Organic gardening, mulching, natural building techniques, forest farming, water retention and regeneration, erosion control, community processes, and much more. Lecture, discussion, hands-on activities, field trips, group design project. Almost 100 hours of course time. \$1350/\$1250 sliding scale (if registered two weeks in advance), incl. meals, lodging. www.oaec.org; oaec@oaec.org; 707-874-1557.

Mar 23-25 • Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) Spring Organizational Meeting
Afton, Virginia. Shannon Farm Community. 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 and directory.ic.org websites and Community Bookshelf mail-order book service. Public invited. ic.org; jenny@ic.org.

Mar 31-Apr 2 • Permaculture Fundamentals
EcoVillage at Ithaca, Ithaca, NY. Weekend introductory workshop sponsored by Fingertlakes Permaculture Institute. Overview of ethics, principles, and techniques of permaculture, focusing on practical application of conscious design strategies. Site assessment, applied ethics and principles, observation, design in practice. \$100-250, sliding scale; \$50 deposit. www.flpci.org; 607-319-0737.

Apr 5-9 • In Heart Of Now 2 - Dancing on the Edge
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (Formerly "Naka-Ima.") Companion course to the Heart of Now Basics course (see Apr 20-23). Exercises designed to have you understand and let go of emotions held from child-

hood: looking at how much they actually control what you do, how you act, and how you respond in the present. Explore the ideas and assumptions that color your perception and affect how you relate to others and the world. Donation, incl. lodging, meals. \$55 registration deposit & county room tax; suggested additional contribution \$300-\$650. www.lostvalley.org; heartofnow@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

Apr 6-8 • Natural Building Introduction
Apr 6-8, Jun 8-10, July 27-29, Oct 26-28
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Instruction in straw, cob, wood, and other natural materials. Wattle and daub, fidobe, earthbags, earthships, traditional Mexican styles, bamboo, slipclay, domes and arches, earthen floors, earth plasters and alis, passive solar, foundations and drainage, living roofs and thatch. Classroom work, hands-on experience. Learn energy and resource conservation and the economics of sustainability. Howard Switzer, Katey Culver, Matt English, Patrick Ironwood, Albert Bates, and guests. \$300 for 3 days, meals and lodging included. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 8-11 • Natural Building Volunteer Days
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Help finish some natural building projects in progress and get a sense of what it is like living here. Those interested in taking a workshop or apprenticeship but concerned about cost, is an easy and less costly way to get a closer look. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 10-May 8 • Ecovillage Apprenticeship
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. First of four month-long apprenticeship programs (5/22-6/16, 7/10-8/11, 9/4-10/6). Organic gardening, natural buildings of all types, fundamentals of permaculture and ecovillage design. Ecology, energy & resource conservation, social & community skills, the economics of sustainability. Field trips. Instructors: Albert Bates, Valerie Seitz, Matt & Jennifer English; guest instructors throughout the year: Adam & Sue Turtle, Greg Ramsey, Liora Adler, Andy Langford, Scott Horton, Sizwe Herring, Diana Leafe Christian, Ed Eaton, Howard & Katey Culver. Approx. \$300/ week (incl. meals, lodging). www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 13-15 • Bamboo Cultivation and Construction
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Growing bamboo for fun and profit. Joinery and design with bamboo artisan Matthew English and landscaper Will Bates, includes visit to local nurseries. \$300, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 13-15, May 5-6, Jun 2-3, Jul 7-8, Aug 11-12 • Permaculture Fundamentals
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Five-weekend course with Patricia Allison,

Chuck Marsh, and friends. Essential principles and practices. Practical exercises, demonstrations, hands-on activities audio-visuals. Evening circles, song, celebration. \$650, incl. meals, camping. permaculture@earthaven.org. 828-669-7552.

Apr 13-15 • Green Business Startups
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Start your own green business, learn tricks of the trade with this weekend course from Jennifer Dauksha English and special guests. \$300, incl. food, lodging. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 20-23 • 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. \$55 registration deposit & county room tax; suggested additional contribution \$300-\$650. www.lostvalley.org; heartofnow@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

Apr 27-29 • Biofuels Conversion
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Learn to convert your car or truck to run on fuels you can gather, grow, and make at home with this hands-on weekend course from Jason Deptula. \$300, incl. food, lodging. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Apr 27-29 • Post-Petroleum Permaculture Introduction
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Three-day introduction with instructors Albert Bates, Valerie Seitz, Matthew English. Seed and plant exchange. \$300, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

May 5-6 • Permaculture Fundamentals
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Second weekend of five-weekend course. (See Apr 13-15, May 5-6, etc.)

May 12 • In-Depth Tour of Earthaven with Diana Leafe Christian
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. "Walking Workshop" with Diana Leafe Christian, *Communities* editor and author, *Creating a Life Together*, on starting & sustaining community, using Earthaven as an example. Permaculture design as applied at Earthaven, integrated lumber/food/fiber/fuel agriculture project, natural buildings, off-grid power systems, creating a village-scale economy, governance, communication & process, membership process, lessons learned. \$95 (\$75 if registered at least two weeks in advance), incl. lunch, handout booklet. Optional: overnight lodging, attend Sun. afternoon Council meeting. DianaLeafeChristian.org; diana@ic.org; 828-669-9702.

May 22 -Jun 16 • Ecovillage Apprenticeship
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 10-May 8.)

May 26-28 • Heart of Passion: Unleashing the Sacred Erotic
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. For Heart of Now or Naka-Ima graduates. Exploring being fully present and honest with sexuality, with ritual, movement, discussion, and more. Topics include communicating desires and boundaries; sacred sex practices, techniques, and skills; exploring sensual and sexual energy. Feeling safe is an important aspect this workshop. We will outline safe boundaries at the beginning of the weekend, and everyone will agree to them in order to participate. Suggested donation: \$250-\$600, \$100 deposit. www.lostvalley.org; heartofnow@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

May 25-27 • Biofuels Conversion
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 27-29)

May 25-27 • Raw Foods Weekend
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Learn to prepare and balance raw foods for complete nutrition and great health with Jennifer Dauksha English and Alayne Chauncey. \$300 includes meals and lodging. www.thefarm.org; [Jennifer, ecovillage@thefarm.org](mailto:Jennifer_ecovillage@thefarm.org); 931-964-4324.

May 25-28 • Working with Earthen Materials in a Wet Climate
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. With Steve-o Brodmerkel. \$225, incl. meals, camping. arjuna@earthaven.org; 828-669-0114.

Jun 1-Aug 24 • Permaculture Design Skill-builder: Sustainable Food Production and Ecological Landscaping
O.U.R. Ecovillage, Vancouver Island, Canada. Module 1: 15-day Permaculture Design Certificate Course (see Jun 1-15); Module 2: 10-week Internship Program (See Jun 18-Aug 24); Full community immersion, instruction, individual and group hands-on projects to enhance and expand skills learned within PDC course. Community building, permaculture, whole-systems design, Nonviolent Communication, decision-making processes, personal leadership, local indigenous wisdom. Each participant will develop an experimental garden plot and help run community organic food production systems (no-till, bio-dynamic, bio- and French-intensive, permaculture). Field trips. Modules 1 & 2, \$4,400CAN, incl. meals, camping; Module 2 only (must hold PDC Certificate), \$3,900CAN, incl. meals, camping. Partial scholarships available. Optional—stay through Sep 29 for practicum focused on harvesting, food processing, and seed saving. www.ourecovillage.org; our@pacificcoast.net; 250-743-3067.

Jun 1-15 • Permaculture Design Certification Course
O.U.R. Ecovillage, Vancouver Island, Canada. Permaculture design principles & techniques, including permaculture principles, landscape

analysis, ecological planning & design, organic food production/food security, natural soil improvement, integrated animal systems, water management, agroforestry, and more. Lectures, discussions, hands-on, slide shows, field trips, and design projects. \$1400, incl. meals, camping (1/2 tuition if registered in regular Skillbuilder Program). \$1200, commuters. www.ourecovillage.org; our@pacificcoast.net; 250-743-3067.

Jun 2-3 • Permaculture Fundamentals
Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Third weekend of five-weekend course. (See Apr 13-15, May 5-6, etc.)

Jun 5-Jul 28 • Natural Building in Community
Emerald Earth, Boonville, CA. Darryl Berlin, Massey Burke, and guests. Strawbale, cob, straw-clay, round pole framing, natural plasters and paints, adobe floors, alternative foundations and roofs, passive solar design, home power generation, and more. For owner-builders and people pursuing careers in natural building. www.emeraldearth.org; workshops@emeraldearth.org; 707-972-3096.

Jun 7-9 • Herbal Workshop
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Instructor Wendel Combest on Herbology, gathering, growing, preparation and applications, chemistry and pharmacology. Del teaches pharmacology at Shenandoah University in Virginia. \$500, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; [Jennifer, ecovillage@thefarm.org](mailto:Jennifer_ecovillage@thefarm.org); 931-964-4324.

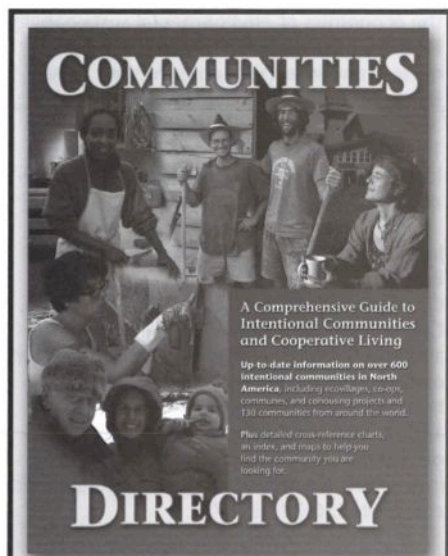
Jun 8-11 • Heart Of Now: The Basics
Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (See Apr 20-23.)

Jun 8-10 • ?
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 6-8.)

Jun 9-11 • EcoVillage at Ithaca Experience Weekend
EcoVillage at Ithaca, Ithaca, NY. Enjoy a balance of nature connection, personal renewal, and hands-on learning: harvesting organic produce, building a root cellar, exploring ecological lifestyle changes. Topics include land stewardship, green building, renewable energy systems, consensus decision-making, building cooperative community. Swimming in the pond, exploring Ithaca's famous gorges. \$200- \$250 sliding scale (incl. meals, lodging), local resident rates \$150-200 sliding scale. *EcoVillage at Ithaca, 100 Rachel Carson Way, Ithaca, NY 14850*; www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us;

Jun 10-12 • Natural Building Volunteer Days
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 8-11.)

Jun 16-25 • Post-Petroleum: Permaculture Fundamentals
Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. First half of the Permaculture Design Course. Ecology, energy and resource conservation, social and community skills, and



COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Over 600 North American communities, plus 130 from around the world, provide contact information and describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future.

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CALENDAR

the economics of environmental sustainability. Field trips will include visits to a bamboo nursery and local permaculture sites. Albert Bates, Andrew Goodheart Brown, Valerie Seitz, Matthew English, Scott Horton, Adam Turtle, and other guests. \$1200, incl. meals, lodging. See Jul 21-29. www.thefarm.org; Jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Jun 18 - Aug 24 • Natural Building Skill Builder

O.U.R. Ecovillage, Vancouver Island, Canada. Cob construction, light-clay infill, strawbale and cob finishing, stonework, natural plasters, earthen floors, community life. Background theory and natural house design principals. \$4000, incl. meals, camping. Elke Cole, Holger Laerad, Adam Perry, and other guest instructors. www.ourecovillage.org; our@pacific-coast.net; 250-743-3067.

Jun 24-29 • Lost Valley 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; info@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

Jun 29-Jul 4 • Interior Adobe Arches

Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. With Janell Kapoor, Steve-o Brodmerkel. \$375, incl. meals, camping. arjuna@earthaven.org; 828-669-0114.

Jun 29-Jul 1 • ICSA (International Communal Studies Association) Conference

Damanhur Community, Valchiesella, Italy. "Communities: Yesterday's Utopia, Today's Reality." www.ic.org/icsa; conference@damanhurnisca.org.

Jul 2-3 • ICSA Post-Conference Regional Communities Tour

Damanhur Community, Valchiesella, Italy. www.ic.org/icsa; conference@damanhurnisca.org

Jul 7-8 • Permaculture Fundamentals

Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Fourth weekend of five-weekend course. (See Apr 13-15, May 5-6, etc.)

July 7-10 • EcoReality monthly meetings and work parties

Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. Business meeting, public orientation, gray water recovery, labyrinth construction, biodiesel production, more. www.EcoReality.org; Info@EcoReality.org; 250-537-2024.

Jul 10-Aug 11 • Ecovillage Apprenticeship

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 10-May 8.)

Jul 13-15 • Post-Petroleum Permaculture Introduction

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 27-29.)

Jul 13-22 • Ecovillage Design and Permaculture Practicum

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. Second half of the Permaculture Design Certificate Course. (See Jun 16-25.) Site selection, master planning, and pattern design for ecovillages; consensus and conflict resolution; financial aspects; work issues; best practices. Ecology, energy and resource conservation, social and community skills, and the economics of sustainability. Scott Horton, Albert Bates, Diana Leafe Christian, Andy Langford, Liora Adler, Greg Ramsey, Valerie Seitz, and guests. \$1100, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; Jennifer.ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Jul 13-25 • Starting and Sustaining Intentional Communities

Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. Dave Henson and Adam Wolpert, plus guests. Visioning, how to find land and finance a purchase, various legal forms available for holding land (limited liability company, corporation, land trust, etc.), organizing as a for-profit or nonprofit, group decision-making process (meetings, agreements, facilitation, agenda management, conflict resolution), financial organization of your community, legal and insurance issues and costs. dealing with zoning and regulations, long-term planning. \$425/\$375 sliding scale (if registered two weeks in advance), incl. meals, lodging. www.oaec.org; oaec@oaec.org; 707-874-1557.

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Jul 13-22 • Network for a New Culture Summer Camp East

Near Hancock, MD. New Culture Intensive: An Extended Journey into Love, Community, and Transformation. Building sustainable, non-violent culture through intimacy, personal growth, emotional transparency, radical honesty, equality, compassion, sexual freedom, and community. \$495-\$895, sliding scale, incl. camping, meals. www.cfn.us; sc07e@cfnc.us; 800-763-8136.

Jul 14-29 • Earth Activist Training

Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. With Starhawk and Patricia Allison. Earth Activist Training blends a full permaculture certification course with Earth-based spirituality, practical political effectiveness, and nature awareness. Transform land, communities, political systems, and yourself. Discover solutions, renew personal energy, hope for the world. permaculture@earthaven.org. 828-669-7552.

Jul 25-Aug 5 • ZEGG Summercamp 2007

ZEGG Community (Centre for Experimental Culture Design), Belzig, Germany. Theme: "Synergy: the Wisdom of the Greater Whole." Multi-faceted insight into ZEGG community. Talks and seminars, village groups: living together, participating in Forum, exploring the ideas underlying ZEGG. Music and other cultural activities. Children's Camp. Cost: 8 days, Euro 365; 15 days, Euro 610. People 27 and younger pay according to means (minimum: 8 days, Euro 155; 15 days, Euro 280). www.zegg.de; empfang@zegg.de; \ +49-33841-595-10.

Jul 27-29 • Natural Building Introduction

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 6-8.)

Jul 28-29 • Women Living in Community: From Dreaming to Doing

Asheville, NC. The Center for Creative Retirement at University of North Carolina. Presenters include Diana Leafe Christian, editor, *Communities* magazine and author, *Creating a Life Together*; Maureen K. McCarthy, creator, The State of Grace Document; Joan Medicott, author of the bestselling *Ladies of Covington* novels; Dene Peterson Founder/Developer, ElderSpirit Community. \$179 (\$159 before 5/28). wlic2007@yahoo.com; www.women-livingincommunity.com.

Jul 29-31 • Natural Building Volunteer Days

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Apr 8-11.)

August 4-7 • EcoReality monthly meetings and work parties

Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. Business meeting, public orientation, water management, gray water recovery, vegetable oil diesel conversion, more. www.EcoReality.org; Info@EcoReality.org; 250-537-2024.

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REACH



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 below to place an ad. **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE Summer 2007 ISSUE (OUT IN JUNE) IS APRIL 15.**

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.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: \$.23 per word for two times and \$.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, 5295 CR 27, Canton, NY 13617, 315-386-2609 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 <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 or 540-894-5798 for more information on being listed in the 2007 Communities Directory.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

AQUARIAN CONCEPTS COMMUNITY, Sedona, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 107 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, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Serious spiritual commitment required. POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 928-204-1206; info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org; www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org; www.globalchangemusic.org; www.musiciansnet.org

COMPANIONS OF THE WAY/FRANCISCAN WORKERS, Salinas, California. We are an inter-faith community dedicated to the service of the marginalized in our area. We work in Dorothy's Place Hospitality Center (community kitchen, health clinic, womens' shelter). We are creating cottage industries with those whom we serve (silk-screening); we collaborate with the local Cal State University on a neighborhood revitalization project as well as host high school and college students for immersion experiences. We work with farm-worker children (after school enrichment and summer camps). Our theme in each of our projects is LOVE LOUDLY! We focus special attention on supporting one another in the different ways we serve, while accepting the same challenges of mindfulness, kindness and the practice of beauty. We are anticipating welcoming friends to share in the journey! Contact: healthforall@gmail.com 831-776-8038 or write: 715 Jefferson St., Salinas, CA 93905.

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a growing ecovillage of more than 30 individuals and are actively seeking new members to join us in creating a vibrant community on our 280 beautiful acres in rural Missouri. Our goals are to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives, and to share the skills and ideas behind this lifestyle. We use solar and wind energy, earth-friendly building materials and biofuels. We are especially interested in welcoming more women and families with children into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org

EARTHAVEN, Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina. A multi-generational ecovillage on 320 forested acres near Asheville. Dedicated to caring for people and the Earth, we come together to create, and to sustain beyond our lifetimes, a vital, diversified learning community. Our 60 members use permaculture design, build with clay and timber from the land, draw power from off-grid systems, drink and bathe in gravity-fed spring water and use constructed wetlands for waste treatment. We raise children in Earthaven's nurturing village environment and many of us work on the land in community-based businesses. We make medicines from wild plants, use consensus for decision-making, and nourish our families with organic local foods grown at Earthaven and in our bioregion. Our diets range from omnivore to vegetarian. We enjoy an abundant social and cultural life, and practice diverse spiritual paths. We offer workshops on permaculture design, natural building, herbal medicine and other subjects. We're seeking new members of all ages and family situations, especially organic growers, people with homesteading or management skills and skills in the trades. www.earthaven.org; info@earthaven.org; 1025 Camp Elliott Road, Black Mountain, NC 28711; 828-669-3937.

COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE REACH ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Please specify which section you wish your ad to appear under:

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Mail this form with payment (by April 15 for the Summer issue) to:

Patricia Greene, 5295 CR 27, Canton, NY 13617; 315-386-2609; patricia@ic.org

ELDER FAMILY, near Cherokee, North Carolina and Smokey Mountain Park. For retirees. Two new furnished group homes in private cove with private bedroom suites, private bathrooms and large common kitchen. More group homes planned. We are a "family" of loving friends committed to spiritual growth through relationships. Looking for mid-50's and 60's, non-smokers, healthy, financially secure. Must be experienced with harmonious, cooperative, consensus groups. After a six-month guest membership, members will buy a share of ownership if they choose to stay. We are part of a larger mixed-age eclectic community with community building, swimming pool, organic garden, trails and adjoining 46-acre spiritual retreat center. Contact *Anthony or Ann, 828-497-7102; or email: annariel@dnnet.net*

FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. We seek co-workers. Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966, centered around the care of the elderly. Now numbering about 150 elderly, co-workers and children, we grow our own fruit and vegetables bio-dynamically. All ages work together in our practical work activities. They include a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weavery/handwork group, greenhouse, publishing press, bakery, outlet store and medical practice. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives nearby. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our web site at www.Fellowship-Community.org If you are interested in co-working or need additional info, please contact our office at 845-356-8494; or write to: *Ann Scharff, c/o The Executive Circle at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; rsffoffice@fellowshipcommunity.org*

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING, Bayfield, Colorado. Located in southwest Colorado, with easy access to the high peaks of the San Juan Mountains and the red rock canyons of Utah, we are a cohousing neighborhood with a deep sense of community. Built in 2000, we support a population of approximately 40 adults and 20 children in a cozy cluster of 24 homes nestled within 250 acres of pine forest and pastureland. We make decisions by consensus and value open and honest communication to accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds and perspectives of our members. Find out more about Heartwood and available property: www.heartwoodcohousing.com; info@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.

AQUARIUS COMMUNITY, Vail, Arizona. Do you have living space in Canada? Exchange with us. *Box 69, Vail, AZ 85641-0069; jku-bias@hotmail.com*

LAMA FOUNDATION, Taos, New Mexico. Join our summer community 2007 as a Summer Steward. When you sign up, you are joining a community of people who are creating a different way of being on earth; who are exploring the connection with others and with the natural world. You are coming to learn and share skills from natural building and permaculture to bread baking and child-care. And most of all you come to live in community, to share resources, to laugh, to love and to serve. Contact us for more info by email at: steward@lamafoundation.org or call 505-586-1269.

MELENAHIKU COMMUNITY, Maui, Hawaii. We are two families seeking committed couples or elders. Our 3.5 acre permaculture farm is off the grid, rustic and a jungle paradise. www.melenahiku.com 808-248-8023.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value cooperation, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, making good ecological choices, and having fun with our friends. We've been at this for 33 years and continue to grow in our visions and our capability to realize them. Sound like home? *POB 155, Rutledge, MI 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org; 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org*

TRILLIUM FARM COMMUNITY LAND TRUST, Jacksonville, Oregon. We are artists, educators and gardeners living the beautiful rustic life in the mountains. Own your own mountain cabin with perfect southern exposure and gorgeous views. Historic wilderness homestead, pure gravity-fed water, established organic gardens, wild orchards, wilderness river canyon, wildlife sanctuary, healing and educational/spiritual retreat center. We are seeking partners and members to co-create community and sustainability, beauty and service. We are expanding and growing. Please visit our website www.deepwild.org and then write us a detailed letter of introduction. trillium@deepwild.org

LAND SHARE, Newburg, Oregon. ARCADIAN VISION at Yamhill County Co-op: 30 idyllic acres in wine country 30 miles southwest of Portland. Build own cabin or live in main house. Many skills needed; flexible arrangements. We are looking for like-minded people: industrious, community-minded, tree huggers; secular humanists connected to natural world through reason and experience. Contact: Pam & John 503 538-8096

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TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. "Not the revolution, but you can see it from here." We are an income-sharing, non-violent, egalitarian community that's been living this lifestyle for 39 years. We would love to have you visit and right now, we're especially looking for more women members, as well as people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. We can offer you: work in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of non-violence, 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; www.twinoaks.org*

WIND SPIRIT, Winkelman, Arizona. We are a twelve-year running ecovillage located in the Sonoran Desert. Our community lies in a valley surrounded by three mountain ranges within a 90-minute drive from Phoenix or Tucson. Wind Spirit has diverse landscape filled with organic fruit and nut trees, native vegetation and a variety of other unique features. Our dwellings are nestled within this desert forest oasis creating a beautiful environment for living and working. Currently, we are welcoming additional individuals/couples who feel drawn to this area of the southwest. Please check out our website for more information. *www.windspiritcommunity.org Email info@windspiritcommunity.org 520-631-5491.*

FLORIDA, No Ultimate Location picked yet. This is not cohousing or ecovillage. No buy-in cost, instead based on a new hybrid combination of the communal and cooperative concepts (yet not egalitarian in the strictest, traditional or a stifling sense). The new goal is real individual dignity and equitable freedom for all, a greater sense of connection and unity among community residents. Translation: much lower costs, both in labor and cash required resulting in much more individual free time for all, time to live well, fully, correctly and create a better world. *352-481-0275, www.abundancethroughsharing.org*

INTENTIONAL ARTISTS COMMUNITY/PERMACULTURE PROJECT/EVOLVING URBAN ECO-VILLAGE, Eugene, Oregon. For rent: two-bedroom private house/studio \$650; small private house/studio/one bedroom loft \$550; one bedroom with small studio in shared house \$350; one bedroom in shared house \$275; 22 foot self-contained motor home \$200. Art gallery, community house, organic gardens, 10'x40' greenhouse. Deposits, utilities and community fee. *Non-smokers. 541-683-0626; www.possumplace.com.* Contact us for current availability and/or for inclusion on the waiting list.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE. Seeking ecologically-minded people to form community in Tennessee. Land with house would be ideal. Goals are to live ecologically sustainable lives, use green power, green building, have independent finances. KIDS are a must! I am a single mom of a ten-year-old son, three dogs, one cat living in Nolensville, Tennessee. Contact *Lee atticus6202000@yahoo.com*

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. 55 acres surrounded by ponds. One solar house with large community kitchen, laundry, large private room available; also two livable older trailers. Our interests are: sustainable living, alternative energies, drumming, environmental issues, farming, social justice. 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 813-754-7374, ecofarmfl@yahoo.com*

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NANJEMOY COMMUNITY, Nanjemoy, Maryland. Community forming in southern Maryland on 50 acres of forested land on the beautiful Nanjemoy Creek. We seek to provide a healthy prosperous home for members, to be at peace with nature and provide service to the greater community in which we live. We practice democratic decision-making, economic sharing, non-violence, simple living and cooperation. Seeking housemates/members who are inspired by healthy, low-impact lifestyles, community service and group living. Children, families, single folks, pets...all are welcome at this time. If interested, contact *Robyn or Danielle*, 301-246-4883; dadarolli@yahoo.com

POPE VALLEY COMMUNITY, Pope Valley, California. Small developing community on 37 acres in the wilderness in Napa Country. Two miles up a dirt road. Looking for new members who are spiritually minded. We are off the grid and have organic gardens. Our land is mainly forest. Visitors welcome. Contact *Rory Skuce*, 707-965-3994

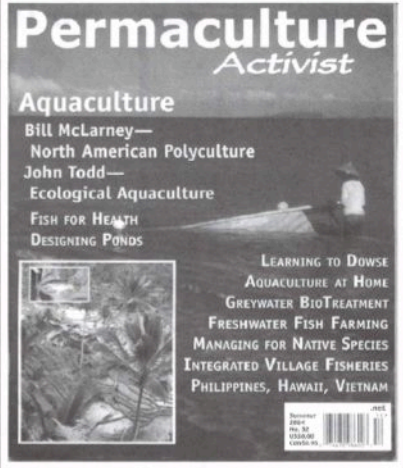
TERRASANTE DESERT COMMUNITY, Tucson, Arizona. Looking for resourceful people who want to build community on 160 acres of vegetated Sonoran desert surrounded by State land trust. Explorations in alternative building, solar energy, permaculture, natural healing, quiet living, artistic endeavors. Abundant well water, good neighbors, mountain vistas, awesome sunsets. Contact *Bruce* at 520-403-8430 or email: scher@ancientimages.com

WHITE OAK FARM, Williams, Oregon. Looking for community-minded partners with agricultural/homesteading experience to help run non-profit farm and education center. info@whiteoakfarmcsa.org

COMMUNITY HOUSES AND PROPERTY FOR SALE OR RENT

NESS COMMUNITY, Russell, New York. Two cabins for sale or rent to buy. One a well-insulated, sunny 550sf post and beam saltbox with new windows, south exposure and view over meadow. Has new Adirondack siding, wood-paneled inside, tile kitchen and bath, sawdust compost toilet, bedroom upstairs, gravity feed water system carried from well, 10x12 storage shed and rainwater collection system with outdoor shower. 450 watt solar system with dc/ac. New well-designed Amish wood cookstove (gas cooking also). \$15,000 for cabin; solar and cookstove negotiable. Second cabin is 360 sf on woods site, has woodstove, small kitchen, attached compost toilet, unheated porch, carry water from nearby well, second floor bedroom/study, 450 watt solar system with dc/ac. \$3,000 for cabin; solar negotiable. Share organic garden, bath house. Simple living, off-grid homesteading on 100 acres forest and field on river. Walk in from parking lot on road (can drive when necessary). Canton-Potsdam area has strong alternative and Amish communities, four universities, low zoning, close to Ottawa, Lake Ontario and Adirondack Park. *Patricia* 315-386-2609; peagreen@earthlink.net

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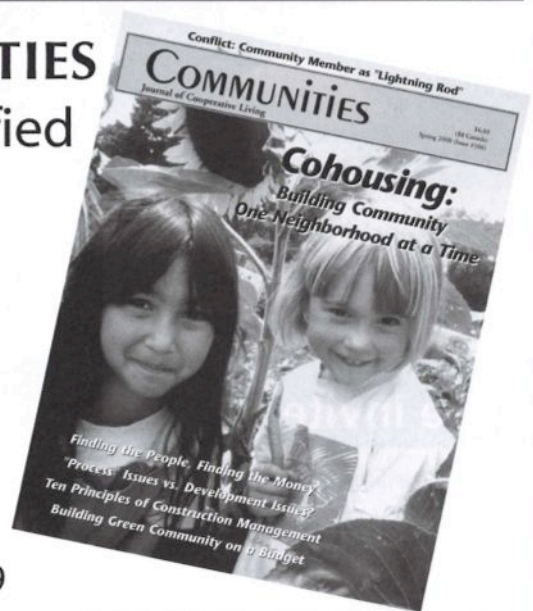
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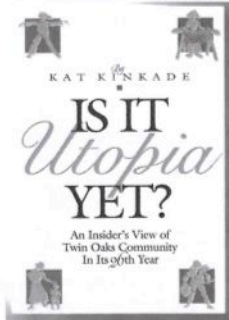


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An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community in its 26th Year by Kat Kinkade

Is it Utopia Yet? is a lively, first-hand account of the unique struggles and triumphs of the first 25 years of Twin Oaks Community, one of America's most prominent and successful communes. This thoughtful and entertaining 320 page book from the author of *A Walden Two Experiment* is illustrated with 16 photographs and 60 cartoons.

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INTERNS, RESIDENCIES, CARETAKERS

AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona. Work/study program: novice/semi-skilled/skilled craftspeople needed to build sanctuary at 17-acre organic Avalon Gardens and Farm, Sedona, Arizona. Learn from Master Contractor. Volunteers receive room and board. Non-profit. *Aquarian Concepts Community*, POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 928-204-1206; info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org www.acc.org

CAROLL COUNTY, GEORGIA. Interns and/or potential farm community members wanted to work on organic farm. Developing a sustainable and diverse farm community including vegetables, fruit, small livestock and people. Currently have a vegetable garden, 140 blueberry bushes, 24 muscadine vines and assorted fruit trees. House is Energy Star passive solar dwelling with a gray water system and composting toilet. In-person trial visit to enable both parties to see it's a good mix. Those interested please contact *Myra* at 770-258-3344 or 404-895-7057.

CARETAKER NEEDED on 20 acres in southern Missouri. Woman with children, pets okay. One room available now. Housing exchanged for services and no pay for now. Training, moral standards, vegetarian or vegan, Christian, helper, believe in God, Jesus, spirit, ghosts. No drugs, smoking or alcohol. Not much daily work, only when work needs to be done. Do you play bluegrass gospel or country gospel music? We need a way to make some money. More housing possible if you help. Responsibilities, nothing illegal. References and background check required. Estate trustee must fulfill the wishes of the trust. Permanent only. Please call 417-399-1032 and leave a message.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2007. If you love gardening and would like to 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 ten weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: 660-883-5543; interns@sandhillfarm.org; www.sandhillfarm.org

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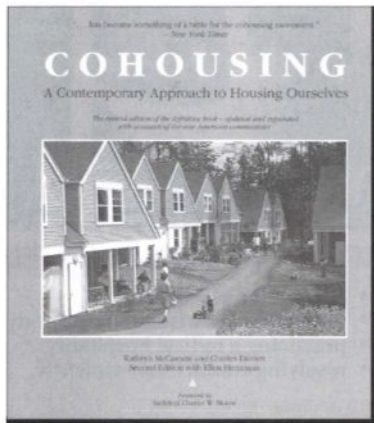
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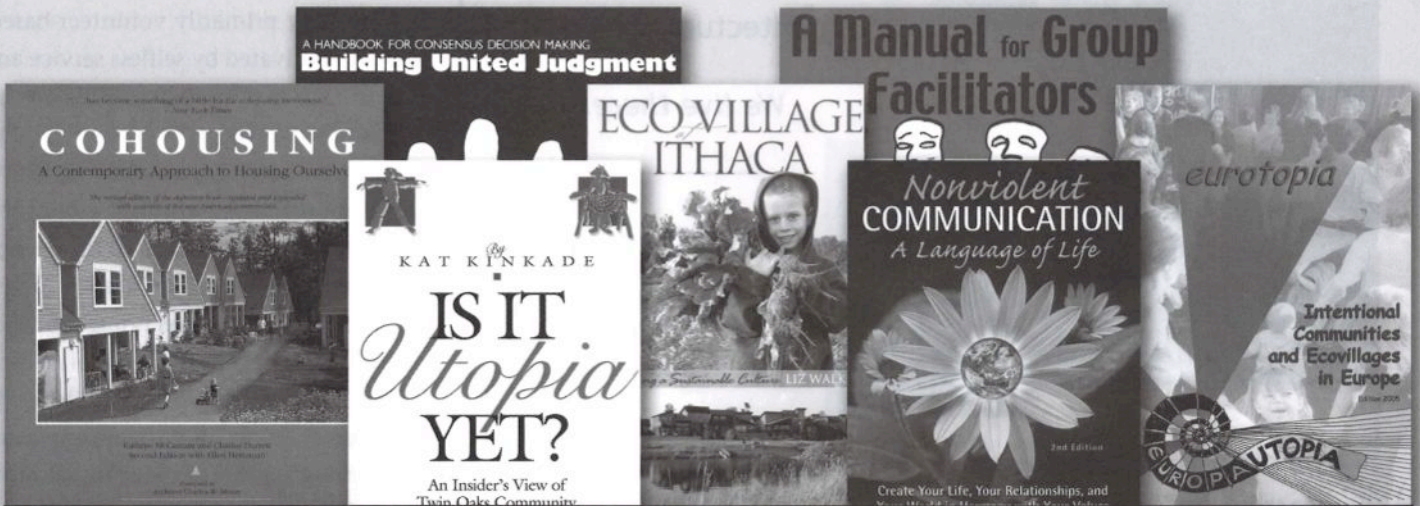
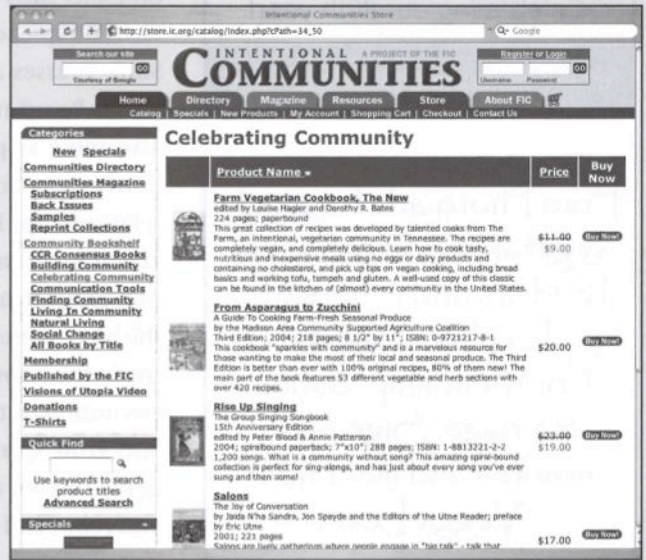
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I SLEPT, DREAMT LIFE WAS JOY

(continued from p. 28)

staffed mostly by volunteers and which gives all of its profits to charities.

Besides learning time and money-management skills and what it takes to operate any successful business, full-time students of the Transformation through Service Education program take classes on topics such as Practical Spirituality, Service Entrepreneurship, and Science of the Soul. Classes are facilitated by experienced Board members/volunteers who also serve as personal mentors to students, in a confidential, one-to-one relationship. People who apply to the Transformation through Service Education program are accepted as students on the basis of their willingness to use proactively the resources inherent in the CPL environment to effect personal changes and grow spiritually. All full-time students receive a full-tuition scholarship and room and board at no charge. Since

we launched the program, more than 30 people, including Board members, have graduated from this program.

CPL's students learn what we volunteers have been learning all along—that hands-on service carried out in a cooperative group setting naturally seems to lead to clarifying one's values and simplifying one's lifestyle. Many CPL volunteers, for example, have discovered what we call "reversing the flow," that when more of one's energy is channeled into selfless service, one begins to change. We find that people desire fewer possessions and experiences and focus more on opportunities to serve others.

Last spring we established the Foundation for Purposeful Living (FPL) to support human service work around the world. Through our volunteers' relatively modest but regular giving, careful stewardship of financial and other resources, sound investing, and over a million hours of volunteer service over two decades—and with no large operating grants or donations from major benefactors—we have amassed a million-dollar (and growing) endowment fund. Up to five percent of the fund's value at the end of the previous year will be available for grants in any calendar year. These grants of between \$1,000 to \$10,000 will be made to individuals, groups, and organizations which are all-volunteer or primarily volunteer-based, and are motivated by selfless service and altruism. They need to exemplify diverse and innovative forms of group work and their work should be practical, inclusive, and demonstrate goodwill. It should also be a source of inspiration to others and be in response to real and clearly articulated needs. Eligible projects might include a volunteer homeless shelter, an educational initiative to involve children in community service, and scientific research concerning aspects of the spiritual mind or soul, for example. One of our recent grantees was a CPL graduate from Zimbabwe; we granted him funds to purchase

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the necessary computer equipment to establish an organization that will promote volunteerism in his country.

We decided to become a residential intentional community in 2003. By using personal funds, most of our Board member and core group volunteers built 16 small common-wall housing units on the CPL property. Now, about 30 adults and four children live in community here. While our group's purpose, values, and operating principles are the same as ever, we now have a new appreciation for the experience of living and serving together in the same physical location, and have the opportunity to strengthen and deepen our commitment to group service work even more.

Our group has little or no sense of being special as a result of what we have accomplished over the years. From our perspective, living in residential intentional community is the natural outcome of our core principles. By taking one step after another, being open to experiment and change, and staying focused on serving others, we have come to realize that all things conceived by a group's love and intelligence are possible. Our group-centered approach reflects the application of a spiritual truth or law: the aspiration to serve is an innate quality of the soul, and group service is the true "science" of creation. The commitment to serve, with clarity of mind, purity of heart, and spirit of cooperation, releases untold spiritual power to assist any committed group in expressing its good will. And after two decades of serving joyfully together, we are putting this into practice in a residential community as well. ☸

A lawyer by training, Joseph Kilpatrick began volunteering with the Human Service Alliance in 1988. For the past six years, he has worked as a self-employed consultant to nonprofit organizations specializing in strategic planning, organizational development, and fundraising. Joseph volunteers full-time at CPL. For more information: www.purposefulfoundation.org; 336-761-8745.

WISE CIRCLES FOR WOMEN

(continued from p. 31)

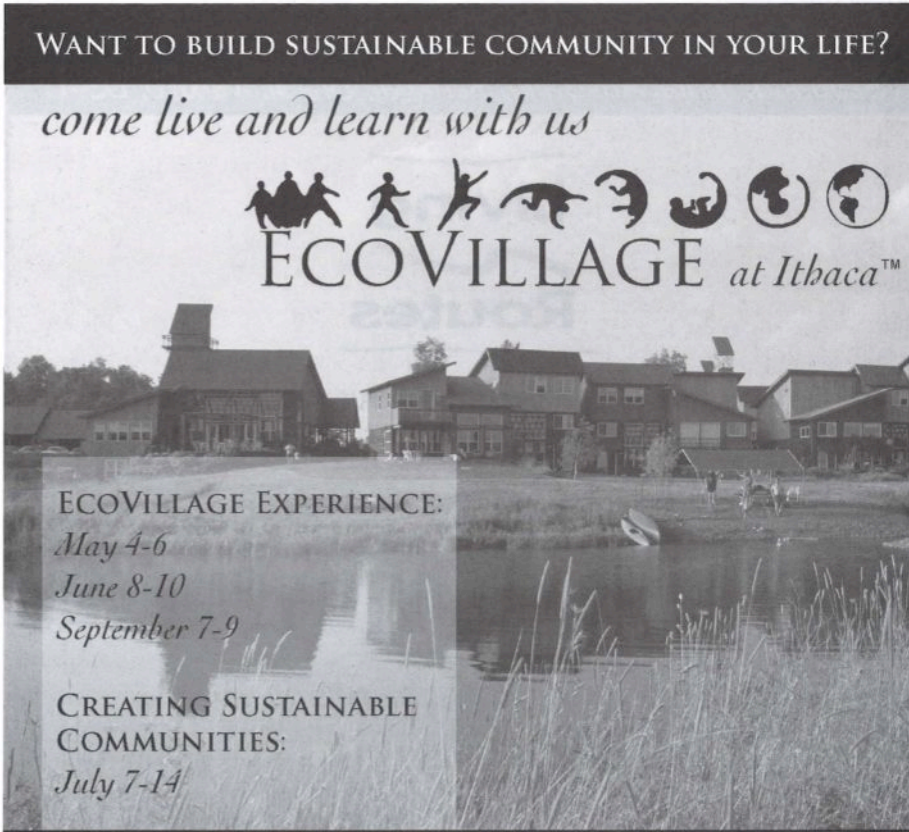
or political issues and share the letters for others to write over their own signatures. At different times we have supported each other during medical or financial emergencies.

Many of us see one or more other group members a few times during the month. We try to encourage members to do things together, such as attending concerts, going on hikes, and so on, to nourish our friendships outside the monthly meetings. Most of us attended a Taiko drumming concert a few months ago when one of our members was performing. Some of the women provided me driving support when I had to travel approximately 300 miles for medical treatments. Some of us are closer to some members than to others. I was recently very pleased when I heard one member say that she had been considering moving to another community but did not want to give up the support of our group. For

the first time in many years, I just planted some organic fall vegetables—and planted enough to share with other members of my circle. This feels so gratifying.


Being a member of this group feels like a very different dynamic than just having individual friends. I always had difficulty trying to individually fit in all my friends into my schedule. Now I can always count on a monthly sharing that provides a great deal of solace and comfort. I can see us growing older together. Some of us are married or in intimate relationships. A few are single. None of that alters the fact that we are all committed to a deeper level of planned support as life rapidly changes and requires us to adapt continually to uncertainty and change.

My dream is to encourage women in midlife to form nonresidential communities of support. The initial set up—working out a schedule that works for most group members and dealing with the conflicts that may arise—is not always easy. However, maintaining what I would call a



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“soft focus” of high regard for each other through the growing pains, is well worth working toward. It has really helped to have a strong but flexible structure for the group—the WISE Circle guidelines provide a suggested meeting agenda, activities, conflict resolution guidelines, resources, and activities that reflect our basic values. These activities can be practiced by individuals or by a group to enrich ourselves, our immediate community, and even the world at large.

It is exciting for me to honor my values of community and connection by encouraging others to reach out and form other nonresidential communities for support, which I believe in turn creates a healthier and more peaceful world. I am extremely grateful to have such a special group of friends I can either call on when things are difficult or share with when I’m blessed with a special joy.✿

Doreen Blumenfeld is a wellness counselor and clinical hypnotherapist in private practice in Northern California. She has been encouraging and supporting individuals in transitions towards health for over 18 years and has produced the best selling meditation recording, Journey into Deep Relaxation. She is happy to discuss the WISE Circle model with others. relax@hearthill.com.

IS HOSTING WORTH IT?


(continued from p. 42)

farmer’s markets and health food stores (expensive in Hawaii). We buy organic foods, and continue to buy seeds, plants, and organic additives for our gardens. Our food is varied, exotic, delicious, and nutritious. (I consider myself a world-traveled gourmet, and have never eaten fresher, purer, or tastier food than at La’akea). Our work exchangers currently pay \$12 a day for food and incidentals. We ask that work exchangers help cook the evening meals and attend our weekly clean-up

party. Sharing cooking skills and encouraging novices can be rewarding. Yet frustrations can arise when cleaning up after someone takes more time than doing the task in the first place, or when a newcomer wastes expensive ingredients, such as the time a work exchanger insisted they could handle a recipe for corn bread but put salt in twice instead of sugar. And most work exchangers are not versed in the Non-violent Communication process or Co-Counseling skills. When conflicts arise, remaining present and resolving them may be difficult. While it’s rewarding to share our communication skills and to help resolve conflicts, there has to be time and the work exchanger has to be willing to learn.

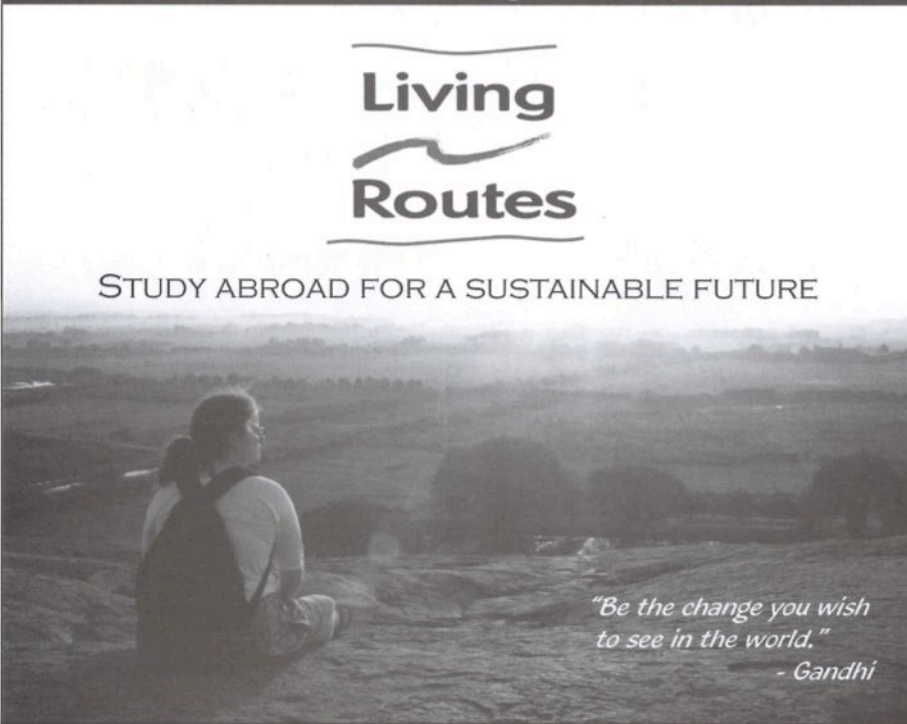
Last but certainly not least, issues of sexuality arise in our relations with work exchangers. Our community values sexuality as an important part of an individual’s life and a powerful energy that nourishes ourselves and our group. Although we support individual choices in sexual relationships, and do not elevate one sexual relationship model, (such as monogamy, polyamory, serial monogamy, celibacy, etc.), over another, we are aware of the power differential between members and work exchangers and how this plays out in the sexual arena. As stated earlier, we are also aware of the transitions a work exchanger must go through upon arrival at La’akea. We have asked new work exchangers how we can support their safety in sexual endeavors. Our current agreement is to focus on non-sexual ways of relating and connecting with work exchangers for at least two weeks after their arrival. We encourage work exchangers to develop multiple friendships in the community and with members of both sexes. The work exchanger’s liaison is a member of the same gender as the work exchanger if they are hetero-

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sexual, and of the opposite gender if they are gay. The liaison is responsible for informing the work exchanger of our sexual mores, and for finding out if the work exchanger has clear boundaries about relationships, and if he or she can easily communicate about these boundaries. We also make sure the work exchanger feels comfortable asking for support if they experience any uncomfortable feelings regarding sexual energies. After two weeks, if one of our community members is having a sexual attraction to a work exchanger, he or she is asked to consult at least two other community members, preferably including the work exchanger's liaison, and get an OK to express and move on the attraction. As with all our endeavors at La'akea, our sexual policies regarding new people is a work in progress and subject to change.

So, back to Brittany's question. Are work exchangers worth the effort? Living in community these past 20 months, which includes interacting with our many short-term residents, I have learned more about myself than I did in 31 years as a traditional medical provider and 25 years as a mother in a nuclear family. My ability to be less judgmental, to be in touch with my truth, and to communicate my needs is constantly improving. I am especially challenged when my truth involves saying "No." I am still not always able to do this, but the great thing is that work exchangers keep coming and I get renewed chances to learn over and over again. I am more aware when I have feelings of anger, and when I feel angry I try to get in touch with which needs are not being met, communicate my feelings in a non-blaming way, and take responsibility for meeting my needs. There are lots of self-growth opportunities here!

Looking over our guestbook of visitors and work exchangers who've lived

here, I recall the life-enhancing experiences our community has provided them. Yes, work exchangers are worth the effort! They are part of La'akea's community vision, which is to spread a more loving, conscious, sustainable, heart-centered culture.

When I remember individual work exchangers whom I grew to love, and who contributed and learned about life, love and community at La'akea, I feel intensely alive and motivated to keep going.

Dona Willoughby is a founding member of La'akea Intentional Community. After 31 years in medicine, her passion now lies in the healing found in community and the creation of a more sustainable lifestyle.

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PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 80)

The potential for abuse is huge ...that the person in the more influential or powerful role may somehow exercise that advantage over the newer/younger person in a way that is manipulative, including exploiting the newbie's awe of the more powerful person's résumé or charisma, and possibly including questionable tasks in the student/intern's list of responsibilities.

A useful community norm might be to encourage everyone to frequently and effusively share affirmations and appreciations ... that's part of the essential juice that keeps the wheels of a community lubricated. On top of that, however, I would recommend vigilant transparency and making it a community issue to attempt to get all the important, relevant information out on the table.

In an ideal world, all members and newbies would feel open and inspired to express an attraction and an interest in exploring greater intimacy, and the recipient would feel clear and centered about responding with "Yes," "No," or "Maybe—let's talk more."

Unfortunately, our self-awareness and social norms are not yet so evolved that this reliably works out well. Thus, caution is advised. Even if the newbie is the one to initiate the exploration—which happens for a variety of motives, some well-thought-out and reasonable, and others not—the danger of an unbalanced power dynamic makes it imperative that the member take responsibility for making sure things get talked about.

Consider this community standard: That no members get sexually involved with guests, students, or interns without first having an open conversation with the newbie and the community (or some designated subset of the community) about all pros, cons, and concerns. I wouldn't give the community or a committee decision-making

or veto power over the choices pursued by the member and the newbie, but I would suggest that the group take responsibility for providing a context and an overview, and also for asking any potentially awkward questions.

After that, it's up to the member and the newbie to make the best informed decision they can—allowing that insecurities and animal instincts might occasionally trump experience and wisdom. In that case, the good news is that there are valuable lessons to be learned by the individuals choosing to dance together ... if they're paying attention and open to learning.

It's also advisable for the community to have some sort of support system in place, a process for looking at and working through any issues that come up. Hopefully without indulging in too many renditions of "I told you so."

Finally, there's the possibility that some community members will feel con-

cerned about how this dynamic impacts the underlying vibe of the visitors program, or they may harbor resentment toward any person(s) who regularly initiates intimate connections with new people. Hopefully having this process in place will allow everyone to express their concerns and then let go of the judgments and worries that might otherwise undermine a close-knit sense of community.

Live and learn ... love and learn.☼

Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 33 years, and has been on the road for 19 years visiting communities—asking about their visions and realities, taking photos, and in general exploring what makes them tick. Presently, he is editing part two of a video documentary on intentional communities, aspiring to convey the vision and passion that drives the movement, and tell stories about what works.

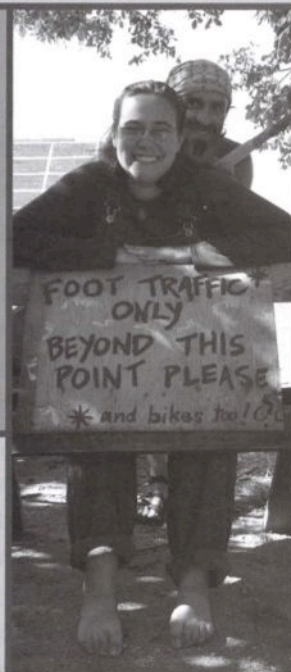
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Interns & Intimacy

One of the great taboos in our culture is intimate relationships between people of unequal status. Relationships between bosses and employees, for example, or teachers and students, or any two people whose ages happen to span a large gap in years, tend to raise eyebrows because of this taboo. Romances between community members and interns often do the same.

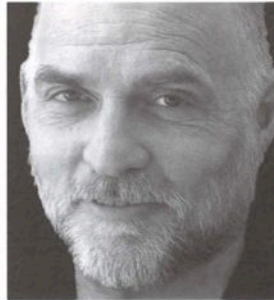
Although communities that host a lot of guests and short-term residents often find themselves facing this issue, very few communities have a standard or policy for handling it—except for those that ban such relationships altogether.

Any of the above-mentioned arrangements between consenting adults can be beautiful—and yet all of them are open to potential abuse and other problems. Therefore relationships between non-equals are not to be undertaken without careful consideration. In a healthy culture, the underlying collective concern would be to strive to see that all interactions between the unequal parties are open and above board, with the goal that all parties involved end up benefiting from the experience.

A related concern is that relations between individuals usually impact the larger group—and navigating that topic is fraught with tricky issues related to group beliefs, values, and dynamics. Sometimes a group's concerns are rooted in fear and moralism, rather than in a broad understanding of the larger issues, including a concern for the welfare of the parties involved and how they're choosing to push their personal growth edges. An open community discussion is usually the best tool for

shedding light on the divergent opinions, contributing factors, and promising possibilities. However, even open discussions don't guarantee positive results: for example, a charismatic leader may be able to convince a large group of loyal followers to support questionable behaviors.

In my opinion, what's important is to be sex-positive while also encouraging an open (and open-minded) dialogue. Community norms about romance with short-term guests should be designed with that in mind.



BY GEOPH KOZENY

Most people enjoy hearing that others find them attractive and interesting, and if any accompanying discomfort arises, it tends to come when they get the sense that the information is being offered with strings attached. If you get the feeling that someone is “interested” and yet they say “No, I’m not,” it’s nearly impossible to verify their true intentions. It can feel oppressive, especially for young women in our culture, particularly if they have a sense of being perpetually “hit upon” by men. And this

is true regardless of the accuracy of their assessment of the intentions of the higher-status person—it feels bad whether it’s real or imagined.

***I would recommend
vigilant transparency.***

On the flip side of this dynamic are the interests, needs, and desires of the person expressing the appreciation and or attraction. How much is the employer/teacher/older person/community member being clear and clean in expressing an appreciation,

and how much may they be pursuing an attraction that they feel but are not acknowledging to themselves? Are they dropping hints but not being straightforward?

(continued on p. 79)

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